

Predestination



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Spring Assembly of Christ

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January 2016

PREDESTINATION

INTRODUCTION

The word *predestination* occurs in the English translation of the Scriptures in Ephesians 1:5,11 and Romans 8:29,30. However, the subject is taught throughout the Scriptures. The word is used in three senses in the Bible: (1) It is used as a synonym for God's decree. (2) It serves to designate the purpose of God respecting all moral creatures. (3) It includes the sovereign election of some and the righteous reprobation of evil men for their sin.

God predestinated neither the persons nor the means unto damnation in the same way He predestinated both unto salvation. Predestination unto life is purely *sovereign*; whereas, predestination unto damnation is *judicial*. The latter takes account of man's sin.

As God knows nothing now that He did not know from eternity, He ordains nothing now that He did not ordain in eternity. Predestination and providence are inseparable. The former ordains, and the latter executes. Absolute resignation can flow only from an absolute faith and an absolute acquiescence to God's absolute providence founded upon absolute predestination.

Five basic things concerning predestination are taught in God's word: (1) Its foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ. (2) Its object is man as a guilty, fallen creature but not man invested with qualities which moved God to ordain him to everlasting life. It was not the merits

of Christ but the love of the sovereign God for some among mankind that moved Him to predestinate. (3) The blessings to which God predestined those whom He foreknew were salvation and eternal glory (I Thess. 5:9). (4) The means of the blessings are the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, calling by the gospel, and practical sanctification. Christian predestinarians keep together that which God has united. (5) The final end of predestination is the everlasting kingdom to which the elect are predestined by God to enter and enjoy throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity.

The subject of predestination is incomprehensible to the unsaved. Without faith it is a matter too high for one to dispute. A person must be a scholar first in the schoolhouses of repentance, justification, and sanctification. Those are the elementary, junior, and high schools where a person must be conversant before he enters the university of God's holy predestination and providence.

The reformers taught *absolute* predestination, and all of God's men who are sound in the faith teach the same. Arminians advocate *conditional* predestination. Predestination is free and independent of any arbitrary standard. However, Arminians state that God determines a man's salvation on the basis of man's free will. One of them said that the subject of predestination is a great shadow on the Christian horizon. Since predestination is a Biblical subject given by the Holy Spirit, it cannot be a shadow on the Christian horizon. Shadows are cast by light. They lie close to God's glory. Many have seen shadows only because they have not graduated from the schools of repentance, justification, and sanctification.

THE PURPOSE OF PREDESTINATION

The purpose of predestination is *adoption*. The subjects of predestination and adoption are both taught in Ephesians 1:5--"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Adoption is used in a different manner when it pertains to Christians than when it pertains to Israelites. The description of Israel's peculiar relation to God applies to Christians in a spiritual manner.

Israel was called God's *son* (Ex. 4:22). The Lord delivered Israel to be a peculiar treasure to Himself. The Israelites were unto Him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:4-6). To them pertains the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, the promises, and the fathers; and through them Christ came (Rom. 9:4-6).

The apostle Paul was not addressing the national, Jewish people in Romans 9:4-6, but those among them who were elected and had been brought into the ark of safety. Adoption indicated the Israelites' connection with God. Glory illustrated their companionship with God. The covenants regulated their conduct before God. Law legislated their community under God. Service educated their consciences about God. Promises perpetuated their confidence in God. The fathers were given them to emulate. They illustrate character through God. These things apply to the children of God now in a spiritual manner.

The Lord has predestinated His own to be adopted as children (Eph. 1:5). The word *children* should be translated *sons*. Israel was

accepted *before* the Lord; whereas, sons of God today are accepted *in* the Lord. Until the death of the Testator, the children of God were only accepted before the Lord.

Predestination and election differ. In some instances, predestination is used as a synonym for decree, purpose, or plan of God. Election in Jesus Christ is taught in Ephesians 1:4. God becomes one's *God* by Divine election. He becomes a person's *Father* by predestination. Holiness, or practical Christian living, is the fruit of election. Adoption is the fruit of predestination.

Election refers only to the people of God. Predestination refers to the people of God, but it includes Divine *providence* (Rom. 8:28-30). Election is God's positive preference to some over others. Predestination is active and includes the idea of ordering and controlling all things according to a settled purpose and plan. Election pertains to persons. Predestination pertains to persons, but it makes all things work together for the good of elected persons. Everything is ordered by God, and He works all things for the good of His people. Events are involved in predestination.

Scripture proves that election is the foundation of a person's salvation: "...as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Faith is the fruit and not the cause of Divine election. Predestination is the foundation of providence. Election and predestination are the two hinges upon which all other truth swings. God chose some among mankind and predestinated the blessings which the chosen receive and enjoy.

Predestination has a threefold cause: (1) The efficient cause

was the good pleasure of God's will. (2) The instrumental cause is by, or through, Jesus Christ. (3) The final cause is to the praise of the glory of God's grace (Eph. 1:6).

Predestination means to set bounds before, or predetermine. Anyone who believes his election occurred at the moment of his belief does not believe in *pre*-destination but *co*-destination. According to that view, he would believe that God determined to do what is actually done at the point of time when it is accomplished.

In the context of Ephesians 1:5, predestination is restricted to those whom God has elected in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world. God has predetermined that they shall receive the placing as sons.

Election and predestination must be viewed in the light of Divine perfections. Whatever God does, He designed to do; and He does what He designed in His time. God either saves or does not save all men. Since He does not save all, He determined not to do so. To affirm that God determined to save all men but saves only some, one admits that God failed, is failing, or changed His purpose. The sovereign God neither failed, is failing, nor changes His purpose. He promises nothing He cannot bring to completion. God cannot lie. What He purposed shall be accomplished by His own power (Num. 23:19; Job 23:13, 14; Is. 46:9,10; Ps. 115:3; Prov. 19:21).

God has predestinated His elected ones to be adopted as sons. Adoption goes beyond the matter of one's salvation in Christ. Individuals are *children* by regeneration and *sons* by adoption. To enjoy the adoption of sons is to enjoy the liberty of Christ. Children

denotes family relationship, and sons signifies position. Believers under the dispensation of grace are already sons (Gal. 4:5,6).

The message of God is confirmed in believers in this life by faith which is the gift of God in regeneration. Every child of God is confirmed to the end. The validity of the *message* the apostle Paul proclaimed to the Corinthians was confirmed by their God-given faith (I Cor. 1:6). The validity of their *lives* will be confirmed at the revelation of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1:8). At that time their adoption will be manifested to the whole world. People of the world do not now recognize the validity of the lives of those who have been born again, but they will at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Confirmation is not some religious rite practiced by men, but a confirmation by the Lord Himself.

Predestination sets forth the glory of God, but it adds nothing to God. It was merely the act of His own will. God is perfect in Himself; therefore, everything that He predestinated was to manifest His glory. Righteousness could profit and has profited man, but the righteousness accomplished by the death of Jesus Christ could never profit God. He is blessed in Himself.

Predestination involves events that are predetermined for the Christian's good. God purposed all things, and He works all things after the counsel of His will by providence. His delights are with the sons of men (Prov. 8:31). God's character is not blemished by purposing the fall of man and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ by the hands of wicked men. His character was affected by neither.

Supposition that God does not know men's actions is a denial of

His foreknowledge. To suppose that some event in time is the cause of that which was purposed in eternity is absurd. Every person who believes in free will embraces that theory. All who believe in free grace know the fallacy of such a supposition.

The world does not now recognize the dignity of the Christian's position as son. That will occur when Jesus Christ comes in power and great glory (II Thess. 1:3-12). The Lord will then be glorified in His saints and admired in all those who believe because the validity of the message was believed and confirmed by faith. The validity of the life will be confirmed in that day when He comes to be glorified in His saints.

THE FOUNDATION OF PREDESTINATION

Foreknowledge is the foundation of predestination. The predestinated number is so certain that it can be neither increased nor decreased. Things still future, due to their certainty, are spoken of as present in Romans 8:28-30. Each verb employed concerning the Lord's dealing with His people denotes a once for all Divine act. Hence, the glorified number equals the foreloved. To say that God foreknew some but they sinned and lost their salvation would make God a bad guesser. That would be the same as asserting that God foreknew that they would exercise their faith to salvation but He did not foreknow that they would lose their salvation. This portion of Scripture proves that all who were foreordained were predetermined to be called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

Predestination is based on *foreknowledge*. God foreordained those whom He foreknew. Foreknowledge signifies that God knows all things in a special way and He knows some things in a *very* special way. The context of Romans 8:28-30 proves He knows His own in a redemptive sense. Therefore, salvation has its origin in God and not in man.

Those whom God foreknew in a redemptive sense are *predestinated* to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Predestination means that God in eternity past determined to save those whom He elected to save. It assures that the elect will be saved, and nothing can thwart God's purpose. Predestination is not merely a guarantee that the elect will not perish but that they will be made like Christ in spiritual transformation. The gathered saints are a living organism, the family

of God. Their vital center is the beloved Son of God who sees in their sonship the fruit of the travail of His soul (Is. 53:11). Predestination goes further than guaranteeing some things. It assures the elect that they shall be like the Lord Jesus Christ in not only character but destiny.

Calling is more than a general gospel invitation to salvation. The call does not come to all who hear the gospel proclaimed. It comes to those alone whom God foreknew and predestinated. Furthermore, it does come to every one of them without the loss of one whom He redemptively foreknew.

The word *justified* is used in the sense of regarding and treating as just for the sake of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Glorification will be the consummation of the change in the elect of God. In the mind of God, the pilgrim is already in the immortal country. To Him there is no time. He sees His purpose brought to completion. Romans 8:31-39 is an expansion of the truths taught in verses 28-30.

God's foreknowledge is not a foresight that certain individuals will repent and believe. It is a *prerecognition* of persons to whom God has determined in His mercy to give repentance and faith (II Tim. 2:25; Acts 13:48). God acts according to the good pleasure of His will in His choice (Eph. 1:5) and not according to any supposed good action by any creature. The holy actions of the elect are the effect and not the cause of their being foreknown and predestinated (I Pet. 1:2; II Tim. 1:9). The economy of salvation is attributed to God (John 17:6,9; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4,5).

Foreknowledge is equivalent to forelove, or foreordain. The Lord Jesus Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world but was manifested for the elect: "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (I Pet. 1:20). Therefore, a Saviour for God's people and a people for the Father's Son were foreordained before the foundation of the world. That was not mere foreknowledge of what certain men would do but foredecision of what God would do for His people.

Intellectual knowledge and foreknowledge must be distinguished. Foreknowledge goes beyond mere cognition, the act or process of knowing. It is more than mere intellectual knowledge. Foreknowledge signifies to set regard upon, to know with peculiar interest, delight, and affection. God elected those He foreloved for the purpose of predestinating them to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Arminians erroneously assert that God's foresight of man's faith is in view in Romans 8:29. However, the text neither states nor implies that erroneous view. If their argument were correct, it would not disprove the doctrine of Divine election. On the basis of that argument, one would necessarily ask, What kind of faith does God foresee? Does He foresee human faith or faith that He Himself gives those He foreloved? The Biblical answer is that God foresees the faith which He Himself gives (Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29; II Pet. 1:2,3; John 3:3-8; 6:44,45,65).

The text states nothing about whose act of faith God foreknew. The apostle Paul stated that those whom God foreknew, or foreloved, He predestinated. God foreknew them in a redemptive sense and predestinated

them to be conformed to the image of His Son. Conclusively, the person's act of faith is not discussed in the text but the *persons* themselves whom God foreknew. God fixed His selective eye upon some individuals and predestinated them to holiness by the means of calling and justification.

THREE MAJOR DISTINCTIVES IN PREDESTINATION

Men misunderstand the subject of predestination because they fail to make proper distinctions. The average view of the subject is that if God predetermined everything, mankind in general is excused because man cannot in any way alter God's plan. Three major dissimilarities should be observed in the study of predestination: (1) God's predestination of angels differs from His predestination of man. (2) Certainty and necessity differ. (3) Efficacious and permissive decrees differ.

(1) God's predestination of *angels* differs from His predestination of *men*. There are elect and nonelect angels, and there are elect and nonelect men. However, God did not choose a number from among the fallen angels, but He did choose some men from among fallen mankind.

Elected angels must be understood in a supralapsarian sense, but elected men must be understood in an infralapsarian sense. God did not decree to deliver elect angels from sin, but He did decree to deliver elected individuals from among mankind from sin. He predetermined that elect angels should never fall. All mankind fell in Adam, but all the angels did not fall in Lucifer. God simply prevented the elect angels from falling. They were not left to themselves. Conversely, He left Adam to himself. By His power, God preserved the elect angels from an act of self-determination to sin.

Nonelect angels were left to themselves. They were not prevented from self-determination to sin. The first object of God's permissive will was to leave the nonelect angels to their own free agency. God

did not withdraw the power given them in their creation until after they self-determined to sin. The nonelect angels fell without an external tempter. Angelic holiness was not self-originated; therefore, the angels were not self-sufficient--self-subsistent and unchangeable. Sin began with the fall of the nonelect angels and not with Adam. God charged them with folly (Job 4:18).

The elect among mankind must be understood in the light of infralapsarianism because God chose some from among fallen mankind. The angels were all in a state of uprightness, and God prevented the elect angels from falling. Adam was created in a state of uprightness. Unlike the elect angels, Adam was left to himself. God did not prevent all mankind from falling in Adam. All men are fallen, but God chose some of them to salvation and passed by all others. He negatively reprobated those He passed by.

There is no hope for the fallen angels. They are reprobated and held in chains, awaiting the time of their eternal punishment (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). However, there is hope for some among fallen mankind. God decreed to deliver His elected ones from sin through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Hence, they have a Mediator--Jesus Christ, the Mediator of reconciliation and intercession.

(2) *Certainty* must be distinguished from *necessity* with reference to predestination. Certainty may or may not denote necessity. Man's acts are not a series to the Divine mind. They are all present at once. Therefore, they are certain. God does not know something that may not occur. Certainty is related not only to Divine omniscience--God's understanding of all things--but to God's omnipotence--His ability

to bring all things into being. God knows all things, and He decrees all things.

The Lord decrees all things and makes them certain by the exercise of His power but not by the same power in every case. For instance, He makes some events certain by physical force and others by spiritual power. The distinction between physical force and spiritual power is that the former works from without and the latter works from within. The Holy Spirit forces no one to accept Jesus Christ. He works *in* man to produce a spiritual relationship between God and man. The work within extends outward by the Holy Spirit working from within.

Things are made certain in the physical sphere through necessity and in the spiritual realm without necessity. God decrees *necessitated acts* in the sphere of *matter*. He decrees *self-determined acts* in the sphere of *mankind*. Physical laws and free agency differ. Every man is a free agent, but he does not have a free will. His will is not free because of his depraved condition, but he is a free agent because he is unforced from without.

Self-determination of the human will is the action of a free, second cause. Hence, it is decreed self-determination. Predestination signifies that an act of the human will is free to both the Divine will and the human mind. Nevertheless, it is certain to the former and uncertain to the latter. The infinite mind of God is distinguished from the finite mind of man. God knows the whole series of man's so-called free acts in one intuition, but man knows nothing in that manner.

The alleged contradiction between predestination and man's free

agency arises from assuming that Divine omnipotence can make an event certain by physical force alone. However, there is a difference between informing one that he will commit a crime and that he is necessitated to commit the crime. Guilt in the former cannot be doubted, but it could be in the latter. Scripture affirms the difference. The Lord Jesus Christ saw no conflict between His assertion that Judas Iscariot would be the one to betray Him and the fact that Judas actually betrayed Him. The Old Testament predicted that Christ would be sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12). The crime was predicted; nevertheless, Judas was not informed that he must necessarily commit the evil act. Scripture also predicted that Jesus Christ would be crucified by the hands of evil men (Ps. 22:1-18). There was no contradiction in the mind of the Lord between the prediction and the actual crucifixion of the Lord. The Lord saw no conflict between His prediction that He would be crucified in accordance with the Divine decree and His assertion that Judas Iscariot was a free and guilty agent in fulfilling the decree. Conclusively, there is no contradiction between predestination and free agency, provided the difference between the Infinite and finite minds is kept in mind.

Predestination of a voluntary act is to make it certain. Forcing a voluntary action would be a self-contradiction. To make certain is not the same as compelling. The ways of making things certain vary. An event in the material world is made certain by physical force. The physical force of God keeps physical things in their proper places: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions,

or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:16,17). Physical force is compulsory. However, an event in the spiritual sphere is made certain by spiritual operation which is voluntary and free.

(3) God's *efficacious* and *permissive* decrees differ. His permissive decree relates only to moral evil; whereas, His efficacious decree is executed by His own efficiency.

The efficacious decree refers to both spiritual and physical things. In the physical realm, God's efficacious decree may be executed by physical and material causes. It includes such events as the motions of the heavenly bodies and the phenomena of the material world: "When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder" (Job 28:26). God decreed the rainstorm, cyclone, earthquake, tornado, hurricane, etc. He made all things by His power, and all things are held together by the same word that called them into existence (Col. 1:16,17).

In the spiritual realm, God's efficacious decree is executed by an *immediate* agency upon the finite heart and will of man. The new man is created in righteousness: "...the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). Consequently, God works within, separate from physical force. The Holy Spirit forces no one into the kingdom of God. Faith which is the gift of God begins within. The Lord gives a new disposition, and the change within manifests itself outwardly. He works in His own people "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12,13).

God determined and works some acts causally and others permissively. His decrees may be executed by His own efficiency or by the causal efficiency of His creatures. One must not assume that decreed ends can be secured only by compulsion. Eternal purposes do not necessitate efficient causation by the Purposer. Free agency may be the very means of fulfilling the Divine purpose.

God's *permissive* decree relates only to moral evil. It renders the event infallibly certain but not by God working causally and immediately upon man and within his finite will. To do so would make God the author of man's evil action. God does not work in men or angels to will and do that which is evil.

God *suffers* nations and individuals to walk in their own ways by His permissive decree (Acts 14:16). The apostle Paul stated that God winked at, or overlooked, in His permissive decree, the ignorance of men following their own ways (Acts 17:30). The Israelites tired of the manna God gave them from heaven. They desired the delicacies of Egypt. In His permissive decree, God granted their request until the food ran out of their nostrils. God sometimes allows His children to do something that is not for their good.

The permissive decree is a decree. It does not hinder the sinful self-determination of the finite will, but it does control the *results* of the sinful self-determination. Men can go only so far: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Ps. 76:10).

God is not an unconcerned and helpless spectator. He disposes all the permissive acts unto wise ends of His own. The permissive

decree is denominated the *Divine will* in Scripture. It is employed in the narrow sense of volition and not in the wider sense of inclination.

The term *will* implies control in the statement that evil is in accordance with the Divine will. That may be illustrated by a disease that is wholly at the will of a physician. The physician takes no pleasure in willing the disease, but he has the capability of curing the disease with medication. God purposed to permit sin, but He overrules it for good. He overruled in the death of Jesus Christ by wicked men for the good of those He elected in the Lord Jesus Christ.

According to His permissive decree, God can and does permit sin. Conversely, man can never permit sin. He is under God's command not to do so. However, God is under the command of no superior. Man's permission of sin is sin.

Justice did not bind God to create man with the infallible certainty of not self-determining to evil. Mutable perfection in a creature was all that Divine justice required of the sovereign God. Therefore, none can accuse God of injustice to create man capable of self-determining to evil.

There is only one case in which the end justifies the means. The permissive decree considered in itself is contrary to the holy inclination of God's nature. However, in the fulfillment of God's permissive decree of the death of Jesus Christ by the hands of wicked men, the use of means to the end was justifiable.

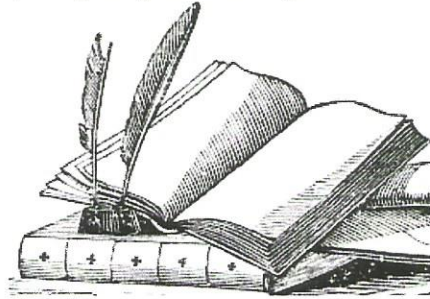
Distinctions must be made between God's dealing with angels and mankind. With God, necessity and certainty differ, and His efficacious and permissive decrees are distinct. All men are under God's command.

He is under the command of none. God is absolutely sovereign and must be worshipped in spirit and truth.

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July 2014