

ROMANS – LIVING BY FAITH
GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY & MAN’S RESPONSIBILITY – Chapters 9-11

LESSON 32 – THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION – Romans 8:29-30 & 9:6-13

The doctrines of predestination and election are both Biblical teachings. The focus of this lesson will be to look at both viewpoints for these doctrines so you can decide for yourself where you stand.

Election – This term occurs about 25 times in the New Testament. It means to pick out...to choose; to pick or choose out for one's self; choosing one out of many.” The one who does the choosing...the electing...is God.

Predestination – This term occurs six times in the New Testament. It means to predetermine or decide beforehand; God decreeing from eternity.

There are two viewpoints for these doctrines...

The Reformed View

As you know, I’m using a study guide by Dr. David Jeremiah as a basis for our Romans study. He is a proponent of the reformed view. Let’s take a look at his explanation as well as some statements of a few others who line up with this viewpoint.

The Reformed doctrine of election and predestination simply stated is that God elects whom He wants to and predestines them to be saved and people choose God only because He has first predestined them.

Here’s an example Dr. Jeremiah uses...

“Think of election and predestination as an airline flight to heaven. Election is God deciding who gets on the plane bound for heaven. Predestination is his charting the route the plane will take, the schedule, the accommodations both during the flight and after the flight, and each passenger’s safety. With God as the pilot of the plane and the plane itself, all who board the plane make it to heaven. Predestination means God, Himself makes sure the elect actually board the plane. Their response of faith is like checking in at the gate with a boarding pass.”

He goes on to say, “Those whom God has elected to salvation He also moves to accept His free offer. All who are chosen are predestined to end up in heaven. God fixes His love on the elect and predestination ensures that the elect fulfill their destiny. This does not deny that we decided for Christ, and freely, but we did so only because He had first decided for us. Not only are we predestined for salvation but according to Romans 8:29, we are predestined to conform to the image of Jesus. A person chosen unto salvation will live a holy life.”

That last sentence really jumps out because I know lots of people who are Christians but don’t live holy lives. Reading 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 John, Revelation and many others seems to make it clear that there are Christians who choose not to live holy lives. But before I jump over to the other viewpoint let me share some more quotes from a few others on the reformed viewpoint.

John MacArthur – “The doctrine of election simply means that God, uninfluenced and before creation, predetermined certain people to be saved. Predestination simply identifies the point prior to time when God determined that He would elect. In other words, the election is the actual choice. Predestination simply identifies this as something that happened preliminary to time.”

Dr. Richard Mayhue – “I would suggest, maybe for discussion among us or for your thinking, that nowhere in the Bible does it suggest that man has a free will and that he acts independent of outside sources, conditions, people, et cetera.”

My Co-worker, “Those God elected and predestined for salvation will accept Christ...maybe not the first time they hear...but they will eventually accept. No one who has been elected and predestined for salvation can reject God’s gift of salvation.”

The Non-Reformed View

The Non-Reformed doctrine simply states that God elected mankind and predestines people to salvation but people freely choose to accept or reject God’s offer of salvation. That God’s plan for the salvation of mankind was predestined and Jesus was elected to fulfill that plan.

Since I’ve already told you that I disagree with Dr. Jeremiah, you already know which viewpoint I hold and I’m going to share with you why I take this position.

I was fortunate enough to have a conversation with a co-worker who is part of the Reformed Presbyterian denomination and he answered some questions for me regarding his position on election and predestination.

Can you explain to me how your stance on election and predestination doesn’t contradict scriptures like John 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:5-6 and 2 Peter 3:9?

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

1 Timothy 2:5-6, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.”

2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

His answer was basically this... Well it’s how you interpret phrases in those verses. You’re interpreting the world, whoever, all people, anyone and everyone in those verses to mean all of mankind. Our view is that the world, everyone, whoever and words like that are referring to those God has elected. So in other words, Jesus didn’t die for all of mankind, He died for the elect.

Can anyone God elected and predestined for salvation reject His free gift?

No...that’s not possible. Anyone that God has elected will get saved. They may not accept Christ the very first time they hear the Gospel message, but they will eventually get saved.

Since you know me and have listened to my teaching for a long time now, you know that I take a literal interpretation of phrases and words like...the world, whoever, mankind, all people, anyone and everyone. I firmly believe that John 3:16 is for everyone not just for an elect group. I also believe that when Peter says that the Lord doesn’t want “anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance” that’s exactly what it means.

Yes...salvation is all about Jesus. God elected Jesus to be the sacrifice for all sin for all mankind. He then predestined how that would happen. God predestined that Abraham would be the father of His chosen people and that through his son Isaac and then his grandson Jacob...Jesus the Messiah would come into the world.

Yes...salvation is extended to us through God's grace. However, to say that we have been elected and predestined for salvation and don't have a choice because God has already chosen for us flies in the face of scripture.

John 3:15, "Everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

John 3:36, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them."

Romans 10:9-10, "If you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."

God's offer of salvation is extended to us by His grace and because of His great love. It is up to us to accept or reject His offer of salvation. Those who hold to the reformed viewpoint of election and predestination remove mankind's choice from the equation. Mankind was created to be different from all of God's other creation.

Genesis 1:26, "Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness..."

Part of that difference included giving us the freedom of choice. We've been given an ability...a power if you will...that no other created being has. We have the ability to say, "Yes" or "No" to God.

So is salvation totally and absolutely from God. YES!! We can't save ourselves, that's His job but we do have a small part in the process. Our responsibility is in faith believing to receive this great gift He's offered to us.