

## "PREDESTINATION"

(Romans 9:1-33)

(Chuck Swindoll)

Predestination. Just the word appears intimidating. It is perhaps one of the most difficult concepts in all of Christian doctrine because it appears on the surface to rob humans of their most precious treasure: their autonomy. Although the doctrine challenges our notions of self-determination, it is ultimately what separates Christians from humanists, who proclaim that the fate of the world is *ours* to decide. The past, they say, has been fired in the kiln of history and cannot be altered, but tomorrow is still soft and pliable clay, ready to be shaped by the hands of humanity. Individually and collectively, we—not an almighty figment of wishful thinking—will determine our own future. Put in today's terms, "It's all about us."

Today, I stand in the company of great theologians, preachers, teachers, missionaries, and evangelists to proclaim exactly the opposite. I join the ranks of reformers like William Tyndale, John Wycliffe, John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, John Huss, John Knox, and Martin Luther. I sing with the poets Isaac Watts and John Newton and preach with George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Spurgeon. I respond to the call of pioneer missionary William Carey, who stirred his slumbering Calvinist generation to follow the command of Christ and make disciples of all nations. I place my theology alongside those of John Owen, A. H. Strong, William Shedd, Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, Lewis Sperry Chafer, John F. Walvoord, Donald Grey Barnhouse, and Ray Stedman. And I am numbered alongside my contemporaries John Stott, R. C. Sproul, John Piper, John MacArthur, and J. I. Packer. Today I stand in a great company of sound biblical scholars to declare that God not only created humanity and directed our past, He has already shaped our future. "Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases" (Ps. 115:3).

Coming to terms with the doctrine of predestination requires a dramatic shift in our perspective. We emerge from the womb and progress through childhood viewing the universe with ourselves at the center. Then something wondrous happens at some point in the process of maturing—for most healthy adults, anyway. We suddenly realize that the world extends beyond the circle of our own horizon and that others see the same world from a different viewpoint. Soon, the universe no longer revolves around us, and we accept that our little circle is but a very small part of a much greater reality.

The same is true of salvation!

We faithfully share God's "plan of salvation" with individuals—as we should—but we too often fail to appreciate that Christianity is not "all about us"; it's about *Him*. If we are to proclaim the complete gospel of Jesus Christ, we must recognize and embrace God's masterplan of salvation. The



almighty Creator is fulfilling His own agenda for His universe, which cannot be altered; therefore, those who have heard and accepted the plan of salvation have become a part of something much greater than themselves, even if they don't realize it.

Take a few moments now and reread Romans 8:28-39 in light of God's master plan of salvation. We tend to claim the promises of those verses as individuals. God does indeed love us personally and individually, but note that Paul used the first-person plural, "we" and "us," throughout the passage. This does not promise that God will alter the universe to ensure the highest good of each individual. On the contrary, God's "plan of salvation" is a mighty river of destiny into which a believer plunges. This river of righteousness will eventually flood the world, washing away the old order to make room for the new. And when Jesus returns to set all things right, our belief in Him allows us to become a part of that new order.

Make no mistake: Paul's letter to the Romans is not about our salvation. His primary subject is the righteousness of God, of which our salvation is a part. The Lord is pursuing His own agenda, remember. It is to remove death from the throne of creation and give it to His Son so that the righteousness of God will rule all things. And He will do this whether anyone decides to join Him or not.