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“Predestination or Predeterminism for Israel and ALL God’s People”

I Prayer

II Overview and Objectives

In our last Bible Study, covering Romans 7 & 8, we concluded the second major section of Paul’s letter to the church at Rome (Rom 4:23-8:39). In doing so, you will recall that we discussed concepts like “predestination” and “grace,” while also illustrating some of the thought differences among Christian denominations.

Please look again at how Paul closes the last verses of Chapter 8. “NOTHING,” he writes, “can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.” In other words, Paul is emphasizing that because of Christ, we all have the gift of salvation., both Jew *and* Gentile. The question becomes, however, what if someone rejects God’s plan for them. Specifically, what about those Israelites (Jews) who are “still waiting?”



This third major portion of Paul’s letter to the Romans is grouped (Rom. 9-11) and really should be considered at one unit. In the interest of time, however, as we look at chapters 9 & 10, this evening, I ask that we contemplate the meaning of two words: **“Predestination”** and **“Predeterminism,”** as they relate to salvation. If something is **predetermined**, there is no choice or—from the perspective of humans, no “free will.” Think, for example, about a robot that is programmed by a computer to do certain things in certain situations. Paul’s theology **IS NOT** one of predeterminism. Please consider instead a theology of **predestination**. It simply means the end destination is already set. There still is, however, a choice on how to get there (e.g., a drive from New Orleans to Baton Rouge sets the destination; but some might opt to drive *via* Airline Highway and others might opt for I-10). Paul’s theology recognizes “free will,” but also presupposes that **ALL** people are saved, because of Jesus. That’s a concept of predestination.

A careful read of Romans 9 and 10 debunks some of the “bad rap” that Paul has received by anti-Semites. As an Israelite, Paul is **NOT** suggesting that a rejection of God’s **GRACE** through Jesus condemns those who reject (Jews). Instead, Paul is emphasizing that the gift of salvation is given to all, Jew and Gentile alike. Further, Paul is also stating that it’s God’s

prerogative on who receives salvation. Consistent with Paul's theology in Galatians, and earlier parts of Romans (**justification by FAITH and not works**), Paul is also stating that one can't "earn" salvation. One must instead receive salvation as an unmerited gift from God.

III Reflective Matters for Consideration



- What have YOU done to be saved and how do you and your ACTIONS compare with someone else?
- Have you "earned" salvation, as if it was merit-based, like a scholarship, or was your salvation freely given?
- If God GAVE you the gift of salvation, is it God's prerogative to give the same gift as God so pleases?

IV Textual Examination (portions of Rom. 9 and 10)

- In 9:1-5, the chapter begins immediately after Paul's emphatic claim that NOTHING can separate us from the love of God. What group of people is Paul talking about in these verses? What apparently seems to be at issue that has made Paul so impassioned?
- In 9:8, Paul writes about "the promise." **Pull Gen. 22:15-18 and Gal. 3:27-29.** How does this relate to both Jews and Gentiles?
- Consider 9:16-24. Paul uses rhetorical examples to show God's power and prerogative in extending the gift of salvation. Does it matter to you who God saves? **Does it matter to you how God chooses to show God's glory in and through different humans** (discussion)?
- In 9:25-26, Paul says "those who were not, now are . . ." What does this mean with respect to Jews and Gentiles and God's elect? Who is now "the elect?"
- Paul has consistently been referencing Hebrew (Old Testament) scriptures. In 9:27, he references "the remnant." From where (what popular narrative) does that reference come? Is the context the same or different from its popular previous usage?
- In 9:32, Paul references his fellow Israelites and says they have "stumbled over the stumbling stone," by focusing on works instead of faith. What does he mean?
- In 10:1-4, who is Paul referencing and in what context is he using "righteousness?"

THEREFORE
GOD HAS MERCY ON
WHOM HE WANTS TO
HAVE MERCY, AND HE
HARDENS WHOM HE
WANTS TO HARDEN.
ROMANS 9:18

- 10:9-10 is arguably the reason we open the doors of the church in worship? Is there an alternative to this liturgical practice, based on Paul's requirement of professing (discuss)?
- Obviously, 10:12-13 proceeds verses 19-21. Even though we haven't yet covered chapter 11, do you believe God had mercy on Israel (those that did not readily accept and profess Jesus as the Messiah)? Why or why not?

V Follow-up Questions?

VI Closing Prayer

