

Peace Adult Sunday School

Chosen by God

Chosen by God - R. C. Sproul

Session 2 - The Struggle

Why do we struggle against the notion that our salvation is all God?

Our cultural background - Freedom Cries Out!

When the issue flares up we suddenly become super-patriotic, guarding the tree of human liberty with more zeal and tenacity than Patrick Henry ever dreamed of. The specter of an all-powerful God making choices for us, and perhaps even against us, makes us scream, "Give me free will or give me death!" p. 1, Sproul, R.C. *Chosen by God*. E-Book ed., Tyndale House Publishers 1986 Kindle

The freedoms for which we cry are not freedom from God but rather over-zealous control by sinful people. In a flight- my freedom of movement is drastically reduced and put largely into the hands of the pilot and other personnel directing the flight. I do not want control; do I want control from a all-powerful, perfect, good and loving God?

Our fear of fatalism or being a robot

The very word predestination has an ominous ring to it. It is linked to the despairing notion of fatalism and somehow suggests that within its pale we are reduced to meaningless puppets. The word conjures up visions of a diabolical deity who plays capricious games with our lives. p. 2, Sproul

It's not fatalism, but God's own good will and plan.

God has not "given it [the universe] either to necessity, or to chance, or to the caprice of man, or to the malice of Satan, to control the sequence of events and all their issues, but has kept the reins of government in his own hands." - Benjamin Warfield attributes to Charles Hodge in [Is Predestination the Same Thing as Fate](#)

(See https://www.opc.org/new_horizons/NH02/06e.html)

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Warfield goes on to illustrate the difference between fate and predestination

There is a story of a little Dutch boy, which embodies very fairly the difference between God and fate. This little boy's home was on a dike in Holland, near a great windmill, whose long arms swept so close to the ground as to endanger those who carelessly strayed under them. But he was very fond of playing precisely under this mill. His anxious parents had forbidden him to go near it; and, when his stubborn will did not give way, had sought to frighten him away from it by arousing his imagination to the terror of being struck by the arms and carried up into the air to have life beaten out of him by their ceaseless strokes. One day, heedless of their warning, he strayed again under the dangerous arms, and was soon absorbed in his play there – forgetful of everything but his present pleasures. Perhaps he was half conscious of a breeze springing up, and somewhere in the depth of his soul he may have been obscurely aware of the danger with which he had been threatened. At any rate, suddenly, as he played, he was violently smitten from behind, and found himself swung all at once, with his head downward, up into the air; and then the blows came, swift and hard! O what a sinking of the heart! O what a horror of great darkness! It had come then! And he was gone! In his terrified writhing, he twisted himself about, and looking up, saw not the immeasurable expanse of the brazen heavens above him, but his father's face. At once he realized, with a great revulsion, that he was not caught in the mill, but was only receiving the threatened punishment of his disobedience. He melted into tears, not of pain, but of relief and joy. In that moment, he understood the difference between falling into the grinding power of a machine and into the loving hands of a father.

Predestination has an image problem

Add to the horror of the word predestination the public image of its most famous teacher, John Calvin, and we shudder all the more. We see Calvin portrayed as a stern and grim-faced tyrant, a sixteenth-century Ichabod Crane who found fiendish delight in the burning of recalcitrant heretics. It is enough to cause us to retreat from the discussion altogether and reaffirm our commitment never to discuss religion and politics p. 3

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This is a caricature. This doesn't depict Calvin nor is he the earliest or most vocal proponent of this view.. For more on myths about Calvin see:

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/5-myths-about-john-calvin/>

After Paul (being inspired by God), Augustine and Luther came first. Luther wrote more extensively on this topic than Calvin.

[Historical footnote: Melancthon didn't follow Luther's views on this after Luther died and influenced the Lutheran movement to a different view than Luther]

I talked about my struggle with how we can be held morally culpable for our sin if I couldn't escape my sin but need God's intervention.

A final struggle is that we often don't have sharp clarity about what predestination really is - we confuse it fatalism (cold fate determines all things) or determinism (Everything is determined by a previous cause). So we need to be clear that predestination is God sovereignly exercising his will that his chosen will be saved.

What are some of the misconceptions people have about predestination?

What is your struggle? How did/do you overcome that struggle?

Reminders that God is in control:

Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it. Isaiah 46:9 - 11 ESV

What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. Romans 9:14-16 ESV