

DOCTRINE OF FOREKNOWLEDGE, ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION

- I. Preliminary considerations.
- A. These concepts have caused a great deal of confusion and perplexity among theologians and believers for years.
 - B. A detailed study of these concepts, coupled with the correct definitions, should effectively eliminate the difficulties.
 - C. Some have used these concepts to teach the false doctrine that God has predestined some people to go to Hell, leaving them with absolutely no choice in the matter.
 - D. Therefore, other doctrines, which are plainly taught in the Word of God, must be understood in order to protect one from making false assumptions, arriving at false conclusions, and teaching the resulting false doctrines.
 - 1. The doctrine of unlimited atonement. II Cor. 5:14-15; ITim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9, 10:10,12; IJn. 2:2
 - 2. The doctrine of the universal availability of salvation. Jn. 3:15-17; Acts 2:21,38-39; Rom. 3:22-23
 - 3. The impartiality of God. Job 34:19; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; Jms, 2:9
 - E. Since God is perfect, and His word can be nothing less, there can be no real (only apparent) contradiction between any of these doctrines.
 - F. The concepts of foreknowledge, election, and predestination must be understood individually before attempting to determine how they relate to one another, and to the other doctrines of Scripture.
- II. Vocabulary.
- A. Foreknowledge.
 - 1. While there is no specific Hebrew term for foreknowledge, it is a concept that was clearly understood and taught in the Old Testament. Deut. 31:14-21; Isa. 46:10, 48:5, 65:24; Jere. 1:5
 - 2. Greek vocabulary.
 - a. προγινώσκω (proginosko), verb, 5X, this term means to know something beforehand, to have some type of previous knowledge about some matter.
 - b. πρόγνωσις (prognosis), noun, 2X, refers to the foreknowledge, or the actual content of what one knows beforehand.
 - B. Election.
 - 1. Hebrew vocabulary.
 - a. בָּחַר (bachar), verb, the basic meaning of this verb is to try or examine something, to prove something, and then to pick or select something after examining it.
 - b. בָּחִיר (bachiyr), adjective, that which is picked, chosen, elected, or selected. This term is used in the Old Testament for both the nation Israel and the Messiah. IChron. 16:13; Isa. 45:4, 42:1

2. Greek vocabulary.
 - a. ἐκλέγω (eklego), verb, 21X, to pick something out, to choose, select, or elect.
 - b. ἐκλεκτός (eklektos), adjective, 22X, something or someone that has been picked out or chosen, elect ones.
 - c. ἐκλογή (ekloge), noun, 7X, as an action, a picking or choosing, an election or selection; passively, what has been selected for a purpose or task; equivalent in some passages to ἐκλεκτοί (eklektoi), elected or chosen ones.
- C. Predestination
 1. προορίζω (proorizo), verb, 6X, a compound form the prefix προ (pro—before, and the verb ὀρίζω (horizo—to divide or separate, to make a boundary). The term means to determine or appoint something beforehand, to preordain, or predestine.

III. Foreknowledge.

- A. Foreknowledge is a function or aspect of the Divine attribute of omniscience. Isa. 46:9-10
- B. God now knows and has always known all things, the actual as well as the possible; He does not acquire knowledge or information. Matt. 11:21-24
- C. This is clearly demonstrated in the reality of the prophetic word, in which God declares events that have not happened. Isa. 48:3,5,8
- D. Via His foreknowledge, God always knew who would be positive and desire a relationship with Him; He also knew who would be negative and desire an existence without Him.
- E. Therefore, He always knew who would believe the gospel and who would not believe it.
- F. It must be clearly understood that God's foreknowledge is not causative, since it is a function of omniscience and not sovereignty; God's foreknowledge makes nothing certain, it only anticipates that which will be certain.
- G. With all the knowledge of the universe at His disposal, it should be readily obvious that God could conceive a perfect plan--a plan that had no possibility of failure. Isa. 25:1, 46:10
- H. From our perspective in time, foreknowledge preceded all things in God's plan; most particularly, foreknowledge preceded election. Rom. 8:29; IPet. 1:2

IV. Election.

- A. Unlike foreknowledge, which is a function of omniscience and not causative, election is an active function of sovereignty of God; election is a function of God's volition.
- B. Election, selection, or choosing is an active function, which indicates that God decided to pick or choose some, while not choosing others.
- C. Since God is not a respecter of persons, He could not just arbitrarily choose some and disregard others; He must have had some fair and impartial method for making His choices.
- D. The clear basis for his choice is His foreknowledge. IPet. 1:1-2
- E. Based on His knowledge of who would be positive and who would not, God chose all He knew would be positive in human history and placed them in Christ before the world was formed. Eph. 1:4
- F. This action is completely compatible with the principle of grace, demonstrating that human merit or works was not the issue; God made His choice before anyone ever did anything. Rom. 9:11
- G. Via foreknowledge, God knew before the foundation of the world what the God/man would do in history and so, chose Him to be the savior. IPet. 1:20
- H. **The elect** then becomes a title for those that believe. Matt. 24:22,24,31; Rom. 8:33

- V. Predestination.
- A. Predestination is by far the most mysterious of the three concepts that we are considering; it reaches from eternity past into time, and deals with the relationship between the Infinite Will and the finite will of man.
 - B. Like election, predestination is a function of sovereignty that occurred in eternity past. Eph. 1:5,11; ICor. 2:7
 - C. In a logical sequence of time, which obviously did not exist at the point God performed these actions, foreknowledge and election preceded predestination. Rom. 8:29
 - D. It is extremely important to note that the vocabulary of predestination is never used in terms of unbelievers and their eternal destiny; the Word of God does not support that false concept that God predestined anyone to go to Hell. Jn. 3:16
 1. Calvin stated, as a part of his fallacious theological system, that *"All are not created in like condition; but eternal life is ordained for some, eternal condemnation for others."*
 2. He confesses that this is a *"horrible decree"*; therefore, it is easily understandable why many theologians have come to recognize that his views are not compatible with Scripture.
 - E. Once God "knew" who was positive, the group that would comprise the company of believers, He marked out that entire group for a particular end.
 - F. He ultimately determined to make every believer in that group just like His own Son. Rom. 8:29
 - G. Although predestination occurred in eternity past, it requires at least three steps in time in order to conform all believers to the image of Christ.
 1. Calling, the invitation to join God's plan, is the gospel hearing that God determined every elected individual would receive in time. Rom. 8:30; IIThess. 2:14
 2. As we will observe in a subsequent point, this does not mean that those that were not elected may not hear the gospel.
 3. Justification, the act by which God imputes His own righteousness to everyone that accepts the good news of salvation, occurs at the point of salvation. Rom. 8:30; Gal. 2:16
 4. Glorification, which occurs at the resurrection of the body, completes the necessary steps to make the believer like Christ. Rom. 8:30; IJn. 3:1-2
 - H. Predestination focuses on believers only; it deals with the fact that God has designed a plan that takes every necessity and contingency into account. The elect can be saved and can advance spiritually as far as they choose, ultimately being conformed to the image of His Son.
 - I. Specific times that God has predestined.
 1. The sufferings of Christ that were necessary to effect the potential of salvation for the entire world. Acts 4:27-28
 2. Our present dispensation, the Church age. Eph. 3:8-11
 3. Our gospel hearing, leading to the fact that we will be conformed to the image of Christ. Rom. 8:29-30
 4. Our sufferings in time. Phil. 1:29, 3:10; Rev. 2:10
 5. Bible doctrine, the wisdom of God, was predestined for all that would avail themselves of it. ICor. 2:6-7

- VI. The logical sequence of events in regard to foreknowledge, election and predestination.
- A. God is perfect and immutable; therefore, all these concepts have always been realities with Him, they did not have a beginning as we understand beginnings.
 - B. Since God worked before the beginning of time, and is not bound by time, one concept did not precede another in His thinking.
 - C. However, for us that seek to grasp these concepts, things must be viewed as they relate to time, which involves a progression of events.
 - D. In other words, when considering these things from the perspective of time there must be a sequential order.
 - E. The logical sequence of events is documented in Romans 8:29-30, where Paul deals with these issues from a future perspective.
 1. Foreknowledge, which is clearly revealed to be the basis of election, must have preceded all the other events.
 2. Although election is not mentioned specifically in this passage, it was the next logical event.
 3. Once God has determined who will comprise the body of believers, the next step is to predestine them to a particular end.
 4. Calling, the gospel presentation in time, follows for every positive believer throughout history.
 5. Justification, the imputation of God's righteousness to those that believe, occurs at the point of faith in Christ and is next logically.
 6. Although not mentioned, the imputation of eternal life must also occur if one is to be conformed to the image of Christ. IJn. 5:11
 7. Glorification, the point at which we are conformed to the image of Christ, completes the eternal purpose expressed in the object of predestination; thus, making Christ **the first-born among many brethren**. Rom. 8:29
 - F. Foreknowledge, election, and predestination are concepts that occurred in eternity past.
 - G. Calling and justification occur in time.
 - H. Glorification is still future for all believers, but will be fulfilled for the Church age believer at the rapture.
- VII. Negative volition as it relates to these concepts.
- A. While God has predestined believers to be conformed to the image of His Son, there is no scripture that can be adduced to support the erroneous contention that He has predestined unbelievers to any fate.
 - B. The Lake of Fire was prepared for the Devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41), and they are certainly destined to inhabit that place for all eternity. Rev. 20:10
 - C. God can, and obviously has and does, create human beings and provide them with volition, knowing that they will exercise their volition to reject His offer of salvation and end up in the lake of fire with Satan. Rev. 20:15
 - D. As the sovereign king of the universe, God has the right to create humans and give them life as He chooses. Isa. 42:5, 43:7, 45:12
 - E. Since it is impossible for God to be unfair, and since He is clearly not partial to anyone, the fate of any human being must be the result of his own volitional decisions and not something that God arbitrarily decreed for him.

- F. It is unscriptural and illogical to assume that God could righteously judge someone that had no choice in the matter of accepting or rejecting His plan.
- G. However, like any creation of God, those that are negative may be used by God as He sees fit, since they belong to Him. Rom. 9:21
- H. Therefore, God can use unbelievers to further His plan and to glorify Himself without violating their volition, or without violating His righteousness and justice. Rom. 9:17-18
- I. Further, God is under no obligation to provide the call, a gospel hearing, for anyone that He already knows will not accept it; this explains why some unbelievers will go to Hell without hearing the truth. *See doctrine of God Consciousness*
- J. However, many unbelievers have heard the call, the good news of salvation, and rejected it because they were negative. Matt. 22:14
 - 1. Many people throughout the world have heard the gospel in the course of their lives. Rom. 10:18
 - 2. The vast majority have rejected it and continue to resist the truth, confirming that **the way is broad that leads to destruction and many are those that enter by it.** Matt. 7:13
 - 3. Although the good news of the gospel has been heard by many that are not among the elect, they simply ignore it, or reject the invitation.
 - 4. **The few** are those that are positive; they choose to exercise their volition to accept the invitation, and believe in Christ. Matt. 22:1-14

VIII. Problems associated with the false doctrines of Calvinism.

- A. While men like Luther and Calvin have been exalted among believers as the premier theologians of their time, a study of their doctrine reveals many troubling theological contentions.
- B. According to Calvin's doctrine, foreknowledge means foreordination; this is something that is patently false since the words have completely different meanings.
- C. Calvin, and those that adhere to his system, cannot figure out why God would choose certain members of the human race, essentially reducing His decision to some arbitrary, inexplicable action on His part.
- D. This is quite ironic since the basis for God's selection of certain humans is clearly taught in the Bible. IPet. 1:1-2.
- E. Calvin's doctrines also include the concept of irresistible grace, effectively stating that no one can reject the call if he hears it; however, this is completely contradicted by the Word of God. Matt. 22:14; Acts 7:51, 18:5-6, 19:9; Rom. 10:16
- F. Another one of the insidious doctrines is the doctrine of limited atonement; again, this is clearly contradicted by the Scripture since it reduces God to a respecter of persons. I Tim. 4:10; I Jn. 2:2
- G. While it does not specifically impact on the doctrines that we are considering, the doctrine of perseverance of the saints is also wrong; it does not allow for the concept of reversionism, and negates the passages that indicate that believers can become spiritual casualties. ITim. 1:19-20; IITim. 4:10; Rev. 2:21-23

IX. Conclusions.

- A. Based on the aspect of omniscience known as foreknowledge, God knew in eternity past how each volition would respond to Him; He saw the response to His plan in time, before anyone ever did anything.
- B. This prior knowledge allowed Him to pick, select, or elect certain members of the human race to join Him in Heaven without violating their volition or His justice.
- C. Once God "knew" who was coming to the party, He then determined that this group of people would ultimately be conformed to the image of His Son.
- D. For all those He elected, God formed a plan that guaranteed their call (gospel hearing in time) and subsequent salvation. Jn. 6:37
- E. For those in this group, their glorification and complete conformity to His Son is guaranteed by that same plan; although, this is as yet unrealized.
- F. Foreknowledge is a function of omniscience and not of sovereignty; therefore, it makes nothing certain, but only anticipates that which is certain. I Tim. 4:1ff; II Tim. 3:1ff
- G. Election and predestination are functions of God's sovereign will and cannot be thwarted or frustrated. Isa. 43:13, 46:10
- H. No one whom God foreknew and elected will fail to hear the gospel in time and believe in Christ. Jn. 6:35-39, 10:14-16
- I. God's plans and provisions for us, both in time and into eternity, completely preceded our personal history. II Tim. 1:8-9
- J. God plan for your life is perfect and cannot be thwarted by Satan, the most powerful, evil enemy in the universe; nor can it be halted by anyone else that is opposed to God's plan. Jn. 17:4-5,15; Rom. 16:20
- K. These concepts in no way militate against the reality of volition, nor do they prevent or hinder the operation of volition; salvation is a matter of personal choice in time. Jn. 3:16,18, 6:29

“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified”.

Rom 8:29-30