

*their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. (MATTHEW 6:7-8)*

*Known to God from eternity are all His works. (ACTS 15:18)*

*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (ROMANS 8:28-30)*

*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. (2 TIMOTHY 1:8-9)*

## DOUBLE, DOUBLE, TOIL AND TROUBLE: IS PREDESTINATION DOUBLE?

Double predestination. The very words sound ominous. It is one thing to contemplate God's gracious plan of salvation for the elect. But what about those who are not elect? Are they also predestined? Is there a horrible decree of reprobation? Does God destine some unfortunate people to hell?

These questions immediately come to the fore as soon as double predestination is mentioned. Such questions make some declare the concept of double predestination out of bounds. Others, while believing in predestination, declare emphatically that they believe in *single* predestination. That is, while believing that some are predestined to salvation, there is no need to suppose that others are likewise predestined to damnation. In short, the idea is that some are predestined to salvation, but everyone has an opportunity to be saved. God makes sure that some make it by providing extra help, but the rest of mankind still has a chance.

Though there is strong sentiment to speak of single predestination only, and to avoid any discussion of double predestination, we must still face the questions on the table. Unless we conclude that every human being is predestined to salvation, we must face the flip side of election. If there is such a thing as predestination at all, and if that predestination does not include all people, then we must not shrink from the necessary inference that there are two sides to predestination. It is not enough to talk about Jacob; we must also consider Esau.

### Equal Ultimacy

There are different views of double predestination. One of these is so frightening that many shun the term altogether, lest their view of the doctrine be confused with the scary one. This is called the equal ultimacy view.

Equal ultimacy is based on a concept of symmetry. It seeks a complete balance between election and reprobation. The key idea is this: Just as God intervenes in the lives of the elect to create faith in their hearts, so God equally intervenes in the lives of the reprobate to create or work unbelief in their hearts. The idea of God's actively working unbelief in the hearts of the reprobate is drawn from biblical statements about God hardening people's hearts.

Equal ultimacy is *not* the Reformed or Calvinist view of predestination. Some have called it "hyper-Calvinism." I prefer to call it "sub-Calvinism" or, better yet, "anti-Calvinism." Though Calvinism certainly has a view of double predestination, the double predestination it embraces is not one of equal ultimacy, which was condemned at the Second Council of Orange in 529.

To understand the Reformed view of the matter we must pay

close attention to the crucial distinction between *positive* and *negative* decrees of God. Positive has to do with God's active intervention in the hearts of the elect. Negative has to do with God's passing over the non-elect.

The Reformed view teaches that God positively or actively intervenes in the lives of the elect to insure their salvation. The rest of mankind God leaves to themselves. He does not create unbelief in their hearts. That unbelief is already there. He does not coerce them to sin. They sin by their own choices. In the Calvinist view the decree of election is positive; the decree of reprobation is negative.

Hyper-Calvinism's view of double predestination may be called *positive-positive predestination*. Orthodox Calvinism's view may be called *positive-negative predestination*. Let us view it in chart form:

CALVINISM	HYPER-CALVINISM
positive-negative asymmetrical view	positive-positive symmetrical view
unequal ultimacy	equal ultimacy
God passes over the reprobate.	God works unbelief in the hearts of the reprobate.

The dreadful error of hyper-Calvinism is that it involves God in coercing sin. This does radical violence to the integrity of God's character.

The primary biblical example that might tempt one toward hyper-Calvinism is the case of Pharaoh. Repeatedly we read in the Exodus account that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. God told Moses ahead of time that he would do this:

You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh, that he must send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them. (Exodus 7:2-5)

The Bible clearly teaches that God did, in fact, harden Pharaoh's heart. Now we know that God did this for his own glory and as a sign to both Israel and Egypt. We know that God's purpose in all of this was a redemptive purpose. But we are still left with a nagging problem. God hardened Pharaoh's heart and then judged Pharaoh for his sin. How can God hold Pharaoh or anyone else accountable for sin that flows out of a heart that God himself hardened?

Our answer to that question will depend on how we understand God's act of hardening. How did he harden Pharaoh's heart? The Bible does not answer that question explicitly. As we think about it, we realize that basically there are only two ways he could have hardened Pharaoh's heart: actively or passively.

Active hardening would involve God's direct intervention within the inner chambers of Pharaoh's heart. God would intrude into Pharaoh's heart and create fresh evil in it. This would certainly insure that Pharaoh would bring forth the result that God was looking for. It would also insure that God is the author of sin.

Passive hardening is a totally different story. Passive hardening involves a divine judgment upon sin that is already present. All that God needs to do to harden the heart of a person whose heart is already desperately wicked is to "give him over to his sin." We find this concept of divine judgment repeatedly in Scripture.

How does this work? To understand it properly we must first look briefly at another concept, God's *common grace*. This refers to that grace of God that all men commonly enjoy. The rain that refreshes the earth and waters our crops falls upon the just and the unjust alike. The unjust certainly do not deserve such benefits, but they enjoy them anyway. So it is with sunshine and rainbows. Our world is a theater of common grace.

One of the most important elements of common grace we enjoy is the restraint of evil in the world. That restraint flows from many sources. Evil is restrained by policemen, laws, public opinion, balances of power, and so on. Though the world we live in is filled with wickedness, it is not as wicked as it possibly could be. God uses the means mentioned above as well as other means to keep evil in check. By his grace he controls and bridles the amount of evil in this world. If evil were left totally unchecked, then life on this planet would be impossible.

All that God has to do to harden people's hearts is to remove the restraints. He gives them a longer leash. Rather than restricting their human freedom, he increases it. He lets them have their own way. In a sense he gives them enough rope to hang themselves. It is not that God puts his hand on them to create fresh evil in their hearts; he merely removes his holy hand of restraint from them and lets them do their own will.

If we were to determine the most wicked, the most diabolical men of human history, certain names would appear on almost everyone's list. We would see the names of Hitler, Nero, Stalin,

and others who have been guilty of mass murder and other atrocities. What do these people have in common? They were all dictators. They all had virtually unlimited power and authority within the sphere of their domains.

Why do we say that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely? (We know that this has no reference to God but only to the power and corruption of men.) Power corrupts precisely because it raises a person above the normal restraints that restrict the rest of us. I am restrained by conflicts of interest with people who are as powerful or more powerful than I am. We learn early in life to restrict our belligerence toward those who are bigger than we are. We tend to enter into conflicts selectively. Discretion tends to take over from valor when our opponents are more powerful than we.

Pharaoh was the most powerful man in the world when Moses went to see him. About the only restraint there was on Pharaoh's wickedness was the holy arm of God. All God had to do to harden Pharaoh further was to remove his arm. The evil inclinations of Pharaoh did the rest.

In the act of passive hardening, God makes a decision to remove the restraints; the wicked part of the process is done by Pharaoh himself. God does no violence to Pharaoh's will. As we said, he merely gives Pharaoh *more* freedom.

We see the same kind of thing in the case of Judas and with the wicked men whom God and Satan used to afflict Job. Judas was not a poor innocent victim of divine manipulation. He was not a righteous man whom God forced to betray Christ and then punished for the betrayal. Judas betrayed Christ because Judas wanted thirty pieces of silver. As the Scriptures declare, Judas was a son of perdition from the beginning.

To be sure, God uses the evil inclinations and evil intentions of

fallen men to bring about his own redemptive purposes. Without Judas there is no Cross. Without the Cross there is no redemption. But this is not a case of God coercing evil. Rather it is a glorious case of God's redemptive triumph over evil. The evil desires of men's hearts cannot thwart God's sovereignty. Indeed they are subject to it.

When we study the pattern of God's punishment of wicked men we see a kind of poetic justice emerging. In the final judgment scene of the book of Revelation we read the following:

He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still. (22:11)

In God's ultimate act of judgment he gives sinners over to their sins. In effect, he abandons them to their own desires. So it was with Pharaoh. By this act of judgment, God did not blemish his own righteousness by creating more evil in Pharaoh's heart. He established his own righteousness by punishing the evil that was already there in Pharaoh.

This is how we must understand double predestination. God gives mercy to the elect by working faith in their hearts. He gives justice to the reprobate by leaving them in their own sins. There is no symmetry here. One group receives mercy. The other group receives justice. No one is a victim of injustice. None can complain that there is unrighteousness in God.

### **Romans 9**

The most significant passage in the New Testament that concerns double predestination is found in Romans 9.

For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son." And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "Even for this same purpose I have raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name might be declared in all the earth." Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. (vv. 9-18)

In this passage we have the clearest biblical expression we can find for the concept of double predestination. It is stated without reservation and without ambiguity: "Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens." Some people get mercy, others get justice. The decision for this is in the hand of God.

Paul illustrates the double character of predestination by his reference to Jacob and Esau. These two men were twin brothers. They were carried in the same womb at the same time. One received the blessing of God and one did not. One received a special portion of the love of God, the other did not. Esau was "hated" by God.

The divine hatred mentioned here is not an expression of an insidious attitude of malice. It is what David earlier called a "holy hatred" (Psalm 139:22). Divine hatred is not malicious. It involves a withholding of favor. God is "for" those whom he loves. He turns his face against those wicked people who are not the objects of his special redemptive favor. Those whom he loves receive his mercy. Those whom he "hates" receive his justice. Again, no one is treated unjustly.

Why did God choose Jacob and not Esau? Some believe God must have foreseen something in Jacob that justified this special favor, that God looked down the corridors of time and saw Jacob making the right choice and Esau making the wrong choice. These people espouse the foreknowledge or prescient view of predestination, which we looked at in the previous chapter.

When I was converted to faith in Christ during my freshman year of college, I did not immediately become convinced of the doctrine of predestination. Although I realized the word *predestination* occurred frequently in the Bible, and that it was not an invention of Augustine, Martin Luther, or John Calvin, nevertheless I adopted the foreknowledge view, which is the most popular view of predestination among evangelicals. I doggedly held that view for several years, until, in my senior year of seminary, I took a course on the theology of Jonathan Edwards and was required to read his masterpiece *The Freedom of the Will*. It was Edwards's treatment of Paul's teaching on Romans 9 that finally caused me to surrender to the overwhelming clarity of the Word of God on this matter. I saw that Paul's teaching in Romans 9 not only demolishes the arguments of the opposition but dusts off the spot where they stood.

It must be said that the foreknowledge view and the Reformed view, as espoused by Edwards and others, agree as to the point in

time when God elects people for salvation—eternity past. God's decree to save some individuals was made from all eternity, not last week, last year, or at some other point. However, the two views part ways when it comes to the basis for God's choice. As I noted above, the popular view is that he made his decree to save based on what he foresaw, but the Reformed view is that it was a sovereign decree of God without a view to anything he saw in the future. One view affirms the grace of God plus human actions, whereas the other affirms the grace of God alone.

When Paul wrote to the Romans, if he had been writing as an exponent of the foreknowledge view, it would not have been difficult to make the point clear. This was Paul's golden opportunity to teach a foreknowledge view of predestination. It seems strange indeed that he did not take such an opportunity. But this is no argument from silence. Paul does not remain mute on the subject. He labors the opposite point. He emphasizes the fact that God's decision was made before the birth of these twins, Jacob and Esau, and without a view to their future actions.

Paul's phrase in verse 11 is crucial: "For the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls." Why does the apostle labor this point that the decree was not only made from all eternity, but was made before any one of these people had been born or had done anything good or evil?

Sometimes when we are interpreting a message or a document, we have to think through the authorial intent—that is, what the writer intended to convey. The quest for authorial intent can be dangerous, as it can lead interpreters to try to read the author's mind, so that they end up putting into the author's mouth words that were never there. However, when there are differences about

the meaning of a passage after we have carefully looked at the words, it is appropriate to raise the question of authorial intent. Since evangelicals take different positions on the intent of Paul's words, I am raising the question here.

If Paul were teaching the foreknowledge view of predestination here, it would have made more sense for him to stop after saying that Jacob and Esau were predestined before they were born. By adding "nor having done any good or evil," Paul makes clear that divine predestination is based on God, not on us. The accent here is clearly on the work of God. Paul emphatically denies that election is a result of the work of man, foreseen or otherwise. It is the purpose of God according to his election that is in view.

But while Paul is silent about the question of future choices in verse 11, he does not remain so. In verse 16 he makes it clear: "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." This is the *coup de grace* to Arminianism and all other non-Reformed views of predestination. This is the Word of God that requires all Christians to cease and desist from views of predestination that make the ultimate decision for salvation rest in the will of man. The apostle declares: "It is *not* of him who wills." The non-Reformed views must say that it *is* of him who wills. This is in violent contradiction to the teaching of Scripture. This one verse is absolutely fatal to Arminianism.

It is our duty to honor God. We must confess with the apostle that our election is not based on our wills but on the purposes of the will of God.

### **Anticipating Objections**

One of the key techniques used in debate is anticipating the objections one's opponent will raise against one's position. If I

am debating an issue, and I know my opponent cannot wait for me to stop talking so he can raise his objection, the most clever thing I can do is to raise it for him before he has the opportunity to raise it on his own. Whenever possible, I want to raise that objection as cogently as I possibly can. If possible, I want to make the objection more compelling than my opponent himself can. If I can do that, I have pulled the rug out from under my opponent's position.

I don't think anyone in Western thought was as adept at this technique as Paul the apostle, and we see that expertise on display here in Romans 9. Paul poses two rhetorical questions in this passage that counter objections his readers were likely to raise. The first is, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness in God?" (v. 14). Paul was anticipating an objection along these lines: "What chance did Esau have to be elect if the choice was not his to make? It seems wrong of God to do it this way. God is unfair!"

Let's assume that Paul is teaching the foreknowledge view of predestination. If that is the case, why did he anticipate this objection? My Arminian friends have to defend their doctrine of predestination all the time. They are told that it is not true or not biblical. But I cannot imagine any Arminian ever having to defend his position against the charge that it isn't fair, that Arminianism somehow casts a shadow over the integrity of God and his righteousness. What could be more fair than that God would base his election unto salvation of one person over another on his knowledge of what they would do? If our election is ultimately based on human decisions, there is no need to raise such an objection.

It is to the biblical doctrine of predestination that this question is raised. It is predestination based on God's sovereign purpose,

on his decision without a view to Jacob or Esau's choices, that prompts the outcry, "God is not fair!" But the outcry is based on a superficial understanding of the matter. It is the protest of fallen man complaining that God is not gracious enough.

How does Paul answer the question? He is not satisfied by merely saying, "No, there is no unrighteousness in God." Rather, his answer is as emphatic as he can make it. He says, "Certainly not!" or "God forbid!" depending on the translation you are reading.

Then Paul takes his readers to Scripture to back up his point. He writes, "For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom ever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion'" (v. 15). In this citation from Exodus 33:19, God is simply declaring his sovereignty over his grace. He can pardon whom he will without being under any obligation to give the same mercy to another person. His grace is completely undeserved; indeed, there is nothing we can do to earn it. That leads to verse 16: "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." As I noted earlier in the chapter, God does not treat everyone equally, but he cannot be charged with treating anyone unfairly. There is no unfairness with God.

The second objection Paul anticipates is this: "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?'" (v. 19). Again we wonder why the apostle anticipates this objection. This is another objection never raised against Arminianism. Non-Reformed views of predestination don't have to worry about handling questions like this. God would obviously find fault with people who he knew would not choose Christ. If the ultimate basis for salvation rests in the power of human choice, then the blame is easily fixed and Paul would not have

to wrestle with this anticipated objection. But he wrestles with it because the biblical doctrine of predestination demands that he wrestle with it.

How does Paul answer this question? Let us examine his reply:

But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and the other for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? (Romans 9:20–24)

This is a heavy answer to the question. I must confess that I struggle with it. My struggle, however, is not over whether the passage teaches double predestination. It clearly does that. My struggle is with the fact that this text supplies ammunition for the advocates of equal ultimacy. It sounds like God is actively making people sinners. But that is not required by the text. He does make vessels of wrath and vessels of honor from the same lump of clay. But if we look closely at the text we will see that the clay with which the potter works is "fallen" clay. One batch of clay receives mercy in order to become vessels of honor. That mercy presupposes a clay that is already guilty. Likewise God must "endure" the vessels of wrath that are fit for destruction because they are guilty vessels of wrath.

Again the accent in this passage is on God's sovereign purpose and not upon man's free and good choices. The same assumptions are operating here that are operating in the first question.

### **The Arminian Reply**

Some Arminians will reply to my treatment of this text with indignation. They agree that the passage teaches a strong view of divine sovereignty. Their objection will focus at another point. They will insist that Paul is not even talking about the predestination of individuals in Romans 9. Romans 9 is not about individuals but about God's electing of nations. Paul is here talking about Israel as God's chosen people. Jacob merely represents the nation Israel. His very name was changed to Israel and his sons became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

That God favored Israel over other nations is not in dispute. It was out of Israel that Jesus came. It was out of Israel that we received the Ten Commandments and the promises of the covenant with Abraham. We know that salvation is of the Jews.

That much is indeed true of Romans 9. We must consider, however, that in the electing of a nation God elected individuals. Nations are made up of individuals. Jacob was an individual. Esau was an individual. Here we see clearly that God sovereignly elected individuals as well as a nation. We must hasten to add that Paul extends this treatment of election beyond Israel in verse 24 when he declares: "even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles."

### **Unconditional Election**

Let us return for a moment to our famous acrostic, TULIP. We have already quarreled with the *T* and the *I* and changed it to

RULEP. Though I prefer the term *sovereign election* to *unconditional election*, I will not damage the acrostic further. If we changed it to RSLEP it wouldn't even rhyme with TULIP.

Unconditional election means that our election is decided by God according to his purpose, according to his sovereign will. It is not based upon some foreseen condition that some of us meet and others fail to meet. It is not based on our willing or on our running, but upon the sovereign purpose of God.

The term *unconditional election* can be misleading and grossly abused. I once met a man who never darkened the door of a church and who showed no evidence of being a Christian. He made no profession of faith and was engaged in no Christian activity. He told me that he believed in unconditional election. He was confident that he was elect. He did not have to trust Christ, he did not have to repent, he did not have to be obedient to Christ. He declared that he was elect and that was enough. No further conditions for salvation were necessary for him. He was, in his opinion, saved, sanctified, and satisfied.

We must be careful to distinguish between conditions that are necessary for salvation and conditions that are necessary for election. We often speak of election and salvation as if they were synonymous, but they are not exactly the same thing. Election is *unto* salvation. Salvation in its fullest sense is the complete work of redemption that God accomplishes in us.

There are all sorts of conditions that must be met for someone to be saved. Chief among them is that we must have faith in Christ. Justification is by faith. Faith is a necessary requirement. To be sure, the Reformed doctrine of predestination teaches that all the elect are indeed brought to faith. God insures that the conditions necessary for salvation are met.

When we say that election is unconditional we mean that the

original decree of God by which he chooses some people to be saved is not dependent upon some future condition in us that God foresees. There is nothing in us that God could foresee that would induce him to choose us. The only thing he would foresee in the lives of fallen creatures left to themselves would be sin. God chooses us simply according to the good pleasure of his will (see Ephesians 1:5).

### Is God Arbitrary?

That God chooses us not because of what he finds in us, but according to his own good pleasure, gives rise to the charge that this makes God arbitrary. It suggests that God makes his selection in a whimsical or capricious manner. It seems like our election is the result of a blind and frivolous lottery. If we are elect, then it is only because we are lucky. God pulled our names out of a celestial hat.

To be arbitrary is to do something for no reason. Now, it is clear that there is no reason found *in us* for God to choose us. But that is not the same as saying that God has no reason in himself. God doesn't do anything without a reason. He is not capricious or whimsical. God is as sober as he is sovereign.

A lottery is intentionally left up to chance. God does not operate by chance. He knew whom he would select. He foreknew—that is, foreloved—his elect. It was not a blind draw because God is not blind. Yet we still must insist that it was nothing that he foreknew, foresaw, or foreloved in us that was the decisive reason for his choice.

Calvinists do not generally like to speak of luck. Instead of wishing people “good luck,” we might say, “Providential blessings.” Yet if we were to speak of our “lucky day,” we would mark that day in eternity when God decided to choose us.

Let us turn our attention to Paul's teaching on this matter in Ephesians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. (1:3-6)

"According to the good pleasure of his will." This is the apostolic statement that seems to suggest divine arbitrariness. The chief culprit is the word *pleasure*. In our vocabulary the word *pleasure* is often charged with the meaning of wild, reckless abandon. Pleasure is that which feels good, something that has sensual and emotional overtones. We are aware of vices that bring wicked pleasure to us.

When the Bible speaks of God's pleasure, the term is not used in such a frivolous manner. Here pleasure means simply "that which is pleasing." God predestines us according to what pleases him. The Bible speaks of God's *good* pleasure. God's good pleasure must never be mistaken for an evil pleasure. What pleases God is goodness. What pleases us is not always goodness. God never takes pleasure in wickedness. There is nothing wicked about the good pleasure of his will. Though the reason for choosing us does not lie in us but in the sovereign divine pleasure, we may rest assured that the sovereign divine pleasure is a good pleasure.

We remember also what the apostle instructed the Philippian Christians. He said to them: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13).

In this passage Paul is not teaching that election is a joint enterprise between God and man. Election is exclusively the work of God. It is, as we have seen, *monergistic*. Paul is speaking here about the outworking of our salvation that follows our election. He is specifically referring here to the process of our sanctification. Sanctification is not monergistic. It is synergistic. That is, it demands the cooperation of the regenerate believer. We are called to work to grow in grace. We are to work hard, resisting sin unto blood if necessary, pummeling our bodies if that is what it takes to subdue them.

We are called to this sober work of sanctification by a divine summons. The work is to be carried out in a spirit of fear and trembling. Our sanctification is not a casual matter. We do not approach it in a cavalier manner, saying simply, "Let go and let God." God does not do it all for us.

Neither, however, does God leave us to work out our own salvation by ourselves, in our own strength. We are comforted by his sure promise to be working in us both to do and to will what is pleasing him.

I once heard a sermon by the great Scottish preacher Eric Alexander in which he stressed that God is working in us for *his* good pleasure. Paul does not say that God is working in us for *our* good pleasure. We are not always entirely pleased by what God is doing in our lives. Sometimes we experience a conflict between the purpose of God and our own purpose. I never choose to suffer on purpose. Yet it may well be within the sovereign purpose of God that I suffer. He promises us that by his sovereignty all

things work together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose (see Romans 8:28).

My purposes do not always include God's good. I am a sinner. Fortunately for us, God is not a sinner. He is altogether righteous (see Psalm 89:14). His purposes are always and everywhere righteous. His purposes work for my good, even when his purposes are in conflict with my purposes. Perhaps I should say, especially when his purposes are in conflict with my purposes. What pleases him is good for me. That is one of the most difficult lessons Christians ever learn.

Our election is unconditional except for one thing. There is one requirement we must meet before God will ever elect us. To be elect we must first be sinners.

God does not elect righteous people unto salvation. He does not need to elect righteous people unto salvation. Righteous people do not need to be saved. Only sinful people are in need of a savior. Those who are well have no need of a physician.

Christ came to seek and to save people who were really lost. God sent him into the world not only to make our salvation possible, but to make it sure. Christ has not died in vain. His sheep are saved through his sinless life and his atoning death. There is nothing arbitrary about that.

## SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 7

1. Not all men are predestined to salvation.
2. There are two aspects or sides to the question. There are those who are elect and those who are not elect.
3. Predestination is "double."
4. We must be careful not to think in terms of equal ultimacy.
5. God does not create sin in the hearts of sinners.
6. The elect receive mercy. The non-elect receive justice.

7. No one receives injustice at the hands of God.
8. God's "hardening of hearts" is itself a just punishment for sin that is already present.
9. God's choice of the elect is sovereign, not arbitrary or capricious.
10. All of God's decisions flow from his holy character.

## For Further Study

*For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 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, 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.* (DEUTERONOMY 7:6-8, ESV)

*And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger."* (GENESIS 25:23)

*And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go."* (EXODUS 4:21)

*"I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated."* (MALACHI 1:2-3)

*Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. (ACTS 13:48)*

*And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." (ROMANS 9:10-13)*

*They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. (1 PETER 2:8)*

## CAN WE KNOW THAT WE ARE SAVED?

The ministry of Evangelism Explosion keys its presentation of the gospel upon two crucial questions. The first is, "Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know *for sure* that when you die you will go to heaven?" Experienced workers say the vast majority of people answer this question in the negative. Most people are not sure of their future salvation. Many, if not most, raise serious doubts about whether such assurance is even possible.

When I was in seminary, a poll was taken of my classmates. Of that particular group of seminarians approximately 90 percent said that they were not sure of their salvation. Many expressed anger at the question, seeing in it a kind of implied presumptuousness. It seems arrogant to some people even to talk about assurance of salvation.

To be sure, stating our assurance of salvation may be an act of arrogance. If our confidence in our salvation rests in a confidence in ourselves, it is an act of arrogance. If we are sure we are going to heaven because we think we deserve to go to heaven, then it is unspeakably arrogant.