

## Inquirer's Class Week 5 - Providence and Predestination

### I. Providence

#### A. Providence Defined - what our terms mean

1. "God's sovereign control and direction of events in the world" ~ James Anderson

-Sovereignty is the all-powerful rule of God over the universe

-So sovereignty and providence are related, but not interchangeable

-However, some times we use them interchangeably

2. "God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions." ~ WSC Q & A 11

-God preserves and governs over his creatures

-Why can He do this? Because He's the creator —> He calls the shots and He dictates how things go

#### B. Providence Demonstrated - what the Bible says

\*\*\*instead of just verses, they are in groups to better categorize them

\*\*\*There are a lot of texts, but I want you to see this isn't a doctrine mentioned only once or twice —> it's all over the Bible

1. General Statements - Job 42:2; Psalm 139:16; Proverbs 16:4; 19:21; Isaiah 46:8-11; Ephesians 1:11
2. Forces of Nature - Psalm 147:15-18; Jonah 1:4; Mark 4:37-41
3. "Random" Events - Proverbs 16:33; Acts 1:23-26
4. Nations and Rulers - Job 12:23; Proverbs 21:1
5. Physical Suffering - Luke 4:40; Exodus 4:11; 2 Kings 15:5
6. Human Thoughts - Mark 13:11; John 14:26; 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12
7. Human Decisions - Proverbs 16:9; Ezra 1:1
8. Good Human Actions - 1 Corinthians 15:10; Philippians 2:13
9. Evil Human Actions - Genesis 45:7-8, 50:20; Exodus 4:21; Deuteronomy 2:30; Joshua 11:19-20; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28

-Job 42:2 - I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

-Psalm 139:16 - Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

-Genesis 50:20 - As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

#### C. Providence Defended - potential objections

1. This undermines human freedom and responsibility and makes us robots
  - a) Incompatibilism - freedom and responsibility are incompatible with God's providence —> this is an argument against a Reformed understanding of providence
  - b) Compatibilism - freedom and responsibility are compatible with God's providence

- Scripture is very clear that we aren't robots —> We have a will and we desire certain things and have certain intentions
- Scripture teaches that we are free to act in accordance with our desires and intentions
  - Example of chocolate or vanilla ice cream vs. a bowl of ice cream or a bowl of manure (your will, desires, and intentions are not going to be for the bowl of manure - you are free to choose but you could say it's already determined what you will choose)
- People love to talk about free will —> but a biblical understanding of free will doesn't mean you can do whatever you want
- Rather, you can do whatever is consistent with your nature —> our sin makes us unable to please God or choose God
- Our actions are not coerced —> God doesn't force anyone to do something they don't want
- We act in accord with our desires
- In other words, God doesn't work against our will but through our will
- We have enough freedom to be held responsible for our choices

2. This doctrine means God's will for us is to break his law and sin (Deuteronomy 29:29)
  - a) God's revealed or prescriptive will - Ezekiel 33:11; Matthew 7:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 1 John 2:17
  - b) God's secret or decretive will - 1 Samuel 2:25; Job 42:2; James 4:15

## II. Predestination / Unconditional Election

### A. Predestination / Unconditional Election Defined - what our terms mean

1. "God's decision to save someone does not ultimately depend on anything in that person." ~ James Anderson
2. From all eternity God decided to save some members of the human race and to let the rest of the human race perish." ~ R. C. Sproul
3. "That eternal act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation." ~ Louis Berkhof

- Unconditional election is closely related to predestination
- predestination literally means before the destination —> so deciding before the end result

-Functionally, predestination and unconditional election are synonymous

**-When we understand the depths of sin, we realize God must be the one who chooses —> Ephesians 2:1**

- All Christians believe in election (God choosing) - the Bible is really clear about that
- the debate is whether or not this is conditional or unconditional
- Arminians believe that God's election is conditional. On what? God's foreknowledge of what will happen —> God looks down the telescope of time, sees that these people will have faith, and then He chooses them.
- Reformed Theology understands Scripture to teach that God chooses unconditionally —> it's not about anything foreseen, but simply out of God's love
- We need to realize there's a positive and a negative side to predestination

1. Positive - election —> God ordains to choose certain people for salvation
2. Negative - Reprobation —> God ordains to pass over others and leave them in their

sin

-This is called double predestination

\*\*\*Not all Reformed folks agree here - some only hold to single —> God ordains to choose to save some but doesn't ordain anything for the rest

\*\*\*Hyper-Calvinism says that God ordains to save some and then actively rejects others and works unbelief in their heart - i.e. God works in a heart to save and he works in a heart to reject Christ —> we don't believe that

\*\*\*Rather, we believe that election and reprobation are not symmetrical —> God doesn't choose to save some in the same way that he chooses not to save others

Is it part of his plan? Yes. Is it him working sin into people's heart? No! Remember, God is the primary cause, but humans are the secondary and proximate cause

-Election is positive not just in outcome but in the manner - He actively chooses

-Reprobation is negative, not just in outcome but in manner, He chooses to pass over the rest and leave them in their state of sin and misery

\*\*\*This is not semantics like some accuse. This is a real distinction

#### \*\*\*\*Questions

#### B. Predestination / Unconditional Election Demonstrated - what the Bible says

1. Deuteronomy 7:7-8
2. John 6:37, 44, 64-65
3. John 10:24-26
4. John 15:16
5. Acts 13:48
6. Romans 8:29-30
7. Romans 9:10-16
8. Ephesians 1:3-6
9. 2 Thessalonians 2:13
10. Revelation 13:8, 17:8

-Deuteronomy 7:7-8 - It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, <sup>8</sup> but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

-John 6:37, 44, 64-64 - All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out...No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day... But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) <sup>65</sup> And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.

-Romans 8:29-30 - For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

-Ephesians 1:3-6 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

### C. Predestination / Unconditional Election Defended - potential objections

#### 1. God respects our free will

-We've talked about this, but ultimately the Bible doesn't teach libertarian free will

-We are free to make choices within our nature

-Because of the Fall, we all have a sinful nature that will never choose God unless God intervenes

#### 2. If God chooses whom He will save, there is no need for evangelism

-God ordains the ends and the means —> the end is salvation, the means are the preaching of God's Word and relational ministry where we share the hope of Jesus

-We don't know who the elect are!

-The external call goes out to all

-It's up to God whether or not someone is called by the Holy Spirit

#### 3. It is unfair and unjust for God to condemn people to hell before they are born

-Who defines what is fair?

-Salvation is not fair

-Fair is that everyone gets the just penalty for their sin - hell!

-The fact that even one is saved is God's grace and mercy

#### 4. John 3:16 teaches that salvation is for anyone

-This is the biggest Arminian objection

-Basically it's that God is love (1 John 4:8) —> what kind of loving God would choose to pass over some people

-And John 3:16 says God loves the world

-How do we respond?

-Some try to say that the world here is just the elect —> that's not true

-The world is fallen humanity in its sinful state

-God's love drove him to send Jesus —> the impact of that love is different for different people —> those who aren't saved still experience benefits from Christ even if they aren't saved (blessings in this life, understanding of forgiveness, better ordered society, etc.)

-The elect receive the full measure of God's love

5. Unconditional election undermines assurance of salvation - am I really saved?
- The argument is, how can I know I'm elect? Maybe I'm not!
  - I think the reverse is true —> if it's God choosing, then we can rest in His work
  - Where can you find more confidence - God's choice or your choice?

D. Predestination's / Unconditional Election's Implications

1. God is the one who gets the glory for our salvation

- He's the one at work from start to finish
- It's His choice and his work
- Not up to us to respond in faith —> God gives us that faith

2. Because He chooses us, we can have total assurance of salvation

- We don't have to worry about not having enough faith
- God will carry to completion what he starts —> perseverance of the saints

3. Predestination and unconditional election reminds us of the need for humility and fights against pride

-While Arminians will deny it, salvation in their understanding rests at least in part on our response

-They'll say God does the work, but still it means God makes salvation possible and we have to respond

- It can easily lead to a sense of pride for choosing God when someone else didn't

4. Predestination and unconditional election gives us confidence in our evangelism

- We don't have to feel the pressure to "save" someone

-As long as we faithfully share the gospel, we don't to worry if we didn't say the right thing

-We can freely call people to faith and trust God to work that faith in them by the power of the Spirit