

**Romans 8:28-30**  
**April 26, 2015**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: When you hear the word “predestination,” what comes to mind?

Q: When you hear the word “elect,” what comes to mind?

The last three verses of last week’s lesson was not covered in depth, but I would like to revisit them because it raises a significant theological question that has been debated for many years in Christian circles: Does God predestine, i.e. “elect,” those who will become His children, while those who are not elected face eternal separation from Him?

As you can imagine, that question tends to stimulate strong emotional reactions because the first thing we say is, “If God unconditionally loves us, why would he predestine some to hell?” There are a group of Christians who are “Calvinists,” who subscribe to a doctrinal position that Christ’s death on a cross was a “limited atonement” and that those whom He has elected is an “unconditional election” – meaning that a person doesn’t have to exercise faith in order to be saved.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that salvation has been made available to all, and faith in Christ Jesus must be exercised in order to become a child of God. We typically call this the “free will” camp. [Dry Erase Board: God’s Sovereignty vs Free Will]

I will say at the outset that I do NOT have all the answers on this. God is not a God of chaos or confusion, so if we are having a hard time reconciling this, let’s remember that this is not because God didn’t do a good job of explaining this! Rather, we need to embrace that our finite minds in this life cannot fully understand how God works. It is okay to leave room for some mystery in how salvation works. It is not my goal to argue, but to give my inputs and let you pray through them and ask the Lord to help you with this topic.

**Transition:** From my vantage point as a teacher, this topic looks like a huge elephant in the room. Where do I begin?! I think the best way to begin is to outline the key positions, and then let the class begin engaging it with thoughts and questions, and then let’s trust that he Holy Spirit will guide us as we go!

**BOOK (NIV 1984):**

**Read Rom 8:28-30**

V.28:

- And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

V.29:

- For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

V.30:

- And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

#### Background for Calvinism (Major Scripture Passage for Predestination is Eph 1:4-11):

- They believe in limited atonement. Christ did NOT die for everyone's sin.
- They believe that God has predestined an "elect" group of people to be His chosen children. "God loved Jacob and hated Esau." "I will have mercy on whom I'll have mercy, and compassion on whom I have compassion."
- They believe in "unconditional election," meaning that exercising faith is not required. If you've been elected, you don't freely choose Christ. If you choose Christ, then you're performing a "work," but salvation is by grace.
- A position that is in common with Arminius: Both camps agree that salvation can only occur if God "draws" us to Him because we are "dead in our sins." (See John 6:44, 65)

#### Background for the Arminius Position:

- They believe in unlimited atonement. (I Peter 3:17) Christ DID die for everyone's sin.
- They believe that God that 100% of God's creation was predestined "IN CHRIST" (Eph 1:4) to be a part of the "elect" group of people to be His chosen children.
- They believe that "whoever believes..." means WHOEVER believes. "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but EVERYONE to come to repentance." 2 Pet 3:9
- With regard to salvation, exercising faith is absolutely required. If you choose Christ, then you're "responding" (not "working" for salvation) to God's question on the table, "Do you believe in my Son, Jesus, who died for your sins?"
- They believe in "prevenient grace," which means that at some point in each person's life, God has "drawn" or "wooed" him to ENABLE a person to then freely choose whether to accept Christ as their Savior or not. Everyone has a chance to choose before they die.
- A position that is in common with Calvin: Both camps agree that salvation can only occur if God "draws" us to Him because we are "dead in our sins." (See John 6:44, 65)

#### Process Questions:

- What are the implications of Calvinism and how you share the gospel? [A true Calvinist has to admit that God does NOT unconditionally love all of His creation. Because no one knows who God has chosen for the "elect," a Calvinist still has a great responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission.]
- What is the bottom line? [Whether you subscribe to Calvinism or Arminian viewpoint, the ultimate issue is "Do you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior?"]

#### LOOK:

Theologians have spent a lifetime debating predestination vs free will when it comes to salvation. But today we are reminded that "His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways." (Isa 55:8) There is a mysterious truth to both positions, and we need to be able to embrace that not all things we read in Scripture is comprehensible by our finite minds! The tension found between these two camps needs to be okay. We have limited understanding, and in His wisdom, He has revealed in the Bible all that He thinks we need to know for now. Again, the ultimate question for each of us is, "Have you placed your full faith in trust in Christ alone for your salvation?" That's all that matters in the end!

**Close in Prayer**

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