

151. The Gospel of John—15:16

“Chosen by God”- Part 2

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In our study of John’s Gospel, we are in Chapter 15 studying **Jesus’ farewell address to His disciples** before His crucifixion.

Last week we camped on verse 16 where we focused on Jesus’ statement—**“You did not choose Me, but I chose you...”** Upon saying this, I think Jesus’ disciples must have looked at each other somewhat puzzled by that statement. You see in their minds each of them had decided to follow Jesus and become one of His disciples—in that regard they had chosen Him not the other way around!

Of course, the immediate context was that these men didn’t choose to be Jesus’ *apostles*—that was something He had chosen for them.

But the ultimate idea behind the statement that they (or any of us who are His disciples) didn’t choose Jesus, He chose us—is **a positional truth** that took place long ago—

Ephesians 1:4 (NKJV)

⁴ just as He chose us [for eternal life] in Him before the foundation of the world...

Now, the question we’ve been wrestling with is—on what basis did God *choose* us for eternal life? Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:2 that God chose or elected us to salvation—**“according to His foreknowledge”**. **The Greek word for ‘foreknowledge’ is *prognosis* which means—“knowledge known in advance; or the action of foretelling or prophesying future events.”**

>>> Now, those who are Calvinists say that this Greek word (‘foreknowledge’) actually means ‘*foreordination*’. In other words, God only knows the future because—**He has foreordained the future**. He knows the future because **He has predetermined the future**—including all those who would be saved.

You see in Calvinist theology; it wasn’t that God simply knew in advance (foreknowledge) those who would get saved and those who wouldn’t—He *predestined* some to be saved and the rest to be damned.

Now, let me say again that **predestination is a biblical doctrine**—

Ephesians 1:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ 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, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself...

REFLECTION: What does the verse Jesus spoke “—“You did not choose Me, but I chose you...” mean to you?

As we said last time, the word ‘**predestination**’ comes from a Greek word that means “to predetermine or plan beforehand a person’s destiny.”

The strict definition isn’t hard to understand—the problem comes when we try to figure out upon what basis does God predetermine someone’s destiny (heaven or hell)—is it based entirely upon His sovereign will or on our free will?

>>> Extreme or hyper-Calvinists believe that in eternity past God chose some to be predestined to eternal life in heaven and the others He predestined to spend eternity in hell (doctrine of reprobation). All of this was decided before any of us were ever born and without any free will on our part to choose where we wanted to spend eternity.

In other words, we are nothing, but puppets and God is the puppet Master! He makes us behave in certain ways and causes some to believe in and others not to believe in His Son—and we have no choice in the matter. I thoroughly reject the Calvinist definition of predestination.

But before I give you my interpretation of predestination—let me talk for a moment about the Calvinist doctrine of reprobation.

First of all, with regard to the doctrine of reprobation—not all Calvinists hold to it.

>>> Moderate Calvinists teach that although God *did* elect and predestine some to salvation before the foundation of the world simply on the basis of His divine sovereignty—they claim that that doesn’t mean He predestined others to hell.

Now folks, this is trying to have it both ways!

- If God commanded that to be saved a person had to fly but then only gave a select few people (the elect) wings so they could fly—that would be tantamount to condemning (reprobating) the others to hell without any hope of ever being saved.

I have heard Calvinists say, “Oh, but God isn’t telling them not to fly—so their damnation is their fault.”

That is so disingenuous it’s hard to take it seriously. Besides that, if God can (and does) force the elect to be saved—then why not just force everyone to be saved?!

- How can God, Who is all-love (omni-benevolent), **only save a few** when **He could save all?**
- How does that even harmonize with His nature as a God of love?!

Practical Example

What if you were passing by a pond on a hot summer’s day and you saw 5 young boys who at first glance looked like they were swimming—but upon a closer look you realized they were actually *drowning*. o

Let’s say you could save all of them, but you only chose to save one of them.

Do you think people would call you a hero or a heartless villain?

Calvinism turns God into a heartless villain—a God Who could save all of ‘drowning’ humanity (drowning in sin and on their way to hell)—but instead chooses only to save a small number of sinners called the ‘elect’. I have heard Calvinists respond to this accusation by saying—*“God is under no obligation to save anyone!”*

That’s true but *it’s not the point!*

Of course, God is under no obligation to do anything for any of us—including and especially to save any fallen sinners. But if He chooses (by force) to save sinners at all—then He must choose to save all sinners—or else He can’t be an all-loving God.

Now at this point, many Calvinists would respond, *“That’s right! God is only all-loving to the elect, the rest of mankind He hates—doesn’t God say, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated?’”* (Malachi 1:2; Romans 9:13, Luke 14:26)

➤ *“Well then Phil, how do you explain predestination?”*

Remember, the word ‘**predestination**’ comes from a Greek word that means *“to predetermine or plan beforehand a person’s destiny.”* **The strict definition isn’t hard to understand—the problem comes when we try to figure out upon what basis does God predetermine someone’s destiny.**

Once again, Peter said that we were elected (and predestined) according to the *foreknowledge* of God. (1 Peter 1:2)

“Foreknowledge” is a Greek word that means *‘knowledge known in advance’*.

How do I explain predestination?

I explain it this way—**that God in eternity past looked down into the future through His foreknowledge and knew everyone who, through His grace, would respond in faith to His offer of salvation when the Gospel was presented to them (maybe not the first time but eventually).**

And therefore, based on that foreknowledge He elected (chose) us to be His children and predetermined our destiny (the definition of predestination)—**that we would spend eternity with Him in heaven.**

Predestination only applies to heaven and those who receive Jesus as their Savior—nowhere in Scripture are we taught that God predestines anyone to hell.

If they do wind up going to hell—it is because of *their* refusal to believe in and receive Jesus as their Savior.

REFLECTION: Try to explain “foreknowledge & predestination”:

Now our Calvinist brothers and sisters would immediately jump all over that interpretation of predestination by saying—“*If God chose us based on us choosing Jesus—that would make God the responder and not the initiator of salvation.*”

This, they say, would violate what Jesus Himself clearly said on the subject—

John 6:44 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father...draws him...

I totally agree with that—**God is the initiator of salvation.** Jesus is the Good Shepherd Who goes out looking for lost sheep—**He draws sinners to Himself—we simply respond to His call and come to Him for salvation.**

The difference between Calvinists and non-Calvinists like me is that—Calvinists claim that God only draws the elect to Christ.

Whereas I believe, as Jesus said, “*If I am lifted up from the earth (the cross) I will draw all men and women to Myself.*” (John 12:32)

Now listen, just because God draws a person to Jesus (the ministry of the Holy Spirit) doesn’t mean they *have* to be saved—they can resist the grace of God (I don’t believe in the Calvinist doctrine of Irresistible Grace).

I believe the Bible teaches that God is calling (and drawing) all men and women to be saved—but that His grace to be saved isn’t forced on anyone and can be resisted and even rejected:

Matthew 23:37 (NKJV)

³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing!”

Acts 7:51 (NKJV)

⁵¹ “*You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so do you.*”

I believe that God is calling all people to be saved—but God knew in eternity past those who would receive Jesus as Savior and those who wouldn’t. Based on that foreknowledge He chose those who would receive Jesus to be His children and predestined them (pre-determined their destiny) to spend eternity with Him in heaven.

This is what Jesus meant when He said—“*Many are called but few are chosen.*” (Matt. 20:16 and 22:14).

John 3:18-20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

One author had this to say—

“You see, the singular issue concerning predestination is neither intellectual nor theological—it’s moral. Through His foreknowledge, God sees the person who wants to continue to walk in darkness—and doesn’t choose them for eternal life in heaven. So, too, before the foundation of the world, He saw those who wanted to walk in light—and chose them to be His sons and daughters and live with Him in His Kingdom forever.”

But once again, let's be crystal clear on this point—just because God chooses some for heaven, the Bible never teaches that He chose others for hell. The Bible says that hell wasn't even made for man—it was made for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

However, if a person wants to live their entire life in rebellion against God—then like the very first rebel in the universe (Lucifer)—they will follow him all the way to the place where he will spend eternity!

Hell is where everyone goes who wants to live in sin and refuses to choose Jesus as their Savior—**of their own free will!**

REFLECTION: How does mankind's freewill impact our journey to heaven or hell?

That is the ultimate tragedy—because God desires *all* people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)—also see:

John 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Romans 10:11-13 (NKJV)

¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

One writer tried to harmonize God's election with man's free will this way—

"On the door to heaven, from our side, it says, 'Whosoever will may enter. I am the Door (Jesus said) if anyone chooses to enter by Me they will be saved and have everlasting life.'

Now, if a person enters that door, when they get on the other side (heaven) as they look back—on the other side of that door they will find the words written, 'Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.'"

At this point, I want to take a little detour and say some things that at first glance are going to seem like they are totally disconnected from our subject this morning—but bear with me, they aren't.

There are many in our society that, if they even believe in God, don't believe He created the universe and in particular everyone living on planet earth. So, in that regard they don't believe in creationism—they believe in naturalism.

The naturalistic worldview says that in the beginning nothing produced everything all by itself.

Naturalism is an atheistic worldview that believes there is no God and that everything in the universe came about thru natural processes without any supernatural intervention or divine fiat. Of course, this is contrary to what the Bible clearly teaches—

Genesis 1:1 (NKJV)

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

In the first verse of the Bible, we have the basis for a *theistic* worldview—that everything in the natural realm was created by a supernatural Deity. Of course, this has had a profound impact on our society.

The Bible says that God made man “*a little lower than the angels*” and crowned him with glory and honor. (Psalm 8:5) But modern man has rejected the Creator and has embraced evolution which teaches that man evolved “*a little higher than the apes*”.

Of course, evolution is amoral, so by rejecting the God of the Bible, Who is a moral God, and replacing Him with the ‘god’ of naturalism—man is free to live anyway he likes (or so he thinks!).

These two different worldviews—*theism* and *naturalism* inevitably lead to two entirely different ways of looking at and living one’s life. Many people who have embraced the naturalistic worldview don't realize the implications and ramifications this has had on society.

**Man is not a cosmic accident—
there is a God who created man
in His image and likeness on purpose
and for a purpose!**

If there is no God, if man is just a cosmic accident (the result of countless genetic mutations in the evolutionary process) then there is no purpose or ultimate value to life—and of course no afterlife! This leads to a philosophy of life that is nihilistic and hedonistic the motto of which being, “*Let's eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die—and that's it!*”

But fortunately, *that isn't true!!*

In fact, the Bible says that, not only are we not an accident—**we are God’s masterpiece!**

“*For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us for a purpose, so we can do all the good works he planned for our lives even before we were born.*” (para. of Ephesians 2:10)

In this regard the Lord is saying that even as He chose us for salvation—He also appointed us for special service—

John 15:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that your fruit should remain*...

So, God created you on purpose for a purpose—and He has been preparing you for that work even from before you were born! The apostle Paul mentions this in Galatians 1:15 when he was giving his testimony how that it pleased God, “*Who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace...*”

God has been preparing you for His purposes from eternity past—but even more recently from the womb—you are no accident! I mean, who you would be—your race and gender; where you would be born, the family

and economic status you would be born into, the talents and abilities you were born with—all of these were God’s way of preparing you for the purpose He had for your life.

And ever since you were born God has been further preparing you through the experiences of your life (good and bad) for this work—shaping and molding you into who you are today.

God has your future all mapped out and designed—He knows exactly the work that He wants you to accomplish for His glory and His Kingdom.

REFLECTION: What is the purpose of God creating “you” and “choosing you” to be in His Kingdom?

➤ *The question is will you submit to Him and fulfill the plans and purposes He has ordained for your life?*

Jesus goes on to say that once the relationship with God is established it has its privileges—like answered prayer!

John 15:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, **that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you** [for the work He is calling you to do for Him—the work of His Kingdom].

Now, understand, just because the Father chose you, and Jesus saved you, and the Holy Spirit wants to use you—that doesn’t mean that if you serve God the world is going to applaud you!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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