

Peace Adult Sunday School

Chosen by God - R.C. Sproul

Session 8 – Predestination and Foreknowledge

As we've mentioned before in this class, one of the arguments that opponents of the Reformed view of predestination use is that predestination violates man's free will as God makes an arbitrary decision regarding your eternal destiny. They see this as reducing man to a puppet on a string. We have seen throughout this class that this is most certainly NOT what the Reformed view of predestination teaches, but the opponents of this view prefer a position on predestination that is not so "violent" to our wills. So what is this view?

Romans 8:29-30

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined these He also called; whom He called these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." (NKJV)

This passage is known as the "Golden Chain of Salvation" and lays out order of events of someone's salvation. The key word in this verse that is used by the proponents of this alternate view of predestination is the word "foreknowledge".

Prescient View of Predestination - ("Pre-science" or "pre-knowledge")

God saw into the future and knew those who would accept Christ and those who would reject Him. He then in turn chose those who he knew would choose Christ (Sproul, 103)

What makes this view attractive?

Questions arising from this view:

1. What exactly does God "foreknow"?
2. What is the basis of the "predestination"? - Romans 9:10-13 regarding Jacob

To help us understand this, let's do a "deep dive" into the word "call" in the Romans passage. What exactly is this call? We see in Scripture two different types of call, and it's important to understand the distinction between them.

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External Call - the preaching of the gospel (Romans 10:14-15)

“Some of those He foreknew he predestined” vs. “All of those he foreknew he predestined” - If this passage is referring to the external call, what are the implications of these two readings for the prescient view?

- “Some” - Implies that God predestines some but does not call them
- “All” - Implies that everyone who hears the gospel preached is predestined and ultimately justified (universalism)

How can God predestine someone based on His knowledge of them responding to the call of the gospel in the future, if He predestined them but didn't ultimately call them? This does not follow logically or biblically. This passage cannot be referring to the external call.

Inward Call - Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. 10

This call effects a change in the heart. It is something only God is able to do. Let's do a similar “some” vs. “all” study as we did for the external call:

- “Some” - Implies that there are people who God inwardly calls but are not justified or glorified.
- “All” - Implies that everyone who God inwardly calls are justified and ultimately glorified.

It is clear from Scripture that this passage must be referring to the inward call. God gives the inward call to those whom He predestines. But we are back to the earlier question: On what basis does God predestine someone? Per the prescient view, God predestines those who He knows will respond positively to the inward call and receive Christ. This view has some serious problems:

1. What is the cause of them responding positively to the inward call?
2. If God decided not to predestine someone who He saw responding positively to the inward call and receiving Christ, then would they receive Christ since they have to be predestined to receive him?

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The prescient view leads to a situation of circular reasoning. It says that He inwardly calls a person because He predestined them, and He predestined them because He saw them responding positively to the inward call.

Reformed View of Predestination

God, in eternity past, chose some for salvation, and did not choose others. His choice was based solely on His grace, and nothing about the particular person. And yet, when he saves, he does not coerce someone against their will. He changes them inwardly so that they will choose Christ (Sproul, 110). - *Romans 9:16*

So what does the reformed view say about foreknowledge? In what way does he foreknow those who he has predestined?

- Genesis 4:1
- Amos 3:2

The “knowledge” referred to in these passage is not a knowledge of actions or events, but an intimate knowledge of the person himself or herself. It should be a great comfort to use that God knows us as His people in this way.