

THEOLOGY PROPER (77)

2) Rom.8:29-30 - Here it is specifically stated that God has set the individual boundaries in salvation and the individual growth boundaries after salvation.

When it comes to the subject of predestination as it relates to salvation, there are two general theological divisions:

- 1) Election- God elects some to salvation. He does choose some to be saved.
- 2) Retribution- god does not elect some to salvation. He does not choose some to be saved.

Dr. Chafer writes: "Election and retribution are counterparts of each other. There can be no election of some that does not imply the rejection of others." "Since divine predestination is taught in the Bible without diminution, it is to be received and believed. Rationalistic attempts to modify this revelation, as might be expected, have resulted in greater complications." (Vol.1, p.244)

We must **always** keep in mind, when studying any Biblical issue, the authority for what we think and believe is the written word of God- God's written revelation. If the Bible teaches election and retribution, it is to be believed, even if it isn't fully understood. There are many passages that indicate retribution is a Biblical doctrine.

1) Rev.13:8 - It is very evident that names of individuals not written in the book of life have not been there "from the foundation of the world." The irony of this context is that it is nearing the end of the program of God, which means these are some of the last people on earth and their names have not been in the book of life throughout all of human history, in dramatic contrast to the unbeliever, it is recorded, concerning the believer, that God chose us "before the foundation of the world." (Eph.1:4) If one is honest with the Bible, one must admit both election and retribution are true, eternal doctrines.

2) Rom.9:22 - This text is very specific to say that God has included el group of unbelievers in His sovereign plan and has some "prepared for destruction," Two reasons why He does not save everyone is to demonstrate His wrath and His power, Solomon said exactly the same thing in a slightly different way (i.e. Prov.16:4).

3) Jude 3-4 - God has "marked-out" certain ungodly people for His condemnation. Certainly a key to determining who is "marked-out" for condemnation is one's concept of the grace of God.

4) I Pet.2:8 - As hard as it may be for us to grasp, God has "appointed" some to stumble at the grace message of Jesus Christ. Some have been given a Divine sentence of rejecting Christ and disobedience to God's word. Dr. Chafer writes: "God does for one class what He does not do for the other, but both aggregations pass before His mind and become objects of His determination. Exceedingly painful expressions are used in the Scriptures to describe the divine decision regarding the nonelect." (Vol.1, p.247)

THEOLOGY PROPER (78)

5) Ps.76:10 - Here is a powerful statement that says when God pours out His wrath on man, it will praise Him. proper concept of God requires a demonstration wrath. If it is necessary for God to demonstrate His wrath in order to be praised properly, it stands to reason something must be the recipient or target His wrath. It is discovered in the pages of Scripture that the recipients of God`s wrath will be certain angels and unbelievers who are classified as non-elect. This is clearly what Paul has in mind in Romans 9:22.

Certainly the doctrine of election and retribution to the spiritual mind will not cause one to question God, it cause one to praise God.

If we accept the Bible, it is clear that God does elect some to salvation and that even though God has provided salvation for all, He does not elect all to salvation. Although it is true that we will never understand this in this world, it is also true that God expects us to accept it, or He would not have revealed it about Himself.

There have always been some who are not willing to accept the Biblical record on these issues and have attempted to offer certain, human finitely reasoned arguments against the doctrine of election. There have been at least five main objections to the doctrine of election and these objections are briefly considered and refuted here:

Objection #1- It is not fair.

This objection basicity says this- it is not fair that God would elect some to salvation and not elect others. **The point we need to remember is this salvation is never a question of what is fair, it is a demonstration of what is merciful.** If God were to base salvation on what is fair, there would be no human being who would ever be saved. Actually, this argument attacks the justice of God, in that it basically says God is not just if He elects some and does not elect others. The truth is God's justice demands He send all to hell, "for all have sinned." It is His mercy and grace that saves any person. Salvation is never a question of what is fair.

Objection #2- It is not loving.

This argument basically says God loves all men and this kind of selective election is contrary to that love. As we have already observed, there is a love side to God and a hate side to God, God`s love makes salvation possible through the provisionary cross-work of Jesus Christ. However, there is no place in Scripture where it says God will save everybody out of love. God's love does not negate His sovereignty any more than His mercy does not negate His justice. It is very important to see that when Paul discusses the doctrine of election, he brings up the subject of God's love (i.e. Rom.9:13), which suggests God's love is certainly no infringed upon by the doctrine of election. It is far wiser to suggest our concept of God's love is distorted rather than to suggest God's doctrine of election is to be rejected. God`s love provided the potential of salvation through the cross- John3:16; Rom.5:8.

THEOLOGY PROPER (79)

Objection #3- It is not righteous.

This argument against election says that if it is a true doctrine, then it means God created some men to sin and therefore He becomes the unrighteous author of sin. This is pure heresy, for the truth is "all have sinned" of their own volition and the Scripture makes it very clear that God is not the author, nor can He be the author of sin (James 1:13-14). Election is the choice of God to save some and retribution is the choice of God not to save some, God can legitimately not save any person because "all have sinned" against Him. Pure righteousness apart from Grace and Mercy would condemn all.

Objection #4- It is not responsible.

This argument basically says that if election is true then men have no responsibility to respond to God's message of Grace; The argument basically suggests that if God has elected some and not elected others then it does not matter whether or not a person believes because He will be saved anyway. It is true that none of the elect will miss salvation (John 6:44). All who are to be saved will in fact be saved. It is also true, however, that "believing of Christ" is the message to which the elect respond (John 3:16,36; Rev.22:17). When all is said and done, God elects His elect through the gospel message of believing on Jesus Christ and when men respond to that message, they, in fact, are the elect. Men are responsible to accept or reject the gospel offer. If they accept it, they are the elect. If they reject it, they are not.

Objection #5- It is not evangelistic.

This is perhaps the most ridiculous objection that is made, for it says is true then we have no need of witnessing of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with anyone. The reasoning basically says "if everyone cannot believe, then there is no point presenting an evangelistic message to everyone." There are many areas of weakness with this line of reasoning:

1. No one knows who the elect are. Truth is, most of the time God ends up saving the most unlikely candidates and develops them for His glory. Who would have thought we would be saved?
2. We have been commanded to proclaim the gospel to those lost and to refuse to do this is to neglect our responsibility and to live our lives in direct violation of God's word (II Tim.4:5). Our obedience to evangelize is not contingent upon our view of the doctrine of election.
3. Whoever does believe on Jesus Christ will be saved. That message is absolutely true. Whoever chooses to believe on Jesus Christ will be saved. We know that the one who will believe will end up having been one of the elect, but that does not change the message we proclaim.
4. We will, in some cases, have the privilege of seeing God sovereignly save someone. This is a wonderful motivation for us to share the gospel. This potential of being a key part of God's sovereign work actually makes us coworkers with God. When we share the gospel, we are in obedience to God and are part of His sovereign work. We may be planting or watering for the or part of the condemnatory process of the non-elect but we are part sovereign plan. If we don't share- God can raise up another who will, but we miss blessings (Est.4:14).

THEOLOGY PROPER (80)

5. We can have great confidence in sharing the gospel with those lost. Knowing that it is God who saves takes all of the pressure off us and leaves us with the responsibility of accurately setting forth God's truth. This should give us great confidence in evangelism. Our job is to clearly present truth, God's job is to use that truth in the way he ordains.

Our conclusion is that God does predestine some to salvation and others He does not. Although we will never fully grasp this mystery or the complete mind of God on these matters, it is imperative that we accept what God has revealed. If we reject a doctrine because we don't understand it, We are rejecting revealed truth and God has never blessed those who reject His truth.

When it comes the matter of predestination as it relates to God's sovereignty in salvation, the real theological battle ground is the issue of the will. Chafer said: "If God be sovereign and only those things occur which are determined in His decree, is there any sphere in which a creature may exercise his own free will? Or, again, could the human will ever act outside the decree of God, and, does not, is its action free." (Vol.1, pp.238-239)

This issue has been debated since the time of Augustine, the famed theologian and African pastor (A.D.354-430) and Pelagias, a theologian who downplayed God's grace and taught man could become perfect in this life (A.D. 360-420) Augustine held that men do not have free wills, but are enslaved to sin. Left to their own will, Augustine taught, men will not choose God. Pelagias, on the other hand, taught that men do have free wills and can choose to be saved whenever they want to, and many in fact do want to be saved and choose to be saved.

These were the early historical roots of what now has become two schools of theological thinking. Approximately 1200 years later, John Calvin (A.D.1509~1564) started an intense study of the Bible and produced a massive theological work- "Institutes of the Christian Religion" (A.D. 1536). The main source of Calvin's theology was the Bible. He believed that "...the Bible is the only source of man's knowledge of God and of His will and works" (Dictionary of the Christian Church. p.180) It was from his careful study of the Bible that Calvin came to the same conclusions Augustine did in that both had a profound sense of the Sovereignty of God. This theological system of thinking has become known as Calvinism.

Jacob Arminius wanted a chance to debate his thinking with the conclusions of Calvin. Arminius, a man who did not like Calvin, requested that a national synod be called. In the midst of this controversy, and before the synod could be called, Jacob Arminius was stricken with an illness and died in A.D. 1609. In the year 1610, the disciples of Arminius issued a statement of their belief which they called the "Remonstrance". They summed up their beliefs in five key points:

1. Partial Depravity- Man has partial ability to initiate salvation. Holy Spirit does not do it all.
2. Conditional Election- God's election is based on God's foreknowledge of who would believe.
3. Unlimited Atonement- Christ's death was for all men. It is sufficient to save all.
4. Resistible Grace- Men may resist the saving grace of God. Man's will may prevail over God's.
5. Non-Perseverance- It is possible for one once saved to lose his salvation.

THEOLOGY PROPER (81)

After the "Remonstrance" was stated, the general Synod of the Reformed Churches met to carefully consider these points as they related to the Bible and to John Calvin. This now famous meeting took place in the autumn of 1618. The meeting was held in the Netherlands's town of Dort (Dordrecht), and it was at this meeting that the famous Dutch Reformed doctrinal statement, "The Cannons of Dort", was formed. It was at this meeting that the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism were confirmed as a standard of orthodoxy. It was at this meeting that five points of doctrine were offered in refuting the claims of Arminius and his disciples. These five points have become known as the famous "five points of Calvinism." They are as follows:

1. **T**otal Depravity- Man is so corrupt by sin and alienated from God that he is totally depraved, incapable of doing anything in and of himself to generate holiness or salvation. Ps.14:1-4; Rom.3:9-12

2. **U**nconditional Election- God unconditionally chooses those He saves, The choice is completely and unconditionally God's choice, not ours: Eph.1:4-5; II Thess.2:13; Rom.8:29-30; James 1:18.

3. **L**imited Atonement- Jesus Christ died for only the elect. His work on Calvary was only for those God would save. The argument is based on the fact that the words "all", "whole", "every" and "world" must be considered in light of the context and many times the context dictates that it is referring to something specific, not something general- i.e.Rom.5:18/3:30. Some passages cited to support this are: John 10:14-15,26-29; 17:6,9-10,19-24; Acts 20:28. We will study this in depth in Soteriology, but we may say that there are also passages in which the context makes it clear that these words do refer to the entire populace- John 3:16. It is also revealed in Scripture that the cross of Jesus Christ is the foundational stumbling block for all who do not believe I Cor. 1:23; I Pet.2:6-8. Even if we concede the specific nature of Christ's work on Calvary as being limited to those God would save, the atonement is not limited because it will be Christ's work on Calvary as being limited to those God would save, the atonement is not limited because it will be Christ's atoning work on Calvary that will ultimately condemn those who do not believe.

4. **I**rresistible Grace- When God's Grace calls one to salvation, that one will and must respond. There cannot be one of the elect who does not respond to the Grace of God. Man's will cannot ever defeat God's will- John 6:37,39,44,65; Acts 13:48; 16:14

5. **P**erseverance of the Saints- Those to whom God gives salvation are forever and finally saved. It is impossible for a believer to lose his salvation. He is guaranteed "eternal" or "everlasting" life- John 6:37; 10:27-29; Rom.8:29-30; Phil.1:16.

The fundamental difference between Calvinism and Arminianism is this: Calvinism is totally God centered, and Arminianism is partially God centered. Calvinism places a major emphasis on God and Arminianism places a major emphasis on Man.

THEOLOGY PROPER (82)

This means that it is possible for God to actually prevent individuals from doing whatever He wants in any situation or with any individual. When we look at God's sovereign will we observe the following,

Observation #1- God's will can be Preventative.

This means that it is possible for God to actually prevent individuals from doing whatever He does not want them to do. God can control circumstances, people, hearts and minds so that He can actually prevent anything He desires to prevent.

- 1) Gen.20:6 - God prevented Abimelech from touching Sarah.
- 2) Ps.19:13 - God can prevent an individual from committing certain types of sin and here David prays for God's preventative will in his own life, The word "presumptuous" refers to a proud, inflated, impious and arrogant type of sin (Ges., p.238). It is the type of sin that proudly and arrogantly chooses to sin against God (i.e. Num. 15:30), David is asking God to prevent him from ever committing this type of sin and He believed God could do this.
- 3) Acts 16:6-7 - God prevented Paul from preaching the Word of God in Asia because it was not His will during second missionary journey.
- 4) Rom.1:13 - God prevented Paul from visiting Rome, even though Paul had often times tried to go to Rome. In fact, Paul requested the Romans pray that God would permit him to go to Rome-Rom. 15:30-32
- 5) Heb.6:1-3 - God can prevent a believer from growing into becoming a strong person of His word.
- 6) Rev.9:5-6 - God can prevent death, even when it is the desire of demons to kill and when it is the desire of an individual to commit suicide.
- 7) Rom.9:15-18 - God can prevent one from being saved.

God can use any source he wants to prevent anything He wants. It is very wise for a believer to ask God to direct him in paths of righteousness and prevent us from sinning against Him.

Observation #2- God's will can be Permissive.

It is possible for God to actually permit individuals to do or accomplish something. God, in His sovereignty, will, at times, not prevent something from happening or someone from doing something, but permit it.

- 1) Deut.8:2 - God permitted Israel to wander in a wilderness for 40 years and had His own sovereign purpose for it.
- 2) Judges 14:1-4 - God permitted Samson to lust after a Philistine woman because unknown to anyone else, God had a plan to conquer the Philistines. This plan included the finale in which God permitted Samson enough strength to destroy the Philistines and commit suicide; (Judges 16:28-30), In fact, Samson ends up listed as a hero of the faith in Hebrews 11:32,
- 3) Gen.50:19-20- God permitted all of the negative things to happen to Joseph in order that He might get him to Egypt into the position of leadership that He ordained. All of the negative things that happened- being hated by family members, being sold as a slave, being falsely accused of sexual immorality and serving time in jail were permitted and controlled by God.

THEOLOGY PROPER (83)

- 4) II Chron.32:31 - God permitted Hezekiah to go through a time of isolated testing in which it seemed as if God had abandoned him so He could reveal what was in his heart.
- 5) Rom.1:24,26,28 - God can permit one to plunge so deep into sin that God abandons him.
- 6) Heb.6:1-3 - God can permit a believer to grow deep into becoming a strong believer.
- 7) John 6:37,65 - God is the One who permits a person to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

When a person is faced with a choice, which is not specifically analyzed in the Scripture, he does not know whether God will permit or prevent the decision. This is exactly why James says "Instead you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." (James 4:15) As God, He can sovereignly permit anything or prevent anything. Wise is the one who recognizes this and fears God.

When we are faced with negative things God permits to enter our lives, it is very wise for us to realize God could have prevented these same things and therefore He must have a good reason for permitting them. If we are not able to specifically discover the reason, the wise thing to do is to commit ourselves to remaining faithful to God, as Joseph did, until God demonstrates why He permitted that which He permitted.

Observation #3- God's will is Directive.

The will of God is very specific and direct. God, in His sovereignty, is directing all things and He has given us His word that gives specific direction concerning His sovereign will.

- 1) Gen.50:20 - God was directing the bizarre things that happened to Joseph.
- 2) Is.10:5 - God directed an entire nation, Assyria, to punish His own people and when He completed His plan, He would then punish Assyria for her arrogance (10: 12). Here is a deep mystery concerning the sovereign directive will of God- directing a power to do something and then punishing the power for doing it.
- 3) Acts 4:28 - God was completely directing the execution own Son- Jesus Christ. God put Herod, Pilate and others in positions He determined so accomplish His direct plan.

It is also exciting to think that we may specifically know that we are involved in God's direct, sovereign will in our own lives:

- 4) Prov.1:10 - When we refuse to yield to the enticements of sinful people- we are doing God's will.
- 5) Prov.3:7 - When we fear God and turn from evil, we are doing God's direct will.
- 6) I Thess.4:3 - When we abstain from sexual immorality, we are doing God's direct will.

These are just some examples of God's directive will. he is sovereignly directing even the most negative kinds of things and He has put His specific direction into writing. That is why there must be a major emphasis on studying God's word- Prov.3:1; 4:1-13; 5:1; 6:20-23; 7:1-4; 8:10-11

Observation #4- God's will is Determinative.

THEOLOGY PROPER (84)

This means that God determines exactly what he will do and then does it. God determines and accomplishes with His whatever He wants in every situation.

- 1) Esther 4:14 - God determined to put Esther in a critical position of leadership by using bizarre means- an immoral beauty pageant- to deliver Israel.
- 2) Acts 2:23 - God determined the crucifixion of His own Son.
- 3) Rev.17:17 – God directly determines the allies of the Antichrist.

In thinking through the Sovereign work of God and the doctrine of God, Arthur Pink wrote the following:

"Can a doctrine be "horrible" and "dangerous" that gives God His true place, that maintains His rights, that magnifies His grace, that ascribes all glory to Him and removes every ground of boasting from the creature? Can a doctrine be "horrible" and "dangerous" which affords the saints a sense of security in danger, that supplies them comfort in sorrow, that begets patience within them in adversity, that evokes from them praise at all times? Can a doctrine be "horrible" and "dangerous" which assures us of the certain triumph of good over evil, and which provides a sure resting-place for our hearts, and that place, the perfections of the Sovereign, Himself? No, a thousand times no. Instead of being "horrible and dangerous" this doctrine of the Sovereignty is glorious and edifying, and a due apprehension of it will but serve to make us exclaim with Moses, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"(Ex. 15: 11)

The doctrine of God is a blessed doctrine and any study of Theology Proper that elevates God is one that honors God.