

Title: Double Predestination

Scripture: Romans 9:17-20

Series: God's Saving Grace

1. Introduction:

- a. **John Calvin** said that the doctrine of election is one of the most challenging doctrines of sacred Scripture and must be handled with care, caution, tenderness, and patience among those who struggle with it, but it should not be neglected. The doctrine comes from the Word of God, and even though we struggle with it, we must not sweep it under the rug; we must deal with it biblically.
- b. Today, we circle back to the Doctrine of Election and discuss one of its subpoints: the Doctrine of Double Predestination.
 - i. The doctrine of Double Predestination teaches that God has predestined some people to salvation (the elect) and others to damnation (the reprobate). According to this doctrine, God's decisions about who will be saved and who will be damned are made from eternity past and are not based on any foreseen merit or work on the part of individuals.
 1. Beloved, remember what we learned in **Romans 9:11-13** though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— (12) she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” (13) As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

- ii. People have called the Reformed doctrine of Double Predestination "a horrible decree," "a ruthless statement," "a terrible theory," and "an illogical conclusion." Many are especially upset by the idea that God would predestin some to damnation.
- c. So we must ask: Is the doctrine of Double Predestination biblical?
 - i. Beloved, asserting that if some of humanity is elect, others are non-elect is biblically logical. Unless we are universalists (the idea that everyone goes to heaven), there is no way to avoid the idea of a double aspect to divine predestination.
 1. **Proverbs 16:4** The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.
 2. **Jeremiah 6:29-30** The bellows blow fiercely; the lead is consumed by the fire; in vain the refining goes on, for the wicked are not removed. (30) Rejected silver they are called, for the LORD has rejected them.”
 3. **Joshua 11:18-20** Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. (19) There was not a city that made peace with the people of Israel except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. They took them all in battle. (20) For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

4. This doctrine and the verses we just shared strike at our idolatry. We want God to be as we wish Him to be, not how the Bible tells us He is. But for the Christian, the command is simple: Worship God as He reveals Himself. He is the good and perfect God who determines all things by His Sovereignty. Amen!
- ii. So, if double predestination is biblical, how do we understand this doctrine?
 1. There is still debate about understanding Double Predestination in some parts of the church.
 - a. The Blasphemous View: Hyper-Calvinism, or the positive-positive view of predestination, teaches that God predestines both the elect and the reprobate in a symmetrical way (what He does for one, He must do for the other). For the elect, God decrees their salvation from eternity, intervenes in their lives, and creates saving faith, bringing them to faith in Christ. For the reprobate, God decrees their damnation from eternity, intervenes in their lives, and creates evil in their souls, ensuring their ultimate damnation. This view believes that God works grace in the elect and hardens the reprobate in the same manner, against their nature or will. In other words, just as God brings the elect to faith through an inward change, He damns the unbeliever through an inward process of hardening.

- i. This is not the traditional Reformed view of Double Predestination. The symmetrical (positive-positive) view is unbiblical and wrongly proclaims that God causes a sinner to sin and then punishes that sinner for sinning.
- b. *The Biblical View*: The Bible teaches a positive-negative (asymmetrical) distinction in Double Predestination:
 - i. In the case of the elect, God positively intervenes in their lives to rescue them from their corrupt condition. The Holy Spirit changes their hearts of stone to hearts alive to the things of God. That is his positive intervention.
 - ii. For the reprobate, God acts negatively by passing them over and leaving them to their own choices. He does not interfere in creating new evil in their lives; He does not have to. Remember, we are already born sinners and separated from God. We are already born damned!
 - 1. **Ephesians 2:1-3** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins (2) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— (3) among whom we all once lived in

the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

iii. In other words, among all fallen humanity, some receive God's saving grace and are rescued from sin. God passes over the rest, who are reprobate. They are judged based on the evil already present in them.

1. **Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

iv. This is the view of our passage today.

2. Verse 17: God's sovereign purposes are fulfilled even in the life of the reprobate - For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

a. Our passage teaches us that it is not enough to say that God just allowed Pharaoh to sin or that God was uninvolved by leaving Pharaoh alone. The Bible teaches that God raised Pharaoh, this terrible reprobate, for a specific purpose.

i. A better translation of our text is: "I have appointed you to this task."

ii. The eternal God Almighty raised Pharaoh, seated him in the seat of power over the Egyptians, and gave him the power to rule over his people and the Israelite slaves. God put Pharaoh in a position of power so **that I might show my power in you and**

that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth (v. 17b).

1. All the power was invested in the Pharaoh by the Lord God, who is omnipotent.
 - a. **Daniel 2:21A** He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings...
 - b. **Proverbs 21:1** The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.
2. God told Pharaoh, "I appointed you to this position not to show the world how much power you have, Pharaoh, but to show the world my power. That's why I appointed you to this task, so that my people, in their powerlessness, might know where the power of their salvation lies."
 - b. So we see God's sovereign purposes even in the life of the reprobate.
3. Verse 18: Assertion of God's Right - So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.
 - a. How does God harden Pharaoh's heart? He does it not just by allowing it but also through a divine decision. In the Bible, God hardens the sinner's heart by giving him over to his sin.
 - i. In the book of Revelation, the final judgment of the wicked happens through this very process.
 1. **Revelation 22:11A** Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy...."
 - b. God doesn't need to create new evil to make someone more wicked; He just removes His restraints. One of

God's great mercies is preventing us from being as sinful as we would want to be.

- i. Beloved, think of all the sins you have committed in your lifetime. As bad as they have been, they could have been worse. You could have committed more sins, and the sins you have committed could have been more vicious. The same could be said of Ted Bundy, Charles Manson, and Adolf Hitler.
 - ii. No one is as sinful as they could be, not because of some inherent goodness but because God's restraining power keeps everyone in check.
- c. How does God harden the human heart? When we abuse God's patience and longsuffering, our hearts become harder and harder, and at any moment, God can remove some of His restraints and give us over to our sins. We see this displayed in the life of Pharaoh.
- i. From Genesis to Revelation, we see that God's abandoning a sinner to wickedness is not an act of unrighteousness but a manifestation of his perfect justice. It is as if he is saying, "You want to sin? Be my guest. I am going to take some of the brakes off. I will loosen the leash and let you do what you want because I know that the desires of your heart are only wicked continually."
- d. Beloved, God did not look around Egypt for somebody to appoint to resist Moses and, in the process, stumble upon the poor, innocent, righteous young man Pharaoh and say, I will make him do what he would not otherwise do!
- i. He hardened a man who was already hard by nature and will. Pharaoh could not say, "God, what's going

on here? You are punishing me for the hardness of my heart while you have been making sure that my heart gets hardened. That is not fair."

ii. Beloved, it is perfect justice for God to give an evil one over to evil.

1. We all deserve justice (eternal death and separation), but in His sovereignty, he gives underserved mercy to the elect and not to the reprobate. This is His divine right!

4. Verse 19-20 - Man cannot complain: You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" (20) But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?"

a. Paul does not answer the question of fairness: **You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?"** He does not slip into Arminianism and blame reprobation on man's free will. God does not need rescuing. We find none of that here.

b. Paul's response to this anticipated objection is simply a moral rebuke: **But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?** (v. 20a). Before Paul answers any question, he calls the objector to remember what he is and who God is. He is saying, Who do you think you are? How dare you question God's sovereignty or character?

i. Here, we must remember Job. He was the victim of much injustice at the hands of men and Satan; he suffered affliction without relief. Finally, he raised his fist against heaven and shook it in the face of

God. God answered Job using a lengthy, relentless interrogation:

1. **Job 38:1-2** Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: (2) “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?
 - a. Again, when Job questioned God’s sovereignty and character, the divine response was: Who do you think you are?
2. After an extensive interrogation by God, Job finally admits: **Job 42:5-6** I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; (6) therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”
 - a. Beloved, even when we struggle and do not fully comprehend the mystery of God's sovereign will, let that not lead us to blasphemy. We are not the determiners of truth!
 - b. The absolute integrity and righteousness of Almighty God are not to be questioned. **Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”** (v. 20b).
 - c. Pharaoh could not shake his fist at God and ask, "Why have you hardened my heart?" God owed Pharaoh no explanation, and his heart had no inherent righteousness.
 - i. God has every right to use any human being, elect or reprobate, to glorify himself. He is the potter who has an absolute right over the clay.

5. Final questions:

- a. Does God force innocent people to go to hell?
 - i. God does not force anyone to go to hell against their will. Humans are inherently born in a state of sin and trespass, making them natural citizens of hell. Without God's intervention and saving mercy extended only to the elect, all individuals would remain lost.
- b. How do I know if I am part of the elect?
 - i. Do you recognize your need for the Gospel? Have you, or are you willing to, place your faith in Christ? Repentance is a gift from God, and if you have repented or are willing to do so, you can be confident that God has initiated this transformation in you. You belong to Him!
- c. Is there unfairness with God in electing some and not others?
 - i. Salvation is God's prerogative. Remember, **“So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.”**

6. Benediction

- a. **1 Peter 1:1-2** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, (2) according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Pastoral Blessing: **Numbers 6:24-26** The LORD bless you and keep you; (25) the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; (26) the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Public Reading of Scripture
Joshua 11:15-23