

Salvation—Predestination (4th)

(Today we continue studying the doctrine of predestination and its connection to salvation. In this lesson, we will consider predestination as given in Ephesians 1:5, 11.)

So far in our study of the subject of salvation we have given a basic and overall definition of salvation, identified the standard for studying this subject (the King James Bible), the purpose of God, the sovereignty of God, election, adoption, and are now studying the doctrine of predestination. While these topics are controversial among some people and professed believers, my primary purpose in examining these subjects is not to idolize one theology over another. It is to show the grand and majestic design of the salvation of God from the beginning of the world and that all the glory, praise, and honor for salvation goes to God and Him alone. Why He purposed to save some and not others is beyond our understanding and comprehension. It is clear that if He left all or any part of salvation up to sinful man then no one would be saved. Therefore, dear believer, I pray the various facets of the diamond of salvation that we are considering will not be a stake for controversy but that they bless your soul to praise and bless the Lord for loving you and setting His grace on you before you had any knowledge of Him. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.” Romans 11:33-36.

With this in mind, we will continue our topic of predestination as it relates to salvation by considering Ephesians 1:5, 11. To fully comprehend these verses, we should consider verses three through fourteen because they are one paean of praise to the Lord for His salvation. While we will allude to various things in these verses as we particularly study verses five and eleven, time prevents us from a detailed exegesis of each verse or subject matters contained therein. The two verses are as follows: Verse five: “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” Verse eleven: “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will.”

If you have been following our studies on salvation, you will remember that we covered Ephesians 1:5 somewhat when we considered the doctrines of election and adoption. Verse four says that God chose us (His sheep; the elect) in Christ “before the foundation of the world.” Then verse five declares that the chosen were predestinated “unto the adoption of children ... according to the good pleasure of” the will of God. So why is it that God predestinated some and not others? He did it “according to the good pleasure of his will.” The reason God loved some and not others is because of “the good pleasure of his will.” Many people argue that it is not right if God does not give everyone a chance to be saved. However, it must be remembered that salvation is not by chance; it is by grace, Ephesians 2:8. Since it is by grace, then it is not by works, Ephesians 2:9. In other words, if a person must perform some function to be saved from their sins then that function is a work and grace would be excluded. Not only does Ephesians 2:9 state that salvation is “not of works,” but Romans 11:6 plainly declares that it is not a combination of works and grace, but that it is either one *or* the other: “And if by grace, then *it is* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” Therefore, those who were chosen before the world was and predestination according to the good pleasure of the will of God should worship and adore the Lord for

bestowing grace on them and not try to figure out the details as to why God would choose one and not another. The Scriptures admonishes us to remember that “The secret *things belong* unto the Lord our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law,” Deuteronomy 29:29. So, instead of trying to figure out what the Lord does not tell us, let us believe the Scriptures as given to us and as Ephesians 1:6 suggests, praise and glorify the grace of God for making us “accepted in the beloved.”

Now let us consider Ephesians 1:11, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will.” As we know an inheritance is not something that we earn, and clearly, the verse says that the inheritance of salvation is due to “being predestinated according to the purpose of” God that works “all things after the counsel of his own will.” Remember that earlier we quoted Romans 11:33-36 and there it was said “For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?” Also Isaiah 40:13-14 says, “Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or *being* his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and *who* instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?” Therefore, the predestination of the elect in Christ is hidden in the counsel of God.

Ephesians 1:11 further speaks of our predestination being “according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will.” However, we will not look into the “all things after the counsel of his will.” This would require expanding our study beyond the umbrella subject of salvation. Nevertheless, we will make this observation. Predestination is part and parcel of the will of God regarding all things. Regarding these things, hear the declaration of Isaiah 46:10 where it is said of God that He declares “the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done,” and further says “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” From this and many other passages that could be supplied that teach the same truths, it is clear that salvation was not an afterthought on the part of God.

Often the objection is raised that a person has to believe in order to be saved. (The Lord willing we plan on discussing faith and believe in future studies.) While we maintain that the Lord will bring His sheep to follow Him (John 10:14-16), our believing has nothing to do with payment for our sins. Concerning this I will give a quote from Volume 10 of *The Works of John Owen*, pages 173-174, as published by The Banner of Truth Trust.

To which I may add this dilemma to our Universalists:—God imposed his wrath due unto, and Christ underwent the pains of hell for, either all the sins of all men, or all the sins of some men, or some sins of all men. If the last, some sins of all men, then have all men some sins to answer for, and so shall no man be saved; for if God enter into judgment with us, though it were with all mankind for one sin, no flesh should be justified in his sight: If the second, that is it which we affirm, that Christ in their stead and room suffered for all the sins of all the elect in the world. If the first, why, then, are not all freed from the punishment of all their sins? You will say, “Because of their unbelief; they will not believe.” But this unbelief, is it a sin, or not? If not, why should they be punished for it? If it be, then Christ underwent the punishment due to it, or not. If so, then why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which he died from partaking of the fruit of his death? If he did not, then did he not die for all their sins. Let them choose which part they will.

The quote may be somewhat confusing; therefore, here is a modern simplified version of the quote of John Owen in a syllogism. It is as follows:

The Father imposed his wrath upon the Son, and the Son was punished for:

1. All the sins of all men.
2. All the sins of some men.
3. Some of the sins of some men.

In which case, it may be said:

- a. That if the last be true, all men have some sins to answer for, and so none is saved.
- b. That if the second be true, then Christ, in their stead suffered for all the sins of some men (i.e., all the elect in the whole world), and this is the truth.
- c. But if the first be the case, why are not all men free from the punishment due unto their sins?

You answer, "Because of unbelief." I ask, "Is this unbelief a sin, or is it not? If it is, then Christ suffered the punishment due unto it, or he did not. If he did, why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which he died? If he did not, he did not die for all their sins!"

This should be clear as to the question of what about "the sin of unbelief." However, we have exhausted our time for today. Farewell.