

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Video Lecture Series

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

STUDY GUIDE

Module 2:
THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Lecture 10:
PREDESTINATION



The John Knox Institute
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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

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Module 2

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Module 2: THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Lecture 10: Predestination

Introduction

The unconverted are not just sick or weak; they are spiritually blind, ignorant, and dead in sins. That means that if left alone, they cannot possibly respond to the gospel and be saved from their sins anymore than a person in a grave can respond to someone shouting at them. What the sinner needs can only be provided by God. He must show the initiative in supernaturally giving them spiritual life. Otherwise, the dead sinner will die in his sins and suffer the eternal death of divine punishment in hell. But thanks be to God that he is pleased, graciously and mercifully, to choose a people for himself; to seek and save them; to give them life; and to secure their complete and eternal redemption in Christ Jesus.

Theme: *The doctrine of Predestination.*

I. Scriptural Basis

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved....In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:4–6; and 11–12)

1. God is the one doing the choosing and predestining.
2. God made this determination “*before the foundation of the world.*”
3. God’s predestinating to save a people is rooted in his own good pleasure.
4. God’s predestination results in the “*praise of the glory of his grace.*”

Questions:

1. Read and meditate on the whole of Ephesians chapter 1. What other lessons can you draw from this chapter? What spiritual blessings and privileges does a believer have in Christ?

2. How is God's act of predestination related to his grace?

II. Doctrinal Overview

As summarized in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 3, paragraphs 3 and 4:

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death."

"These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished."

1. The definition of "predestination."
2. The doctrine of election.
 - a. The definition of election.
 - b. *The Westminster Confession*, chapter 3, paragraphs 5 and 6.
 - c. God's decree to elect his people is eternal and unchangeable.
 - d. Election is also unconditional
 - e. Election is exceedingly gracious.
3. The doctrine of reprobation.
 - a. *The Westminster Confession*, chapter 3, paragraph 7.
 - b. Two facets included in reprobation.
 - 1) preterition
 - 2) condemnation

Questions:

1. What does the word “predestination” refer to? What are the two sides of predestination?

2. What is the doctrine of election? Where did it originate?

3. What are the characteristics of election? Where do we see election proven in the Scripture?

4. Whom does the doctrine of election speak of? What did the Lord Jesus say about those are the elect?

5. What is the doctrine of reprobation? What are the two facets included in reprobation, and what do they mean?

III. Polemical Exposition

Objection 1: *This doctrine is not fair. How can people be held responsible if they were not chosen by God to be saved?*

Objection 2: *This doctrine makes God the cause of people going to hell.*

Objection 3: *There are people who sincerely want to be converted, and who are rejected and excluded from salvation.*

Objection 4: *The power exerted to save man is found within himself. By God's universal, prevenient grace, man has a free will and the ability to savingly respond to the gospel.*

Questions:

1. What error in thinking does Objection #1 stem from? How does the Bible answer this objection?

2. What does "monergism" mean? Why does God condemn reprobate sinners to hell?

3. How do we know that the claim in Objection #3 is false?

4. What are the historical errors, false doctrines that rejected the true doctrine of predestination? Who were those that God raised up to stand for against those errors? What does this historical controversy remind us of in the Scripture?

IV. Practical Exposition

As summarized in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 3, paragraph 8:

“The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.”

1. We are to focus on the revealed gospel.
 - a. Men are called upon to respond by receiving and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. The doctrine of predestination casts us in dependence on the Lord.
3. This doctrine destroys pride and fosters humility.
4. This doctrine should strengthen, and not diminish, our assurance of salvation.

Questions:

1. What things should we keep in mind in order to make good use of the doctrine of predestination?

2. Why do we say that this doctrine casts us in dependence upon the Lord?

3. why should the doctrines of election and reprobation humble us?

4. How does the doctrine of predestination strengthen the believer in assurance of their salvation? What are the fruits of gospel grace?

V. Self-Reflection

1. As Rev. McCurley said at the end of this lecture, “You could summarize what we’ve learned in three brief, simple words—God saves sinners. God is the one who does the choosing and saving, not man. God does not merely attempt to save, he saves—irresistibly saves the elect. And he saves undeserving sinners, who, if left to themselves, would be otherwise lost.”

Are you a person who is always in doubt about whether you are elected by God or not? The doctrine of election calls us to Christ. All of election’s blessings are in Him. Are you waiting to come to Christ until you can somehow discover that you are one of the elect? John Calvin said that the way to know that God elected us is by believing in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

2. We also see people who are proud because they think they are one of the elect. Can this be right? Election inspires humility and holiness, not pride. We must never separate election away from obedience to God’s laws. Those who think that they can sin freely because they are elect have actually rejected the God who elects sinners unto holiness. How should this doctrine cultivate our hearts?
