

1) ¹ WHAT DOES God WANT WITH US? Predestination

a) Introduction

- i) Is God for some people and against others?
- ii) Has God decided in advance to save some and not others?
- iii) Predestination is not fate; it does not mean that God causes everything that happens and that there is no freedom or un-determinedness in the world.
- iv) Predestination has to do with salvation.

b) DOUBLE PREDESTINATION

- i) From all eternity God has chosen some to be saved and some to be damned. Christ died only for the elect, not the entire world. It is not unjust since God owes no one salvation.
- ii) Calvin taught this believing about 20% would be saved! Westminster Confession also taught it.
- iii) Geneva Catechism, Scots Confession, Second Helvetic Confession, and the Heidelberg Catechism do not teach it.
- iv) Arguments for Double-Predestination
 - (1) Stresses God's sovereignty...God can save whom He wants to save.
 - (2) Stresses salvation by grace alone
 - (3) Takes God's justice and mercy seriously...as well as the seriousness of sin.
 - (4) Faithful to Jesus' words that many are called but few are chosen.
- v) Arguments against Double Predestination
 - (1) Forgets that the sovereign God is a gracious God.
 - (2) No idea in the Bible of Eternal Decrees; it seems to imply also an absentee God.
 - (3) The Scripture says that God wants everyone to be saved so how could God decree that some will be damned?

(4) Turns the Good News into bad. What about John 3:16?

c) UNIVERSALISM God REJECTS NO ONE

i) Arguments for

- (1) Some NT passages seem to suggest it (Romans 5:18; the kings of the earth in Rev 21)
- (2) Affirms that God can choose anyone and everyone if God wishes.
- (3) Heavily stresses that salvation is by grace alone.

ii) Arguments against

- (1) Ignores God's wrath and justice
- (2) Diminishes the human response; trivializes the evil that humans do
- (3) As with double predestination, universalism seems to eliminate free will

d) PELAGIANISM

i) Pure Pelagianism

- (1) God gives us the Law and the freedom to obey or disobey.
- (2) If we obey, God will save us. If not, He will not.
- (3) This is salvation by good works and right religious opinions.

ii) Semi Pelagianism

- (1) We are all unworthy and deserve condemnation
- (2) We are totally dependent on God's grace.
- (3) We are able to acknowledge this and turn to God and ask for forgiveness.
- (4) Therefore we allow God to save us. If we choose God then God will choose us.
- (5) Arguments for
 - (a) Preserves the Biblical hope in the saving power of God.
 - (b) States that God's grace is available to all

- (c) Stresses the need for the human to respond positively to that grace.
- (d) Appeals to our notion of fairness
- (6) Arguments against
 - (a) Salvation is therefore uncertain
 - (b) Overestimates our ability to turn to God/diminishes the power of sin
 - (c) Overly stresses the human response and diminishes God's part.
 - (d) Seems to say we earn God's love.
 - (e) This is probably what most Christians believe if they think about it.
- e) Three rules to follow when thinking about predestination
 - i) Take the entire Biblical witness into account.
 - ii) Bible never speaks of eternal decrees about salvation.
 - iii) We must think about God's plan for all creation.
- f) The Freedom God wills for all human beings.
 - i) Double predestination and universalism eliminate human free will in the matter of salvation
 - ii) And yet when we stress human freedom we seem to diminish God's sovereignty.
 - iii) We cannot approach this problem abstractly; we must approach it from our own experience with our freedom in other matters
 - (1) We know we are never totally free in any decision we make. We are shaped by our past, limited by our biological inheritance, influenced by our national origin, gender, race, and education. We are often driven by fear, anxiety, greed, or lust.
 - (2) In short, we must **become free**. God desires all of us to know the truth in Jesus Christ and it is that truth which sets us free. God's plan is thus to set us

free through Jesus Christ. We are then in a sense predestined to freedom.

- iv) What about predestination and non-Christians?
 - (1) God's love is for them as well
 - (2) God's love is experienced as wrath/judgment by those who oppose God and God's will
 - (3) BUT, we must remember God judges to save.
 - (4) We are called to proclaim God's love in words and deeds to those outside the faith.
- v) What about predestination and Christians?
 - (1) We recognize we too are sinners who stand before God only through God's grace. Our salvation comes totally from Jesus and not from ourselves
 - (2) God's grace through Jesus is both the reason for our salvation and our assurance of it.
 - (3) WE ARE ELECTED INTO A COMMUNITY. Being in the church is not a guarantee of our election but it is a sign pointing to it.
 - (4) WE ARE ELECTED TO SERVE, to be an instrument of the God's saving plan of salvation for all His creation.
 - (5) WE ARE NOT CHOSEN INSTEAD OF OUTSIDERS; WE ARE CHOSEN FOR THE SAKE OF OUTSIDERS.