

God's Purposeful and Definitive Love

Predestination can be a very confusing topic. It's a teaching found in Scripture, and yet many believe that the consequence of this Biblical teaching is that man is a robot controlled by God. Nothing could be further from the truth of Scripture.

When it speaks of election (another name for the predestination of Christians), Scripture reveals certain truths, but leaves other things hidden from our understanding. The reality of God's predestining love is not meant to encourage unnecessary, harmful, and sinful speculation as to who may or may not be predestined. Such knowledge is not given to us nor do we need it (run away from anyone claiming this knowledge!). Nor is predestination the key to Scripture that comprehensively explains everything in the Bible or in life. What we do know is this: if anyone is saved and in Christ, they are saved and in Christ because the Father loved them from before all time without any reference to their good works.

Here is a succinct and helpful definition of election written by an international gathering of pastors hundreds of years ago:

Election is God's unchangeable purpose by which he did the following: Before the foundation of the world [the time of election], by sheer grace, according to the free good pleasure of his will [the cause of election], he chose in Christ to salvation a definite number of particular people [the exclusivity of election] out of the entire human race [the diversity of elect Christians], which had fallen by its own fault from its original innocence into sin and ruin [the necessity of election]. Those chosen were neither better nor more deserving than the others, but lay with them in the common misery [the unconditionality of election]. He did this in Christ [the foundation of election], whom he also appointed from eternity to be the mediator, the head of all those chosen, and the foundation of their salvation. And so he decided to give the chosen ones to Christ to be saved, and to call and draw them effectively into Christ's fellowship through his Word and Spirit. In other words, he decided to grant them true faith in Christ, to justify them, to sanctify them, and finally, after powerfully preserving them in the fellowship of his Son, to glorify them [the certainty and fruit of election]. God did all this in order to demonstrate his mercy, to the praise of the riches of his glorious grace [the goal of election].

Canons of Dort (1619)

Head of Doctrine I, Article 7

