

Tackling Tough Questions
Election Predestination and Free Will
Week 2—Winter GTW 2006

Augustine's predestination was safe with him... comprehensible in Calvin, tiresome in the English Puritans and quite horrible in the Scottish Presbyteries.

—Charles Williams, *Descent of the Dove*

I. Introduction.

A. Limitations of human language to talk about God. (Isaiah 55).

1. Univocal, equivocal and analogical language.

B. If humans are truly free, how can God be truly sovereign?

1. Overarching question: God's plan for our lives.
2. God's plan in general (Providence).
 - a. Christians believe human beings have freedom.
 - b. Christians believe God is sovereign; in control.
 - c. How can both of these be true?
3. Scripture concerned w/ divine plan *vis à vis* salvation.

C. Election and predestination are distinct biblical concepts.

II. Election in the Old Testament

A. Preliminary remarks

B. Genesis 12: "all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" by Abraham. A missional perspective.

C. The Exodus: a further confirmation of God's election.

D. Conquest of land to destruction of Jerusalem (Josh- II Kings

1. Victorious conquest & election of anointed king, David.
2. Under David & Solomon chosen nation became "great"
3. After Solomon, divided into 2 kingdoms; exile.
4. Issue: Syncretism and Apostasy.

E. Isaiah.

1. Election a comfort to exiles: Isaiah 41:9f.
2. Election is now (again) missional: spread Israel's faith in God *among* nations.

F. Summary.

1. Throughout history, Hebrews are elected by God.
2. In O.T. Election applies 1st to nation, 2nd to individuals.

3. Deut. encourages continuing in or returning to the Lord.
4. Missional Trajectory: “all peoples of the earth”(Gen 12)
5. Reprobation, always seen as warnings.
6. Divine judgment results from lack of faith, never unprovoked rejection by the Lord.

III. The Concept of Election in the New Testament

A. Introduction

1. NT election continuation and modification of OT.
2. Early Christians understood church as new/“true Israel.”
3. Paul parts company on issue of Israel’s future.
 - a. Paul insisted Israel remained elect (Romans 11:28)
 - b. Paul less than clear at many points.
 - 1) Full election of Israel (Romans 9:11; 11:28)
 - 2) Partial election of Israel (Romans 11:5,7)
 - 3) Election of the church (I Thessalonians 1:4).
4. Most important Pauline passage: Romans 8:28-11:36.
 - a. Insight on relationship b/n election & predestination.

B. Romans 8:28-39

1. Exhortation to remain faithful amidst afflictions.
2. Roman Christians urged to persevere (8:31-36).
3. God’s call rooted pre-temporally with future hope.
4. Understanding Paul’s terms.
 - a. Christians “foreknown” & “predestined” (8:29f.).
5. Predestination.
 - a. ‘pro-‘ verbs: *see/know/prepare/choose beforehand*.
 - b. *Proorizo*, appoint by a definite plan: “predestine.”
 - c. Goal-orientation of God’s choice of elect.
 - 1) Divine choice is immune to present trials.
6. Foreknowledge. Two historical interpretations
 - a. Foreseeing of faith

- b. Election to faith.
 - c. Human preoccupation with future knowledge.
 - d. Divine foreknowledge as intimate relationship.
 - 1) God's election more certain than any forces.
 - 2) At the end of the day, a mystery.
 - e. God's choice (election) is sure; persevere!
 - 1) Supreme ground for hope amidst difficulties.
7. Election as practical concern for Roman church (9-11).
- a. What *about* elect but non-believing Israel?
 - 1) Paul pressed both theologically and personally.
 - b. Israel's unbelief in no final conflict w/ God's mercy
 - 1) God is sovereign and merciful (Rom. 9 & 10).
 - 2) *And* Historic Israel is still elect (Romans 11).

IV. Historical development.

- A. Two Historic Approaches.
 - 1. Election as an element of the Doctrine of God
 - 2. Election as an Element of the doctrine of Grace
- B. Election and Predestination Prior to Augustinian
- C. Election and Predestination in Augustine
 - 1. The Pelagian Controversy: Pelagius' Theology
 - 2. Original Sin, Grace, and Double Predestination
- D. Post-Augustinian Responses during the Middle Ages
- E. Election and Predestination in the Reformers.
 - 1. Martin Luther on the Freedom of the Will.
 - 2. Luther and the Hiddenness of God: Reprobation.
 - 3. John Calvin on Election and Predestination
 - 4. The 17th & 18th century Reformed Scholastics.
 - 5. The response of Jacob Arminius.