

S T U D Y G U I D E

Chosen by God

R.C. Sproul



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Introduction

There are few doctrines in Christianity that are more controversial than the doctrine of predestination, and yet there are few doctrines that can be as great a comfort to a believer. The doctrine of predestination has not only been at the center of much debate, it has also been at the center of much misunderstanding. It has been wrongly defined in terms of fatalism and wrongly defined in terms that rob it of all its biblical weight.

Christians must regain a proper understanding of what biblical predestination is and what it is not. The Bible repeatedly speaks of predestination. The question, therefore, is not whether we will have a doctrine of predestination. The question is whether we will have a biblically faithful doctrine of predestination. A proper understanding of this doctrine, rather than being a source of arrogance and pride, should be the source of the greatest joy and humility.

May this series better enable you to understand the sovereignty of God in His work of predestination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R.C. Sproul". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

R.C. Sproul

Everyone Believes This Doctrine

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Many Christians view predestination as an obscure Presbyterian issue that has no relevance to the corporate church or to the individual. Predestination, however, is first and foremost a *biblical* doctrine—one that serious Christians cannot ignore. Most denominations and the greatest theologians have wrestled with this issue and have formulated careful statements regarding it. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul introduces the doctrine of predestination.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand that predestination is a biblical doctrine and has been a central, mainstream teaching of the church.
2. To comprehend the three main views of the importance of grace in salvation.
3. To define predestination as God's choice in salvation, made before the foundation of the world.
4. To understand that the issue is not *whether* God predestinates, but *how* (on what basis) He predestinates.

QUOTATIONS

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.

—The Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. III:3

Those of mankind who are predestined unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto.

—The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, III:5

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. Every church or denomination that has historically formulated a doctrinal statement has also formulated a doctrine of predestination.
 - a. Calvinism is always associated with the concept of predestination.
 - b. Because the Bible teaches it, every denomination has had to deal with it (Eph. 1:1–5, 11).

- II. Historically, there have been three basic views of the doctrine.
 - a. Pelagianism taught that God’s grace assists but is by no means necessary in attaining salvation.
 - i. This view should be considered unchristian.
 - ii. It is the basis for today’s liberalism.
 - b. Semi-Pelagianism teaches that:
 - i. Men cannot be saved apart from God’s grace, but fallen man must cooperate and assent to God’s grace before God will save him.
 - ii. Man, prior to regeneration, has the power to accept or reject that grace that could save him.
 - c. Augustinianism says that man is totally dependent on the grace of God even for his initial response to the Gospel.

- III. Great Christian leaders can be divided as follows:
 - a. Augustinian view: Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Francis Schaeffer, Gordon Clark, J.I. Packer.
 - b. Anti-Augustinian view: Pelagius, Erasmus, Charles Finney, John Wesley, Arminius.

- IV. Do those who hold different viewpoints define “predestination” differently?
 - a. “Pre” “destination” means “before” “where you are headed.”
 - b. Certain aspects of this doctrine are agreed upon by all.
 - c. There is disagreement over the basis for God’s choice.
 - i. Semi-Pelagians believe that God’s choice is based upon His knowing in advance who will actually accept Christ when given the opportunity.
 - ii. This view places the control over salvation in the hands of man.
 - iii. Augustinians believe that the choice is God’s alone.

- iv. We all believe that God is sovereign, but the disagreement comes in relation to how God's sovereignty works itself out in salvation.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is confusing about the question, "Do you believe in the doctrine of predestination?"
 - a. The Bible does not teach predestination.
 - b. No one believes in predestination anymore.
 - c. Predestination is a private matter and should not be made a topic for conversation.
 - d. There are many views of the doctrine of predestination, and most people would affirm at least one variety.

2. What church or churches have formulated a doctrine of predestination?
 - a. Presbyterian
 - b. Baptist
 - c. Roman Catholic
 - d. All of the above

3. The three historic views of the activity of the grace of God in salvation are:
 - a. Calvinism, Arminianism, and dispensationalism
 - b. Calvinism, Arminianism, and Amyraldianism
 - c. Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism, and Augustinianism
 - d. Pelagianism, Arminianism, and semi-Pelagianism

4. Pelagianism says that God's grace is not _____ for man to attain salvation.
 - a. Sufficient
 - b. Necessary
 - c. Meant
 - d. None of the above

5. Which of the following leaders within Christendom are anti-Augustinian?
 - a. Charles Finney
 - b. John Wesley
 - c. Arminius
 - d. All of the above

6. At the heart of the disagreement on predestination is a dispute over the _____ of man.
 - a. Role
 - b. Sinfulness
 - c. Nature
 - d. None of the above

7. "Predestination" literally means:
 - a. Before/God's choice
 - b. Before/Where you are headed
 - c. Selection/Before
 - d. None of the above

8. Augustinians assert that God's predestination is based on _____.
 - a. Man's choice
 - b. Nothing
 - c. His sovereign will
 - d. None of the above

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Ephesians 1:1-14 and 2:8-10, and list all the key words that have a bearing on the subject of predestination.

2. On the basis of the Ephesians texts:
 - a. Who is credited for the work of salvation?
 - b. When did predestination occur?
 - c. Is man's will mentioned?
 - d. What is the purpose of predestination?

3. Read Romans 8:28-39 and 9:11, 16. List all the key words that have a bearing on the subject of predestination. What do the verb tenses indicate about predestination?

4. What did God foreknow in Romans 8:29? Substantiate your answer.

5. What part does man play in the cause-and-effect chain of Romans 8:28-30?

6. In what sense is the eternal security of the believer in Romans 8:31-39 related to God's responsibility for initiating and choosing those whom He predestinates?

7. What do the following texts add to our understanding of the doctrine of predestination? Note especially the key words and the role of God and man.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31
 - b. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14
 - c. 2 Timothy 1:9-10
 - d. John 15:16

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Should it disturb us that historically the church and the great theologians have dealt extensively and carefully with predestination, while the modern church and Christians tend to ignore it? How evident should this doctrine be in the church? How much attention should it be given in preaching and teaching?
2. Why does the Augustinian doctrine of predestination evoke strong emotional responses?
3. Why does Dr. Sproul consider Pelagianism to be an unchristian doctrine?
4. How would Pelagianism naturally lead to a humanistic liberalism?

APPLICATION

1. List all the things that you have previously thought affected your “being saved.” Consider each in light of the verses you have studied in this lesson. Which ones will need to be rethought or dismissed?
2. List items that still trouble you about the biblical doctrine of predestination. Refer to this list through this course as you continue to study the doctrine. At the end of the course, ask yourself whether those issues have been resolved.
3. Inventory the main sources that have influenced your understanding of salvation and the Christian life. Include pastors, books, experiences, teachers, and personal studies. From which perspective have you been taught? How threatening is it to reconsider the basis of your salvation? Would your gratitude for past influences need to change if you were to adopt an Augustinian/biblical understanding?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Gerstner, John. *Primer on Predestination*

2

God's Sovereignty

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

When predestination is isolated from the broader context of God's sovereignty, it seems harsh and unusual. Like a monster rising suddenly out of a calm sea, it seems at best out of place and at worst totally horrifying. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul teaches that God ordains and controls everything without destroying the freedom of His creatures. Dr. Sproul differentiates between what God could do from what He did do and explains why God shows His sovereign mercy. The aim of this lesson is to show that the sovereignty of God in salvation (i.e., predestination) is built upon the sovereignty of God in all things.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To present God's sovereignty as comprehensive.
2. To understand that a denial of God's sovereignty over even a single molecule is a serious shift from theism to atheism.
3. To differentiate between fatalism and sovereignty, concluding that sovereignty does not destroy human freedom.
4. To realize that while God could save all, some, or none, He chose to save only some.
5. To understand that God is never unjust and has mercy on whomever He desires.

QUOTATIONS

God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

—The Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. III:1

Do not stand still disputing about your election, but set to repenting and believing. Cry to God for converting grace. Revealed things belong to you; in these busy yourself. . . . Whatever God's purposes may be, I am sure His promises are true. Whatever the decrees of heaven may be, I am sure if I repent and believe I shall be saved.

—Joseph Alleine

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. God is sovereign over every detail of His creation.
 - a. Chapter 3 of the Westminster Confession states that God foreordains everything that happens.
 - i. That statement separates theists from atheists.
 - ii. If you do not believe that statement, you are technically an atheist.
 - b. God always has the power to prevent something from happening.
 - c. God's allowing something to happen does not mean that He favors it, only that it fits His will that it should take place.
 - d. If one molecule were outside of God's control, we would have no guarantee that any promise God had ever made would ever come to pass.
 - e. This is not rigid determinism, since man does have a degree of freedom, but God is sovereign even over free creatures.
 - f. Christianity has been attacked with the question, "Why does God allow some people to perish?"
- II. There are four ways in which a sovereign God could relate to a fallen world.
 - a. God would not have to offer any opportunity to be saved.
 - i. God's love is always an expression of His righteousness.
 - ii. A just and holy God is never required to love a rebellious creation to the extent of offering mercy.
 - iii. Mercy is never required; if it were, it would be justice rather than mercy.
 - b. God could give an opportunity to all (or some) to be saved and would then be an equal-opportunity Redeemer (semi-Pelagian view).
 - c. God could intervene and ensure the salvation of all persons.
 - d. God could intervene and ensure salvation for only some (Augustinian view).
- III. God states an important principle: "I will have mercy upon whomever I will have mercy" (Ex. 33:19; cf., Rom. 9:15).
 - a. All men are sinners, and no one deserves mercy.
 - b. The Augustinian view says that God sovereignly elects and redeems some, while passing over the others. One group receives mercy; the other receives justice. No one receives injustice.
 - c. Non-justice consists of two categories:
 - i. Mercy—perfectly good and consistent with God's nature.
 - ii. Injustice—a violation of justice; it is sin and evil.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The Westminster Confession of Faith summarizes sovereignty by stating that God ordains “_____” come(s) to pass.
 - a. Whatsoever
 - b. All good things that
 - c. Every human action that
 - d. None of the above

2. Those who deny God’s comprehensive sovereignty are considered to be _____.
 - a. Augustinians
 - b. Arminians
 - c. Agnostics
 - d. Atheists

3. If anything were to happen that God had not foreordained, then God would not be _____.
 - a. Sovereign
 - b. Omniscient
 - c. Holy
 - d. None of the above

4. If God were not sovereign, He would not be _____.
 - a. Righteous
 - b. Just
 - c. God
 - d. Omnipresent

5. To assert that God intervened and ensured the salvation of some is the _____ view.
 - a. Augustinian
 - b. Semi-Pelagian
 - c. Arminian
 - d. Pelagian

6. To assert that God gives an opportunity to all to be saved is the _____ view.
 - a. Augustinian
 - b. Semi-Pelagian
 - c. Arminian
 - d. Pelagian

7. All men are sinners, and no one deserves _____.
 - a. Mercy
 - b. Justice
 - c. Free will
 - d. None of the above

8. Non-justice consists of two categories: _____ and _____.
 - a. Injustice; unrighteousness
 - b. Grace; mercy
 - c. Mercy; injustice
 - d. Mercy; justice

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Romans 9:6–24 and answer the following questions: What is the characteristic of God taught in this passage? Are God's choices consistent with His revealed character? Are the consequences of His choices consistent with His revealed character? Does God need to be sovereign in order to guarantee the consequences?

2. Read Ephesians 1:1–11 and answer the following questions: What is the characteristic of God taught in this passage? Are God's choices consistent with His revealed character? Are the consequences of His choices consistent with His revealed character? Does God need to be sovereign in order to guarantee the consequences?

3. Read Genesis 45:1–8 and answer the following questions: What was God's role? What was the evil freely accomplished by man?

4. Read Exodus 9:1–35 and answer the following questions: What was God's role? What was the evil freely accomplished by man?

5. Read Luke 22:14–23 and answer the following questions: What was God's role? What was the evil freely accomplished by man?

6. Read John 19:1–16 and answer the following questions: What was God's role? What was the evil freely accomplished by man?

7. Read Acts 2:22–24 and answer the following questions: What was God's role? What was the evil freely accomplished by man?

8. Read Acts 4:23–31 and answer the following questions: What was God's role? What was the evil freely accomplished by man?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree that God's sovereignty is an essential aspect of His being, without which He ceases to be God? Is this strictly a Calvinist doctrine, unrelated to the very definition of God?
2. In what ways does God's sovereignty threaten you as a human being? In what ways does it comfort you? In what ways does it give you hope?
3. What is fatalism? What is the difference between fatalism and God's sovereignty?
4. Why are non-Christians so opposed to God's sovereignty, yet so ready to embrace various forms of fatalism like astrology?

APPLICATION

1. Have you personally experienced any events that seemed to be out of God's control? Do you believe they actually were out of God's control?
2. Do you struggle with the fairness of God's sovereignty in electing some to salvation? How does an understanding of mercy and justice help here?
3. Why have you received mercy from God?
4. What in your life do you fear? Why do you fear it? Do you have confidence that God is in control over it? If not, how could you gain this confidence?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Pink, A.W. *The Sovereignty of God*

3

What Is Free Will?

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

“Free will” has such an appealing ring to it. It suggests the ability to do whatever we want, with no constraints imposed on us—a liberty that knows no restriction of any kind. Most definitions of “free will,” however, cannot stand the scrutiny brought to bear on them through logic, philosophy, theology, and the Scriptures. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul will clarify what “free will” cannot mean and then explain what it does mean.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To define “free will” as the ability to make choices according to our desires.
2. To understand that there is no basis for the view of a neutral free will.
3. To see the difference between coercion and inclined choice.
4. To examine the state of fallen and redeemed man in relation to the issue of choice.

QUOTATIONS

To suppose the will can act at all in a state of perfect indifference, is to assert that the mind chooses without choosing.

—Jonathan Edwards

A man’s choices are free in the sense that they are not just determined by external compulsion. But they are not free if by freedom is meant freedom from determination by the man’s own character.

—J. Gresham Machen

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. What is free will?

- a. The popular humanist view defines “free will” as our ability to make choices spontaneously, unaffected by prior prejudice, inclination, or disposition.
 - i. The moral problem is that a spontaneous choice by definition would have no reason or motive—it would have no moral significance.
 - ii. God judges not only the action but also the motivation behind the action.
 - iii. The logical problem is that a choice without a motive is like an effect without a cause—it is impossible.
- b. Jonathan Edwards wrote *The Freedom of the Will*.
 - i. He wrote that free will is the mind choosing.
 - ii. We do not make a choice without the mind’s approving of our choice.
 - iii. Edwards says that “free moral agents always act according to the strongest inclination they have at the moment of choice.”
 - iv. Any external coercion reduces and limits the options.
 - v. The greater problem comes when one is faced with two or more very desirable options.
 - vi. Paul speaks of times when our desire to sin is greater than our desire to please Christ.
- c. Calvin stated that the term “free will” is proper when saying that man always chooses what he wants.
- d. R.C. Sproul’s definition of “free will” is this: “Every choice that we make is free, and every choice that we make is determined.”
 - i. This is not determinism, in which everything happens to you by external forces.
 - ii. Rather, your choices are freely made but determined by you—self-determination.
 - iii. Since fallen man has a sinful nature and a desire for sin, he will choose to sin.

II. What is the distinction between natural and moral ability?

- a. Natural abilities are creaturely features.
- b. Moral ability is the ability to be righteous or sinful. At the Fall, man lost the ability to be righteous and lost the inclination toward godliness.
- c. Augustine said that man had free will and liberty; in the Fall he lost his liberty but retained his free will.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The popular _____ view defines “free will” as our ability to make choices spontaneously, unaffected by prior prejudice, inclination, or disposition.
 - a. Evangelical
 - b. Augustinian
 - c. Humanist
 - d. Pelagian

2. A choice without a motive is _____.
 - a. Immoral
 - b. Impossible
 - c. Predetermined
 - d. Uncaused

3. Who defined “free will” as “the mind choosing”?
 - a. Martin Luther
 - b. Augustine
 - c. John Calvin
 - d. Jonathan Edwards

4. When we sin, our desire to sin is greater than our desire to _____.
 - a. Please Christ
 - b. Sin more
 - c. Choose
 - d. None of the above

5. _____ reduces and limits the number of choices, but it does not destroy the opportunity to make choices.
 - a. Coercion
 - b. Disposition
 - c. The mind
 - d. Free will

6. Calvin maintained that fallen man did not have the moral ability to choose _____.
 - a. Anything
 - b. To sin
 - c. At all
 - d. Righteousness

7. What view teaches that everything happens to a person by external forces?
 - a. Calvinism
 - b. Augustinianism
 - c. Determinism
 - d. None of the above

8. The ability to be righteous or sinful is referred to as _____.
 - a. Free will
 - b. Moral ability
 - c. Natural ability
 - d. Fatalism

BIBLE STUDY

1. What do each of the following passages teach us about the will?
 - a. Romans 5:6
 - b. Romans 8:7-8

2. What does 1 Corinthians 2:14 tell us about the natural man and his abilities?

3. What do we learn in Titus 1:15 about the mind of the fallen man?

4. What is the significance of John 8:44 to a discussion of the will of man?

5. Read Ephesians 2:1-2. How is the fallen man portrayed? What terms are used to describe his condition?

6. What does John 6:44 teach concerning the moral ability of man in relationship to salvation?

7. What do we learn from John 8:34 concerning the relationship between the desires of the heart and choices made?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why would a neutral will preclude any moral actions?

2. Discuss R.C.'s comment, "Spontaneous choice is a rational impossibility." Is this comment true or false? Defend your answer.

3. Does the Augustinian or Reformed doctrine of free will change men into puppets? Why or why not?

4. What do Calvinists mean when they affirm that fallen man has the ability to choose what he wants?

APPLICATION

1. Do you agree with the definition of “free will” offered by Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Edwards as explained by R.C.? Why or why not?
2. Is your own motivation to do something usually single-minded, or are multiple motivations at work?
3. How does an understanding of free will affect your presentation of the Gospel to unbelievers?
4. In what area of your life are you inconsistent in your obedience to Christ? Why do you choose not to obey Christ in this area? How can you become more consistent in your obedience?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Edwards, Jonathan. *The Freedom of the Will*

4

Man's Radical Fallenness

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Edwards could all be wrong in their understanding of the faith. But what did Jesus teach regarding the nature of salvation? Even His teaching has raised many varying opinions and interpretations. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul will carefully study the crucial words upon which the entire debate of predestination hinges. What these words mean and what they indicate about man's spiritual inabilities will determine the outcome of the debate.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To define the Fall of humanity.
2. To realize that Scripture clearly teaches the inability of man to save himself.
3. To see the conditions necessary for salvation to occur.
4. To understand that all men are either in the flesh or in the Spirit.
5. To define the exclusive activity of the Holy Spirit in salvation.

QUOTATIONS

Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God; and our heart is restless till it finds its rest in Thee.

—Augustine

The whole man is overwhelmed—as by a deluge—from head to foot, so that no part is immune from sin and all that proceeds from him is to be imputed to sin.

—John Calvin

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. "No one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father" (John 6:65).
 - a. "No one" is a universal negative with no exceptions.
 - b. The word "can" means "has the ability" or "has the power."
 - c. The word "unless" points to a necessary condition or prerequisite.
 - i. The word "necessary" does not mean that the intended result is guaranteed.
 - ii. "Sufficient" would mean the result is guaranteed.

- II. None of us has the ability to come to Christ unless God does something. What is this something that God must do?
 - a. The necessary condition is that the person must be drawn by the Father.
 - i. The classical Arminian approach is that "draw" means to entice or attract. This definition still leaves room for us to resist.
 - ii. The Augustinian view is that the word "draw" means more – to drag, which is an act of force.
 - iii. The classical Greek definition of "draw" is to compel by irresistible superiority, which is the way the Augustinians interpret it.
 - b. Regeneration must occur before we can see the kingdom of God.
 - i. Arminians believe people see the kingdom of God and choose Christ before they are born again.
 - ii. Regeneration precedes faith.
 - iii. We are saved through faith and grace that God must give us.
 - iv. The flesh profits nothing by itself but the spirit profits everything (eternal salvation).
 - v. Man *in the flesh* is hostile to the law of God and cannot obey it.
 - vi. All regenerated people have the Spirit of God indwelling them; they are no longer in the flesh.
 - c. The crucial prerequisite for salvation is a working of the Holy Spirit before we can have faith.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In John 6:65, the phrase "no one" is referred to as a _____.
 - a. Necessary condition
 - b. Universal negative
 - c. Unconditional negative
 - d. Sufficient condition

2. In John 6:65, the term “can” refers to _____.
 - a. Ability
 - b. Permission
 - c. Sufficiency
 - d. All of the above

3. In John 6:65, the term “unless” points to a _____.
 - a. Sufficient condition
 - b. Necessary condition
 - c. Universal negative
 - d. Necessary distinction

4. The classical Arminian understanding of the term “draws” in John 6:44 is that it means _____.
 - a. To force
 - b. To drag
 - c. To compel
 - d. To entice

5. The Augustinian view is that the term “draws” in this passage means _____.
 - a. To woo
 - b. To attract
 - c. To entice
 - d. To drag or compel

6. The Greek word translated “draws” in John 6:44 meant _____ in classical Greek.
 - a. To woo
 - b. To attract
 - c. To compel
 - d. To entice

7. According to Augustinianism, _____ precedes faith.
 - a. Justification
 - b. Regeneration
 - c. Repentance
 - d. None of the above

8. Romans 8 describes one who is hostile to the law of God and unable to obey it as _____.
 - a. In the Spirit
 - b. Regenerate
 - c. In the flesh
 - d. None of the above

BIBLE STUDY

1. What do the following passages of Scripture say about man's inclination, the state of the heart, the extent of evil, and the degree of personal involvement?
 - a. Genesis 6:5
 - b. Genesis 8:21
 - c. Psalm 51:5
 - d. Ecclesiastes 9:3
 - e. Jeremiah 13:23
 - f. Jeremiah 17:9
 - g. Mark 7:21–23
 - h. John 3:19
 - i. Romans 3:10–20
 - j. Ephesians 4:17–19
 - k. Titus 1:15
 - l. Titus 3:3

2. What do the following Scriptures say about man's ability, choices, wishes, and mind-set?
 - a. Proverbs 20:9
 - b. Matthew 25:41–46
 - c. John 6:44
 - d. John 6:65
 - e. John 8:44
 - f. Romans 8:5–8
 - g. 1 Corinthians 2:14
 - h. Galatians 5:19–21
 - i. Ephesians 2:1–3
 - j. 2 Timothy 2:25–26

3. What do the following Scriptures say about man's role in regeneration and his cooperation in producing spiritual life?
 - a. Psalm 51:10
 - b. John 1:12–13
 - c. John 3:3–6
 - d. Ephesians 2:4–6
 - e. 1 Peter 1:3

4. What do the following passages say about God's role in regeneration and His purposes in granting salvation?
 - a. Ezekiel 36:26–27
 - b. John 1:12–13
 - c. Acts 13:48
 - d. Acts 16:14

- e. Romans 9:11–13
 - f. Ephesians 1:4–6
 - g. Colossians 2:13–14
 - h. 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14
 - i. 2 Timothy 1:9
5. How complete is the new life that God produces? What do the following Scriptures say about assurance and eternal security?
- a. Matthew 18:12–14
 - b. John 6:35–40
 - c. John 10:27–30
 - d. John 17:11–12, 15
 - e. Romans 8:29–39
 - f. Ephesians 1:5, 13–14
 - g. 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24
 - h. 1 Peter 1:3–5
 - i. Jude 24–25

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If God must “drag” men, what does that say about the nature of our resistance to Him?
2. Discuss R.C.’s assertion that John 6:65 is sufficient to end the debate forever with respect to man’s ability or lack of it to incline himself to choose Jesus Christ.
3. Why do so many within the church struggle with, and even reject, the severity of the effects of the Fall?
4. How do semi-Pelagians substantiate their belief in the moral ability of man to choose Christ prior to regeneration?

APPLICATION

1. How can we graciously persuade those who oppose this doctrine?
2. Why do you think semi-Pelagianism and even Pelagianism are so attractive to many people?
3. How does your understanding of the severity of the Fall affect your gratitude to God for your salvation?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Boettner, Loraine. *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*

Does God Create Unbelief?

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

When people rightly acknowledge that God alone is responsible for man's salvation, some wrongly assume that He is also responsible for the sin and lostness of all others. Whether intended or not, the result of this way of thinking is that God becomes the author of sin. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul will clearly establish that God is not the author of sin, is not unjust, and does not create unbelief.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To clearly comprehend the Bible's teaching that God alone makes the distinctions among individuals—choosing some and passing by others.
2. To understand the inadequacy of the “foreknowledge view” of election.
3. To be able to address the perceived problem of God's being unjust in His choices.
4. To be able to answer the question raised by the texts that speak of God's hatred.
5. To examine the two different concepts of “double predestination” and to discover the basis for the Augustinian view.

QUOTATIONS

The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extended or withholdeth mercy, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.

—The Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. III:7

The ground of the discrimination that exists among men is the sovereign will of God and that alone; but the ground of damnation to which the reprobate are consigned is sin and sin alone.

—John Calvin

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. The credit for our salvation must be given to God alone.
 - a. God preferred Jacob over Esau before they were born (Rom. 9:11–13).
 - i. He chose Jacob over Esau before they had done any good or evil so that God’s purpose might stand.
 - ii. From God’s perspective, no good or evil on the part of either Jacob or Esau was taken into consideration.
 - b. God’s choosing us had nothing to do with our works or whether we would ever choose Christ.
 - i. In contrast, the foreknowledge view believes that God looks ahead into our lives and can see who will choose Him and who won’t.
 - ii. The foreknowledge view ties in with the Arminian belief that ultimately it is up to us to choose Christ.
 - c. Paul was apparently confronted with the same charges concerning divine election and makes it clear that there is no injustice in God.
 - i. God has a divine prerogative to have mercy upon whom He will have mercy—Jacob received mercy; Esau received justice.
 - ii. It is blasphemous to claim that God is not merciful enough.
 - d. Paul states that it is not up to the one who wills or runs, but instead our salvation depends on God’s mercy.

- II. Does God ever actually hate anyone?
 - a. There is such a thing as a holy hatred whereby God withholds something.
 - b. In Romans 9:13 there is an absence of divine favor.

- III. Does God actually create unbelief in the reprobate’s heart?
 - a. There are two views of double predestination in church history:
 - i. “Equal Ultimacy,” also called the “symmetrical view,” has two sides: election and reprobation. In this “positive/positive” schema, the view is that God actively creates faith in some hearts and unbelief and evil in others.
 - ii. In the “positive/negative” schema, God does create faith in the hearts of the elect, but passes over or does nothing to the reprobate.
 - b. Hardening can be active or passive, but a just God cannot force someone to sin and then punish him for it.
 - c. All God has to do is leave the sinner alone to harden his heart.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. God chose Jacob over Esau because _____.
 - a. Jacob was firstborn
 - b. God foresaw his faith
 - c. Jacob was more righteous
 - d. It suited God’s purpose

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2. What is the name of the view that God looks ahead into our lives and elects on the basis of what He sees us choose?
 - a. Foreknowledge view
 - b. Double predestination view
 - c. Augustinianism view
 - d. None of the above

 3. The foreknowledge view of election is most commonly associated with what theological position?
 - a. Calvinism
 - b. Arminianism
 - c. Augustinianism
 - d. Hyper-Calvinism

 4. Jacob received _____, while Esau received _____.
 - a. Mercy; injustice
 - b. Mercy; justice
 - c. Justice; mercy
 - d. Injustice; justice

 5. According to R.C., it is _____ to claim that God is not merciful enough.
 - a. Understandable
 - b. Grossly inaccurate
 - c. Blasphemous
 - d. All of the above

 6. Paul's answer to the question of Romans 9:14 and 9:19 is what?
 - a. God shows mercy to whomever He wishes.
 - b. God shows mercy to all.
 - c. People respond to the mercy of God that is equally offered to all.
 - d. God is obligated to show mercy to some.

 7. Which view of double predestination contends that God creates faith in the hearts of some and unbelief in others?
 - a. Negative/positive
 - b. Positive/negative
 - c. Equal ultimacy
 - d. Negative/negative

 8. Hardening refers to removing the _____ sin, not the active creation of unbelief in the hearts of the reprobate.
 - a. Inclination to
 - b. Restraint upon
 - c. Willingness to
 - d. None of the above

BIBLE STUDY

1. Study Acts 5:31 and explain the nature of the gift that God is said to grant.
2. In Acts 11:18, what is spoken of as being a gift from God?
3. In 1 Corinthians 4:7, Paul tells the Corinthians that they have received something from God. What is it?
4. What is said to be a gift of God in Ephesians 2:8–10? Is it salvation? Is it faith? Is it both?
5. What significant aspect of salvation is said to be given by God in Philippians 1:29?
6. What does Paul tell us is a gift of God in 2 Timothy 2:25–26?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is God obligated to do for humanity? Defend your answer from Scripture.
2. Does the Arminian foreknowledge view ultimately rest salvation on a good work of man? Explain.
3. Why are the concepts of obligation and mercy mutually exclusive?
4. Is there a moral difference between actively creating evil and passively allowing evil to exist? Explain.

APPLICATION

1. How does the biblical teaching that God chooses some and not others for His own inscrutable reasons affect your view of God?
2. Have there been times in your life when you have thought that God is unfair or that He is not merciful enough? Does Romans 9:14–15 have anything to say to this?
3. Even if you are intellectually convinced of the truth of this doctrine, do you ever struggle with it emotionally or spiritually? How do you overcome such struggles?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Warfield, B.B. *The Plan of Salvation*

The Divine Initiative

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

We conclude our series on predestination by showing God's initiative in salvation and its relationship to evangelism. Man's condition of "total depravity" leaves us completely unable to save ourselves and thus completely dependent upon the divine initiative in order to be saved. We are to continue to fulfill the command to preach the Gospel, believing it to be the privileged means through which a sovereign God saves. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul explains that God alone initiates salvation as a gift, and he cautions against passivity in preaching the Gospel.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To review an understanding of the radical fallenness of man, distinguishing between total and utter depravity.
2. To emphasize the biblical doctrine of the divine initiative in salvation.
3. To realize that the divine initiative in no way negates the necessity of evangelism.
4. To understand that the means through which God saves sinners is the preaching of the Gospel.

QUOTATIONS

Were it not for the sovereign grace of God, evangelism would be the most futile and useless enterprise that the world has ever seen, and there would be no more complete waste of time under the sun than to preach the Gospel.

—J.I. Packer

I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the Gospel, if we do not preach

justification by faith, without works; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the Gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a Gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. . . . If God hath loved me once, then He will love me forever. God has a mastermind; He arranged everything in His giant intellect long before He did it; and once having settled it, He never alters it. "This shall be done," saith He, and the iron hand of destiny marks it down, and it is brought to pass.

—Charles H. Spurgeon

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. The issue of divine initiative is covered in Ephesians 2.

- II. Calvinism defines man's situation as that of total depravity—the first of the five points of Calvinism: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints.
 - a. Total depravity does not mean utter depravity.
 - b. Total depravity means that the total essence of our humanity is fallen.
 - i. We have a radical corruption that goes to the very core of our existence.
 - ii. We were dead in our sins.
 - iii. Our natural way is not God's way until He changes our hearts.
 - c. God quickened us even when we were dead in our sins.
 - i. We did not contribute to our regeneration.
 - ii. It is the work and gift of God alone.

- III. What is the purpose of evangelism?
 - a. We evangelize because God has commanded us to do so.
 - b. Evangelism is the means by which He brings people to Himself.
 - i. God does not need us to fulfill His plan.
 - ii. It is a duty and a privilege.
 - iii. God allows us to be a part of a significant cause.
 - c. "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame" (Rom. 10:11).
 - d. The only way we can call upon Him is to first believe and trust in Him; the only way we can believe in Him is to hear of Him; the only way we can hear of Him is through a preacher or evangelist sent by God.
 - e. "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:15).
 - f. Evangelism is the highest privilege that God can give us.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Total depravity differs from _____ in that the first says that man is corrupted in all his faculties, while the second says that man is as bad as he could be.
 - a. Radical corruption
 - b. Utter depravity
 - c. Sin
 - d. None of the above

2. How does total depravity manifest itself in fallen man?
 - a. The core of our being is corrupted.
 - b. All of our faculties are corrupted.
 - c. We are spiritually dead.
 - d. All of the above

3. The best analogy of fallen man's spiritual condition is what?
 - a. A sick person in need of medicine
 - b. A drowning man in need of rescue
 - c. A dead man in need of life
 - d. A terminally ill man in need of intensive care

4. R.C. believes the most important three letter word in Scripture is _____.
 - a. But
 - b. And
 - c. Can
 - d. The

5. Fill in the blanks with the correct words: "For by _____ you have been saved through _____, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).
 - a. Faith; grace
 - b. Grace; faith
 - c. Grace; repentance
 - d. Works; effort

6. Because of man's spiritual condition, the initiative in salvation must be taken by _____ alone.
 - a. The elect
 - b. Man
 - c. God
 - d. None of the above

7. Why do we evangelize?
 - a. Because Jesus has commanded us to do it.
 - b. Because it is a duty and a privilege.
 - c. Because it is the God-ordained means by which He brings men to Himself.
 - d. All of the above

8. God has decreed the end (_____) as well as the means (_____).
 - a. Predestination; evangelism
 - b. Predestination; election
 - c. Evangelism; predestination
 - d. Evangelism; election

BIBLE STUDY

1. How does Deuteronomy 29:29 help us as we wrestle with this doctrine?

2. What does John 15:1-7 say about the responsibility of man to use the means of grace?

3. What reason do we find in Matthew 28:18-20 for our participation in evangelism?

4. What does Colossians 3:12-25 say about man's responsibilities?

5. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:8-22. What does Paul teach here? How does this relate to the sovereign graciousness of salvation?

6. How does Peter relate trust in the gracious work of Christ and our obedience in 1 Peter 1:13-19?

7. How does Peter relate faith in Christ with our sanctification in 2 Peter 1:5-11?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. "There but for the grace of God . . ." was first uttered by the English Calvinist John Bradford. What impact does an understanding of the divine initiative have on human pride and humility?

2. It is often said that once total depravity is understood, the doctrine of unconditional election naturally follows. Why would this be so?

3. Which of the faculties of man (mind, will, emotions) is completely reliable? Which is free from the distortion of sin?

4. Bunyan, Whitefield, Edwards, and Spurgeon were all Calvinists and great evangelists. William Carey, Adoniram Judson, Alexander Duff, and David Livingston were all Calvinists and great missionaries (as indeed were virtually all of the pioneers of the modern missionary movement). Why did they bother, if God has already determined who will be saved?

APPLICATION

1. How does what you have learned in these six lessons affect your view of your own conversion to Christ? How has your appreciation for the work of God changed? What concepts that you believed prior to beginning this study need reevaluating?
2. What remaining questions do you have about the doctrine of election and predestination? How can you find answers to these questions?
3. As you hear news reports over the next week, listen to them in light of what you have learned about man's radical corruption. Ask yourself whether the proposed solutions to the many modern problems actually address the source of those problems.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Packer, J. I. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*

