

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

82 – Predestination

Announcements:

8/23 @7:30 -

Prayer

8/24 @6:30 -

Grace Group

8/27 @8:30 -

Sunday School

8/27 @6:00 -

FAMILY NIGHT

Small Groups!

ICE BREAKER: Are you a planner or more spontaneous?

READ: Matthew 25:31-40

It seems that most people's relationships with certain doctrines go to one of two extremes. On one hand people think: no one is saved by doctrine (partially true), so why lose any sleep over it, it's not that big of a deal. On the other hand some people think that having perfect doctrine is of utmost importance (partially true), and therefore it must be formulated in the most aggressive way and argued for with passion. Often these people can coexist, but there are some doctrinal issues that force these thoughts to the surface, and the one that seems most likely to ignite sparks is the doctrine of predestination. And that is what we are talking about today!

Before we go anywhere else, it would be helpful to understand the heart of the doctrine. While the doctrine of predestination has a few different names (predestination, election, etc) and most of these come from a man-centered point of view. In his book "What is Reformed Theology", RC Sproul paints these doctrines in a more God-centered (and I would say correct!) way. To that end, he calls the doctrine of predestination: "God's Sovereign Plan." Because this is ultimately what this doctrine is most concerned with. What the doctrine of predestination primarily focuses on is that God, and only God, is completely sovereign. Therefore all (and here is a case where we can emphasize that ALL means ALL) things occur according to the plan that he had made before even the foundations of the earth. We can (and will) wrestle with the implications of this, but here is a wonderful start: that God is God, and we are not. Then on top of this we proclaim that he has the right and privilege of doing all that he pleases when and how he pleases.

DISCUSS: Why is it important to start with who God is with any doctrine, let alone the doctrine of predestination?

So far nothing too controversial has been said, but the strife happens when we apply the doctrine of "God's Sovereign Plan" to salvation. This is when we move from just "sovereignty" to "sovereignty that affects me" (truly everyone, but this often gets personal). How can God do this? If so, then how does this all pan out? It is hard to make sense of for many people. I think it is most helpful to wrap our minds around by asking how this might look to us. It seems that there are really two major ways to go about this. The first way to view this is what some people call "double-predestination". By this people mean that God has not *just* predestined some people to heaven, he has also predestined some people to hell. In this view God looks to each person and says to them either "To heaven" or "to hell". While this view *does* give God the ultimate sovereign choice, I think there is a better way to see it, and one that gets to the hope of the doctrine. Instead of people lining up and getting sent one of two ways, we should understand that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". Thus it is not that God sends some to heaven and some to hell, rather the doctrine of predestinations states that some people -- who are already headed to hell -- God looks at in love and compassion and saves. The hope is that God, because of who he is, saved perfectly and completely sinners according to the riches of his mercy.

DISCUSS: Why is the second way of thinking through this doctrine better (scripturally and practically)?

"So why David," you may be asking, "are we talking about this today?" It is because understanding this correctly gives us access to a richer understanding of what Jesus says to his sheep in the Olivet Discourse. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you from the foundation of the world*.'" (Matthew 25:34). How can we make sense of this, how can we work through the idea of the sheep and the goats? By understanding that his sheep know him and importantly here, he knows his sheep. He *has* known his sheep -- he has ALWAYS known his sheep. And in doing so he is preparing a place for us. The working out of the end is not some great tragedy wherein we have no idea where God will make these distinctions willy-nilly. Rather, what Jesus speaks of here is the great hope that those who are his will always be his because they have always been his and so they will enter into the great marriage supper of the lamb, not of their own accord, but through the perfect work of the Triune God. Those the Father has predestined, the Son has saved, and the Spirit sealed, perfectly and completely.

DISCUSS: In what ways can we better appreciate that the kingdom is prepared for his sheep “from the foundation of the world”?