

Series: God Saves #1414

**Title: Romans 8.29b; Ephesians 1
God's Will and Predestination**

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Yesterday we defined this word “predestines” found in Romans 8, verse 29. Specifically applied to our salvation from sin, it means to determine beforehand. God marks out the boundaries or the limits for us, and He does so *before* we are even born. He *predetermines*. He *pre*-appoints us to our destination beforehand. And that destination is either heaven or hell. Our final destination, heaven or hell, has been decided by God before we were born. As the theologian RC Sproul puts it, “Our ultimate destiny is in the hands of God.”

And I want to emphasize off the top that predestination deals primarily with *salvation*. This doctrine of predestination is related to how God saves us from our sin. Predestination is *not* does God predestine what shirt I wore today? Does God foreordain the dress you put on this morning? Or, more significantly, does God predestine the car accident, the plane crash, the cancer diagnosis, the hurricane or tornado? Those are valid questions and there is a discipline in theology that deals with those. It is the doctrine of providence. But at this point we are not talking about divine providence but rather divine predestination. We need to keep these straight.

Having said that, let's talk about the *will*. When I just shared with you my definition – albeit I think a sound, biblical definition of predestination – when I gave it, here is a very common reaction and I wonder if you have it? “You are saying God has made a decision about the final destination of my life – where I am going when I die - before I was even born. But don't I get a say? This is *my* life! And hasn't God given me ‘free will’?” I have heard this repeatedly from many people when I share with them my definition of predestination. Ah yes, it seems that human free will always come up in a discussion on predestination.

The point is, using my free will, I have the ability to choose to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved or I have the ability to choose against Jesus Christ and therefore to not be saved. The choice is mine. The idea that the choice is actually God's is repugnant to anyone cherishing the freedom of the human *will*. I get it. But, let me either inform you or remind you that God also has His will. We can talk about our will, and the freedom to use it, all we want, but we must never forget that God also has His will. And the Bible has a lot to say about the will of God.

I have chosen as our text Ephesians chapter 1. I have done so for two reasons. First, this text focuses us on the will of God in regards to our salvation. Second, this text is closely associated with Romans chapter 8, verses 29 and 30. The Apostle Paul is the author of both Ephesians and Romans and he is making a similar point although in two different cities where the churches were located. Ephesus and Rome. You will be able to hear this as I read. Also, be sure and listen for God's will here, in Ephesians chapter 1. I will read verses 1-4 and verses 5, 9, 11 and 12 then circle back and make some comments. Ephesians 1, verses 1-4, 5, 9, 11 and 12.

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the **will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and *who are faithful in Christ Jesus*: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as **He chose us in Him** before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.**

In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the **kind intention of His will... (verse 9) ⁹ He made known to us **the mystery of His will**, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him... (dropping down to verse 11, Ephesians 1, and now verse 11) ¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined** according to His purpose who works all things after **the counsel of His will**, ¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.”**

As always with Paul, there is a lot there. Since the intention of my will is not to teach Ephesians 1 to you, I will not be covering the immense amount of truth that is here. My intention is to draw your attention to the following. First, notice that God has a will. Verse 1 says it, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the **will** of God..." Why is Paul an apostle? He is an apostle because God willed his apostleship. We have the will of God right away in Ephesians 1.

Then in verse 5 we have the "kind intention of His **will**." And, noticeably, this Paul connects to predestination, because all of verse 5 states, "He **predestined** us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His **will**..." So, it is the will of God, it is the kind intention of God to predestine believers to our adoption as sons and daughters of God! The will of God is what drives His predestination of those people He saves from sin. Let me say that again: the will of God is what drives His predestination of those people He saves from sin.

Then in verse 9 we have this stunning statement. "**He made known to us the mystery of His will**..." Ah, there is a mystery to God's will. How true this is. Importantly, the word "mystery" here does not mean an unsolved or unsolvable mystery, but rather the counsel of God, once hidden but now revealed in the Bible. This mystery is what can be known through revelation, because God Himself reveals it to us. Paul says, "He made known to us..." That is, God has revealed to us that He has a will and this is what His will is. I do not want to quickly blow past this. *Please* capture this in your mind and heart. We are going to be talking about God's will in regards to the human will and we need to remember that God has made known to us the mystery of *His* will. Now that's an *awesome, awesome* thought.

And then, as we make our way down through Ephesians chapter 1 we come to the end of verse 11 where we read about "the counsel of His will..." Oh, I love this. And we talked about the counsel of God when we talked about God's foreknowledge. That is, God in Three Persons (Father, Son, and Spirit) holds counsel within Himself and from this counsel determines His will. In verse 11 Paul states, "[God] works all things after the counsel of His will..." All things means all things. When God acts, He acts according to His *will*. He does all things by the counsel of His *will*. And, as we will see, this has great implications for us. Our will is subjected to His much greater will. But more on that later.

Are you with me? I am using Ephesians 1 and these verses to show you that God has His will and He uses His will in relation to our salvation. I have just highlighted Paul identifying the will of God. And now let me draw out of the passage predestination. Surely you heard me read it. Ephesians 1, verse 4: "He chose us in Him." That is descriptive of foreknowledge and election and also predestination. The Apostle says, "[God] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world." Christians are those who have been chosen, elected by God, predestined by God to believe in Jesus from when? From *before the foundation of the world!*

God marks out the boundaries or the limits for us, and He does so *before* we are even born. He *predetermines*. He *pre*-appoints us to our destination beforehand. Verse 4: we are chosen. Then verse 5: "He predestined us..." The word for predestined here is the same word from Romans 8, verse 29 so it means the same thing. And then we have predestination *again* in verse 11: "having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will..." Again the same word from Romans 8.29 is used for predestined in Ephesians 1, verse 11. Same meaning.

Do you see how in Ephesians 1 Paul puts together God's will with God's predestination of us?

I will pick up here again tomorrow, but it will do you good to read Ephesians 1 today. Focus on verses 1-12 and look for God's will and predestination in Ephesians chapter 1. Then, join us again tomorrow because God is.

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