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Principles for Rightly Applying Predestination

Romans, Part XLVII

Romans 9:24-29

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I. The Father who Plants (Mt 15:12-14)

The doctrine of *predestination* reminds us that (1) *God alone can grant salvation* and that (2) *He has not chosen to give salvation to all*. Hence, it is not within our power to convert people to Christ. Our calling is to be faithful witnesses to the truth and leave the results and the responses to God.

¹²Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" ¹³But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

II. Reviewing Paul's Reasoning on Predestination

A. God's Promise (8:28-30) – All those the Father justifies shall be glorified

²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

B. Paul's Problem (9:1-5) – Unbelief Among God's "Elect" People

But if God promises to glorify all those whom He justifies, then what are we to think of the widescale unbelief among the Israelites? Does God's word fail?

C. Paul's Principle (9:6) – They are not all Israel who are of Israel

Paul answers this apparent tension with a *foundational principle*: "They are not all Israel who are of Israel" (9:6). Paul is clearly defining "Israel" in two distinct ways:

- The first refers to all those who are *personally elect*. This is the "inward Israel" (cf. 2:28-29).
- The second refers to those who are *corporately elect* (cf. 9:4-5). This is ethnic Israel, outward Israel.

Paul insists that they are not all *inward Israelites* who are *ethnic Israelites*. And God's promises are for all those who are inward Israelites, _____ elect.

D. God's Purpose (9:14-24) – Declaring His Name in all the earth

So why does God choose some and not others? Because His purpose in history is to declare His _____ in all the earth (9:17) – revealing that mercy and justice meet in Him:

- ⁶The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." (Ex 34:6-7)
- ²²What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³[even] that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? (Rom 9:22-24a)

III. Principles for Rightly Applying Predestination

²⁵As He says also in Hosea: “I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved.”

²⁶“And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ There they shall be called sons of the living God.” ²⁷Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved. ²⁸For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.” ²⁹And as Isaiah said before: “Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah.” (Romans 9:25–29)

A. God often acts outside the walls of His visible church (25-26 cf. Hos 1:10; 2:23)

Hosea promised that though God was currently excluding northern Israel from His covenant, one day He would restore them. Paul applies this promise to the Gentiles. By calling both Jews and Gentiles, God revealed that He doesn’t just work within the walls of His Church, causing the descendants of His people to grow up and praise His Name (cf. Jer 32:38f), He also works outside her walls, calling unbelievers to faith (cf. Ps 67; Mt 5:14-16). After all, the number of the _____ is “a great multitude which no one [can] number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues” (Rev 7:9).

B. God often winnows His visible church (27-28 cf. Is 10:22-23; Jn 15:1ff)

Paul’s second quotation reminds us that God often winnows His visible church. Sadly, in Isaiah’s day, God’s people were corrupt from top to bottom. Isaiah had prophesied:

²¹How the faithful city has become a harlot! It was full of justice; Righteousness lodged in it, But now murderers. ²²Your silver has become dross, Your wine mixed with water. ²³Your princes are rebellious, And companions of thieves; Everyone loves bribes, And follows after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, Nor does the cause of the widow come before them. ²⁴Therefore the Lord says, The LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, “Ah, I will rid Myself of My adversaries, And take vengeance on My enemies. ²⁵I will turn My hand against you, And thoroughly purge away your dross, And take away all your alloy. ²⁶I will restore your judges as at the first, And your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.” (Is 1:21-26)

In Isaiah’s day, God used the Assyrians to winnow His church. In Paul’s day, the Romans. In our day, leftist politicians and LGBTQ activists. This principle reminds us that when the church is unfaithful, it is but a *remnant* who will be saved. The numbers of those *corporately elect* and *personally elect* are not equivalent. God winnows His visible Church. Hence, *predestination* is not _____. Fatalism is “a doctrine that events are fixed in advance so that human beings are powerless to change them.” But Scripture uses the doctrine of predestination to warn unbelievers to repent and professing Christians to have a living faith and to “make your calling and _____ sure” (cf. 2 Pet 1:10).

C. The church is always dependent on God’s mercy (29 cf. Is 1:9; 1 Cor 10:4)

Paul’s third quotation reminds us that we are in constant need of God’s _____. God could have left all of us in our sin and condemned us for our sinfulness. That would have been perfectly just. Yet God has chosen to have mercy on a vast multitude. So we ought to respond with praise and thanksgiving. *Predestination* rightly understood reminds us of the absolute necessity of a living faith.

IV. Conclusion