

Predestination - Romans 9-10
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

“You don’t believe in predestination, do you?” I’d heard the question before, but this time it was coming from my mouth. I had figured out that my friend was one of those “Calvinists”, and I just couldn’t make sense of the ideas I was hearing. How could my salvation completely depend on God and how could God have chosen me before I ever chose Him? I resonated with the question for our sermon this week, If the Bible teaches predestination, are all meant to be a child of God? Of course God’s plan was for all to be saved, I argued. The truth is that all Christians believe in predestination and election in some form, these words are Biblical words and they appear over and over again. And the words mean exactly what they appear to mean. Predestination simply means to determine beforehand with definite purpose. The people of God are called the “elect” throughout Scripture, referring to the reality of God’s sovereign choice to redeem His people. In fact, when the words “chosen” and “elect” are used, they are from the same basic word which means to select for oneself and for one’s good pleasure. So, there are a pile of verses that point us to the reality that salvation is completely God’s deal, that it is all of Him.

On the other hand, there is also a pile of verses that point us to the fact that Jesus died for the world, that God desires all people to be saved, and the offer of salvation is for all. These verses seem to put the weight on the response we make to God’s work, calling people to trust in Christ. And they point to what seems to be a universal application of the atonement of Christ.

The tension between these has led to two basic camps (in the sermon I spoke of four views, but you will have to listen to hear the other two that have been rejected by the church throughout the ages). The first has names like Calvinists, Augustinians, Reformed Theology, Monergism (meaning that God is over all in Salvation), and Limited Atonement. This camp holds the view that God’s sovereign grace is responsible for all of our salvation, and the basis of election is nothing more than His good purpose flowing from His pleasure and glory. Those holding this view still preach the Gospel and call on people to believe, but they also confess that even faith itself is a gift from God and a result of God’s purpose in election. They also believe that Christ died only for the elect, and that His death purchased something specific, that being His people, chosen for Him before the foundation of the world who will be saved through faith. On the other side are those called Arminians, Semi-Pelagians, Synergists (two handed salvation, our hands meet God’s hand), and Unlimited Atonement. This side places more emphasis on the freedom and responsibility of people, believing that the offer of salvation is made to all, but that the deciding factor in salvation is our vote through faith. I’ve heard it expressed that God cast a vote, Satan cast a vote, now we get the deciding vote. You can choose Christ, you can choose to reject Jesus, but the weight is on you. They believe that Christ died for all, and that His death actually only bought the possibility of salvation for us. In this view the basis of predestination and God’s choice is His foreknowledge, as He looked down through the corridor of time and saw those who would believe, and therefore chose them. So, again, the two views of predestination. Either we choose God because God first chose us, or God chose us because we first chose Him (first is not an order but the priority of cause).

First of all, let me be clear here. This is an in house debate, both sides represent ideas that are found in Scripture, even though they are in tension. My journey through this came in my seminary days. Before then I was completely in the second camp, it was all I knew. But then I had professors who were Reformed and I started wading through the Scriptures and seeing things I had not seen before. It was a two year journey (in reality that journey never ended, still struggling and growing), but eventually I came to the view held by Reformed Theology. A few things that convinced me. First, the idea of freedom. We want to believe we are free agents, able to do whatever we please. Believe it or not, the Scriptures affirm this view. We are free, the problem is that in our sinful freedom, we will always choose self and our sin. We are not sick in our sin needing a little medicine, we are dead in our trespasses and sins and in need of life (Ephesians 2:1-3). So, left to ourselves we would never choose God, and therefore our only way to salvation is if God acts in us for His glory. Second, I began to see that all of Salvation is God’s work (Ephesians 2:8-10), and a display of His glory. My greatest challenge was believing that it was unfair for God to save some and not others. But then I realized that the problem did not go away under the other view, but in that case the reason some were saved was some kind of good in them that caused some people to choose Christ when others did not. In the end, the Elders at Genesis hold a monergistic view, but with varying degrees.

Final challenge here is that we must be careful to hold our view while hearing all of Scripture and with humility. I have heard some that hold my view reinterpret words in Scripture to fit their grid. That is not a good idea. Listen, world means world, all means all. So when the Bible says, “For God

so loved the world, that He gave..." Or that, "God desires all men to be saved," don't just insert "elect" in the place of world and all. These verses are telling us something about the heart and purpose of God and accomplishment of Christ. For me, I have come to believe that there are ways in which Christ's death is only effective for the elect, but it is sufficient for all. I don't understand that in its fullness, not sure I ever will. But we get in a lot of danger when we try to fit everything into a nice, systematic, and completely understandable theological box. Second, we should never divide over this. We have tremendous brothers and sisters in Christ on both sides, and will do mission and life with them. So, last thought here. Maybe our freedom and responsibility to trust Christ and God's sovereignty aren't really in conflict. Maybe it is just beyond our understanding, reaching into Trinitarian conversation and purpose. Or as Charles Spurgeon said when asked about reconciling responsibility and sovereignty, said, "Reconcile, you don't reconcile friends."

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Exodus 22	Exodus 23	Exodus 24	Exodus 25	Exodus 26	Exodus 27	Exodus 28

Reading from this past week: Romans 9-10

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Matthew 25:31-46

Family Worship

What a Friend - Matt Maher version

<https://youtu.be/n6qXfZPtzsM>

Gospel Project

Story: The Shipwreck

Main Point: God protected Paul in the shipwreck so that He could stand before Caesar.

Big Picture Question: When should we tell others about Jesus?

Answer: We should always tell others about Jesus, even when it is difficult.

Scripture: Acts 27-28

New City Catechism

Question 24: Why was it necessary for Christ, the Redeemer, to die?

Answer: Since death is the punishment for sin, Christ died willingly in our place to deliver us from the power and penalty of sin and bring us back to God. By his substitutionary atoning death, he alone redeems us from hell and gains for us forgiveness of sin, righteousness, and everlasting life.

Verse: Colossians 1:21-22

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

Scripture

Romans 8:27-30

*What do you think it means when the text says that God predestined us to be conformed to the image of Christ?

*How can knowing we have been chosen by God bring us hope?

*What is the goal of our salvation?

Prayer

*Pray for people living in the Legends neighborhood in Eureka.

*Thank God that He has chosen us and brought us His Salvation.