

# Biblical Predestination #1: IS YOUR GOD TOO 'small'?

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*Predestination*

By Larry Wessels

**Bible Text:** Isaiah 55:8

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Larry Wessels: Greetings and welcome once again to our program. This is Pilgrim Publications Presents and I'm your co-host, Larry Wessels. Today we have a very special show on a subject that I think you'll find highly fascinating. It's a biblical topic; it's a biblical term. It's the topic of predestination and as we get into this, I want to introduce my co-host for this show, Bob L. Ross, who is the Director of Pilgrim Publications.

Bob, it's great to have you here to help us with this analysis of the biblical doctrine of predestination.

Bob L. Ross: Larry, it's good to be with you and to discuss this subject. We have been anticipating and preparing for this show for a while and just never have gotten to it until now so maybe our hopes of enjoying this discussion will be brought to pass.

Larry: Yes, as a matter of fact, we've been wanting to do this show for probably a year now and it just wasn't predestined to be done until today.

Bob: These charts were predestined to be made up back then.

Larry: I'll tell you, they're already turning yellow.

Bob: So at least it was in the works.

Larry: There you go. Before we get into that totally, Bob, I'd like to let our viewers know that this show is sponsored by Pilgrim Publications and, Bob, you have just here, I'd like you to hold this up and maybe some of the other books you have there with you and just tell our viewers at home a little bit about Pilgrim Publications, some of the books that are available and information that they can get their hands on by simply calling or writing for these materials.

Bob: Well, I'll just do this hurriedly, not use too much of our time and just some of our select materials. First of all, we have a magazine, "Baptist Biblical Heritage." Perhaps the camera can zero in and get a little closer view of that. These are the issues that we have

published so far. We took this magazine over a few months ago and our latest issue is this one with the article on Spurgeon on the front cover, "Inquirers and Converts," and we'd be glad to send you free samples of the "Baptist Biblical Heritage" if you'll just write us at Box 66, Pasadena, TX 77501.

Larry: I would like to mention, at that point you mentioned Spurgeon there, that Pilgrim Publications is the, as far as I know, one of the world's leading publishers of all the works of the great Baptist preacher of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, The Prince of Preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Bob: That's right, Larry. We have just about all of Spurgeon's works in print: his 63 volume sermon set; his seven volume commentary on the "Treasury of David," the Psalms; and we have his four volume "Lectures to My Students"; his four volume autobiography; and, of course, several volumes of his magazine called, "The Sword and the Trowel"; plus many other sermons and books by Spurgeon. I have a few of the sermons here that we have in a new form that we've been producing them in here lately in conjunction with Chapel Library over in Pensacola, FL, Mount Zion Bible church. Here is a sermon, "Christ Crucified," it's actually a double sermon. Then Spurgeon's sermon on election which is somewhat on the topic that we're discussing today. "A Defense of Calvinism," by Spurgeon. "Free Will – A Slave." I selected these in particular because they go along with our subject of predestination. All of these would deal with some of the points that relate to predestination.

Larry: And people can get their hands on those by simply calling the phone number or writing.

Bob: Right, and we'll give them a list. We have a new list being prepared of all the sermons by Spurgeon we have in individual form such as this, as well as the books and even now through videos that we have produced concerning Spurgeon about his life and so forth.

Then we have, of course, the recent book that I wrote and published which is getting quite a nice response from the public. It's called, "The Trinity and the Eternal Sonship of Christ," and in particular this book refutes the United Pentecostal Oneness Movement to now. Not only the historic Christian doctrine of the Trinity but their denial of the eternal Sonship of Christ as we have discussed before on this program and we have it in video form. Their doctrine is that Christ was not the eternal Son of God. He is the Son of God simply by virtue of his birth as a virgin born Son and they limit that term "Sonship" to that. So this refutes the United Pentecostal doctrine.

Then we have our "Defense of Instrumental Music" and other articles concerning Campbellism and I'm writing a series currently, Larry, which we're down to chapter 5. This one will be mailed out very shortly. It's on the hard shell movement, the history and the heresies of hard shellism," and this is chapter 5 that I'm holding in my hand here; eight pages in this chapter; "The Hard Shells and the Baptist Confession of Faith," showing how they do not adhere to the Baptist Confession.

A recent article we just produced is on the Christians Resource Institute calling attention to their pro-Romanist stance as we would view it, and voicing our opinion concerning that.

Then on the King James Only controversy which we have discussed on this program, I want, once again, to mention Dough Kutilek's little booklet, "An Answer to David Otis Fuller."

Now, these are just a few of the articles and, like I say, I won't take up any more of our time promoting that literature but those who are interested in these or other subjects can write us at Box 66, Pasadena, TX or give us a call. We'd be glad to accommodate them with a list.

Larry: That's right, there is just a wide range of subjects and material that is available and it's all in the catalog and that's available for anyone that would want to call or write.

Well, with that said, I'd also like to mention we'll be talking, of course, about predestination. There is a paper here that I have been able to put together and I'll show it right now, it's called, "The Doctrines of Grace," and I'd like to make this available to anyone that will call or write. They can get their hands on this and this will put in a nutshell, an easy-to-read fashion, a lot of the biblical doctrines that Bob and I will be talking about today. So that's "The Doctrines of Grace" and this is free to anyone who will call or write Pilgrim Publications and it will be sent to you at no charge.

Anyway, with that said, let us, Bob, begin to deal with the subject at hand. Now that everybody has seen what Pilgrim Publications has to offer, we need to get into the subject of predestination. Now, this is a pretty scary topic for a lot of people. I know a lot of groups and religious types, particularly religious cults and other organizations, even standard religious people, I guess, do back flips, get red in the face, get upset. I had a guy the other day say, "Predestination? That word's not even in the Bible, is it?" It's just kind of a scary term to people and it's usually associated with fatalism, like you would think that the Muslim have that, well, everything's just set and it's a fatalistic outlook and there is just nothing you can do to change anything.

Bob, to start this show off and the series off, is the word "predestination," is it a biblical term? Is it found in the Bible? And what does it mean?

Bob: Well, anyone who has a complete concordance can look up under the English word "predestinate" or "predestination" and they will find predestination is a Bible term and if you have a Greek dictionary, you can look it up and also find the listings of the Greek word which is translated "predestination."

When I think of the subject, the doctrine of predestination, I think of a statement Spurgeon made, I think it's in this little booklet I held up a while ago on election. He said that men love God everywhere but on the throne. Well, predestination, in effect, is

affirming the sovereignty of God in the world that we exist in currently at this present time. The Scripture uses terms like "God worketh. God doeth. God acteth or acts and God willeth or God wills." All of these imply that God has an active power, an active will, an active interest in the things that are going on in the world and anyone who can read the Bible or has read the Bible or will read the Bible, the Bible affirms that God is active among the affairs of men and the circumstances that are taking place in the world. Now, by the word "predestinate," actually we simply mean that God acts according to a predetermined plan or program that he has even announced in advance. And prophecy itself, you take biblical prophecy, for instance, one of the most notable prophecies in all the Bible, of course, are the prophecies concerning the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and when men ask questions out of their lack of knowledge, out of their propensity against predestination or God's working in the affairs of men, when they raise questions and objections to this, I always ask them about the death of Christ. I say, "Do you believe that the death of Christ as it is taught in the Bible was an event that God predetermined and foreordained, predestinated, if you will, before there was ever even a world as it is presented in the Scripture?" We will be getting to quotations concerning those but right now we'll just say Acts 2 speaks about it. Acts 4 speaks about it. Peter speaks about the ordination of the death of Christ before the foundation of the world.

Larry: Acts 2:23.

Bob: So, most people who have any knowledge of the Bible will grant that the death of Christ was something that God had determined beforehand and that the prophecies of the Old Testament foretell that he would come and his incarnation, the reason he took a human body, was for this very purpose. Jesus said, "You don't take my life from you, I lay it down. This is the will of God that I should die for men." Well, this is a classic example or maybe the most classic demonstration of the preordained, predestinated purpose of God being brought to pass and yet on the other side of the coin, although it is a predetermined purpose of God, on the other side we have the responsibility of men in their actions; it is put right on their doorstep. Peter says, "You by wicked hands have taken and slain the Lord of glory."

Larry: That's Acts 2:23 again.

Bob: So what we learn is something which we may not be able to reconcile in our minds because we, after all, are only finite and what we cannot reconcile with our minds we should not reject simply because we cannot see the consistency or where these thoughts meet. We should accept the teachings of the Bible and, like the man said, "Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief." So there is a point in our lives and in our minds where that we may not be able to see where things are consistent or where they are reconciled, but we don't have to reject them if they're taught clearly in the Bible.

So what we have in the death of Christ, for example, is we have the Bible teaching that it was foreordained of God that he would be crucified, and then we also have it stated that men by wicked hands have taken and slain the Lord of glory and they were guilty of a crime, of the murder for doing this. So man's responsibility and his accountability is

intact despite the fact that God does have foreordination or predestination in the affairs of mankind and there are numerous examples that we will probably discuss in the program. But I like to think of this and I told a gentleman one time with whom I was debating this subject of predestination and he was bringing up all kinds of objections that he was offering that to his way of thinking refute the idea that God works, that God acts, that God controls, and I said, "Well now look, you can take all of these objections that you have, all of these examples, all of these incidents, and when you can tell me how God could foreordain the death of Christ, predestinate that, and yet men still be held accountable for it, then I can explain all these other objections you have that you have brought up, whether real or imaginary."

So we don't want to reject a Scripture or a doctrine of Scripture simply because we may not be able to reconcile or offer an explanation of it that, in effect, explains away the problem. I think there are people who want a God so small that they don't have any problems with him and so we don't want that kind of a God and we don't want that kind of a situation where we just reduce God down to a little box that we can put him in and take him out when we want him to come out and that's, I'm afraid, as Spurgeon said, men will have God everywhere but upon the throne, and this is where the doctrine of predestination and the sovereignty of God places God to us in our thinking.

Larry: Alright. Well, that's good for starters. Bob, you have already mentioned several passages and talked about, again, a concordance where you can just look up in a Strong's concordance or a Young's or whatever, and you'll find the word "predestinated" or "predestination" and so forth is right in the Bible. The word is right there.

Bob: And I could have read, Larry, in fact, maybe we ought to. If you'll find Ephesians 1.

Larry: That's coming up in our charts.

Bob: Verse 11. What we mean by predestination is that God works all things after the counsel of his own will.

Larry: Which destroys fatalism.

Bob: Right, and it destroys chance. It destroys fortune. It destroys fatalism. These things that we have in the world that people offer as reasons or explanations of why things come to pass, we have basically about three broad philosophies. First, you could think of fatalism and what does fatalism mean? It simply means that even God can't have any control over anything. Men can't control anything. God can't control anything. It's just swept along by a blind force which some people call fate. It's just a fixed thing and no one fixed it and there is no personality involved in it. There is no power that can undo it.

Then we have another one which is somewhat the opposite although actually they are very similar. It's called chance or luck. Some people call it luck and this simply means that things just happen by a mere fortuitous circumstance. No one is in control of it. It's just by chance. It's by luck. It's by fortune and God doesn't have anything to do with it

and men basically don't have anything to do with it either so really it's almost like fatalism because both of them deny that God has a hand in what's going on.

Then we have what's called determinism, that someone, some mind, some intelligent being is in control of things and we call it divine determinism. It is the statement of the Bible that God works all things according to the counsel of his own will.

Now, people imagine all kinds of problems with this but they never seem to imagine or face the problem of what they had with fatalism or what they have in luck or chance or fortune. Now, there are people who want to say, "Well, free will, where does free will come in?" Well, the fact of the matter, Larry, no one has free will. Now, that may seem like a startling statement to some of our viewers but no one has unlimited absolute free will because we are all subject to things that influence us. For instance, am I free to fly like a bird? Well, I'm free to fly like a bird but I can't do it because of circumstances. I'm free to lift a 1,000 pound slab of concrete but I don't have the power. Circumstances forbid me to do that so when we're talking about free will, we're talking about a will that is free within the area which it has the capacity to operate. Now we can talk about free will if we limit it on that level. I have a will that is free to make the choices which are reflective of what I'm capable of choosing and doing so actually even God doesn't have free will because the Bible says God cannot sin so the nature of God forbids him having the choice of committing sin.

So it's a very simplistic way of looking at it, but there are a lot of people that imagine divine determinism would conflict with what's called free will. Not at all because divine determinism is over and controls and incorporates the freedom of the will that man has to the extent that man's will is free.

Larry: I think Jonathan Edwards, one of the great theologians of the Great Awakening in America, said that your will was basically the choices of the mind and then those choices that your mind makes, considering this free will thing, are based on motivation, is what he said. So whatever motivates you to make a choice, let's say a classic example, a lion, what would motivate a lion to eat the meat rather than the hay if it was set before him. It's your propensity or your motivation to make the choice.

Bob: Larry, another thing on that particular point, have you ever been in a situation where you wished that you were in a circumstance where you did not have to make a choice? But there was no way out. You were forced to make a choice one way or the other. It's kind of like coming to a "T" in the road: there is a right and a left and there is the way back and you don't have a choice but to make a choice of those three.

Larry: That's happened to me actually in a chess tournament where I was in a bad situation where any move I made would actually cause me to lose the game. If I didn't have to make a move, I was okay if it was the other guy's move, but since I had to move, it was going to force me into a losing position and I was sitting there going, "I don't want to move."

Bob: I've often thought of this when Pilate had the Lord Jesus Christ on his hands. Pilate was in a situation where he really probably would not have wanted the choice of making any choice but he had to make a choice. So when men talk about free will, they fail to consider that even where you have choice, you only have a limited number of choices and yet you are forced by circumstances to make a choice. You're not free to withhold choosing. You're still going to have to make a choice.

Larry: In this free will questions too, I know a lot of people may not be familiar with this but a lot of this free will idea comes back from the ancient Greek philosophy of Aristotle who said that the will is completely neutral from the intellect where you can either be vicious or virtuous. He used the two "v's" there. But it was like a neutral thing and it was separate from the rest of your emotions, your mind and everything and it was just this neutral entity and this was picked up by faculty psychology around the turn of the century and they kind of put your mind over here and they kind of split the human personality up. Your will is over here, your mind is over here, your emotions are over there and you've got this split personality. Of course, now they're finding that this Aristotelian philosophy doesn't really work in reality because your will is not neutral. It is subject to your emotions, your motivations as Jonathan Edwards says, other factors in your life and circumstances as you were mentioning a minute ago. So to say you have a free will doesn't really work when you consider that it's only as free as what it's tied into: into your propensities, your mind, your emotions, things that you've already experienced in your life. You are tied to those things.

Bob: Larry, I have noticed this among professing Christians that maybe have not studied the subject biblically, considering the Scriptures to the extent that perhaps they will or should have. I still find that people who are really committed to Christ, they actually would desire for God to be the sovereign that the Scripture assert him to be and where this comes in is in the prayers. They will pray, "Lord, not my will but thine be done." They will pray, "Lord, guide me, direct me." And they are asking God, in effect, to take over and to work in their lives what God chooses and not what they choose.

Well now, this is really, for those Christians who maybe are not theologically or biblically rooted in predestination, this is really what we're saying that God is doing in the world, that God is in control. That he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will and verses like Daniel 4:35 and numerous others.

Larry: We will bring all those up on the charts as we continue.

Bob: But the point I want to make is that you said a while ago something about predestination being a rather awesome or fearful subject sometimes. I think it is to the people who don't love God, but to the person who loves God, he would have nothing more to be done than that God would control everything and have his will and his way in the affairs of men and the inhabitants of the earth and work his will. Every time I've noticed that some people that are against, you would say, the theoretical views on predestination, yet they will pray the very opposite. They will pray that God will do the very things that when they quit praying they deny that he is doing.

Larry: This reminds me too of one of my favorite theologians, R. C. Sproul, a very good Reformed theologian, and he said, "If there is just one random molecule running around loose in the universe somewhere that God does not control, then how can God be God? If there is even just one molecule out there somewhere that God cannot control or have anything to do with, how can he be all the things the Bible says he could be? He'd have to be a no God instead of God." That's what R. C. Sproul says and I think it's a good point. For God to be God, he has to be in control. If he created everything, he has to be in control of every last molecule.

Bob: And this brings up another term which we use in referring to God's work, it's providence. Providence. God is at work. And in fact, in our confession of faith under the discussion of predestination, the actual chapter title has to do with providence. That's the term that's used because it's not merely a fixing of something in time past. It is actually God at work now as time is experienced in this world. God is at work and we think in terms of it being a predetermined thing because the truth is God has just always known and planned that he would be doing this and we think in terms of it being kind of a past decree or a past plan but actually it's just God active in time.

Larry: Working all things together for good.

Bob: And he can announce them in advance because he knows in advance and this brings up another point too, those who are so obstinate against God working, some of them have gone even to deny that God can foreknow.

Larry: Well, you know, that's an interesting point there because just a couple of weeks ago, I was at work and one of my fellow employees who is also a Christian but also very Arminian and doesn't believe in predestination at all but he knows I do and so he was taking a few potshots at me to try to see how I stood on it. But he was making a statement that, "Well, God, sure he intervenes now and then in human history. He kind of fiddles around with things." He was grabbing his hand and he said, "Yeah, God kind of fiddles around a little bit now and then with things and he can get some working out the way he wants to, but generally he kind of stands back and watches how things unravel." In the course of the discussion I said, "Well, you know, it's interesting that you had no choice in the fact that you were born in this country, you were born in this state, you were born to the certain parents you were born to and that you've even a Christian right now. That was all out of your control because what if you were born a thousand years ago in the darkest part of Africa where they had never heard the Gospel and there was no Gospel message given to you and you lived your whole life in heathen darkness worshiping trees and then you died?" He said, "Oh well, no, that couldn't happen because that wouldn't work that way." I said, "Wait a minute now, you had no control on being born at this point in time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That was totally God's choice to put you where he put you and all the circumstances of your life are based on the fact that God put you here at this certain time instead of somewhere else where maybe you never would have heard the Gospel. Maybe you'd be of a different race and different circumstances."

I then mentioned Jeremiah 1 and I said, "Take Jeremiah, for instance. It says right there," in fact I've even got the passage here. Jeremiah 1 around verse 4 and following it says, "Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." Here is God saying before you even came out of the womb and before you were formed and all this stuff, he already knew him and had ordained him to be a prophet long before he was even born. I said to my friend, "Well, what do you think of that?" His response was, "No, that can't be. That can't be. The word 'before' is not in the text." I said, "Yes it is in the text. The word 'before' is in the text." I pulled out a Bible and I said, "Look, it's right here, verse 5, 'Before I formed thee.'" Predestination and, of course, he was at a loss to continue the discussion and he immediately had something else to do and that was the end of the conversation.

Bob: There is a verse in Romans, early in the book of Romans, that refers to God calling those things that be not as though they were and that example that you were reading there from Jeremiah, God calls those things that be not as though they were and why? Because he knows what his plan is.

Now, back to the thought of fatalism as an opposite of what the Bible teaches by way of providence or predestination, we have cults, Larry, operating today based on fatalism. If you stay up late at night sometime and watch some of these programs that they're having on tv now about these psychics and these people who are giving you readings and the card reading stuff and....

Larry: ...particularly astrology is particularly based on fatalism.

Bob: ...the astrology reading your signs or whatever, all this is based on fatalism and they think that they have calculated or put together a certain amount of information that is fatalistically determined. So therefore they can take you and based on their doctrine of fatalism, they can read your future and make these prophecies or predictions. Now, the problem with that is, with our position in the Bible, this rules out God. God is not involved in this. God is excluded. Now, you've heard the expression for years, "What is to be, will be," I'd like to correct that, "What God wills to be, will be." But what is to be, will be is fatalism, but what God wills to be, that is divine determinism and a true Christian who is submissive to God should not want God to be ruled out of anything. He should want God to have the rule in everything and so that's what we're pleading for, a biblical dependence upon God and a biblical looking to God as he works in human history, even in those things that we cannot comprehend at the current time. And we can look back in history and we can see things that at the time looked bleak and looked bad and looked like God was a thousand miles away, but as time went on, we can look back and we can see how God was putting the pieces together and bringing to pass his own will and his own purpose.

But we want to emphasize that we are not advocating fatalism because fatalism eliminates the will of God, it eliminates the Spirit of God, it eliminates dependence upon God and that's certainly not taught in the Scripture. What we're taught in the Scripture is

to commit our way to the Lord. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," and Job is a good example of this. Although the things that happened in Job's life were negatives as we view them, Job looked back at it and he saw that God had blessed him doubly by what he had gone through and Job said, "Though God slay me, yet will I trust him."

Larry: That's right, and I'd like to mention too at this point that what Bob is talking about, how God is working, it's not fatalism but God is working all this out according to his plan so there is a divine mind of the Lord behind everything that takes place, whereas in fatalism it's like "the force" in Star Wars. It's just mindless and impersonal.

Bob: Even God can't break it.

Larry: So predestination is determined by God who is a living ego.

Bob: Larry, if your destiny, for instance, is written in the stars, well, even God can't change it.

Larry: Right, because it supplants the power of God.

Bob: It's fate. It's just in cold cement there.

Larry: And the reason we're going through this in so much detail to refute this idea of fatalism when it comes to predestination is because that's one of the main attacks that all the people that hate predestination will bring against it.

Bob: They'll call it fatalism.

Larry: Right, they call it fatalism and a cheap shot attack which is not true at all. And you were saying something else too about how God works everything, even if something looks bad. There is a classic text in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. You go to Genesis 50 and you look around verse 19 and following and we have the classic tale of Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers who hated him and then, as God worked out events in his life, he went through prison and all these bad things, but he eventually ended up being Pharaoh's number 1 man to run the country and then suddenly Joseph's brothers are put at Joseph's mercy, the same brothers who had sold him into slavery back when he was a youngster, and his brothers think he's going to kill them now that he's got them in his power but Joseph tells his brothers something very interesting here in Genesis 50, around verse 19 and following. It says, "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?" Verse 20, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." So they thought to do this evil thing which was to sell him into slavery but as Joseph says, "but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive," which there was a famine in the land and Joseph being in power and had saved up food so everybody could be saved from the famine.

So here is a classic case of God taking an evil by the brothers who sold him into slavery, but actually uses that evil in his sovereign plan, his predestined plan, to work things out for the good in the end.

Bob: And one example such as that should demonstrate to the human mind of those who would object to the principle of God's sovereignty, this one example should show that we should not sit in judgment upon these things that happen that appear to us at the current time to be somehow conflicting or contradictory because here is Joseph's brothers selling him to the Ishmaelites and thinking they were ridding themselves of him and it was out of a principle of hatred and they were, as he said, "You meant it for evil," but God was in it all along and God was overlooking and overseeing and overruling everything and ultimately bringing to pass that Joseph should be in a position to bless his brothers because he was the ruler in Egypt and now that they had this drastic need of food, he was in the position now to give it to them. So this is one example, just one biblical example to show us that we should not offer these wild and fanciful objections as if God is a thousand miles away when he may be much nearer than we discern.

Larry: And to go back to what you were originally saying, Bob, and you've mentioned it several times but I might as well read it now straight up out of Acts 2:23 where Peter is giving the day of Pentecost sermon and he says, "Him," talking about Jesus, "being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." He's going, of course, right back to some of the messianic prophecies, particularly I'm thinking of Isaiah 53, where God had predetermined and by his foreknowledge determined that Christ would come and be crushed for our sins and die for our iniquities. Here he says it point blank in Acts 2:23 but yet you have the human responsibility in there also because by you, by wicked hands, have crucified him. So God, even the most heinous evil act imaginable, the crucifixion of the very Son of God, was determined by a predestinating hand of the Almighty God.

Bob: And let me read Acts 4:28 on the same subject. It says, verse 27 of Acts 4, "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel," here you have the whole collection of mankind being represented here. Herod, who was the ruler at that time in Israel, and Pontius Pilate who was the governor from Rome over this area, and then we have the Gentiles mentioned and the people of Israel, the Jews. They were gathered together and what were they going to do? "To do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." So they were acting freely. They were acting by their own choice and yet they were acting out what had been determined before to be done.

Now, when people can explain this and show the consistency of this if they were looking for that because that's seemingly what people are running to when they come to the doctrine of providence and predestination. They come to these conflicting things, "Well, that contradicts my free will. That contradicts free agency." Well, here evidently it didn't conflict with anything because Peter said that they were gathered together and they were acting out of their choice. God wasn't there just forcing them and just beating them over

the head to do this. They were choosing freely and yet they were doing exactly what the determinate counsel and the hand of God had determined before to be done.

Larry: It reminds also of John 6 toward the end of that chapter where, I believe, Jesus is talking about how he has chosen. He says something like, "Haven't I chosen you 12? And one of you is a devil." Now, here we have a case of Judas Iscariot. Judas had complete free will in this whole situation. Jesus already knew he was a devil. He says so there in John 6. But he picks him and Judas is just going to do his thing all along but he's going to do exactly an evil act of betraying Jesus into the hands of the scribes and the Pharisees so they can take him to a kangaroo court and then crucify him by the Romans. But Jesus picked him sovereignly and then Judas, by his own free will, did exactly what Jesus, God the Father, Holy Spirit, had determined for him to do from all eternity. It starts to blow your mind when you start thinking about those kinds of things but it's all right there.

Bob: And Larry, one of the classic chapters in the Bible on the sovereignty of God is Romans 9, and in this Paul anticipates the objection that most natural minds will offer. I'll not read the whole chapter just these verses in 9:14, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" Men will say, "Well, hey, this makes God the cause of sin. This makes God unrighteous. This makes God unholy." Well, Paul anticipated that that's what they were going to say when he was discussing the sovereignty of God. He said, "God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," as if to say sovereignty is God's right. Then Paul says, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." And he says in verse 19, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault?" Why does God hold me accountable? That's what the man is saying here. "For who hath resisted his will?" If they crucified Jesus and it was the will of God that they crucified Jesus, why is God holding them accountable for this?

Now, here's Paul's answer. He doesn't try to reason with them. He doesn't try to approach it philosophically with them. He doesn't say, "Well now, let's sit down and discuss this in a way that we can reconcile these things." He doesn't do that at all. He just gives them one answer, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" God is sovereign and you're a mere man, you have no right to question this. If God says he did it, you have no right to make charges and ask questions. That's the way Paul deals with it.

Larry: He even goes on to say there that doesn't the potter have power over the clay to make one a vessel of honor and another one a vessel of dishonor?

Bob: "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Man has no right to reply against the sovereign. That's what Paul is saying here. Now, someone says, "Well, you know, that's a very simplistic way to answer it." Well, what other answer is there? God is sovereign. He is our Creator and if he wanted to make me a worm, who am I to say, "Hey God, you did me an injustice. You make me a worm. I wanted to be a bird or I wanted to be a dog or I wanted to be a cow or I wanted to be a horse. I wanted to be a man." God is sovereign.

He makes each being as it pleases him and even sometimes when a person in life, like the man born blind, the Pharisees, they said, "Who sinned?" Or the disciples said, "Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" Jesus said, "Nobody sinned. It's for the glory of God that the works of God might be made manifest."

Larry: That's John 9.

Bob: Right, and so the sovereignty of God is primary and whys and wherefores and rationalizing these things, the answer is, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

Larry: And as we found by pure experience over the years that these doctrines we're mentioning even right now, to the natural mind, to the carnal mind, are absolute anathema because the natural man wants to do it his own way. He doesn't want to really think that there's a sovereign out there that has this kind of power that we're talking about, the power to make a man any way he wants to and can even use any action that man does whether good or bad to his own purposes.

Bob: Larry, I have lived through the development of the atomic bomb in the 40s and I remember the first dropping of those initial bombs and then I remember the 50s and the 60s and the 70s and the 80s, all the dire fears and warnings and predictions with respect to nuclear power and the Soviet Union and the Cold War and how that mankind was kept on the edge of its seat, so to speak, by the prognosticators who, ruling out God in their thinking, were saying, "Well, you know, we might wake up some day and the whole world will just go up in a mushroom because of nuclear power." Larry, in all this time while I naturally have fears concerning enemy nations such as the Soviet Union and all that, I never once feared that anything was going to be done in this world with the atomic powers that was out of God's control.

Then as we went on and we come into the 90s now, we see the demise of the Soviet Union as a superpower and as a nuclear threat, at least as we have known them in the past, how many of these people who were...I remember the time, Larry, when Life Magazine when it was the leading magazine in the country, they were publishing photographs and directions on how you should build your bomb shelter. Dig a place and build your bomb shelter and I visited Tulsa, OK and went to Oral Roberts' headquarters and sure enough they had built them a bomb shelter.

Larry: Heck, I remember in kindergarten where we used to have drills in class to get under our desks in case of a bomb attack.

Bob: And now that all this has passed off the scene, at least as we've known it with the Soviet Union, not that nuclear weapons in any means are off the scene, but how many of these same people that were voicing all these fears and keeping people so disturbed over nuclear power, how many of them have said, "Thank God that he was in control"? And nothing happened that they had feared would happen like the world destroying itself like this. I've got new for them. It's not new, it's just as old as the Bible, but nothing is going

to destroy this world until God gets ready for his bringing the curtain down upon it as it is according to his will and Russia, the United States or anyone else, for that matter, is not going to sidetrack God in his plans on what he's going to do and this world is going to be here when Jesus Christ returns.

Larry: In fact it even says in Luke 17, I believe, that it's going to be as in the days of Noah. They were buying and selling, giving in marriage and all that.

Bob: That just shows you, Larry, that God in his sovereignty is saying to us, "Hey, I have a plan. Don't rule me out. Don't say that it's fatalism, it's chance, it's free will." Don't forget what Nebuchadnezzar learned when God put him out to pasture in the Old Testament and taught him a lesson and that old wicked Babylonian king became a servant of God, a worshiper of God, whereas once he was walking around bragging, "Look at what I've done. Look at what great Babylon I have built." God put him out to pasture for a while and he lived like a wild animal. Then he came back and he blessed God, he praised God, he honored God and he said, "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand," or resist his hand, "or say unto him, Why doest thou?" As if God has to answer them. This is what Nebuchadnezzar, a sovereign, learned in the Old Testament. It just takes with some people, they just have to be put out to pasture also to learn this.

You know, I was playing golf this past week with a good friend of mine and in the past I've noticed that he had somewhat, not atheistic tendencies but certainly agnostic type tendencies as I have mentioned God to him a few times in the past. You know, Larry, this past week, I was shocked and surprised and blessed, he started asking me in a positive way about Christianity and I said to him, "George, are you taking an interest in Christianity?" He said, "Well, Bob, something is missing." He said, "Something's missing and I can't handle it." I said, "Well, George, there are a lot of things that we can't handle and that's where God certainly comes into our lives trusting and relying upon him." So just yesterday I put into his hands several booklets to read and hopefully God will continue to work with him.

But this shows you, Larry, just on the human level, a man like Nebuchadnezzar put out to pasture. George had been kind of out to pasture and feeding on the wilds but now he has come to his senses or is coming to his senses and he's wanting to find God. He's wanting God in his life because he says something is missing, and hopefully he will come to that. But Christians who have had experience with God and have learned to depend upon God and trust in God and pray to God, they want this kind of thing. They want the Lord to have his will and an army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and they are prepared to give him the glory for these things.

Larry: Alright, well said, Bob. I can see by the clock we're starting to run a little low on time so what I want to do is get into this in even more detail utilizing some of our charts for the remaining time that we have in this first show in this series that we'll be doing on predestination. There is just so much to be said about it and hopefully during this series

somewhere we'll be able to answer a lot of the straw man attacks that are made against the biblical doctrine of predestination. Those attacks are legion and I think we've answered quite a few of them today, but as we move through the series, hopefully we'll answer even more of them.

Bob: Well, Larry, I think your chart zeroes in on the greatest text in the Bible for content on the subject of predestination.

Larry: Take our viewers through that, Bob.

Bob: Well, why don't you take us through Romans 8:29-30.

Larry: If you're home, write down this text or if you have your Bible, go ahead and open it up to this passage. It's Romans 8, starting in verse 29 and basically you can start in Romans 8:29 and move all the way through verse 39 to really get the full impact, but for our purposes here, we're going to read Romans 8:29-30 and then we'll expound on this passage as our time remains.

What we have here is Romans 8:29-30. It says, "For whom he," that's God, "did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, these he also called: and whom he called, these he also justified: and whom he justified, these he also glorified." So God foreknew. We see that the word "predestined" is mentioned twice and we see that the word "called" is mentioned twice. Then from there, "justified" is mentioned twice. I think the Apostle Paul is really trying to emphasize something here. And then "glorified" is the final reaction. As you see on our chart up here, foreknew or foreknown, predestinated, called, justified and finally glorified. These are all linked together like a strong chain. Bob, could you expound on that for us?

Bob: Well, you have the title "God's eternal chain of grace." That's the way we describe it and think of it because these things are linked together and you notice that we have the beginning here, it's in eternity past as we think of things and it takes us to eternity in the future, the state of glorification. That is at the resurrection of the dead when we will have glorified bodies and we'll be spending out lives in eternity with the Lord. So foreknown, that's in eternity past. Glorified, that's what we would describe as eternity in the future. Then in between this, you have the predestination of those that were foreknown; you have the calling of those that were foreknown and predestinated; you have the justification of those who have been called, predestinated and foreknown; and then ultimately there will be the glorification. Now, Larry, this is the unbreakable chain.

Larry: Now, let me ask you a question just for the sake of the viewers at home. We've got the first word in this chain, "foreknew." Now, that's not implying that there are some people God doesn't know. Can you give us a better definition for those that really not familiar with this? What does this word "foreknew" mean? Does that mean that God knows some people and he's unaware of other people? What does that really mean?

Bob: Well, actually, Larry, the word "knew" is a word that goes back, well, I guess in Genesis is a good example of it where it says, "Adam knew his wife Eve." Now, this was implying an intimate relationship between them as husband and wife. He knew his wife Eve and she bore children. So this was implying a very intimate love relationship between the two. Now, the word "fore" put in front of it means that this was something beforehand so it takes us back into eternity, foreknown. So what this actually is implying is a very intimate choice and relationship that God has with those which he is describing here after. Certainly God foreknows everyone and everything but those whom he foreknew that he predestinated and he called and he justified and glorified are those that are mentioned in Romans 8:28.

Larry: That reminds me of a good cross-reference with Matthew 7:23 where Jesus is talking to those who called him Lord and he said basically, "Not everyone who calls me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven." He turns to those people and he says, "I never knew you. Depart from me."

Bob: Right, and these are descriptive of those in Romans 8:28, those who are the called according to his purpose for whom he foreknew, that is, those whom he has called according to his purpose. Those are the ones that are foreknown specifically in distinction to others that do not enjoy these things as a consequence of God's work.

Larry: Very well said. Now, I see we're now completely out of time. We will pick up on this theme of predestination in our next installment of this series so please join us for Pilgrim Publications Presents. If you need any information about the things we mentioned at the beginning of this show, please all the phone number or write us at the address at the end of the show and we'll be glad to provide that information for you.

I'm Larry Wessels with my co-host Bob L. Ross. Thank you for joining us and God bless.

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