

LESSON 4

PREDESTINATION: GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PLAN

Introduction

Predestination is the doctrine of hope for a hopeless world. The doctrine is often neglected and avoided because of the difficulty of understanding it and relating it to human freedom. Frequently the initial response to the word 'predestination' is a negative emphasis on God's condemnation of sinners who are considered deserving of salvation. Such an idea is unscriptural and misses the point of the doctrine.

Predestination means "to mark out beforehand" or "to decide upon beforehand." It refers to God's plan for Creation before the foundation of the world. The doctrine is more difficult for men in a democratic society to accept since in principle, if not in practice, they hold that all men are equal. The tendency is to ignore the authority of God and the unworthiness of sinful man.

Predestination is defined by Loraine Boettner as that theological doctrine, primarily associated with Calvinism, which holds that from eternity God has foreordained all things which come to pass, including the final salvation or reprobation of man.¹ The doctrine must be understood in relation to other doctrines: election, the sovereignty of God, God's foreknowledge, God's purpose for man, the depravity of man, and salvation by grace.

The Bible emphasizes the positive side of predestination, that is, a sovereign God controls and directs history towards redemption. History comes to its climax in the return of Jesus Christ who redeems both nature and man from the power of sin and death. Sinful man's only hope for deliverance is in what God does for him rather than what he is able to accomplish for himself. Man does not come to salvation if he has not been predestinated to be saved.

Because of the Biblical emphasis on God's sovereignty, some statements are made concerning God's

¹Loraine Boettner, "Predestination" in Baker's Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 415.

The doctrine of predestination is neglected because it is difficult to _____ and to relate to human _____.
(understand, freedom)

What does the word 'predestination' mean?

(to mark out beforehand or to decide upon beforehand)

Boettner defines the doctrine of predestination as teaching that from eternity God has _____ all things which come to pass, including the final _____ or reprobation of _____.
(Compare your answer with the text.)

The Bible's positive statement of predestination is that a sovereign God controls and directs history towards _____.
(redemption)

hardening of man's heart. These Scriptures present great problems for many people. Because some Scriptures teach that man is free to choose and is responsible for his choices, God's predetermination appears contradictory to man's freedom. The question of how a God of love can make a man like Judas for condemnation is raised frequently.

Biblical Statements Concerning Predestination

Romans 8:28-39

Predestination has been defined as God's predetermined plan for His Creation. Because of a strong conviction concerning God's sovereignty, Paul stressed that God's plan would not be defeated (Rom. 8:28ff.). God's purpose is accomplished even in experiences which appear to man to be defeats:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.

Paul does not emphasize God's predetermination of some men to eternal damnation. He does stress that saved man has hope because nothing can defeat God's purpose for man. The work of Christ and the conforming of man to the image of God's Son are God's eternal plans.

Paul does not state that all men have been chosen in Christ to be conformed to His image. He does emphasize that no man would achieve the image of Christ apart from God's grace. The emphasis of Romans 8:28-39 is on the assurance of sinful man's salvation because of the eternal plan of a loving God to redeem him.

Ephesians 1:3-6

Ephesians 1:4-5 indicates the close relationship between election and predestination. Election refers to the choice of the people and predestination refers to God's determined plan to bring the chosen people to redemption. That plan was accomplished in Christ who died for man's sin. The death of Christ was not His defeat but was foreordained "according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11). The world does not move forward haphazardly but is controlled by God's will according to His purpose.

God's plan for man predates the creation of the world (1:4). God determined beforehand that the elect would be adopted through Christ (1:5).

*Is this statement true or false?
Paul stresses in Romans 8:28ff. that God's plan would not be defeated. _____.*
(true)

*The emphasis of Romans 8:28-39 is on the assurance of sinful man's _____ because of the eternal plan of a loving _____ to _____ him.
(Compare your answer with the text.)*

*Fill in the blanks with predestination and election to make correct statements.
_____ refers to the choice of the people.
_____ refers to God's determined plan to bring the chosen people to redemption.
(Election, Predestination)*

The Gospels and Acts

Jesus believed that God has a plan for every life. God's plan for Him included His suffering and death in Jerusalem (cf. Mark 8:31-33; 10:32-34). Jesus knew what lay before Him because He knew His Father's will for Him as the Suffering Servant was to accomplish God's plan of redemption through death. God's will for Christ was determined before His birth. Jesus was burdened by the death which He faced on the cross, but He recognized that "for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27).

Luke states that "the Son of man goeth, as it was determined . . ." (22:22). Peter stated that Jesus was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). Jesus was born for the purpose of being the King who would establish the Kingdom of God. His purpose could only be accomplished by suffering and dying for those chosen by the Father. God's predetermined plan was for His Son to die on the cross for man's sin.

The Emphasis of Predestination

Predestination is not God's arbitrary plan for assigning some to condemnation and others to grace. It is God's plan of redemption in Christ Jesus. Through God's work, those who come to God through faith in Christ are "conformed to the image of Christ" (Rom. 8:29). God predetermined that in Christ sinful man would be redeemed. In speaking of what God has done for man in Christ, Peter states that "ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, . . . Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world . . ." (1 Pet. 1:18-20). The Crucifixion of Christ was not an arbitrary action of sinful man which threatened the authority of God but was the fulfilling of what God had ordained before the world was created.

Classical Interpretations of Predestination

Pelagianism

Prior to Augustine and near the end of the fourth century, the emphasis of theologians was on the absolute freedom of the human will and man's full power to accept or reject the Gospel. Salvation was conceived to be the result of a cooperation between grace and free will. Pelagius (d. after A.D. 418) was a British or Irish monk who affirmed that man achieves salvation by making the right use of his natural abilities to choose between good and evil.

What was God's predetermined plan for Christ?

(To accomplish God's plan of redemption through death)

The emphasis of predestination is that in _____ sinful man would be _____.

(Christ, redeemed)

Pelagius taught that man achieves salvation by making the right use of his natural _____ to choose between _____ and _____.

(abilities, good, evil)

He believed that man's nature possesses an inalienable power to do what is right. Since God enjoined His Law upon man, man must have the power to fulfill it. He argued that there is nothing in man that compels him to sin. It is possible for man to lead a sinless life.

Pelagius did not believe that man possesses an inclination to sin but he is endowed with freedom as a natural power to choose. The Fall of Adam was insignificant, with no meaning for his posterity. Physical death was not the result of sin but a mere necessity of the human organism.

A modified form of Pelagianism has become the official doctrine of Roman Catholicism. It has appeared within Protestantism also, especially through the teachings of Arminius in the seventeenth century. The emphasis continues to be that man has power within himself to turn to God and to ask for God's grace. God's help is available to those who ask for it. Christ provided potential salvation for all men, but actual salvation comes only to those who decide to believe in Him. Man's salvation depends upon his deciding to follow Christ. Predestination is only a matter of God's foreknowledge of all things, not God's active plan in bringing man to salvation.

Augustinianism

Augustine's views were influenced by his struggle with his sensual nature and by his understanding of Paul. He believed that human nature, existing in its totality in Adam, was corrupted in the first act of transgression. The corrupted nature of humanity was transmitted to all the descendants of Adam. The instrument of this transmission is the sexual appetite. As soon as the descendants of Adam exist as individuals, they exhibit in themselves the same corruption of nature—inordinate appetites and slavery of the will to sin. The will is not eradicated but it has no power of self-deliverance. Man's hope does not rest in his ability to turn from sin to God but in the grace of the Redeemer who finds sinful man and brings him to salvation. Grace is not the result of merit but is the expression of God's love for sinful, unworthy, and helpless man. Divine grace is given to man in the Spirit who operates within the soul of man to bring about conversion. A power from above must enter man and effectually move him to believe.

Augustine's view of the sinfulness and impotency of man led to the doctrine of unconditional predestination. Those who believe in the Gospel with a saving faith are not merely elected to be the recipients of

Is this statement true or false?

Pelagius believed it is possible for man to lead a sinless life. _____

(true)

Augustine said that grace is not the result of _____ but is the expression of God's love for _____, _____, and _____ man.

(merit, sinful, unworthy, helpless)

faith itself.² Faith is the gift of God, and without it men are left to perish. Those who are not saved by electing grace are predestined to the punishment which sin deserves.

Calvinism

John Calvin, the father of Reformed theology, stressed the sovereignty of God. He emphasized that grace is unmerited and could not be grace without the sovereignty of God and the bestowal of it. His doctrine of predestination included in it the decree of reprobation.

According to Calvin, God has determined by an eternal decree "what He would have to become of every mankind."³ Some are foreordained to eternal life and others to damnation. A sovereign God has determined once for all whom He would admit to salvation and whom He would condemn to destruction. The hearts of those determined for condemnation are hardened by the withdrawal of God's Spirit and by the employment of Satan who influences their minds and their efforts.

In Calvin's definition of predestination, he stated:

Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which he has determined in himself, what he would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestinated either to life or to death.⁴

Calvin denied that God willed the salvation of the elect, but permitted the destruction of the unrighteous. Since God is sovereign in every respect, nothing comes to pass unless He wills it. Calvin's statement of double predestination appears to exclude any freedom of choice on the part of man.

The view that God has created some men for eternal damnation is repulsive to many Christians. Early opponents of Calvin held that his doctrine of predestination makes God the author of sin and that it leads to ethical indifference.

² G. P. Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896), p. 191f.

³ Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine, p. 300.

⁴ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, III, 21, 5.

Augustine believed faith is the gift of _____, and without it men are left to _____. (Compare your answer with the text)

Calvin's doctrine of predestination held that a sovereign God has determined once for all whom He would admit to _____ and whom He would condemn to _____. This view is called double predestination. (salvation, destruction)

Does Calvin's statement of double predestination appear to exclude any freedom of choice on the part of man? _____. (yes)

Arminianism

A Dutch theologian, Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), taught conditional predestination which differed significantly from Calvinism. He avoided a doctrinal development which made God the author of sin and of the condemnation of men. He denied neither God's sovereignty nor His free grace, but he desired to save the honour of God by repudiating the Calvinistic doctrine that God created some men for eternal damnation. Also, he sensed the need for giving more emphasis to the clear expressions of the Bible with regard to the free will of man. He held that God by an eternal, unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ determined to save sinful men. He placed more emphasis on man's faith and the necessity of man to persevere in faith. Instead of God's predestinating the unbelieving to damnation, they were left in their sins and under God's wrath. Their condemnation was not the result of God's predetermination which left them without choice but was a result of man's own choosing to continue in unbelief.

Arminianism later became allied with more liberal tendencies.

Universalism

Universalism arose in protest to the idea that God's purpose was to save some and to condemn the rest. Early adherents of this view believed that there is no hell and there are no lost souls, thus universal salvation. They declared that God's saving purpose includes all men. Modern universalism holds that men of good will and of sacrificial spirit must cooperate with God as His instruments in bringing about good. God is love; therefore He is ready and waiting to do His part, but men must provide the instruments.

Conclusion

Shirley C. Guthrie divides the classical interpretations of predestination into three categories:

1. Double predestination states that some men are chosen for life and others for damnation.
2. Pelagianism states that God chooses those who choose Him. Divine salvation is available to all but is given only to those who ask for it. It is up to every individual to decide for himself whether he wants salvation or not.

Arminius repudiated Calvin's doctrine that God created some men for eternal _____. He emphasized the _____ of man and man's eternal destiny depended on his _____ rather than on God's _____.

(damnation, free will, choice, predetermination)

Universalism holds that all men will be saved because God is _____.

(Love)

Give a brief description of the three classical interpretations of predestination.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answer with the text)

3. Universalism holds that since God is love He is gracious towards all men and rejects none. All men will be saved.⁵

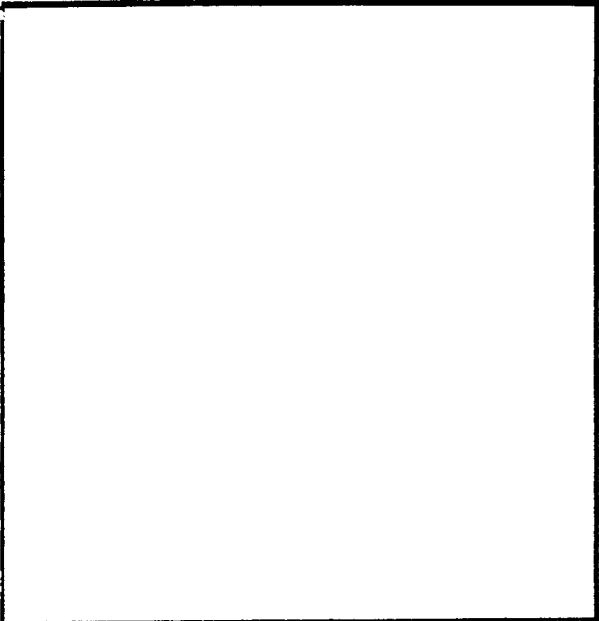
Double predestination does emphasize the sovereignty of God, and it recognizes that grace is not earned or deserved but freely given. It recognizes that God is the Creator and in control of the universe. Man does not live a self-sufficient and independent life, but as creature he is under the control of God and is dependent upon God. It takes seriously the Scriptures which state that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh and had the sovereignty to elect whom He would (cf. Rom. 9:11-18). Despite these statements which seem to point to a decree of the eternal damnation of some, the Bible never speaks specifically of an eternal negative decree by which some men are rejected.

Double predestination speaks of a predetermined and unalterable plan made before the creation of the world which invalidates the doctrines of petitionary prayer and repentance. The Bible teaches that God is responsive to prayer and changes the course of His actions when a person or a nation repents. The doctrine of predestination must not be equated with a mechanical plan of God which cannot be altered. The doctrine must be correlated with Biblical teachings which state that man is responsible for his actions and decisions. If man is responsible for what he does, there must be some freedom in his choice of actions.

Pelagianism recognizes human freedom and responsibility but fails to recognize the seriousness of the Fall and of sin. In its emphasis on human freedom, it fails to recognize that there are many things that man is not free to do. Man has no choice with regard to his parents and his early home environment. He does not choose his nationality, sex, or inherited economic conditions. He does not choose many of the early influences which mold the pattern of his personality, nor his physical features and health. Man is not the master of his circumstances and life. He is a dependent creature who is incapable of mastering his God and determining his own destiny.

The Bible does state that God loves all men and desires that all will come to repentance (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:18). It does not teach, however, that all men will be saved. Universalism emphasizes the love of God but neglects His justice. The Bible specifically states that those who believe not in Christ are condemned already. Universalism tends to ignore those texts which speak of God's wrath and judgement.

⁵Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr., Christian Doctrine (Richmond: The Covenant Life Curriculum Press, 1968), pp. 126-136.



A weakness of double predestination is that it fails to recognize man's _____ and responsibility for his _____.
(freedom, actions)

Pelagianism fails to recognize the seriousness of the _____ and of _____.
(Fall, sin)

Universalism neglects God's _____.
(justice)



The Biblical teachings concerning predestination and the free will of man must be kept in tension. From God's perspective, the salvation of man, even his faith, is the work of God. From the perspective of man, he is responsible for his sin and must respond to God's gracious work by faith. From the divine perspective, man can do nothing of himself. From the human perspective, man must choose to submit to God. An overemphasis on either perspective results in an extreme doctrine which is unbiblical.

Doctrines Related to Predestination

Election

The relation of predestination and election. — Predestination which refers to God's general plan for and control of history becomes more specific with reference to man's salvation in the doctrine of election. Election refers to the choice of particular persons and is looked upon as a particular application of the general doctrine of predestination as it relates to the salvation of sinners. The Scriptures are concerned primarily with the redemption of sinners; therefore, the doctrine of election is discussed by many theologians instead of the doctrine of predestination. "The Baptist Faith and Message" adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, U. S. A., states:

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which he regenerates, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is a glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

It should be noted that the statement emphasizes the redemption of sinners and God's sovereignty, and it is included under the topic of God's purpose of grace. It avoids any statement concerning God's predetermination of the fate of those who do not believe.

Ephesians 1:1-7 relates several important words concerning predestination and election. Paul was convinced that God has a plan for every man. He was an apostle by the will of God (v. 1). God's plan dated back to a time before the foundation of the world (v. 4). Christians are predestinated (chosen according to God's predetermined plan) to be the adopted children of God (v. 5). The adoption as children of God requires redemption through the blood of Christ which was an expression of the riches of God's grace (v. 7). Predestination includes not only

Write a statement about predestination and one about election which will help you distinguish between them.

Predestination _____

Election _____

(Compare your answer with the text)

Ephesians 1:1-7 teaches:

- 1. God has a _____ or will for every man.*
- 2. God's plan predates the foundation of the _____.*
- 3. God's plan is for sinful men to become His adopted _____.*

(plan, world, children)

the election of the people but also the provision for their salvation in Christ. In love, God predestinated His people to salvation.

The election of Israel. — The term 'elect' may refer to God's action of electing or to the person or persons who are elected. It is thus synonymous with 'choose' and 'chosen'. It is also closely related to the concept of call: "for many be called, but few chosen" (Matt. 20:16).

Although the terms 'call' or 'election' are not used with reference to Abraham, the concept is present in Genesis 12. Yahweh spoke to Abraham concerning his departure from his fatherland and his new relationship to Yahweh. The descendants of Abraham became a group of people separated from other nations and designated for a particular relation to God (cf. Deut. 4:37; 7:6,7; 1 Kings 3:8; Isa. 44:1-2).

Israel's king was chosen by both Yahweh and the people (1 Sam. 10:24). David was chosen by Yahweh and was the prototype of the Messiah (cf. 1 Sam. 16:8-10,12; 2 Sam. 6:21). The Messiah is described as Yahweh's elect (Isa. 42:1). Israel is described as God's chosen people (Isa. 44:1-2; 45:4).

The Church as the elect. — In the New Testament, Christ frequently spoke of the elect (cf. Matt. 24:22; 24:31; Luke 18:7). Paul spoke of himself as "called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1). He referred to the Roman Christians as "called to be saints," that is, chosen and set apart into God's service by His grace. Peter spoke of the Christians in various parts of the Roman Empire as "the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Pet. 1:2).

In the New Testament, the elect are identified with the Christian Church. First Peter 2:9 states that "ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."

God's initiative in election. — The Old Testament emphasis that election is the result of God's initiative and not of man is also taken up in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 1:27-28, Paul describes God's choice of the weak, foolish, despised, and lowly in order to put to shame their opposites. The elect have no grounds on which to boast since their position is not a human accomplishment but by God's grace.

God's purpose in choosing Israel as a people and the promises made to them were fulfilled in Jesus (Acts 13:17, 32-33). Those who had been called to be the people of God rejected God's plan of righteousness in Christ and went about establishing their own righteousness (Rom. 10:3-4). God's predetermined plan, including the choice of the people and their redemption, was not

'Elect' may refer to God's _____ or to _____ who are elected.

(action, persons)

Both the man _____ and the nation _____ were elected by God.

(Abraham, Israel)

Israel's king _____ was elected by God.

(David)

The _____ was elected by God.

(Church)

defeated by Israel's rejection of Christ. God had "a remnant according to the election of grace"(Rom.11:5). The mystery which God revealed to Paul was that Gentiles were also included in the election and that the election would be accomplished through the death of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 2:7ff.; Eph. 1:7-12; 3:3-6).

The sovereignty of God

Calvin emphasized God's sovereignty and omnipotence which led to the emphasis that creaturely man is dependent on his Creator and Ruler for salvation. Nothing can come to pass apart from God's sovereign will, for He is the absolute Owner and final Disposer of all that He has made. He is the ultimate Source of all the power that is found in Creation.

A man approached Jesus to inquire concerning the requirements for salvation (cf. Matt. 19:16-26). Jesus mentioned that in addition to keeping the Commandments he should sell all that he had and give to the poor. After the young man turned away sorrowfully, Jesus stated to his disciples that "a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." The disciples were astonished and inquired, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus pointed out that salvation is impossible with man but not with God. The experience leaves no doubt that Jesus taught men are dependent upon God for salvation.

Since man does not deserve salvation, the sovereign God has the right to be merciful to whom He will (Rom. 9:18-23). God is not obligated to elect any man to salvation, but He may choose those on whom He will have mercy and those whom He will harden (Rom. 9:18).

God's justice and love are not in opposition to His sovereignty. Since man has sinned he has earned condemnation. If God were only just in nature, He would consign every man to eternal damnation. Since God is sovereign, He can find a way to fulfil His justice and at the same time express His love. It is through His Son that God expresses His justice by condemning sin and expresses His love by redeeming the sinner. Since God is sovereign, His nature of love can find a way to redeem unworthy man.

The foreknowledge of God

Paul stated that God foreknew those whom He predestinated (Rom. 8:29). Foreknowledge designates the foresight of God concerning the entire course of future events. Scripture constantly represents God as knowing all things whether actual or potential, past, present and future. In comparison to human

Can anything come to pass apart from God's sovereign will? _____ . Why? _____

(no, Because He is the absolute Owner and final Disposer of all He has made)

God expresses His _____ by condemning sin and He expresses His _____ by redeeming the sinner.
(justice, love)

knowledge which is limited, God's knowledge is unlimited.

An understanding of predestination must include God's foreknowledge. God knows beforehand what man's responses and opportunities will be. God's plan includes the preaching of the Gospel to the unenlightened by faithful witnesses. Predestination does not operate in spite of whether the Gospel is preached or not, but it includes preaching and witnessing as part of the total plan of redemption for man. In other words, God normally does not predestinate those to be saved who have never heard the Gospel, but His predetermined plan includes His will for Christians to share the Gospel with the unsaved. God's knowledge of what will happen is not partial. He knows those Christians who will be faithful witnesses. His plan to bring some men to salvation includes His will for the life of each Christian in dedicated service.

Foreknowledge appears to exclude free agency and moral responsibility on the part of man. However, a knowledge of events beforehand does not necessarily make them mechanical and deterministic. Through a partial knowledge of natural factors involved, man expects the sun to shine tomorrow. From his practical perspective, the sun might not shine because of a cloud coverage. If his knowledge were not partial, he could know what weather is in store for the following day. Jesus used a similar illustration in indicating that the men of His day could determine what kind of weather to expect but they could not discern the times with regard to the Kingdom of God. He implied that they should have been able to know what the future held by correctly interpreting contemporary events; however, their knowledge did not determine the events. Man has the freedom to express his nature through choices he makes within the limitations of his circumstances. Since God knows both man's nature and circumstances, He foreknows man's choices. God so conditions man's circumstances to make it possible for him to choose faith in Christ rather than unbelief.

Man is not totally free in the decisions which he makes from day to day. They are largely determined by the influences and circumstances which come to bear upon him. Since God's knowledge is not partial, He knows the circumstances and influences which will guide man's decisions and shape his destiny. More than that, He knows man himself—man as a sinner. In the light of His foreknowledge, God determines to bring sinful man to salvation.

The sinfulness of man

Man's sinful condition is more serious than the average man realizes. Perverted pride, an element

God foreknows: He knows beforehand what man's _____ and _____ will be. God's predetermined plan is based on this knowledge.

(responses, opportunities)

Since God knows man's _____ and _____ circumstances, He foreknows man's _____. Does this take away man's freedom to choose? _____. God so conditions man's _____ to make it possible for him to make certain choices.

(nature, choices, no, circumstances)

of man's basic sinful nature, causes him to deny his helplessness in sin. He continues to claim that he is able to accomplish more than is actually possible. Even many theologians and church leaders are blinded to their real condition in sin. When man evaluates himself, he emphasizes his positive and good features. Since he is unable to see his true nature as deceitful and sinful, he tends to think that he is able to accomplish his own salvation.

Jesus stated that man who commits sin is the slave of sin—he cannot liberate himself. Sinful man's only hope is in what God does for him. Predestination is God's predetermination to deliver sinful man from his bondage. This is man's only hope. He whose life is dominated by sin and pride does not recognize the degree of his helplessness and dependence on God's grace. Often he feels some need of help, but in pride he concludes that salvation is the result of his merit or accomplishment plus God's assistance. The Biblical doctrine of predestination is based upon man's helpless condition in sin and God's gracious intervention on the basis of a predetermined plan to deliver man from his bondage.

The nature of grace

Satan is able to deceive man at the point of causing him to think that he is good enough or must become good enough as a result of his own efforts to be accepted by God. Many people fail to receive Christ as Saviour, not because they do not want to be saved but because they feel incapable of living up to the requirements of the Christian life at the present time. Although Christianity does require a certain standard of moral and religious conduct, the ability to live up to that standard does not come from man but from God.

Sinful man can never accomplish his own salvation because his life of sin does not please God. His only hope is in the atonement provided through Jesus Christ. Acceptable righteousness is offered to man as a result of the work of Christ and not as an accomplishment of man: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation by grace means that man's deliverance is completely the work of God. God is able to deliver sinful man because He has determined beforehand to bring him to salvation.

The Stages of God's Plan of Redemption

One of the most concise statements of predestination is set forth by Paul in Romans 8:28-39. After

Sinful man's only hope is God's _____
plan to deliver him from _____.

(predetermined, bondage)

Salvation by grace means that man's
deliverance is completely the work of _____
who has determined beforehand to bring sin-
ful man to _____.

(God, salvation)

Paul discussed the victory that man has in the present life through walking in the Spirit, he turned to the hope which man has in what God will do for him. Man can be sure that the redemption and victory over sin which he experiences through the indwelling Christ will not be lost or cease. Paul's assurance was based on the sovereignty, omnipotence, and love of a God who is able to cause all things to work "together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Paul's confidence was because of God's purpose to make sinful man to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). God's purpose was based upon a plan (predestination) which was devised on the grounds of his foreknowledge. Sinful and defeated man can have hope in future victory because of God's predetermined plan. Paul mentioned four aspects of that plan (Rom. 8:30).

Predestination. — On the basis of His knowledge of and love for sinful man, God determined to provide for his redemption. His plan was predetermined "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). He determined beforehand to bring sinful man who had rejected Him into relationship as an adopted child. The new relationship would mean that His adopted children would be in the image of His Son (cf. Eph. 1:5; Rom 8:29).

Calling. — Man in freedom chooses to turn his back upon his Creator and to live the life of sin. Satan deceives him into thinking that the life of sinful pleasure brings joy and meaning. In this deceived condition, man is unable to recognize the true meaning of life and to achieve the fullness of life. Only when the inner voice of the Holy Spirit speaks to his understanding is he able to see that the life in sin is actually death.

Through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, man becomes disturbed and dissatisfied with his life in sin. Apart from God's work through the Spirit, man would be satisfied to continue in sin and would not desire salvation. While the Spirit is working conviction in the heart of the lost man, the same Spirit is speaking to the Christian concerning his responsibility to witness. As the will of God revealed to Christians by the Spirit is fulfilled, the Gospel of salvation is shared with the man under conviction. Through this encounter, God calls the sinner to the salvation which he has provided in Christ Jesus. God's call is not limited to the circumstance of a witness sharing his faith with a sinner, but this is the normal way.

Christian obedience to share the Gospel is part of God's predetermined plan (predestination) for saving lost man. Those who have an extreme view of

What is the first stage in God's plan of redemption? _____

(predestination)

The second stage in God's plan of redemption is His _____.

(calling)

predestination conclude that God is able to save the lost without man's efforts. The Biblical view is that God's predetermined plan includes the witnessing of Christians.

Justification. — The man under conviction needs the Good News (Gospel) that the salvation which has eluded his own efforts is available through the work of Christ. The death of Christ atones for his sins, and if he will repent and believe he receives that atonement.

God's plan for Christ included His resurrection as well as His crucifixion: "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). The resurrected Christ is able to make man just by abiding within and controlling his life. Man who through his own efforts attempts to gain salvation lives a life of sin because he is sinful in nature and his nature is expressed in his actions. He who is justified through faith in Christ transfers the control of his life from sinful self to the indwelling Christ through whom his life is guided and empowered to accomplish Christian righteousness.

Glorification. — God's plan does not end when man receives Christ as his Lord and Saviour. The redemption which God provides includes future events—man's resurrection and eternity with God. Although Paul spoke of glorification in the past tense, it is actually future. Paul was positive that the God who had planned for man's redemption and who had brought him to the point of justification would also glorify him.

Conclusion

The Biblical emphasis of predestination is not that God is for some and against others. Paul understood it as a doctrine of God's being for sinners who do not deserve His help. If God determined from the foundation of the world to accomplish justification and reconciliation of man through Christ's death and resurrection, he can be assured that God is for him. Although man is an enemy who chooses sin rather than God, the predetermination of a loving God to forgive him provides assurance that God will freely give all things to those who are reconciled (cf. Rom 8:32). God is working for His chosen (elect) and, since He has ultimate power, no one can bring the elect to condemnation.

What is the third stage in God's plan of redemption? _____

(justification)

The fourth stage in God's plan of redemption is _____

(glorification)

Home Study Exercise

Basic Activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Why is the doctrine of predestination neglected? _____

2. Give a definition of predestination. _____

3. What is the emphasis of Romans 8:28ff. with regard to predestination? _____

4. What was God's predetermined plan for Christ? _____

5. What is the emphasis of predestination? _____
6. What did Pelagius believe about salvation? _____

7. What was Augustine's view of predestination? _____

8. What was Calvin's doctrine of predestination? _____

9. How did Arminius differ from Calvin? _____

10. Give a sentence description of each of the three categories of the classical interpretations of predestination: (1) Double predestination _____

_____ (2) Pelagianism _____

_____ (3) Universalism _____
11. Name one weakness of double predestination, Pelagianism, and Universalism. _____

12. Distinguish between predestination and election. _____

13. List three teachings of predestination in Ephesians 1:1-7. _____

14. Name four individuals or groups elected by God. _____

15. How does the sovereignty of God relate to predestination? _____

16. Explain the relation of predestination and foreknowledge. _____

17. How can God foreknow man's choices and yet give man freedom to make the choice? _____

18. Why must predestination be understood in the light of man's sinful nature? _____

19. How does predestination relate to grace? _____

20. Name the four stages of God's plan of redemption. _____

21. How does God normally call men to salvation? _____

Supplementary activity (Level 2):

1. Read pages 125-146 in Christian Doctrine by Shirley C. Guthrie.
2. List the advantages and disadvantages of the three classical interpretations of predestination.
3. Give the three rules a Christian should follow in developing a doctrine of predestination.
4. Give a brief answer to the dilemma of God's sovereignty or man's freedom.
5. Give the meaning of predestination for Christians.

Advanced activity (Level 3)

1. Read pages 51-74 in The Gospel of Redemption by W. T. Conner.
2. Discuss the statement, "Election is a doctrine for the elect."
3. Does God choose some for destruction? Explain.
4. Answer the objection which holds that God is unjust to the non-elect.

Seminar Discussion

1. What is the relation of predestination and election?
2. What does Romans 8:28-39 teach about predestination?
3. Identify the classical interpretations of predestination.
4. Explain how predestination is not inconsistent with human freedom.
5. How does a belief in predestination affect Christian witnessing?