



Romans 9:10-24

Reprobation - Unconditional Election, pt.2

- 10 And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac
 11 (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls),
 12 it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger."
 13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."
 14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!
 15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."
 16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.
 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."
 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.
 19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"
 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"
 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?
 22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,
 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,
 24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Having discussed election in the first part of this sermon, it is appropriate that we spend some time discussing the equally serious and important subject of Reprobation. Together, election and reprobation may be said to make up the two parts of *predestination*.

In Romans 9 Paul uses the example of Jacob and Esau, the two were twins. They had the same mother, Rebecca, and the same father, the patriarch Isaac, himself the son of Abraham. They were raised in the circumstances, and yet Jacob after a rocky and sinful start grows up to be a godly patriarch and the inheritor of the covenant promises of God. Esau on the other hand, sells his birthright, marries unbelievers, and becomes the founder of the pagan nation of Edom.

Why is it that Jacob for all of his faults went on to become a Faithful servant of God while Esau became an unbeliever?

Did God foresee that Jacob would choose Him and that Esau would not and did he pick Jacob and pass over Esau because he had this foreknowledge?

Did God look at Jacob's deeds and say to himself, Jacob pleases me better than Esau?

No the fact that Jacob became a believer and Esau remained an unbeliever all his life finds its origins in God's decrees in eternity past. Long prior to the birth of these twins God had decided that he would elect one and pass over or reprobate the other:

We see that these decrees of election and reprobation are not based in anything the boys did or would do in verses 11-18

11 for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls),

12 it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger."

13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated

15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."

18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

Now Paul uses the example of Jacob and Esau, but he could just as easily have used the example of say Peter and Judas. Both of these men were Galileans, both of these men were with Jesus, both of them heard every sermon Christ preached. And yet Peter was elect and Judas Reprobate, and Jesus knew this from the very beginning, that is why we read in John 6:63

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

64 "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.

65 And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

John 6:70 Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

71 He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.

So what is reprobation and why is it necessary?

Last week we talked about the necessity of election – because men are fallen and born by nature "dead in trespasses and sins" if anyone is to be saved they must be chosen by God and in due time redeemed, called, regenerated, and brought to faith and repentance. None of these are works that the spiritually dead may perform for themselves, all are accomplished by the sovereign working of a merciful God. The objects of His election do not merit, earn, or deserve salvation, it is pure grace, the bestowal of unmerited favor.

As Paul puts it quoting the words of God Himself to Moses in Exodus 33:19 "I will have **mercy on** whomever I will have **mercy**, and I will have compassion **on** whomever I will have compassion."

But if God sovereignly chooses some to salvation, the other conclusion is that in doing so, he decrees that the others not be saved. As Romans says:

"18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens."

Reprobation therefore may be defined as *the positive decision by God in eternity past to pass over and not elect some specific individuals, identified by name, out of sovereign good pleasure to the manifestation of God's justice in them by punishing them for their sins.*

Now, before we begin to confuse the subject, note that reprobation is different in some very specific ways from election. In order to save the elect, God has to actively regenerate them and bring that which was formerly spiritually dead to life. Reprobation is more passive than that, at its root it simply entails decreeing to leave men in the fallen condition in which they are born. It is in effect simply an active decision by God *not to save certain individuals*. God does not need to work unbelief in their hearts, even in their hardening, all that God needs to do is *give them up* or *give them over* to their own natural inclinations as in Romans 1:28 : ***"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind"***

It is not that God needed to debase their minds, all he had to do was remove his restraining influence.

In explaining how this "hardening" process works, I like to use the example of a pot of ordinary glue. What does it take for me to harden the glue? I don't need to actively harden the glue by somehow changing its very nature, all I need do is remove the top from the pot and leave it alone for a while. ***I remove that which restrains it from following its natural course and boom, I have a pot of rock-hard glue by the next day.***

Ok then, apart from Romans 9, is there any scriptural evidence for Reprobation? Evidence that some were predestined by God for damnation? Actually there is plenty. Here are just a few examples:

Jude 1:4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. 17:8 "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is

1 Peter 2:7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,"

8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

John 10:26 "6 "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you."

Just like election, scripture teaches that reprobation is *unconditional*. It is founded on God's good pleasure. He did not have to choose to save any but he mercifully chose to do so.

Some have argued that this idea of Reprobation is monstrous because it means that some men were created in order that God might damn them, Horatius Bonar the great hymn writer argues that this is patently a misunderstanding of God purposes:

God did not make the angels ‘who kept not their first estate,’ to damn them. He did not make Lucifer for the purpose of casting him out of Paradise. He did not make Judas for the purpose of sending him to his own place. God made man, every man, and everything to glorify Himself. This every creature, man and angel, must do, either actively or passively, either willingly or unwillingly, – actively and willingly in heaven, or passively and unwillingly in hell. This is God’s purpose; and it shall stand. God may have many other ends in creation; but this is the chief one, the ultimate one, – the one which is above all the others, and to which all the rest are subordinate. In this sense then plainly, God did not make men either to destroy them or to save them. He made them for his own glory.¹⁶

Elsewhere he argues against those who say that while it is not wrong for God to save some it still must be somehow wrong for God to decree that some will be reprobates:

Whatever is right for God to do, it is right for him to decree. If God’s casting sinners into hell be not wrong or unjust, then his purposing to do so from all eternity cannot be wrong or unjust. So that you must either deny that there is a hell, or admit God’s right to predestinate who are to dwell there forever. There is no middle way between Calvinism and Universalism.¹⁷

G. B. Strickler, another Southern Presbyterian theologian, affirms the same:

Many men are not saved; God foreknew they would not be saved; he foreknew it because he had no purpose to save them, to overcome their inexcusable love of sin and thus inexcusable opposition.¹⁹

Girardeau argues for the doctrine of reprobation on the basis of it being the logical consequence of election.

Such are the proofs of the doctrine of reprobation which are derived from the word of God, and they are too solid to be shaken by appeals to human sentiment, or even to human reason. It is admitted that the chief weight of the argument consists in the Scriptural evidence in favor of unconditional election. That being proved, reprobation cannot be denied. . . . The two doctrines stand or fall together. They are opposite sides of the same truth.²⁰

God actually points to the decision to elect and reprobate as proof of his amazing love to his people:

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁷ *Idem.*

¹⁹ “Reprobation”, unpubl. MS Sermon at Union Theological Seminary Library, cited in the author’s *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology*, *op cit.*, p. 309.

²⁰ *Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism: Compared as to Election, Reprobation, and Related Doctrines*(Columbia: W. J. Duffie and New York: The Baker and Taylor Company, 1890), p. 174.

Mal. 1:2 " I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved; 3 But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage For the jackals of the wilderness."

Lastly some may be tempted to think that this doctrine would destroy all incentive to come to turn to Christ, because he might not have been elected. The bible never ever speaks in this vein. Thomas Watson puts it this way:

“But though God be so full of mercy, and ready to forgive, yet his mercy reaches not to all; he forgives such only as are elected, and I question my election.

No man can say he is not elected. God has not revealed to any particular man that he is a reprobate, excepting him only who has sinned the sin against the Holy Spirit; which thou art far enough from who mournest for sin, and seekest after forgiveness.

The thought that we are not elected, and that there is no pardon for us, comes from Satan, and is the poisoned arrow he shoots. He is the accuser:he accuses us to God that we are great sinners; and he accuses God to us as if he were a tyrant, one that watches to destroy his creatures. These are diabolical suggestions; say, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan.’

It is sinful for any to hold that he is not elected. It would take him off from the use of means, from praying and repenting; it would harden him, and make him desperate. Therefore pry not into the arcana coeli, secrets of heaven. Remember what befell the men of Bethshemesh, for looking into the ark. 1 Sam. 6:19. Know that we are not to go by God’s secret will, but by his revealed will. Let us look into God’s revealed will, and there we shall find enough to cherish hope, and encourage us to go to God for the pardon of our sins. He has said in his Word, that he is ‘rich in mercy, ’ and that he does not delight in the destruction of a sinner. Eph. 2:4; Eze. 18:32. Jurat per essentiam. Musculus. He swears by his essence. ‘As I live, saith the Lord God I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.’ Eze. 33:11. Hence he waits long, and puts off the sessions from time to time, to see if sinners will repent and seek to him for pardon. Therefore, let God’s tender mercies and precious promises encourage us to seek him for the forgiveness of our sins.”