

THE DOCTRINE
OF PREDESTINATION
Scripture: Eph. 1:1-12

INTRO: We have already looked at the doctrine of election. We want to now consider a closely related and a doctrine often confused with election, the doctrine of predestination. How one views the doctrine of election can have a considerable impact on how one views God and life. If one believes that God chose certain individuals in eternity past and that choice has nothing to do with the individual's life or life choices; he is either elect or reprobated and there is nothing he can do about it. No doubt such a theology will affect the individual's life. Seeing to one's own salvation loses its urgency because if I am elect I will be saved because God has determined I shall be saved, and if not, there is nothing I, or anybody else can do about it.

If one believes that the individual can and must choose, and not to choose the Lord leads to everlasting damnation, that also has a great impact on how one views life. Not only that, but it affects how one views such things as witnessing and missions. Seeing to one's own salvation now becomes a matter of greatest importance.

From the doctrine of election we pass on to another doctrine which took place in eternity past. It is the doctrine of predestination. The doctrine of predestination is a much misunderstood doctrine. For those who confuse election with predestination, these two doctrines mean much the same thing. They are interrelated.

However, as I see it, these are two very distinct doctrines. I will seek to show that in this message.

I. PREDESTINATION DEFINED

As we look at a definition of predestination I trust we will see that election and predestination are two different issues. The word translated 'to predestin' is the word 'prohorizo'. It comes from two words, pro, a preposition meaning 'before' and horizo meaning to set the boundaries. So here is the definition of predestination: **It is to set or mark out the boundaries beforehand.** When I type the word horizo in my computer it automatically corrects it to

'horizon', and in fact we get our word horizon from this word. The horizon marks the boundary between heaven and earth.

Now let me take you to the first occurrence of this word in the Greek NT (read Acts 4:27-28). We could translate it thus, "...to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to happen." We can immediately see how easy it is to jump to the conclusion that certain people are predestined to hell and a few others to heaven. So we want to look at predestination as it relates to the wicked and predestination as it relates to the righteous.

II. PREDESTINATION CONFUSED WITH ELECTION

Predestination is sometimes confused with election. When I speak with those who believe everything has been predetermined and everyone has been predestined they want to go to Romans 9 with predestination. And I say Romans 9 deals with election and not predestination. The only place predestination may be hinted at in this passage is in 9:23 (read 9:22-24). In 9:22 the lost are spoken of as vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. That does seem as though God has prepared some people for destruction.

The vast difference between these two words, *prepared* in verse 22 with regard to the unsaved, and *prepared* in verse 23 with regard to the saved must be given careful consideration. In this word prepared in verse 23, we may have some connection with predestination although the word itself is not that of predestination. However, this passage does indicate God's prior plan for the Christian. This word is again used in Ephesians 2:10 where Paul writes that believers are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

I cannot spend more time on this matter here because of what I want to cover that truly relates to the doctrine of predestination.

III. PREDESTINATION OF THE WICKED

The wicked, as far as I find, are never predestined to anything. They choose their future. However, there are some verses that do sound as though the wicked are predestined. Acts 4:27-28 which we have seen briefly already seems to indicate just that. The words translated, 'determined before' is the word to predestine. So one might read into this passage that the Lord predestined Herod and Pontius Pilate and the Gentiles involved, and the Jews involved, to bring Christ to the point of crucifixion. By the way, this is the only time the word 'to predestine' ever occurs in relation to the unsaved as far as I can find.

The Scriptures teach us that Jesus was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 1 Peter 1:20 says of Jesus, "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you..." Revelation 13:8 goes on to say it like this: "All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Jesus was foreordained before the foundation of the world, and He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

How could He be slain from the foundation of the world? Well, God knew before He created man that man would sin and ultimately, if He wanted to save man He would have to send Jesus and if He sent Him, man would become wicked enough to kill Him. God knew this in His foreknowledge. In 1 Peter 1:20, when it says "He was foreordained" the original word is 'to foreknow'. Of course God foreknew this, otherwise He would cease to be omniscient!

We saw in an earlier message that God's election of certain individuals to salvation is based on His foreknowledge. So God also knew by His foreknowledge that Jesus would ultimately be killed by man. Listen now to Acts 2:22-24: "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God

raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it."

There are several things here we must note. First, Jesus was delivered to be crucified by the 'determined purpose' of God. First, the word 'purpose' is the word from which the word 'predestination' comes. It is the word 'horizo'. We said earlier that it means 'to set the bounds', or 'to mark out'. Second, the word 'purpose' is the 'will' or 'counsel' of God.

As I see it, the predestination related to the ungodly is God setting the boundaries or the horizon of just how far He will let wicked man go. Matthew 24 tells us that if God would not shorten the days, no flesh would be saved. So God sets boundaries as to how far man can go in wickedness. He says thus far, and no further. He said so in Sodom and Gomorrah. He said so in Noah's day. He will say so again in the tribulation. Thus far and no further. So God has predestined or set the bounds as to the extent of sin God will allow.

With regard to Christ, in the eternal plan of God, in His counsel and will He determined to let man go so far as to crucify His Son. So how did God deliver Jesus to them by His 'determined purpose' or predestination? By setting the bounds as to how far He would allow man to go, and that was to allow man to ultimately crucify Him. God could have stopped this in eternity past, but He did not. He allowed it. Furthermore, Jesus was delivered up to them to be crucified by God's 'foreknowledge'. This same verse tells us this. How could God deliver up Jesus to be crucified by His foreknowledge? In the very same way. God knew in eternity past what man would do, and He predetermined the bounds to allow this.

The Family Bible commentary puts it like this: "The enemies of God, in all their efforts to obstruct the progress of his cause, are doing only what he, for the wisest and best reasons, determined to suffer them to do, and what he will overrule for the highest good of his people." And then this commentary gives Romans 8:28 as evidence. Kistemaker says, "He did not force Jesus' adversaries to engage in acts of

violence against their will, for the evidence shows that they took full responsibility. Instead, God allowed them to conspire against Him that he might accomplish salvation for his people" (169).

So what of all this? God never decided to make man sin in eternity past. And then He would save some and the rest He would condemn to hell all by His choice. He did not plan at a certain time to have someone kill Jesus and then predestined a certain man to do that. We do not read in these verses that God predestined Herod and Pilate to do this. God, in eternity past, on the basis of His foreknowledge knew how wicked man would become. But He also knew that if He presented the truth to man, certain of mankind would choose Him and the truth above all else. It is for these He allowed all this to happen. In other words, the unsaved are never predestined to anything. They do what they do of their own free will. God can only be glorified by those who choose to do so of their own free will. God cannot be glorified by robots. If this is so, then no person is ever predestined to hell, and I believe that with all my heart.

In these few verses where predestination is related to the wicked, it never says God predestined certain men to be wicked and do these evil things. God predetermined the bounds as to how far he would let wicked man go.

III. PREDESTINATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS

So, let us look at predestination and the righteous. The word, *prohorizo*, to predestine occurs 5 times in the NT. Once it is in connection with the wicked, though the wicked are not said to be predestined to anything, but rather that Christ was predestined to be delivered to wicked man (Acts 4:28). The other four occurrences of this word are with relation to the righteous; twice in Romans and twice in Ephesians (read Romans 8:29-30 and Ephesians 1:5, 11).

Now I want to recommend to you this difference in the predestination that is related to the wicked and that which is related to the righteous. For the wicked, God set the bounds and said, this far and no further. He

said so in Noah's day. He said so in Sodom and Gomorrah. He said so in Nineveh. He will say so again in the tribulation. Here is the marked out horizon of sin. You can go this far in sin, but no farther.

With regard to the righteous God set out boundaries and said, "This is how far I want you to come. This is the horizon I want you to achieve." When I teach the doctrine of predestination in class I draw out a piece of cloth on the board, or a piece of plywood. And then I show how much Mennonite ladies can get out of one piece of cloth in sewing a dress. They do this by marking it out beforehand. When they mark out this cloth by pinning the pieces of the pattern on the bolt of cloth, they have predestined it to become a dress. On the other hand, men might mark out a piece of plywood and predestine it to become a doghouse. In like manner, God has marked out certain boundaries that He wants the Christian to achieve.

With regard to the wicked, God has predestined or marked out the boundaries how far he will let them go in sin. With regard to the righteous, God has set out the bounds and said, "This is how far I want you to come." Predestination has to do with what God wants the believer to achieve, not what He has determined they will achieve. These plans may materialize or they may not, as we will see.

A. Positively

So we want to see first what God has predestined the believer to, positively. We begin with Romans 8:29-30: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

Now before we look at what believers were predestined to let me make a comment on the fact that those He predestined, He also called. We saw in the doctrine of election that far more are called than are chosen. So not all who are called are chosen. And the reason they are not chosen is because they chose not to have Him.

However, those He called and who responded to the call, the Lord predestined to something very huge; it is to be conformed to the image of Christ! God wants us to become like Jesus! (Add here if time.)

Now I ask you, does every believer, by the end of life achieve being like Christ? I ask you, if you should die now, have you arrived? The answer is very clearly no! But it is God's goal for us. From this we learn that because God has predestined someone to something, that does not assure it will necessarily happen. And let me add there as well, that if a person does not fully achieve that goal, does that mean he or she will be lost? I absolutely do not believe that. According to 1 Corinthians 11 some believers die prematurely because some failure. According to 1 John 2:28, some may well be ashamed before Christ at His coming.

The second thing we are predestined to is found in Ephesians 1:11-12. "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, **that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.**" One of the goals God has for every believer is to live in such a way as to bring praise and glory to Him (expand here if time).

The third thing believers are predestined to, that is this is the boundary God wants the believer to achieve is the adoption as sons. We find this in Ephesians 1:5 (read 3-6). Now you may say, "Woa. Just a minute. This adoption happens at salvation, so we were predestined to salvation! That is the predestination of an unbeliever to salvation! So all the saved were predestined to salvation!"

And I say, "Woa, woa, not so fast." The doctrine of adoption is a doctrine taught only by the apostle Paul. It is a very interesting doctrine, and I think, also quite misunderstood. We cannot go into it here except to answer the question raised above, as to when the adoption takes place. Turn with me once more to Romans 8 (read 8:19-23). Verse 23 speaks of 'we' referring to believers. And it says, "We" meaning believers, "ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption..." So, first, the adoption

has not yet happened. The adoption does not refer to something that happens at the point of salvation. But notice now very carefully what the adoption has to do with in the very last words of verse 23, "...the adoption..." What is it? "The redemption of the body!" That, brothers and sisters, happens at the rapture! God wants us to experience the rapture! That is one of the boundaries He has set for us to achieve! I am in full agreement! I want to achieve that as well.

Let me also warn us as believers, just as the other boundaries God set for us to achieve may not materialize, this one may not either.

B. Negatively

Now let me say something about what the predestination for the believer does NOT mean, that is predestination negatively. With regard to the unbelievers, they have not been predestined to hell! But the bounds have been set as to how far God will allow them to go in sin.

With regard to the saved, they were not predestined to initial salvation. They chose this. Furthermore, the predestination of the righteous does not guarantee arrival. God did mark out the boundaries He wanted them to achieve, but that does not assure us that it will happen. I may mark out a piece of plywood to become a dog house, that is predestination, but that does not mean it will happen. You see, when I predestine a piece of plywood to become a dog house, it may not happen, and the fault will likely not be in the material I am working with, but in me, the builder. But when God predestines the believer to something and it does not happen, the fault does not lie in the builder but the material He is working with.

So I ask you, is it true that God has predestined believers to be conformed to the image of His Son? Of course. Now I ask you, does every believer become conformed to the image of God's Son? Of course not!

Ephesians 1:11-12 says, "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, **that we who first trusted in**

Christ should be to the praise of His glory." Now I ask you, does every believer bring praise and glory to God? We know of some who bring shame to God, do we not? We have all been involved in some of that ourselves, right? But you say, this refers to the end of the believer's life. So I ask, does every believer bring praise and glory to God by the end of life? The answer is self evident.

Then in Ephesians 1:11 we find that believers have been predestined to adoption. That adoption refers to the redemption of the body. So I ask, does everyone who is truly saved arrive at the adoption? To say 'no' to the rest and 'yes' to this one is a rather serious inconsistency, do you not think?

So, predestination does not guarantee arrival. It sets out the boundaries of what God wants to achieve in the believer's life. The outcome of that is entirely dependent a life of obedience to God. That is why He has mercy those who love Him and obey Him and fear Him. Those are present ongoing actions. When wrong has been done it must be repented of, confessed and forsaken. A life continued in sin is a life in danger of never seeing heaven's shores.

CONCLUSION: So, in conclusion, what is predestination? It is to set the bounds beforehand. Have unbelievers been predestined to go to hell or to do those terrible things God foreknew would happen? Of course not. They chose this of their own free will, and God in His omniscience, knew what they would choose beforehand. However, God did mark out just how far He would allow them to go in their sin and unbelief. He said, "This far, and no further."

Have certain people been predestined to become believers? Of course not. They choose this of their own free will. But God has set out certain boundaries to which He wants them to arrive. He wants them to be conformed to the image of His Son, to exist to the praise and glory of His honor, and to ultimately experience the redemption of the body.

What is the difference between election and predestination? Election is the choice of those individuals God will take to be with Himself. In predestination, God sets the goals He wants those whom He has chosen to achieve. So, in election God chose to salvation those who would choose Him.

The true urgency of election is evangelism! In the predestination of believers, God chose the boundaries beforehand that He wanted believers to achieve and the true urgency of predestination is edification!