

LEFT TO SELF

CLARIFYING GRACE AND JUSTICE

How does predestination relate to those that are not elect? Are those who are not elect predestined just as those who are? The flip side of divine election is its chief difficulty. Many stop here for fear of an inferred “dark side” of grace. But if our understanding of election detracts from the brilliant glory of God and serves more to discourage than to promote deepening worship, then our understanding needs biblical correction.

The centrality of Christ is the key to clearing misconceptions about the flip side of election.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Predestination is a doctrine concerned with salvation. It is the warm revelation of **God’s prevailing love**.
- Sin is much worse than any of us estimate. It is far more deserving of punishment than we naturally feel. Sin’s consequences are utterly devastating. The fall and depravity of humanity is a crucial to our presuppositions on this subject.
- Our will is not free to choose against its nature. But we do freely worship what we want. We are never constrained to sin. This is called **free agency**.
- Moral accountability is tied to one’s desires, not one’s ability to choose. This is called **voluntarism**. It basically states that the will is accountable for what it worships.
- God’s will rules. This is referred to as God’s **sovereign will**.
- Our choices are **compatible** within God’s choices. This does not mean that our choices will necessarily be in harmony with His delight. It means that our will fits within His will, that God is sovereign and humans are responsible.
- Election is not a doctrine of God that can be biblically sustained apart from salvation.
- The redeemed are chosen *in* **Christ**, *in* **love**.

THE CHIEF DIFFICULTY

If our **thesis** is that God elects people to salvation, then the **antithesis** seems to be that God, by virtue of non-election, elects people to damnation. If this is true, then all the Bible's talk about God's justice and mercy is thrown into question. On the other hand, to insist that God predestines some to salvation but does not predestine the rest to damnation categorically presents a logical problem.

THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM

Berkouwer: "Does ... speaking of rejection [pre-damnation] find its origin in the logical conclusion that election implies rejection? Or does it find its origin in the testimony of Scripture itself?"

THE LOGICAL PROBLEM

Geisler: "All Calvinists, like it or not, must hold some form of double-predestination—the logic of their position demands it."

(A) electoral	chosen	not chosen
(B) moral	Christ Justified by faith in Christ	self Guilty by desires of the heart
(C) judicial	redemption	retribution

What is the opposite of election (A)? It certainly cannot be retribution (C), which is revealed by God only as a consequence to sin (B). The antithesis to election (A) is not retribution (C), but rather preterition (A) ("passing over, not choosing"). Just as election (A) is not identical with redemption (C), so non-

election (A) is not identical to retribution (C). Condemnation (C) is consequential to sin (B), just as redemption (C) is consequential to Christ's work applied (B). According to this arrangement, God's active choice to elect or not elect is symmetrical, and therefore His act of election is logically coherent. His non-choice is a real choice and He alone is responsible for it. But this is not to say that God is responsible for the damnation of the wicked, for damnation is not a direct consequence of non-election (A), but rather of sin and corruption (B). God's judgment does not result from His non-election, it results from man's sin. Non-election does not properly lead to condemnation, sin does. God's non-election merely leaves a sinner in his sin. Consequently, the desires and choices (B) of all mankind (elect and non-elect) are willfully depraved, each person rendering himself worthy of God's judgment (C). Thus, the asymmetrical view maintains that through election God is the efficient cause of man's salvation and at the same time through rebellion man is his own efficient cause of condemnation. Asymmetry is observed in that the Lord actively intervenes only in the lives of the elect. Only when these tiers are collapsed or confused does the asymmetrical view pose a logical difficulty.

ROMANS 9

Reprobation properly describes the act of reproving or raising objections against a person and thus disapproving or condemning.

Preterition basically describes the act of passing over someone or something. It derives from the Latin *praeter*, meaning beyond or past.

CONTEXT

Celebration of the prevailing love of God (8:28-39)

The deep comfort and security of this love (8:31-39)

Paul's deep anguish over the failure of most Jews to see the glory of Christ (9:1-5)

(this is the problem that the chapter seeks to address)

Corporate privilege (promises) (9:4-5)

Corporate pride (reject Christ who is God) (9:5)

Israel's failure is not a failure of God's sovereignty (9:6-13)

Not all of the nation of promise are children of promise (9:6-8)

Word <---> promise

Promise is related to election (9:9-13)

Promise is not because of merit but by the sheer mercy of God (9:11)

The justice and mercy of God in His electing purposes (9:14-26)

Mercy is God's prerogative, not an obligation (9:15)

(inference: justice is not optional)

Salvation depends on God's electing mercy, not man's will (9:16)

God's judgment upon the wicked also serves His glorious purposes (9:17-18)

God's sovereign electing will is not culpable for man's wickedness (9:19)

Man has no right to accuse God of injustice (9:20)

God has the right to grant or withhold mercy on whom He wills (9:21)

Withholding mercy makes known God's just wrath against sin (9:22)

Withholding mercy serves the purpose of magnifying His mercy (9:23)

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

	"VESSELS OF WRATH"	"VESSELS OF MERCY"
God's Active Relationship	[God] has endured	[God] has prepared
Temporal Condition	with much patience	beforehand
Purpose	to show	
Attribute	wrath	
Purpose	to make known	to make known
Attribute	His power	His glory
Emphasis: <i>undeserving</i>		the riches of
Emphasis: <i>deserving</i>	"having been prepared/fitted"	
Consequence	for destruction	for glory