

Predestination

- Election - Foreknowledge - and Man's Free Will

A Scriptural study of: the Doctrine of Sovereign Grace

and

**How can one reconcile the Sovereignty of God
with the free will of man? Human Responsibility!**

It is true that there are many things that are decided for one without his having any choice in the matter at all. For example, whether one is male or female...tall or short...homely or good looking...has big ears or small ones...has a big nose or a pub nose...has a bass, tenor, or soprano voice...has brown, blond, or red hair...has brown or blue eyes...is light-skinned or dark-skinned...etc...etc...is all decided before one is even born. Likewise, whether one is born in a Christian land...or in heathen darkness...is also something that is determined for one before he has a choice in the matter.

Does the fact that one is not consulted about these matters indicate that God predestinates some people to be saved and others to be lost?

Through the years, man has set forth three different understanding of how one obtains salvation through Christ. These three understandings are known as the doctrine of:

1. **UNIVERSALISM** . . . which believes that all men will be saved,
2. **ARMINIANISM** . . . which believes that God died equally, and indiscriminately, for every individual and, whether or not one is saved, is dependent upon whether or not he chooses to be saved, and
3. **CALVINISM** . . . which believes that some men are *predestined*, by God, to be saved while other men are predestined, by God, to be damned . . . which means that they cannot be saved . . . they are predestinated for hell.

This doctrine that God predestines some men for hell, because they cannot be saved , having been born to be damned by God's own choice, is a philosophy developed by John Calvin.

Dr. Laraine Boettner, in a chapter entitled "*The Five Points of Calvinism*," from his large authoritative book, "THE REFORMED DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION," associates these five points of Calvinism, which are the main pillars upon which the superstructure of Calvinism rests, with the word **T-U-L-I-P**:

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| T | <u>T</u> otal Inability | A lost sinner cannot repent unless God overpowers him, and God has chose <u>not</u> to overpower many |
| U | <u>U</u> nconditional Election | Unconditionally, God elects, foreordains, some to be saved and others to be damned |
| L | <u>L</u> imited Atonement | Christ died <u>only</u> for those who are ordained to be saved. He did not atone for the sins of those He has ordained to be lost. |
| I | <u>I</u> rresistible Grace | It is unnecessary to urge people to make a decision for Christ because those who are ordained to be saved will <i>irresistibly</i> drawn to Christ. |
| P | Perseverance of the Saints | God keeps men contrary to their free will. |

So that we do not overstate, or misrepresent, Calvinism, I shall quote John Calvin in his "Institutes," Book III, Chapter 23, which states, "Not all men are created with a similar destiny but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestined either to life or to death." Loraine Boettner, in "**The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination**," says, "The doctrine of absolute predestination of course logically holds that some are fore-ordained to death as truly as others are foreordained to life" . . . and also . . . "From all eternity God has intended to leave some of Adam's posterity in their sins, and the decisive factor in the life of each is to be found only in God's will."

The Westminster Confession, which is the best-known and most widely held Presbyterian creed, states this, "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated to everlasting life and others are foreordained to everlasting death."

Dr. Loraine Boettner . . . again, in "*The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*" . . . a book greatly valued by hyper-Calvinists and recognized as a textbook on the subject . . . lists the following churches as being Calvinistic: the **Baptist** and **Congregational Church** . . . the **Established Church of England** . . . the **Episcopal Church in America** . . . the **Lutheran** . . . **Puritan** . . . as well as the **Presbyterian and Reformed** . . . church.

This does **not** mean that all of these church bodies . . . or all the Christians involved in them . . . believe in the radical hyper-Calvinistic doctrine of predestination because many are Calvinists *with reserve* . . . they are sincere, devout Christians who, in their desire to emphasize that salvation is ***by grace without human merit*** . . . and that God has His controlling hand on the affairs of men . . . have accepted a man-made philosophy not found in Scripture.

Because God is **omnipotent** . . . which means that He is all-powerful . . . and because He is **omniscient** . . . which means that He is all-knowing . . . (*that He know everything that will ever happen*) . . . [which means that He knew from the foundation of the world who would reject Him and, therefore, be eternally lost] . . . raises the question of why God . . . since He knew, beforehand, those who would be lost . . . didn't refrain from creating them since it seems like this would have been the more merciful thing for Him to do.

We must remember, however, that . . . because God created man to be a *rational* being . . . **to make decision on his own** . . . what happens to him is "*determined*," not by God, but, rather by his own free will. Despite the fact that God *knows* what man will do, it is man . . . because he has a free will . . . who chooses what he will do . . . and God will not interfere with that free choice because it was God who gave man a free will . . . gave him the power of free choice . . . simply because He wanted man to choose . . . of his own free volition . . . to love and serve Him . . . and, if God had wanted it otherwise, He would have created man to be like a robot . . . a piece of machinery . . . whom He could *make* love Him.

The seeming problem of predestination arises from one's misunderstanding of what Biblical predestination really is. The problem, then, is not whether or not God predestinates, but, rather, the problem is, "What does God predestinate?"

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| <p>The passages of Scripture which have caused the misunderstandings on the subject of predestination are the following:</p> |
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1. Romans 9:11-23

"Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls--she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written: 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.' What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: 'I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. One of you will say to me: 'Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?' But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? 'Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath - prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory."

Any Bible statement must be understood in connection with the subject of the passage. In Romans 9, Paul is showing how the Jews . . . who were chosen of God to evangelize the world and to whom God gave the promises . . . were failing God in spite of their election and, because of this . . . because of their rebellion . . . God would cut them off [Romans 11]. Because so many have misinterpreted Romans 9 and used it in an attempt to support the argument that God predestinates some to reject Him . . . because, they say, "*God hated Esau*" and "*God hardened Pharaoh's heart*" therefore, both Esau and Pharaoh had no choice in the matter . . . we make a point of the following qualifications:

A. JACOB'S BEING CHOSE IN PREFERENCE OF ESAU

Why would God prefer Jacob to Esau?

A study of the history of these boys will show that God . . . rather than making His choice of Jacob randomly . . . made His choice of Jacob . . . over Esau . . . based on the nature, traits, and disposition of these boys . . . based on the fact that Esau was devoid of any spiritual values . . . which was a result of Esau's own choice to be so. Hebrews 12:16 tells us that Esau was a "*profane person*" . . . "*careless about the things of God.*" On the other hand, Jacob . . . because he sought spiritual things . . . was not, like Esau, devoid of spiritual values . . . and . . . God . . . knowing this difference in them even before they were born . . . chose . . . "*preferred*" . . . Jacob on the ground of this difference.

The Greek word translated as "*hatred*" in the King James Translation simply means "*preferred*" in the Greek language. Based on what God knew about these two boys, God simply "*preferred*" Jacob to Esau.

B. PHARAOH'S HEART BEING HARDENED "BY" GOD

Again, a study of the story of Pharaoh reveals that God knew . . . foreknew . . . that this Assyrian king would be stubborn and self-willed. God knew that Pharaoh would resist His will . . . His plan . . . to deliver His chosen people out of Egypt. God never *forced* Pharaoh to do one thing that he did not *freely choose* to do, His simply *permitted* him to choose his own life-style . . . to ascend to the Assyrian throne and to war against, and overthrow, the Egyptian Empire. Pharaoh was given a choice to obey, or to disobey God . . . to receive God's mercy or His judgment . . . and, because he continually chose to resist God's will, He chose God's judgment! God, therefore, raised him up to show forth His [that is God's] power.

2. Ephesians 1:4-11

*"For He...[God, the Father]...chose us in Him...[Jesus Christ]...before the creation of the world **to be holy and blameless in His sight**. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will - to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will."*

This passage is addressed to the Church of Jesus Christ... to "born-again" believers... and you will discover that **every** Scripture that has to do with "**election and predestination**" always refers to a **GROUP** of people rather than to an individual person.

Ephesians 1 says that the **Church** [not individuals] was chosen in the beginning, before the world was made, and **it** . . . the Church . . . was predestinated to be a spotless church, without spot and wrinkle!"

3. Romans 8:27-30

"And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those he called, He also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

The "foreknowledge" . . . or "prescience" . . . of God simply refers to the fact that God **knows before hand all events that will take place.**

Take careful note that what God "**predestinated**" was that the believer be "*conformed to the image of God's Son.*" It was **not** that God "**predestinated**" who would be saved, or lost, eternally!

4. 1 Peter 1:2-3

"Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In

his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"

Peter, in referring to the "***Bride of Christ***" . . . the Church . . . calls them the "***elect according to the foreknowledge of God***" and, in 1 Peter 2:9-10, he goes on to say of the Church, "*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar [purchased treasure] people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*"

In this passage, Peter is only stating what is taught throughout God's Word . . . which is that, from the very beginning, God elected "*to take out of them [out of the world] a people for His name*" [Acts 15:14-18]. However, the **individuals** who would make up the true Church were not "***elect***" . . . were not "***predestinated***" . . . to be saved . . . but, rather, the Church was "***elect*** through sanctification of the Spirit ***unto obedience.***"

5. John 15:16

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."

When one comes to Jesus Christ he is "*chosen*" and "*ordained*" to:

- (1) Bring forth fruit;
- (2) Produce eternal works; and
- (3) Receive answers to his prayers.

This verse says nothing about God choosing a person to be saved and to go to heaven, or choosing another to be lost and to go to hell. John is speaking of what one . . . who has chosen to receive Jesus Christ as his Savior . . . is ***chosen*** . . . ***ordained*** . . . for ***after he is saved!***

6. Acts 13:48

"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed."

When studying the setting of this story of Acts 13, one sees that Paul and Barnabas are speaking about the fact that . . . unlike the Jewish nation who rejected the Gospel when they first heard it [verse 46] . . . the Gentiles, when they first heard the Gospel, were "*glad and glorified the Word of the Lord.*"

The Greek word which is translated "***appointed***" . . . or "***ordained***" . . . means to "***arrange***" . . . or . . . "***to set in order.***" Acts 13:45-49 tells us that God . . . according to His foreknowledge, and plan . . . because He knew that the Jews would reject the Gospel . . . ***arranged*** for the Gentiles to be saved."

IN ORDER TO GAIN A TRUE PERSPECTIVE OF THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S SOVEREIGN GRACE . . . AND THE FREE WILL OF MAN . . . IT IS NECESSARY TO HAVE A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF THE FOLLOWING SIX BIBLICAL CONCEPTS:

1. Christ's atoning death paid for the sins of every person born into the world

A. Jesus is the "Savior of the world" . . . He is not the Savior of just a selected few:

John 3:16-17, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. "

John 4:42, "They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

John 12:47, "As for the person who hears My words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it."

1 Timothy 4:10, "For this we labor and strive, that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe."

1 John 2:2, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

1 John 4:14, "We have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world."

B. The " iniquity of us all" was laid upon Jesus::

Isaiah 53:6, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

C. Christ's atonement was as universal as was man's sin:

Romans 3:22-23, "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Romans 10:12, "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile - the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him."

Romans 5:18-20, "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more."

1 Corinthians 15:21-22, "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

2. God's love and invitation reaches every sinner

A. God longs to see all people saved:

2 Peter 3:9, "*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*"

1 Timothy 2:3-4, "*This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*"

Acts 17:30, "*In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.*"

B. God has given light, witness, and Holy Spirit conviction to every sinner in order for all to be saved:

John 12:32-33, "*But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.' He said this to show the kind of death He was going to die.*"

John 1:4, "*In Him was life, and that life was the light of men [or, all mankind].*"

John 1:7, "*He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through Him all men might believe.*"

John 1:9, "*The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.*"

Romans 2:14-16, "*(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.*"

C. God gives the invitation to all to come to Christ and be saved . . . and . . . this invitation (which runs throughout the whole Bible) to receive Christ as Savior is for "whosoever."

"Whosoever" means WHOSOEVER!

Acts 2:21 "And everyone...[whosoever]...who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

3. Nowhere in Scripture is it shown that one single soul was ever . . . or ever will be . . . "*predestined*" for either heaven or hell!

A There is **not a single case** in the Bible where God ever predestined anyone to go to hell despite the fact that . . . knowing man's heart and how he would react to His grace . . . He used man to influence human affairs (which was true in the case of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Pharaoh). The fact that God used Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar in the affairs of mankind had nothing to do with their being predestined to be saved or damned.

B. The teachings of Jesus emphasize that He wants **every** person saved . . . that He is the Savior of **all** men . . . and that He is not willing that **any** should perish.

4. God's grace is not irresistible

A. Scripture shows that enlightened, convicted men **do** resist God's grace:

Acts 7:51-52, "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always **resist** the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered Him."

Hebrews 10:28-29, "**Anyone who rejected** the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?"

2 Peter 2:22, "Of them the proverbs are true: 'A dog returns to its vomit,' and, 'A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.'"

Acts 24:25, "As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."

5. God does predestinate those who accept Christ as their Savior to a life of holiness . . . to produce the fruit of the Spirit . . . to "*Christ-like-ness*."

A. When one comes to Christ and accepts Him as his Savior, God **predestinates** him . . . has made plans for him . . . to be conformed to the image of His Son . . . to be holy and without blame before Him in love.

6. God made man in His Own image . . . therefore, He made man a *moral* being!

Because it was God's will that man be held accountable in matters of right and wrong, He gave man a *conscience* . . . to enable him to discern between right and wrong . . . and He gave him a free will . . . to enable him to **choose** between right and wrong . . . because God could not make man to always do right . . . without the option of doing wrong . . . without taking away man's personality . . . his free will . . . his God-like soul . . . and, likewise as well, God could not make man to always do wrong . . . without the option of doing right . . . without His

being a partaker in man's sin . . . without His being a "*sinning*" God. No! Rather, than having to coerce the will of man . . . as if man were a robot to be manipulated . . . to make him do what is right . . . God . . . when He created man . . . created laws of right and wrong and then gave man instructions as to what He expected of him as far as keeping . . . and obeying . . . these laws. God revealed to man what His will was for him and then invited man to come to Him . . . invited man to choose to **do** His will . . . to do what is right.

Despite the fact that God can . . . and does . . . use the pressure of the Holy Spirit's loving invitation . . . or stern warning . . . to cause man to weigh the consequences . . . and the moral issues . . . of his decisions . . . so he will be persuaded to choose to do it . . . God cannot **make** man decide to do what is right because if He did . . . if He made all the moral decisions in the universe . . . He couldn't do so without leaving Himself to be the only *moral* being in the universe!

Jesus said, "*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest*" [Matthew 9:38]. If God predestinates who will go to heaven . . . and who will not . . . why did Jesus request us to pray that more laborers would be sent into the fields white unto harvest? In Mark 16:16, Jesus says . . . "*he that **believeth not** shall be damned*" . . . well, if it is true that those who "*believe not*" are going to be damned, then it must be possible for them to **believe** and be saved! And, if one admits this to be true, then one must give up the doctrine that purports that the number of the elect . . . those who are saved . . . is so certain . . . and definite . . . that it cannot be increased. However, on the other hand, if one denies this to be true, then the denial is equivalent to saying that God commands a man to do what is utterly impossible for him to do . . . (because if God has *predestinated* a man to go to hell when it is impossible for him "*to believe and be saved*") . . . and then punishes him with eternal damnation for not doing it . . . according to Scripture, such is not the case.