

# Predestination

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Hello everyone, this is Dan. I will be reading the lesson of Salvation God's Way that was given October 22nd.

! The recording did not pick up that evening, so I will read it so it can be preserved online. Anytime I say I or me, this is Tom speaking, not me, so don't think anything of it. Just understand this is what this is Tom's teaching. And here it goes. I feel led to begin our study this evening with the same words I began our last lesson three weeks ago. Why are we here studying God's Word? We study to assist us on our journey toward holiness and Christlikeness, and to improve and intensify our worship of God. I believe all of these things can happen as we study Salvation God's Way. I would add that such a study can also increase and intensify our humility and humbleness toward God, and that is a good thing. There is nothing humbler than to realize that we are part of God's family because God wanted us to be part of his family. It is also beyond our ability to comprehend. Why the Almighty would choose to save someone like me is utterly amazing. It was Charles Spurgeon who said he was happy God chose him before the foundation of the world. If God had waited until after Spurgeon was born, he never would have chosen him. I feel the same way. Many years ago, I was teaching and used the word predestined. A class member told me later that the word predestined is not in the Bible and that I shouldn't use it. When I saw, when I next saw him, I handed him a piece of paper and asked him to read the following. It's from the Bible. For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. This is from Acts chapter 4 verses 27 through 28. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be firstborn among many brothers.

From Romans 8 verse 29. And those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. From Romans chapter 8 verse 30.

In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace. From Ephesians chapter 1 verses 5 through 6.

[ 3 : 1 3 ] And in him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will. Taken from Ephesians chapter 1 verse 11.

And after reading these passages, this man handed the paper back and said, See? The word predestined is not in the Bible.

Tonight we come to another word that is a lightning rod in any discussion of divine election.

Predestination. It is the word predestination. For many this is a difficult word to define.

That is unfortunate. Defining the word is simple. Explaining it in an intelligible manner is what can be difficult. The word predestination is made up of two words.

The first of these is pre, which means beforehand. Pre refers to time. Destiny refers to the place where we are going. It is our ultimate destination.

[ 4 : 2 2 ] Several years ago, I contacted a travel agent and told her, Diane and I wanted to go on a trip. The first question the travel agent had was, Where are you going?

Put another way, what is your destination? Only when I told her that we were wanting to travel to Scotland, was she able to make for us some meaningful plans.

I remember a true story that explains how important our destiny can be. A young, unmarried woman had just given birth to her first child. Learning that she was pregnant, the baby's father had

abandoned her, and the girl desperately needed help from her mother.

The mother told her to leave Florida and come home. She packed her bags and went to a bus station and booked passage to Portland. After what seemed like a long and very tiring trip, she arrived at Portland, Oregon.

She went inside the bus terminal and had one question for the ticket agent. Is this Portland, Maine? She inquired. It is good to know your destiny.

[ 5 : 34 ] This is true if you are going to Portland, Maine or to heaven. In the Bible, predestination means our final destination. Where are we going to spend eternity?

There are two possibilities. One is heaven and the other is hell. The Roman Catholics have come up with a third possible destination. It is called purgatory and it is to them an immediate stop along the way.

Purgatory is the creation of the human mind and has no support in Holy Scripture. Interestingly, our final destination is ultimately decided by God.

His decision was made before we were born and before we had done anything good or bad. One thing is certain. We can't cancel or even delay our trip.

Let's hit this head on and not stave off the difficult concept we will be dealing with for a few weeks. I want to put a graph on the board which describes the prevailing view of much of humanity as it pertains to heaven and hell.

[ 6 : 40 ] It goes something like this. On the left side of the graph, we have hell. Some people are going there and some are already there. On the other side, we have heaven.

Some people are going there and some are already there. In the middle, we have the sea of humanity and they are called the undecided. They haven't yet decided for or against Christ.

Their choice is still up in the air. The only thing wrong with this graph is that it is wrong. Men write tracts on deciding for Christ. Evangelists give altar calls for people to come forward and choose Christ.

Men write books on how to be saved or how to be born again. And it is all based upon the human effort. We will cover passages which explicitly teach that men don't decide for Christ.

God makes that decision. One of the most understandable and least understood is found in Romans. None is righteous, no not one.

[ 7 : 47 ] No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one.

Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.

Their feet are swift to shed blood. In their paths are ruin and misery. And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Unquote. It's from Romans chapter 3 verses 10 through 18. This stands as an indictment against the entire human race. There are other equally powerful passages which we will examine later.

The truth is that from all eternity God made a choice. He chose some individuals to be saved.

Others he chose to pass over and allow them to follow the consequences of their sins into eternal torment in hell.

[ 8 : 53 ] I do not suggest that this is an easy statement. It is not easy to say and it is not easy to hear. Many a reformed preacher has made statements similar to this only to discover that a number of members will not be coming back to that church and he himself is now unemployed.

This should not be surprising. When the Lord Jesus preached this message during his incarnation, the same thing happened. We read about this in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John.

Quote, The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? So Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.

[ 10 : 10 ] This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. Jesus said these things in the synagogue as he taught at Capernaum.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, Do you take offense at this?

Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.

And he said, This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father. After saying this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

[11:21] Unquote. This is from John chapter 6, verses 52 to 66. I don't pretend that the study of predestination is easy.

It leads to many questions, some of which I hope to answer during our study this year. One question, Do our individual lives have any bearing on God's decision?

Another question, Does God take in his prior knowledge of us before he decides whom to save?

And a third question, On what basis does God make his decisions concerning the eternal destiny of every human?

We make an error when we ascribe predestination to many of the events in our lives. Let me give you an example. This is but one of many. The Big Bayou Canoe rail accident was the derailing of an Amtrak train on a bridge in southwestern Alabama on September 22, 1993.

It was caused by displacement of a span and deformation of the rails when a tow of heavy barges had collided with the bridge eight minutes earlier. Forty-seven were killed and 103 were injured.

[12:38] On that train that night was the theologian Dr. R.C. Sproul and his wife. They were in the back car and barely knew that there had been a wreck.

Their car did not plunge into the river. The fact that he and his wife survived was not assigned to the predestination, but to providence. Our brother in Christ, Noah Webster, author of the 1828 edition of the dictionary that bears his name, here is how he defined providence.

From Webster's dictionary. In theology, the care and superintendence which God exercises over his creatures. He that acknowledges the creation and denies a providence involves himself in a palpable contradiction.

For the same power which caused a thing to exist is necessary to continue its existence.

Providence is an entirely different category which we may or may not discuss.

Our study will focus on a narrower topic of predestination, and that is ultimate destination of humans, whether heaven or hell.

[14:16] The term for this is election and reprobation. If you are unsure of the term reprobation, we will cover it in some detail in a subsequent lesson. One of the things which we must deal with in a study of predestination is a topic of great concern for most people.

How do we hold to this teaching but still maintain and protect the dignity and freedom of humans?

When dealing with salvation, we are faced with a very ticklish problem.

How do we balance God's sovereignty and choose whom he will and at the same time protect human freedom? The fact is that the word of God teaches the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation and the responsibility of man in salvation.

When Spurgeon was asked how these two terms could be reconciled, he replied, I didn't know.

They were fighting against each other. But I am pleased to announce that I am going to put you totally at ease when it comes to reconciling the twin truths of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

We can't. And further, it is not vital that we do. We can rest in the fact that God has them completely reconciled in his mind.

[15:37] That should be good enough for us to live with both concepts. Man is free to an extent.

We will discuss that at some length when we study man's fallen nature inherited from Adam.

So man is free and God is free. But we need to keep something steadfastly in mind. The freedom of the sovereign is always greater than the freedom of his subjects.

This is true in human government. But it is much truer when we are speaking of the sovereign God of the universe. What do we mean when we speak of God's divine sovereignty?

Dr. Sproul says two things are in mind here. They are God's authority and God's power. None of us would dare challenge the fact that God is the supreme authority of the universe.

He is the authority over heaven, over earth, and over hell. I am always amazed that many people believe the one in charge of hell is Satan. He is just a resident that exists under the absolute authority of the eternal God.

[ 16 : 45 ] Because God is the supreme authority, all other authority is a lesser authority. The authorities that exist on earth or anywhere in the universe derive said authority and are totally dependent upon God's authority.

Listen to how the Apostle Paul described it in Romans chapter 13. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God.

And those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed. And those who resist will incur judgment.

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval.

For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid. For he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

[ 17 : 53 ] By the way, this is where law enforcement and the military ultimately receive their authority.

We might argue that there are some really bad forms of authority, and that would be true. But go back to our first lesson. The authorities exist either by the command of God or by God's permission. The very word authority is interesting. Contained in that word is the word author. Think of it this way. God is the author of all things over which he has authority.

As creator God owns the universe. As the owner of the universe, the Lord has certain rights which he exercises, but he also has also placed certain limitations upon himself.

People cringe when they even hear the words limitations connected to God. But think of these. God cannot lie. God cannot violate his word.

[ 18 : 59 ] God cannot ignore one of his promises. God cannot and will not turn a deaf ear to a truly repentant sinner. God will never leave or forsake one of his children.

So I think we get the point of self-limitation. As the owner of the universe, God has the right to do with that universe and those in it what is pleasing.

Now get these words down. What is pleasing to his holy will? Whatever God does, he is always motivated by absolute holiness.

We have seen that God is the ultimate authority in the universe. He is also the ultimate power in the universe. All power in the universe has been placed in subordination to God's power.

The Bible teaches that even the evil one, Satan, has certain limited powers. But Satan is absolutely powerless absent God's sovereign permission to act on those limited powers.

[ 20 : 09 ] Much religion in the world believes in dualism. That is to say, there are two competing powers in the universe, and it is yet to be decided who is going to win. At times in my teaching, I have asked the class, what is the opposite of God?

It is amazing how many people yell out Satan because they want to be the first to answer. Of course, that is absolutely false. God has no opposite, and God has no equal.

If God and Satan shared equal power, we would be destined to witness an eternal struggle for supremacy. But that is not reality. God has no equal, and Satan is but a tool in his hand.

Satan is a creature of tremendous evil, but even his evil is subject to the sovereignty of God. Our evil and our sinfulness is subject to the same sovereignty.

So God's authority is the ultimate authority in the universe, and God's power has no limit. But we do have a couple of problems, and they must be addressed at some length.

[ 21 : 23 ] First, how does the sovereignty of God square with the problem of evil in the world? Second, what about the sovereignty of God in human freedom?

We will tackle those problems next time, and they will probably fill out the entire evening. Thank you.