

Peace Adult Sunday School

Chosen by God - R.C. Sproul

Session 9 – The Other Side of Predestination

Thus far, this class has mostly focused on the glorious Scriptural teaching that God sovereignly and lovingly chose (elected) some for salvation apart from anything about the person. It is solely based on “the good pleasure of His will” (Ephesians 1:5). But so that we don’t miss the full counsel of God’s will, we must also look at the other side of the coin. What about those who God does not choose for salvation? We know that those who God has not chosen will not come to faith in Christ and will ultimately spend eternity separated from God. How does the doctrine of predestination apply to them? Has God actually predestined them to spend an eternity in hell? If so, did He predestine them in the same way as He predestined those who do come to Christ?

Single predestination - Some are predestined to salvation, but everyone has an opportunity to come to Christ

Double predestination - Some are predestined to salvation, and for all others God chooses to not work savingly in their hearts (election and reprobation)

Reprobation - Romans 9:1-24

- 1) Paul’s burden for his fellow Jews - uses very strong language
- 2) Why did so many Israelites reject the Gospel? (“For they are not all Israel...”). Paul draws a contrast between the physical seed of Abraham and the spiritual (true) seed
- 3) Example of Jacob and Esau - not based on anything either of them would do
 - a) Genesis 25:21-23
 - b) Malachi 1:2-3
- 4) Example of Pharaoh - God hardens vs. Pharaoh hardens (Exodus 7:1-5; 8:30-32; 9:11-12)

In what way did God harden Pharaoh’s heart? How could he hold Pharaoh responsible?

- a) Active hardening - God directly creates evil in the heart
- b) Passive hardening - Removal of common grace

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Other examples: 1 Kings 22; Romans 1:24-27. We see that God's hardening of an unbeliever is a judgment against sin that is already in their heart. God is not the author of sin, He does not create "new sin". Sin is already present, He simply lets it "run its course"

Objections

All this can be very difficult to reckon with, and the Apostle Paul knew that. So he covers some objections that he knew his readers would make.

- 1) God is unrighteous. (v. 14)
- 2) How can God fault anyone? (v. 19)

Is God unrighteous? Paul responds by emphasizing the fact that God is sovereign over who he gives grace and mercy. There is absolutely nothing unrighteous about God choosing to extend mercy to one person and not to another. By definition, mercy is undeserved. God could have showed mercy to absolutely no one and still remained perfectly righteous.

How can God find fault with those who He doesn't elect? With the example of the potter and the clay, Paul says that God has every right to be merciful to some of the "pots" and not be merciful to the others. We must remember that all the pots are already condemned because of sin.

Unconditional Election and Reprobation

As we saw last week, God's election of us was not based on something he saw us doing or something about us. His choice was based solely on the "good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:5). Those he did not elect He left in their sin (reprobation).

Discussion: Doesn't this make God's choice arbitrary?

There is an important distinction we must make between election and salvation. God's election of us is unconditional, our salvation is not unconditional. We must repent and believe to be saved. If we do not, we will not be saved. See also Philippians 2:12-13 and 2 Peter 1:10 (monergistic vs. synergistic)

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One Final Note

Luke 5:27-32 - The Pharisees were “righteous” in their own estimation. Their “righteousness” was really self-righteousness. Jesus did not come to call those stubbornly remained hardened. He came to call those who saw themselves the way God saw them: sinners desperately in need of a Savior.