

# GOD'S CHOSEN, MAN'S CHOICE

## *How Predestination and Free Will Go Together*

### I. INTRODUCTION.

#### A. How Does Predestination Fit in With God's Nature?

1. How can God decree something ahead of time and still be just and fair to all?

#### B. How Does God's Predestination and Man's Free Will Go Together?

1. What is the relationship between God's sovereign control and man's free will? Is God in control of man's free will? How can God be in control of all things if man has a free will, and how can man exercise his free will if God is in control of all things?

### II. PREDESTINATION, FREE WILL, AND THE NATURE OF GOD.

#### A. God's sovereignty.

1. God is omnipotent; Lord and Ruler over all (all powerful). He is in control of all things (Isa. 46:10).
2. God chose to create a world where mankind would have a free will and a power to choose from the very beginning (Gen. 1-3). God also chose the conditions that mankind could choose to be saved. God's sovereignty is consistent with conditional election.

#### B. God's foreknowledge.

1. God is omniscient (all-knowing). He knows all things even before they happen. God's knowledge is infinite and is not limited (Ex. 3:14; Psa. 90:2; Isa. 46:9-10).
2. God knows ahead of time who will be saved and who will be lost, but He does not unconditionally save some and damn others. God knows ahead of time who will meet his conditions for salvation and who will not. If God cannot see the future without forcing every move of every person, he is not omniscient! God's foreknowledge is consistent with conditional election.

#### C. God's grace.

1. God grace (unmerited favor) saves mankind by offering a free gift of salvation.
2. God's free gift must be received by complying with his conditions; not conditioned upon works of merit, but upon obedient faith (Eph. 2:8-9). God's grace is consistent with conditional election.

#### D. God's justice.

1. God is just and fair in his judgment. He treats everyone alike and without respect of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17).
2. God's justice allows man to choose for himself whether or not he will meet the conditions to be saved or lost. God's justice is consistent with conditional election.

### III. GOD'S CHOSEN, MAN'S CHOICE.

#### A. What About Jacob and Esau?

1. Romans 9:13 (Gen. 25:22-23) and Mal. 1:2-3.
2. God chose to call Israel through Jacob and not Esau. Is this Calvinism? No. This election was the choosing of a nation to serve and bring about the Messiah (9:1-5), not the choosing of individuals to be eternally saved or lost. Israel was chosen for *service*, not for *salvation*. They all were elected for *service*, but some of them were rejected for *salvation*. Read this text carefully!

3. Paul is not teaching Calvinism, he is confronting Judaism! He taught the need for all Jews and Gentiles to be saved by the gospel (Rom. 1-11). Mankind is saved in Christ, not by physical lineage alone (Rom. 2:25-29).
4. Paul's main point in Rom. 9-11 is that God has acted justly and has not broken his word with Israel. Here is the main question: "Did God cast off his people" (11:1-2)? Here are Paul's key points in answering this question:
  - a) First, God can choose whomever he wants for service (9:7ff).
  - b) Second, God chose Israel for a particular service – to bring about the Messiah (9:21ff).
  - c) Third, God is not rejecting the whole nation, only those Jews who refuse to believe in Christ (9:24,27; 11:4-5).
  - d) Fourth, God rejects or accepts the Jews based upon the Jews' belief or disbelief, not based upon God's arbitrary decision (9:32; 10:13-17; 11:20,23-24).
5. Note: Many Calvinists want to use Romans 9-11 to teach unconditional election and reprobation. However, this very passages teaches several things that are contrary to Calvinism: (1) Desire for all to be saved (9:3; 10:1; 11:32); (2) Conditional salvation (9:33; 10:3,9,11,13,21); (3) Belief through preaching (10:17); (4) The elect are fallen from grace, cut off, and then grafted back in (11:20-24,28,31); and (5) Paul's attempt to save the lost (11:7-14). If Romans 9-11 teaches unconditional election, what about Romans 1:16; 2:6-11; and 5:18-19?

#### B. What About Judas?

1. Jn. 6:70-71; 13:21-26 and Acts 1:16-20,25; 2:23.
2. God had already decreed that his Son would be betrayed (Acts 1:16). Is this Calvinism? No. God foreknew that Judas would make his own choice to betray Jesus. Judas did not betray Jesus because he was chosen to do so; rather, he was chosen because God foreknew he would betray Jesus. God *foreknew* that Judas would betray Jesus, but God did not *cause* Judas to fulfill his role as a betrayer.
3. Judas was evil before he betrayed Jesus (Jn. 6:70; 12:6). Satan entered Judas (Lk. 22:3; Jn. 13:2,27), when Judas let Satan in (Eph. 4:27).

#### C. What About the Jews Who Crucified Jesus?

1. Acts 2:23; 4:28.
2. God had already decreed that Jesus would be crucified. Is this Calvinism? No. The Jews acted by their own free will (Acts 2:36-37).

#### D. What About Pharaoh?

1. Rom. 9:17-18.
2. The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. Is this Calvinism? No. Paul's point in Romans 9:17-18 is that Pharaoh was chosen to serve the purpose of God, not that he lacked free will.
3. What about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart?
  - a) THERE ARE VERSES THAT SAY GOD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART, BUT THOSE VERSES DO NOT SAY HOW GOD DID IT. ONE MUST READ THE REST OF THE CONTEXT TO DETERMINE HOW GOD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART. READ ALL OF EXODUS 4-14 TO SEE HOW GOD DID IT, NOT JUST ONE VERSE.
  - b) We are told that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:1,4,8,17). Did he do this directly and against Pharaoh's will? No.
  - c) We are told that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:13,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:34-35). This demonstrates that Pharaoh had a choice and a free will.

- d) How do these two facts go together? God hardened Pharaoh's heart by giving him the circumstances to be hardened: God's words, God's demands, and God's miracles given through Moses (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 14:4,17 [note the servants and other Egyptians are hardened also]), the time between one miracle and another, the comments of the magicians, etc. God placed Pharaoh and others in circumstances where they chose to be hardened. God provided the circumstances and thereby (indirectly) hardened Pharaoh's heart.
- e) Pharaoh hardened his own heart when he chose not to obey God's word (Ex. 8:15; 9:34). Pharaoh was not a victim of an arbitrary, capricious God!
- f) Remember, the same word of God that hardened Pharaoh's heart, softened the hearts of others including Moses and some of the Egyptians who went with Israel (Ex. 12:38). Illustration: The same sun that hardens clay, softens butter. Remember, God does not lead people to sin (Jas. 1:13), he is not a respecter of persons (Acts. 10:34-35), and he is not willing that any should perish (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- g) Pharaoh was stubborn before it is said that God hardened his heart (Ex. 2:23; 3:9,10; 5:2). Note the comment on this incident by the Philistines in 1 Sam. 6:6. Pharaoh was hardened just like Sihon King of Heshbon and others (Deut. 2:30; see also Josh. 11:20). God provides the circumstances for hardening to those who don't want to obey God (Rom. 1:24,26,28; 2 Thess. 2:10-11; 2 Cor. 4:4).
- h) Examine these other verses to see how God hardens hearts (2 K. 17:14; 2 Chron. 36:13; Neh. 9:16,17,29; Psa. 95:8; Isa. 6:9-10; Dan. 5:20; Mt. 13:14-16; Mk. 6:52; 8:17; Jn. 12:37-40; Acts 19:9; Rom. 11:7-8; 2 Cor. 3:13; Heb. 3:8,13,15; 4:7). God can also open a heart! But how? Through his word (Acts 16:14).

#### **IV. CONCLUSION.**

- A. There Are Two Possible Responses to the Revealed Will of God and the Sovereignty of God: Obedience (Open Hearts) or Disobedience (Hard Hearts).
- B. Are You Open-Hearted or Hard-Hearted (Heb. 3:13)?

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