

"He Predestined Us"  
(Ephesians 1:3-14)  
Pastor Espinosa

(pastor originally preached the bulk of this sermon on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and the topic continues to be a very important one for our peace & confidence)

Introduction: Election or pre-destination is the article of the Christian faith that so many people just don't want to talk about...

A. Well, why not? For one because it is riddled with confusion:

1. Election is often confused with God's foreknowledge.
  - a. Now it is absolutely true that the LORD knows everything in advance. That's foreknowledge.
  - b. This, however, does *not* mean that the LORD *causes* everything in advance. The LORD absolutely did *not* cause Adam and Eve to sin against Him! There are many things that the LORD does not cause, simply because He has nothing to do with tempting someone into sin and evil.

James 1:13: *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.'"*

- c. And since the LORD dear Christian cannot tempt anyone to sin; He most certainly does not CAUSE anyone to sin!
  - d. Again, *knowing* and *causing* are two different categories.
  - e. For example, you know that the sun (most likely) is going to rise tomorrow. This knowledge, however in no way, shape or form means that you will be responsible for the sun rising!
  - f. Let's use another example of knowledge and causation but this time instead of going forward into time, we'll go backward. You may know that our congregation just finished offering its fourth annual Vacation Bible School at Crystal Cove State Beach this past week. If you didn't know it before, you know it now, but the fact that we know this now in no way means that your current knowledge of last week's VBS *caused* last week's VBS. Some of you may even have *forgotten* about VBS this past week, but isn't it good to know that you're forgetting about something does not cause that thing to cease to exist! Your forgetting did not cause VBS to be canceled!
  - g. Election and Foreknowledge are two different things.
2. What's the big deal about keeping this straight?

- a. Answer: If we merge them, then we would be saying this: "Because God knows who is going to heaven and hell, therefore, God elects or CAUSES some people to go to heaven and for some people to go to hell."
  - h. To be clear, to merge the two ideas – which are Scripturally and even logically distinct – is to accuse God of electing people to go to hell. Even Calvin called this teaching God's "terrible decree!" You can say that again!
- B. I had a former parishioner who was absolutely wonderful in her worship attendance; she was so amazingly supportive of the ministry, and very active in the women's group. I just didn't understand why trying to get her to come to Bible Study was like pulling teeth. She just would never come to Bible Study and then one day I discovered why. First of all, I learned that she HAD once regularly and faithfully attended Bible Study, *but one day all of that stopped! The last Bible Study she had attended – before I was finally able to address her concern – was a Bible Study on election. And guess what the former pastor had managed to do? Unfortunately, the pastor confused the teaching and as a result frightened this member of the congregation to no end.*

Part I: But in our sin we lean towards qualifying the Gospel of Jesus Christ (that pastor wasn't the only one who has made that mistake), and this manifests in ways in which we just hurt ourselves. In our sin which raises doubts about whether or not God is for us, we can easily fill ourselves with doubts, fears, and anxieties. In this way we attack ourselves! We turn against ourselves!

- A. I have developed a growing understanding and concern about auto-immune diseases. They are diseases in which the body attacks itself. It includes things like multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, and many other serious conditions like celiac and hashimoto's disease.
- B. In a fallen world, we attack ourselves.
- C. And one of the chief ways that we do is to wonder in unbelief whether or not we are destined not for the best, but for the worst. In this way, many people do not live in hope, but live in fear and dread. And it's no wonder why so many people run from God.
- D. The situation is exacerbated as the New Atheism not only rejects God, but is actively seeking to convert Christians to become atheists. That is, it is not at all unusual for someone to go through a genuine faith crisis (having doubts about their salvation), but then while being tempted to run away are then – at the same time – tempted to join a false worldview. Our children are actively going out into a world in which the world is actively trying to get them to lose their faith...and if

it happens, it usually happens in college. This is but one of the reasons why you should consider a good Christian University, and we all know of a really good one close by here called "Concordia University"! Watch out! Equip your kids...teach them, train them, the time is NOW and not sometime in the distant future.

- E. But we need to understand that many atheists do not hold their position on account of philosophical arguments – though some do – but many of them hold their position against God because they cannot live with the thought (no matter how erroneous it may be) that they must be condemned...believing that they have no hope, so why hope at all...why not just deny God?
- F. This is something in our sinful nature that we all do...we play the avoidance game...since I do not understand how to pray, I avoid praying; since I do not understand how to read Scripture, I avoid Scripture; since I do not understand worship, I avoid Church; since I fear that God may elect me to condemnation and a curse because I do not understand election, I avoid God. This happens all of the time.

Part II: But this is not the will of the LORD for you dear Christian!

- A. Take careful note:

Ephesians 1:5: *"he predestined us..."*

- B. Who is St. Paul talking to? Or asked another way, to whom is St. Paul applying the doctrine of election and predestination? Answer: to Christians!
- C. Election is not a doctrine for all humanity; it is a doctrine about believers; about Christians, about people who have been baptized and have had their sins washed away by the blood of the Lamb!
- D. And take a look at this next verse:

Ephesians 1:11: *"In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined..."*

- E. Who is St. Paul talking to? He's talking to Christians!
- F. Predestination and election is a doctrine that belongs to the children of God.

- G. It is not a doctrine to be applied to all people so that we turn the doctrine into one of speculation and confusion. No!
- H. But in Romans 8:30, we know that those predestined are called...by what? Called by the Holy Spirit through the Word! Who fits that description? Only Christians.
- I. So why is this doctrine so important? Because the LORD wants you dear Christian not to doubt but to know that His grace rests upon you!
- J. How do you know? Well consider that you are in the world and it was and is for the WORLD that Jesus came! What do you think? Are you INCLUDED in these words? Are you in the world? If you are, and you have faith in Jesus Christ by the call and the Word of God, then God wants you to take great comfort: He has elected you to be His child! But first be sure...have faith! Are you included? Listen:
  1. Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations (Luke 24:47)
  2. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son. (John 3:16)
  3. Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)
  4. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh. (John 6:51)
  5. The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7)
  6. [Jesus] is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)
  7. Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)
  8. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy on all. (Romans 11:32)
  9. Not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)
  10. The same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him. (Romans 10:12)
  11. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ [is] for all who believe (Romans 3:22)
  12. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life. (John 6:40)

Part III: That is, Jesus Christ is your Book of Life!

- A. Sometimes people anxiously wonder: "Am I in God's book of life?"

- B. They want to peer into the future and look into that book as they ask, "Will my name be written in that book?"
- C. Look Christian: Jesus is your Book of Life. Look to Him. See His hands and His feet...see His blood...look into these...look at the bread in the Holy Sacrament...the Body of Christ for you; look in the chalice...the Blood of Christ shed for you...look at Jesus...He's your Book...YOU ARE WRITTEN in Him.
- D. And when you know that...when you know that He bore all of your sin and rose to defeat your death...then you know that in HIM He has chosen to give you an additional assurance and says to you: "And as you trust in ME dear child, know that I have elected you to eternal life; I have elected you to never be taken from ME; and I have elected you to be strong and courageous and know that in ME, you will ALWAYS be my child!"
- E. But our inner skeptic and doubter just keeps on doubting: "But what about Pharaoh? What about Judas?" Well, let me nip that in the bud for you Christian: God judged them – didn't cause them to sin or predestined them to hell – but because repentance was the last thing on their mind, the LORD simply acknowledged and confirmed their unbelief. They were rejected because they refused faith...period.
- F. But you were not brought to Church this morning because you're refusing faith! Let me prove it:

1. Do you believe that you are a sinner?
2. Are you sorry for your sins?
3. Do you also hope to be saved?
4. In whom, then, do you trust? [please read the answer with me]

"In my dear Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 10:9)

5. Ah, the sweet words of children of the Living God...those whose names are written in the Book of Life...those for whom Christ died and rose...those who have been elected for eternal life!