

Series: God Saves #1415

Title: Romans 8.29b

God's Will for God's Glory

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. Last time I showed you in the Bible that God has His will. In our discussion of predestination, that we began this week, we are hitting the objection that God's predestination of some for salvation from sin and that God passing over others who do not have salvation from sin is to steal away our *free will*. The freedom of the will, so very important to human beings. Inevitably this is in play, big time, when we talk about predestination.

As we talk about our will, our ability to choose for Jesus or against Jesus, I think it is crucial to point us to the will of God. We must not think of ourselves as being the only ones free to make choices. God is also free to make choices and He does so with His will. God has a free will. And God's will is The Perfect Will. *Will you agree?* The point I will make stronger, later, is that God's will is more free than your will or my will. But we *will* get to that. (Pardon the puns. They're just popping up all over the place today.)

Now, last time we heard from the Apostle Paul in the New Testament Epistle to the Ephesians. We saw that God has a will, that God predestines us according to the kind intention of His will, that God has made known to us the mystery of His will, *and* that God has predestined us according to the counsel of His will. So that God uses His will to elect, to choose some people for salvation. He does this using His kindness. He does this as a mystery, and He does this according to His own self-counsel. That is, God holds counsel within His triune being and out of that counsel come choices. We will talk about this in different ways the further along we go, but Ephesians chapter 1, especially verses 1-12 are *really* important.

To coincide with the Scripture, today I want to draw your attention to a statement in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. What is *that*? Without giving a thorough history lesson, I will say this. It is a doctrinal statement developed in 1646 and 1647. Input was given from 150 or so theologians, mostly Presbyterians and Puritans, who met together at the Westminster Abbey in London, England. They produced the much larger and longer *Westminster Confession of Faith* as well as this shorter statement, which is very readable because it uses a question and answer format.

The document deals in doctrine and many theologians, to this day, consider the *Westminster Confession* to be the best statement of systematic theology ever written and published by the Christian church. It holds the high standard in doctrine and therefore should be read and taken seriously by us. It is, of course, subordinate to the Bible. By the way, it is available for free on-line. If you would like the link to it, email me and I will get it to you.

Anyway, question seven is this: "What are the decrees of God?" Answer: "The decrees of God are, His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." Now that is a very interesting statement, it is a very *biblical* statement. And, wouldn't you know it, Scripture references are attached and two of them are from Ephesians chapter 1. Ephesians 1, verses 4 and 11. Let me read this Q&A to you again and then sort of break down the answer. Question seven: "What are the decrees of God?" Answer: "The decrees of God are, His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."

Let's work with this statement for the next several days, so we will carry this over the weekend and into next week. I am going to put this into dialogue with a couple of respected theologians of the past so that we can understand what is meant here by God, using His free will, to foreordain whatsoever comes to pass. And let me give you my *reason* for this exercise. We are coming to the matter of our free will (human free will) in regards to predestination. I want to do that. I am eager to do that. But first, I think it is paramount that we understand *God's* free will.

Typical for us, in our pride, we hear about God's predestination of people and we are quick to say, "Hey! What about us? What about *our* freedom to make choices? God hasn't pre-programmed me to control me as a robot, directing my every decision, has He?" And we ask this, defensively, without taking into account the glory of our sovereign God. We seem to be constantly arguing from below (us) rather than from above (God) when it comes to this biblical doctrine of predestination. I want to make the case that arguing from above, at least first, is really what God requires of us. And I think this statement from the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* helps us with this.

Again, I promise you that Lord willing, we will talk about *human free will* but first *God's free will*.

And the first thing I want you to notice is that everything God does is for His own glory. The statement says, "For His own glory, [God] has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." Charles Hodge picks up on this beautifully and in a convicting way in volume one of his *Systematic Theology* when he writes (quote), "The final cause of all God's purposes is His own glory...As God is infinite, and all creatures are as nothing in comparison with Him, it is plain that the revelation of His nature and perfections must be the highest conceivable end of all things..."

"If we make the good of the creature the ultimate object of all God's works, then we subordinate God to the creature, and endless confusion and unavoidable error are the consequence. It is characteristic of the Bible that it places God first, and the good of the creation second (*Systematic Theology: Volume I*, 535-536)." I will end the quote there for a moment.

This is descriptive of exactly the mess we find ourselves in today. We live in a culture, a global culture, where people are put first and where God is not even second, but where God has been rendered totally irrelevant. It seems that everything is driven by the creature with no regard for the Creator. Whereas the Bible puts God first, and us second, this culture puts us first and God, well, not even second. Hodge's *biblical* idea that people are as nothing in comparison to God would certainly get him cancelled. His books should be banned. And since our society has made God subordinate to people, well then we get endless confusion and unavoidable error as the consequence!

So, for example, now people, very young children all the way through adulthood, are confused about their sexuality. And the unavoidable error has taken root. *We* decide who is a boy and who is a girl, who is a man and who is a woman. God has no say. The transgender movement, creating a tidal wave of confusion, is all the consequence of error; it is all the consequence of exalting the creature over the Creator.

Bringing this back to the sphere of theology and talking about the difference in certain theologies (a topic we will cover later) Charles Hodge sets up the conviction of one theology versus the other when it comes to predestination. He continues, "[One] allows the supremacy and sovereignty of God in the workings of His providence and grace to determine everything for His own glory, while [the other] lean more or less to the error of restraining God's liberty of action by the assumed powers and prerogatives of man..."

Back to me now. In other words, our understanding of predestination can be driven by God – His supremacy, His sovereignty, His providence and His grace in determining who is saved, all for His own glory. Or, our understanding of predestination can be driven by us – God's will is limited by the liberty, by the freedom of our will! Hodge has more to say, continuing to quote him now, "The Bible gives one answer: some [people] are saved and others perish not because some of their own will believe and others do not believe, but simply because, thus it seemed good in the eyes of God. Whatever [God] does or permits to be done, is done or permitted for the more perfect revelation of His nature and perfections (536)."

End quote. Ah, there is the point: everything God does is for His own glory. Using His free will to choose some for salvation is for the glory of God. This seemed good in the eyes of God. The glory of God is paramount in our discussion of predestination, which continues Monday right here because God Is!

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