



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 153

Another objection to the doctrine of predestination is that in Romans 9 Paul is quoting Malachi 1:2-3, referring to nations, therefore critics say that Paul is not talking about individual but corporate election, where God only elects a group to salvation without electing the individual people. If a person believes Jesus then he becomes a member of that group. It is true that the Bible often uses the names of people to refer to nations and tribes, such as Israel, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, Joseph, Edom and so on (Hosea 14:5; Amos 5:6; 7:9; Jeremiah 10:25; 49:7, 10); but in Romans 9 it is also clear that Paul is applying the election of Israel in Malachi 1 to individuals regarding their salvation or destruction, for he talks about their parents, their birth, their actions (or lack of actions), and God's election of one over the other.

Also groups are meaningless without their members, and this would again make God's election subject to man's decision, which is contrary to Paul's teaching (Romans 9:11, 16). If Paul was referring to God's election of groups then his questions would make no sense (vv. 14, 19). Why would anyone object to God's choosing of a group if the members themselves decide to be in that group or not?

Similar to the above point is another objection that Romans 9 is not talking about being elected unto salvation but for service or other earthly blessings. Such interpretations are contrary to the context and plain meaning of the doctrine of predestination expounded in Romans 9, which flow from Paul's doctrinal teachings in chapters 1 to 8, focusing on personal salvation in Jesus Christ (Romans 9:30-32).

Another popular argument is that if God has already elected all who will be saved, then what is the purpose or value of our prayers or evangelism for anyone's salvation? First, we are to pray for and witness to people because the Bible clearly commands these (Matthew 5:44; Romans 10:1; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 2:9). Second, the Bible also clearly teaches that God has in eternity past predestined some for eternal life and others for eternal death, and this purpose of God is immutable and infallible (Westminster Confession of Faith - Chapter 3, Section 4). Our prayers and evangelism do not change God's mind or plans, for all that God has ordained will be come to pass, and none will be able to obstruct His plans (Numbers 23:19; Romans 11:34-36; Ephesians 1:11). However, our prayers and evangelism do change things, as God uses these as the means by which He brings about His plans (Proverbs 15:8; Isaiah 65:24; Luke 11:9-10; Acts 8:29-38; James 5:16-18). Reformed theology teaches that God has not only ordained the ends but also the means to those ends (Acts 20:18-21; Romans 10:14-17; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Psalm 119:89-91; Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 13:21).

Finally, many ask, "Why doesn't God save everyone?" The Bible does not tell us why God has chosen to save some and not all, but it does teach that God is not obligated to save any sinner, and that He has the right to save whomever He wills; and when He does it is purely based on His grace and mercy.

For sinful man this is a hard and humbling doctrine to accept. Election and reprobation are deep truths of the Bible which we cannot fully fathom, as God has not answered all of our questions about these, much like Job and his questions. But one thing is clear, God has not made salvation possible for all and left its realization in the hands of people; rather, He has made salvation certain for all those whom He has elected (Romans 8:29-30). There is nothing that gives us greater joy and assurance regarding our salvation than this doctrine (Westminster Confession of Faith - Chapter 3, Section 8).

Even though we cannot fully grasp the doctrine of predestination, for us who accept it this is one of the loveliest, sweetest and most marvelous doctrines of the Bible, for in it we see the splendid glory of God's character, and His unfathomable love and grace toward us sinners. As finite creatures we humbly bow our knee before our infinite God and His purposes, with a great sense of awe and adoration, in eternal gratitude for our salvation. Doxology must be the final end of all theology (Romans 11:33-36).