

A Biblical Doctrine that is Hated by many Christians

The Absolute Sovereignty of God

Right away – many Christians would argue – OH NO – I BELIEVE IN GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY.

Well, let’s find out.

We aren’t going to do a lot of proof texting tonight.

We could.

And we CAN prove these things in Scripture.

What I want to do is PILE UP THE ARGUMENTS so we can begin to see at least in some compact way -- the majesty of GOD and the wonder of His ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY – to the point that we might – even as Calvinists begin to feel a little uncomfortable.

My major premise tonight is simply this: We can not paint a picture of God that presents Him as TOO SOVEREIGN – because He is absolutely sovereign.

Positive Truths regarding Predestination – or the Absolute Sovereignty of God

1. God – from ALL ETERNITY has ordained whatsoever comes to pass.

Everything.

NOTHING happens apart from His Divine providence.

2. That God’s predestination is UNCHANGABLE.

It may SEEM changeable – to us -- because we don’t know what is going to happen next – and often we are SURPRISED.

-- God is never surprised.

-- God is never frustrated.

-- All of His purposes – and all of His actions -- even the ones that seem to make NO SENSE to us – and we can’t figure out – have a purpose – which is ultimately and always -- to glorify Himself.

3. God's Predestination of all things includes BOTH election and reprobation.

We are going to talk about reprobation before we are done some tonight.
R is simply the NECESSARY CONSEQUENCE of believing in election.

In fact, I would posit, you can not believe in God's sovereignty
without believing in election,
and you can't believe in election w/o believing in reprobation.

What God's Sovereignty and Absolute Predestination DOES NOT mean

1. God's Predestination of all things does not mean God is the author of sin.

Challenge: Explain to me how sin can exist and God not be the author of sin.

I can't do that in a way that fully satisfies my own understanding.
I also can not fully understand the Trinity to my full satisfaction.
I also can not fully understand the hypostatic union of Christ
How he can be 100% God
And at the same time 100% man
With no mixture or confusion in a mathematical impossibility.

But, I know that He is God.
And I know there is no darkness in Him at all.
And I know He is not the author of sin.

The next point helps us understand that a bit.

2. God's Predestination of all things does not destroy the contingency of second causes.

LBCF – Chapter 3 paragraph 1 – p. 672

Putting it simply – God ordains THE MEANS as well as the outcome.
He ordains not only whatsoever comes to pass – but HOW it will come to pass and THROUGH WHOM it will come to pass.

3. God's predestination does not deny or destroy human responsibility.

This point is one that WE are OFTEN misunderstood about.
And really – if we want to be fair – this is the point where we differ with those I would call HYPER-CALVINISTS.

I would consider a Hyper-Calvinist to be someone who basically says,
“Look, whatever is going to happen will happen – and it doesn't make any difference what you or I do – SO – I may as well go out and sin.”

And unsaved Hyper-Calvinist might talk like this:

I can't be saved unless God changes my heart – and he hasn't done so – so I am not going to repent and I am not going to believe – I am just going to do my own thing.

God's predestination does not deny human responsibility.
Explain that one Pastor Steve.

OK – I will.

Once I get a handle on the Trinity and can explain that.
Then, when I understand the person and nature of Christ.
Then, I'll solve the mystery of how God IS NOT the author of sin.

After those 4 things are done: Then, I'll set about to explain how human responsibility co-exists perfectly with God's absolute sovereignty. ☺

In heaven above – we will have a better understanding of these things.

We might even come to a full grasp and knowledge of them.

But, I GUARANTEE YOU – the answer will not be God saying – “LOOK – I couldn't be in control of EVERYTHING. Why there are a LOT of things I wish didn't happen. In fact, some of the things that happened – surprised me just as much as they did you!”

Whatever the answer **will be** – THAT WON'T BE IT!

Man is responsible.

Man is DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE to God and will answer PERSONALLY to God.

And no one will be telling God that it is HIS fault they didn't repent and believe the gospel.

We preach the Word.

The Word presses RESPONSIBILITY on the creature – so – if we faithfully preach the Word – WE TOO press responsibility upon the creature.

4. God's predestination is not based upon "looking ahead" and foreseeing what would take place.

Chapter 3 – paragraph 2

God's predestination is not based upon "looking ahead" and foreseeing what would take place.

In fact, if I can be so bold – if you believe that things just HAPPEN – and God looks ahead to see what will happen

Your God is actually an impersonal force – like FATE.

And the God of the universe is simply a spectator – a passive observer – like the viewer of a television show as he watches FATE UNFOLD.

You ever get caught up in a good TV show or movie.
You get emotionally involved and hope for a certain conclusion.

You can hope all you want –

The show is already written – and it will unfold the way it has been filmed – no matter HOW emotionally involved you are.

Some Christian's portrayal of God is just like that –

God is WATCHING to see what will happen next.

God is HOPING it all works out OK.

Or others say, God looks ahead and chooses those that he sees will choose Him.

Once again, we have redefined the purpose of God.

That is a definition of the very nature of God.

That is an elevation of the FREE WILL OF MAN – over the eternal purposes and plans of God.

People come up with explanations like this because they are UNCOMFORTABLE with a God who is absolutely sovereign.

That's a good thing.

WE SHOULD BE uncomfortable when contemplating God.

WE SHOULD BE so in awe of His majesty and power – that instead of simply feeling all comfy and warm inside – there is a part of us that can do nothing but fall to our knees and acknowledge HIS ABSOLUTE CONTROL OVER EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIFE.

THAT is to make FATE A GOD.

An impersonal force – that simply causes things to be REALLY determines what happens – and God simply ratifies it as a passive observer.

Is that what you REALLY believe?

There are a lot of Christians who do.

Or – do you believe what the Scriptures teach – that God is absolutely in control of EVERYTHING – down to the most minute detail so that nothing ultimately defeats His purpose?

TRUTHS ABOUT ELECTION AND REPROBATION

- 1. The goal of both Election and Reprobation is ultimately for the glory of God.**

Chapter 3 paragraph 3

- 2. The number of the elect AND the reprobate is absolutely fixed and it can not be changed.**

Chapter 3 – paragraph 4

- 3. Election AND reprobation both took place in the counsel of God before the foundations of the earth – or before time began.**

Chapter 3 – paragraph 5

You might say – “Pastor Steve – that paragraph doesn’t say ANYTHING about reprobation. It only talks about election.

That’s true.

But the flip side is also true.

Reprobation is the flip side of election.

5. The means of election is God’s free grace and the love of God in Christ.

Chapter 3 – paragraph 6

Maybe we shouldn’t talk about these things.

Maybe they are too high and lofty.

Maybe they will confuse people.

True story – in Bible College a visiting professor came and was lecturing a Pastoral Counseling class.

He made a statement I’ll never forget.

He told us – Calvinism is true – but never teach it – because it will kill your church.

That was an amazing statement I never forgot.

I DIDN’T believe the doctrines of grace – but what he said horrified me.

I thought – I DON’T believe in the doctrines of grace – but if they ARE TRUE we would HAVE to preach them!

Chapter 3 – paragraph 7

Let’s conclude with:

SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING REPROBATION

1. Just as election is a secret decree, so is reprobation.

In fact, it is even MORE so.

We do find out who the elect are as they ultimately come to Christ.

Before they come to Christ, it is impossible to know they are elect.

Before their hearts are changed, they are as lost and dead as anyone else.

Before he comes to Christ, he too is an ACTIVE opponent of Christ.
The Apostle Paul is the prime example.

The reprobate REMAINS in his dead condition.
He NEVER comes to Christ.

2. As long as there is life in the body, we can have hope that the person is not reprobate and may yet come to Christ.

Just because someone is lost today, does not mean they will remain in their lost condition. In fact, all of us were lost at one time.

Don't ever hold out hope that God may save your loved ones.

My father-in-law was literally saved on his death-bed.

About a week before he died, he came to Christ.

This was after professing to be a Christian for all the time that I knew him, but never manifesting any tangible fruit.

It is THE GOSPEL that God will use to save sinners.

Use the gospel and use the Word of God.

The elect will come to Christ, even if it is with their dying breath. The reprobate will never come, no matter what YOU do.

3. Reprobation does not mean God takes innocent creatures, infuses sin into them, and causes them to act against their own free will.

God can and does harden.

As a general rule, men simply harden themselves because of their own depravity.

We even see that with the prime example – Pharaoh.

God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Pharaoh also hardened his own heart.

But, we must never divorce reprobation from original sin.

All men are lost because of Adam.

God never has looked at Steve Marquedant as a MORALLY NEUTRAL CREATURE.

Why?

That wouldn't be reality.

I have never existed apart from being Totally Depraved.
I have never existed apart from being a fallen creature.

God can not look at me as an innocent creature -- I have never been innocent.
He sees me as lost.
He sees me in Christ.

Men love to praise FREE WILL.
Men love to THINK they have free will.
And they do.
Lost men have a will free to choose within its own sphere.

Free will can not save you.
You can only be saved by grace.
No one will be saved by the powerful exercise of their free will.

Before conversion, our wills ARE NOT FREE to choose righteousness,
because we do not freely choose the things that we hate – and the natural
man hates God.

4. The doctrine of Reprobation does not conflict with the truth of His goodness.

He is a good God – and He even treats the lost with mercy during this lifetime.

But the doctrine of election and especially reprobation makes people angry.
I wouldn't believe in a God like that.
If that is true, then God is a monster.

It's just another form of the old question, "If there is a God, why do bad things happen?"

And you'll find, those who do not believe in the sovereignty of God in the matters of salvation will not have adequate answers to the problem of disasters and catastrophes in this life.

When the tsunami happens, they will be reduced to saying things like, "*God didn't want this to happen.*"

Which simply causes the lost man to scoff and ask, “*If God didn’t want it to happen, then WHY DID it happen?*”

No, your God is a monster – He creates people just for the purpose of damning them to an eternal Hell.

THIS is a problem to the human mind.

I admit it is.

There is only ONE group I know that adequately addresses this problem.

OPEN THEISTS.

They believe that GOD DOES NOT KNOW what will happen.

A great heresy – denying the omniscience of God – but it does answer a difficult question about God.

THINK WITH ME.

Suppose the old saying is true that God knows everything – and He looks ahead to see who will choose Him and then chooses them.

That’s not true – God doesn’t look ahead.

BUT – let’s suppose He does.

Let me ask YOU a question.

Why does God allow men to be born into this world – that HE KNOWS will never choose Him and will ultimately end up in Hell?

That’s a main reason why OPEN THEISM exists.

But – denying that GOD EVEN KNOWS is a great heresy.

I can not tell you WHY God purposes as He does:

I simply know HE DOES!

And for those evangelicals who complain that we have a warped view of God – all I can say is – my friends – we do not – we believe in the God of the Bible – but you – my friends – have the same difficulty and unanswerable problem that we do.

NO – GOD GIVES THEM A CHANCE.

But if God knows the end from the beginning – and God knows they will never come to faith in Christ – why does He allow them to be born?

FINALLY

5. Reprobation does not mean God refuses to save those who earnestly desire to come to Christ.

This is another error of hyper-calvinism.

Hyper-calvinism does not preach the gospel to the lost.

Hyper-calvinism does not see the gospel as the means that God uses to bring the elect to Himself.

There are those who think one COULD desire God, but since he is non-elect, he can not be saved, no matter how badly he wants to be.

An absolute misunderstanding of Total Depravity.

An absolute misrepresentation of the Scriptural teaching.

No. We have a message to give to the lost.

REPENT and BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.

All men, everywhere are **COMMANDED** to repent.

It is our commission to **PREACH THE GOSPEL.**

It is our privilege to tell men and women about the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not **OUR JOB** to **SAVE** people.

THAT is **GOD'S JOB.**

But, it **IS** our job to give the Good news that "God Saves Sinners."

Let us bow in prayer before this sovereign and holy God.

Pray

Benediction: (hymn 35 – 1 Timothy 1:17)