

## PREDESTINATION, PART II

### What is predestination?

- in our salvation, God must make the first move

#### 1 John 4:19

We love because he first loved us.

#### John 15:16

You did not choose me, but I chose you.

#### John 6:44

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

#### John 10:26-27

You do not believe because you are not my sheep.

### Objection: but if God determines all things, how can we be free?

- and how can God blame us if we choose sin, since predetermined?

### This is the paradox of “double agency”

- God is in control over all things AND we are held responsible for all our actions

#### Genesis 50:20

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

#### Exodus and Pharaoh

<sup>8:15</sup> But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

<sup>9:12</sup> But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

### Objection: doesn't this make God the author of sin?

- paradox: God “ordains” sin but does not “cause” sin
- difference in language tries to grasp what we don't understand

## Difference between God's permissive decree and active decree

#### Psalm 81:10-13

<sup>10</sup> I am the LORD your God,  
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

Open your mouth wide,  
and I will fill it.

<sup>11</sup> But my people did not listen to my voice;  
Israel would not submit to me.

<sup>12</sup> So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,  
to follow their own counsels.

<sup>13</sup> Oh, that my people would listen to me,  
that Israel would walk in my ways!

### Objection: doesn't the Bible say God wants all people to be saved?

#### 1 Timothy 2:4

God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

#### Ezekiel 18:23

Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

### Answer: God has two wills

- God's moral, revealed will and his sovereign, secret will

#### Acts 2:23

This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

#### Isaiah 53:7, 10

<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,

<sup>10</sup> Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him.

#### Matthew 12:50

Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

### God wills all to be saved *and* only the elect to be saved

- God wills something he doesn't want (sovereign will)
- God wills something that doesn't happen (moral will)

## Predestination II, Notes

### What is predestination?

- in our salvation, God must make the first move

### Last week – our hearts are dead

- only if God replaces our hearts of stone with a heart of flesh can we love him
- therefore, the initiative depends on God
- we can't muster faith on our own without the intervention of God

**1 John 4:19** – We love because he first loved us.

**John 15:16** – You did not choose me, but I chose you.

**John 6:44** – No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

### The Father must *first* “draw us” to him

- without that, we cannot come to Christ
- therefore, it depends on the sovereign mercy of God

**John 10:26-27** – You do not believe because you are not my sheep.

### Order is very significant

- not: “you are not my sheep because you do not believe”
- but rather: “you do not believe because you are not my sheep”
- in other words, only sheep believe | non-sheep don't believe
- what ultimately matters is whether you are God's sheep or not

### Objection: but if God determines all things, how can we be free?

- and how can God blame us if we choose sin, since predetermined?
- if I'm predestined to reject Christ, how can it be my fault if I go to hell?

### This is the paradox of “double agency”

- Christianity is full of paradoxes | if you're not comfortable with paradox, then can't believe Christianity
- paradox: Jesus is fully human (finite) and fully divine (infinite)
- paradox: God is a unity (one being) and a community (three persons)
- paradox: God is in control and we are held responsible for our actions

**Genesis 50:20** – As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

### The same action – selling Joseph into slavery (and death)

- Joseph can call “evil” | the brothers are held responsible for their evil intent
- but God used it and ordained it for good – that ancient Near East saved from famine
- but wait a minute, how can it be both? answer: it's a paradox!

## **Exodus and Pharaoh**

<sup>8:15</sup> But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

<sup>9:12</sup> But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

### **Classic example**

- in some places, it says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart against God
- in other places, it says God did the hardening

### **How can it be both? | answer: it's a mystery**

- “secret things belong to God, revealed things belong to us”
- and maybe we couldn't understand if God explained it to us anyway
- imagine a 2D-being trying to comprehend a 3D-being

### **Think of the alternative: if “single agency”**

- then we're on our own | incredibly scary thought
- “double agency” is deeply comforting – because God superintends all our decisions

### **Illustration – think experience reading a novel**

- villainous character full of evil and cruelty
- “ah, but author wrote the character, therefore I'm really mad at the author”
- no, you're still mad at the character | because within story, characters are responsible
- and yet you know the author ultimately wrote the story
  
- and yet this illustration is inadequate
- because God is far greater than any human author
- and we are far more real than any fictional character

### **Wait, doesn't this make God the author of sin?**

- if it was God's will that Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery or Pharaoh to resist
- isn't this God using evil means for a good end?

### **No – God is not the author evil and sin**

- deep paradox – God “ordains or decrees” sin but does not “cause or author” sin
- trying to use language to make a distinction
- but don't ask me what the distinction is – because it's beyond us
- God can somehow ordain evil without being responsible for or creating evil!

### **Some explained it – difference between God's *permissive decree* and *active decree***

#### **Psalm 81:10-13**

<sup>10</sup> I am the LORD your God,  
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.  
Open your mouth wide,  
and I will fill it.

<sup>11</sup> But my people did not listen to my voice;  
Israel would not submit to me.

<sup>12</sup> So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,  
to follow their own counsels.

<sup>13</sup> Oh, that my people would listen to me,  
that Israel would walk in my ways!

### **In v. 13 – God laments that his people do not listen to him**

- and yet we know the reason in v. 12 – God gave them over to their stubborn hearts
- it doesn't say God gave them stubborn hearts or evil hearts
- but that God “gave them over” to what was already there

### **Analogy: there's a difference between pushing someone and letting someone trip and fall**

- suppose you could have stop the fall, but you choose not to intervene
- in one sense, it was your will that they fall, but it's not your fault (you didn't cause it)

### **God knew the evil in our hearts**

- he choose, for his own sovereign will, to let it happen

### **Another objection – but Bible says God wants all people to be saved**

**1 Timothy 2:4** – God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

**Ezekiel 18:23** – Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD,  
and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

### **Distinction between God's *revealed, moral will* and God's *secret, sovereign will***

- this disturbs people because it seems like God is speaking with two sides of his mouth
- on one hand, God wants you to be saved, but on other hand, God ordains your damnation
- in other words, God wills something he disapproves of

### **But actually, we see this everywhere in Scripture, particularly of the death of Christ**

**Acts 2:23** – This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge  
of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

### **Peter condemns the act of crucifying Jesus as evil**

- and yet, he says, God ordained it – “according to definite plan and foreknowledge of God”

### **Isaiah 53:7, 10**

<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,

<sup>10</sup> Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him.

### **Again, it was God's “will” to crush his son and yet God is grieved by the sin**

- God wills it, but it is exceedingly sorrowful to him

**Matthew 12:50** – Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

**Here is another “will of God” – what is good and right and moral**

**So that there are two wills of God**

- will of desire – will of wanting what is good and right
- will of decree – will of ordaining what actually comes to pass, according to God’s sovereign plan

**Sometimes: God wills something he *doesn’t want* and wills something that *doesn’t happen!***

**It is God’s moral, reveal will (his desire and character)**

- that everyone is saved – that all people come to a saving knowledge of Christ
- but according to God’s sovereign will, for his own secret purposes, God only predestines some to salvation

**Why?**

- we cannot say, because the Bible is not exactly on this
- but the Bible gives us hints

**Romans 3:25** – this was to show God’s righteousness

**We often forget God is motivated both:**

- by his love for his people
- and to bring glory to himself <--- *this is the missing piece to help us understand why hell exists*

**God predestines some to eternal damnation and some to eternal salvation**

- so that God’s righteousness is displayed (for his glory)
- those in perishing in hell demonstrate the righteousness of God | as those rescued in Christ
- so that our salvation is all the greater and sweeter

**We don’t ultimately know – but we know that God is good and just**

- his reasons are perfect and beautiful and glorious
- he just doesn’t tell us his reasons – but we must trust his will