

Discernment, one of our most useful tools for Spiritual warfare

Discernment on theological System

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Break down the question

- Question: [Lesson taught] "God knows who is going to be saved and who isn't. So were some people selected for salvation or predestined for salvation and others weren't? And as one person commented 'then why are we going out and evangelizing?' And another said "she has a problem with predestination' ".
- Several questions:
- Does God's foreknowledge equal determinism?
- What does predestination teach?
- What is salvation?
- How should we respond in terms of evangelism?

Discernment issues

- We all interpret (discern it's meaning) the Bible and from that many of the great themes of life based on a system
- It may be unorganized or it may be structured
- Some value in systems, but many dangers
- You must remain clear on what is the system and what does the Bible actually say?
- If you go beyond, or try to make something fit into the system, you will have problems
- Don't read, study the Bible to support a system
- **Key: you must never use a system as an excuse to not be obedient to the clear commands of Scripture or to go beyond what the Bible says.**

How to explore when you have questions

- Look up key terms online, in a concordance, or chain reference Bible (use examples)
- Read the verses in context
- What do they say?
- Study and pray about what you don't understand
- ***Obey what you understand
- Key Terms:
 - Predestination
 - Salvation
 - Evangelism

Verses on Presdestination

- *proorizō*
- *pro*: before
- *horizō*: **1)** to define
- **a)** to mark out the boundaries or limits (of any place or thing)
- **b)** to determine, appoint
 - **1)** that which has been determined, acc. to appointment, decree
 - **2)** to ordain, determine, appoint
- **Rom 8:29-30** " For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

- **Eph. 1: 3** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he **predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ**, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. . . . **In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.**
- **Romans 8: 28-30** 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. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also **predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.
- Typical misinterpretation: "What did God determine ahead of time? According to Romans 8:29-30, God predetermined that certain individuals would be conformed to the likeness of His Son, be called, justified, and glorified. Essentially, God predetermines that certain individuals will be saved." (www.gotquestions.org)
- Not unequivocal interpretations of these or any other verses on predestination, especially as it pertains to salvation.

Verses on Salvation= *sōtēria*

- 1) deliverance, preservation, safety, salvation
 - a) deliverance from the molestation of enemies
 - b) in an ethical sense, that which concludes to the soul's safety or salvation
- 1) of Messianic salvation
- 2) salvation as the present possession of all true Christians
- 3) future salvation, the sum of benefits and blessings which the Christians, redeemed from all earthly ills, will enjoy after the visible return of Christ from heaven in the consummated and eternal kingdom of God.
- *Scripture describes a fourfold salvation: saved from the penalty, power, presence and the pleasure of sin.*
(cf. Arthur W. Pink, *A Fourfold Salvation*)

Verses on Salvation— much more than a formula prayer and done

- **Matt. 1:21** She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.²
 - *Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means the Lord saves.*
- **Acts 4:12** Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. (context: Peter preaching to crowd)
- **Rom. 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile
- **Phil. 2:12** ... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling
- **Hebrews 9:28** Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.
- **1 Pet. 1:3-5** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.—see entire chapter

Meaning and verses on Evangelism

- Gk: Euangelion: eu=good; angelion=message
- Larger definition than one word or action
- **Matthew 28:18-20** Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore **go and make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.** And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Tasks of all Christians

- **2 Corinthians 5:18, 20**
God has given us the **ministry of reconciliation**...we are **ambassadors** for Christ.
- **Jesus' First words to His Disciples were about Evangelism**
- **Matthew 4:18-19**
And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, **Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.**
- **Jesus' Last words to His Disciples were about Evangelism**
Acts 1:8-9
But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; **and you shall be witnesses** to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight

Responsibility in response

- **John 3:16**
"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life
- **2 Peter 3:9**
The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, **not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**
- **Matthew 3:1-2**
In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, **Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!
- **Matthew 4:17**
From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, **Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- **Luke 15:7**
I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one **sinner who repents** than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.
- Call to repentance is not a game or not to be taken seriously

Some concluding remarks

- Predestination, as is commonly taught, referred to by Protestants is a version of 5-Point Calvinism. Now is not the place to discuss all of that, but the most important thing to remember is that the system presented is a construct, created by humans to explain Biblical truth.
- It is not the Bible itself. For some it may explain some of the deep truths of the sovereignty of God—for others it may cause much confusion. At best, it requires a lot of study to even figure out what Calvin was talking about.
- In contrast the Bible is extremely clear that:
Matthew 28:18-20: Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
- Evangelism and building up believers to be mature disciples are not optional, but essential parts of obedience to our Lord.
- Though again, much is to be explored, but for right now a very important guideline is that we are never to try to make the Bible fit into a construct of theology put together by humans—we are to obey the Bible.
- Then we pray, study, discuss to see if these various systems help or hinder our knowledge or walk with the Lord. **If we don't understand how a command such as evangelism fits into the construct of predestination, as defined by Calvin (and not a consensus in the church overall)—we continue to obey the Biblical command, and put the construct aside for further study.**

Predestination to damnation not part of the theology of the early church

- St. Paul says quite explicitly (Romans 8:28): "we know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as, according to his purpose, are called to be saints. For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son; that he might be the first born amongst many brethren. And whom he predestinated, them he also called. And whom he called, them he also justified. And whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Cf. Ephesians 1:4-11) Besides the eternal "foreknowledge" and foreordaining, the Apostle here mentions the various steps of predestination: "vocation", "justification", and "glorification". This belief has been faithfully preserved by Tradition through all the centuries, especially since the time of Augustine.
- St. Augustine's words (*De dono persever., xxxv*): **Predestination is nothing else than the foreknowledge and foreordaining of those gracious gifts which make certain the salvation of all who are saved.** (www.newadvent.org)

"the hidden mystery"

- [church council calls] predestination "hidden mystery". That predestination is indeed a sublime mystery appears not only from the fact that the depths of the eternal counsel cannot be fathomed, it is even externally visible in the inequality of the Divine choice.
- The unequal standard by which baptismal grace is distributed among infants and efficacious graces among adults is hidden from our view by an impenetrable veil. Could we gain a glimpse at the reasons of this inequality, we should at once hold the key to the solution of the mystery itself. Why is it that this child is baptized, but not the child of the neighbour? Why is it that Peter the Apostle rose again after his fall and persevered till his death, while Judas Iscariot, his fellow-Apostle, hanged himself and thus frustrated his salvation? Though correct, the answer that Judas went to perdition of his own free will, while Peter faithfully co-operated with the grace of conversion offered him, does not clear up the enigma. For the question recurs: Why did not God give to Judas the same efficacious, infallibly successful grace of conversion as to St. Peter, whose blasphemous denial of the Lord was a sin no less grievous than that of the traitor Judas?
- **To all these and similar questions the only reasonable reply is the word of St. Augustine (loc. cit., 21): "Inscrutabilia sunt iudicia Dei" (the judgments of God are inscrutable).** ([newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org))
- We don't have to understand why and all the details to obey.
- We don't make the rules and we cannot choose what to obey.

Applications

- We do not understand (and never will) all the ways of God
- Partly because we don't understand His concept of TIME
- Our command in this situation is:
 - 2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
 - Not a know-it-all theologian
- We are called to worship and obey
- I gave them this command: **Obey me**, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you. Jer. 9:23
- Phil: 2: 12 . . . continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.

As part of the pilgrimage

- Share salvation in Jesus with every person we can with our life and our words, as ambassador and witness
- Living as those on the way to salvation, "People of the Way"
- A pilgrim, one who hasn't arrived, this world not our home
- We do not know who, when, or how people will respond
- We only know our Lord's commands and we should strive to obey them.