

THE TRUTH ABOUT PREDESTINATION

a study by Dr. Desmond Ford
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PART ONE

I want to talk to you about T-U-L-I-P. Not the flower. But T-U-L-I-P. That is the acronym to help us short through the beliefs of predestinarians. You must not think that the word "predestinarians" is a swear word. Many of the greatest Christians who have ever lived are/ or were predestinarians.

T-U-L-I-P : What does predestination mean? It means T-U-L-I-P.

T stands for "Total depravity."

U stands for "Unconditional election."

L stands for "Limited atonement."

I stands for "Irresistible grace."

P stands for "Perseverance of the saints."

Total Depravity

Total depravity doesn't mean as bad as bad can be. It simply means that we are weak in every part. And "**total depravity**" IS a biblical doctrine. Isaiah says:

"From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is not soundness—only wounds and bruises and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil" (Isaiah 1:6 NIV).

Jesus said about us:

"If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him! (Matthew 7:11)

So the Bible does teach total depravity, though that doesn't mean as bad as bad can be. If I have a glass of water and I put in a spoonful of salt and stir it up, it's totally salty. But not as salty as if I had put in a half a cup of salt. Humans still reflect the image of God. By nature, we are inclined toward many good things, because we are made in God's likeness. But because we lost the Holy Spirit at the Fall in Eden, we are born selfish and self-centered, with lust and wrong desires prevailing. Sadly, even after conversion, when the Holy Spirit has come into our lives, the old nature remains and must be fought every conscious hour of our lives.

Unconditional election

The "T" in T-U-L-I-P is totally correct and biblical. But it seems to me that the others in the acronym are not so biblical. That may strike you as a very vainglorious statement, because scholars who are a thousand times better than I would disagree. The "U" of "**unconditional election**"—what does that mean? It means this: That God, from eternity, looked down and said, "Well, I'll save Roy but not Des." But it's worse than that. "Well, out of that group there at Auburn, we'll save Roy but none of the rest." Unconditional election says that, from eternity, God arbitrarily decided (without any consideration as to how people actually behave), "We're not going to crowd heaven with all of them, but we'll take some of them."

I must not be unfair. Too often evangelical doctrine is not accompanied by an evangelical spirit. I have often failed in that, becoming too tied up in argumentation. That is a mistake.

Let me repeat: Predestinarians, by and large, have been a wonderful group of people. I'm just giving you one man's opinion why I think that four-fifths of T-U-L-I-P is mistaken. I think that the U of "unconditional election" is not biblical.

Limited atonement

Limited atonement grows out of “unconditional election.” If God decided in advance to save only a few, then His Son did not die for all. So, if you are a predestinarian, you cannot come to me and say, “Des, Christ died for you.” You don’t know that for sure. I don’t know, either. If you are a predestinarian, you cannot say to anybody, “Christ died for you.” You just don’t know. Unconditional election and limited atonement are linked. If you believe in unconditional election, you have to believe in limited atonement.

Irresistible grace

Irresistible grace follows limited atonement and says, “When I say you are going to be saved, you’re going to be saved—regardless.” God is not going to save His chosen individuals against their will. No. He is going to come in and change the will, “to will and to do of God’s good pleasure. But He will do this only for the few, chosen, predestined ones. Not for everyone. That, of course, is the half-truth, because God’s spirit comes to everyone. Those who do not resist are softened. Those who do resist are hardened. The Spirit is the same. The effect depends upon the decision of the individual will. To say that those chosen few cannot resist the changing grace of God, is to paint God a manipulator. This is not consistent with Scripture.

Perseverance of the saints

P is for “perseverance of the saints.” That is, “**Once saved, always saved.**” It doesn’t matter if you commit adultery today, tomorrow, or the day following. It doesn’t matter whether you get drunk and gamble, shoot your brother and bury your wife—in the end, you are going “to persevere” and you will be saved.

In the sad scenario of “**perseverance of the saints,**” there is one morsel of bait. (Again, I must beware of the danger of speaking about evangelical doctrine in an unevangelical spirit.) Perseverance of the saints is a very appealing doctrine. In my opinion, it is very close to the truth, because looking to Jesus, you cannot be lost. However, God doesn’t make us automatons. He doesn’t make us puppets. God never takes away our freedom at any point. God is a gentleman, and never coerces. The Bible does teach that looking to Jesus you cannot be lost. Jesus always has the door open for us in welcome. Nonetheless, in theory, the Bible says it is possible for us to shut that door in Christ’s face. It is possible for those who have been purchased by the blood of Christ to fall away. The Bible says so in Hebrews 10:26-31, 38-39; and throughout John 15, and else where. But, looking to Jesus, ever trusting solely in his merits, you cannot but be saved and for all eternity. [There is a study on the concept of “Once Saved - Always Saved” at this web site.]

THE TRUTH ABOUT PREDESTINATION PART TWO

Now let’s talk about the history of this doctrine of predestination. You are probably saying to yourself, “Well, predestinarians are so rare, why bother talking about predestination? There aren’t many predestinarians around.” This is no longer true. Predestinarians are growing in number. Let me give you the history and then we’ll discuss that.

First 400 years

For the first four hundred years of the Christian church, the doctrine of predestination (as now popularly understood) was unknown. For the first four hundred years of the Christian church, Christians said:

Christ died for everybody (2Corinthians 5:14-15).

Whosoever will may come (Revelation 22:17)

But remember, he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved (Matthew 10:22).

And take heed that you resist not the Holy Spirit, not grieve him or quench him (1Thessalonians 5:19).

This is a summary of the texts that rebut four-fifths of T-U-L-I-P.

Augustine of Hippo

In the fifth century, a wonderful man named Augustine [A.D. 354-430] came along. (You must beware of very gifted men and women. They are often the ones who invent great heresies. No great heresy came from a modest man or woman.) Augustine was a very great man. In his early years, he was very lascivious. His Christian mother, Monica, prayed for him. He said to himself, "I'm going to get away from mother. She is a bad influence on me. She's a Christian." Augustine went to Rome, and then to Milan. But his mother's prayers followed him, and he was converted under the tutelage of the bishop of Milan. Though he was living with a concubine at the time, Augustine was converted. He became the most important man in the church for a thousand years. From Augustine has come almost all of the best in theology since Paul—and also the very worst.

Pelagius

In his time, a man named Pelagius [late fourth-early fifth centuries] arose and said: "Look, there's no excuse for Christian misbehavior. We know what we ought to do. Go and do it. Don't use the excuse of original sin, about being born bad. Every child is a little angel and a little saint, every person is so born they can obey if they want to. There's no excuse for anybody. We all have a perfectly free will, and we can do the right thing, if we so desire. There is no need for us to do the wrong thing, and we ought to be perfect."

Augustine's answer

Augustine was a great polemicist. He jumped right into battle, and said: "Mr. Pelagius, it ain't so! "The Bible says that I was born in sin, conceived in iniquity, a transgressor from the womb. The imagination in my heart is only evil continually; for out of the heart come evil thoughts, adultery, fornications, thefts, sorceries (Psalm 51:5; Genesis 6:5; Matthew 15:19). Mr. Pelagius, don't you know that even the desire to sin is sin? The tenth commandment actually mentions wrong desire: 'Thou shalt not desire wrongly.' If the law is that deep and if our Savior could say you could break the seventh commandment simply by a look and you could break the sixth commandment by a single, unkind thought—then, Mr. Pelagius, you've got it all wrong." We cannot be righteous simply by the exercise of our human will. We must have help!!

Augustine and predestination

The battle was very hot. Pelagius was no idiot. It is possible to make a good case out of a bad thing. You know the old saying about making "a silk purse out of a sow's ear." Augustine, in his great old age, wanted to defend the greatness of God's grace, and emphasize the helplessness of human nature. He looked around the church, and saw that not everyone was doing the right things. He did not fall into universalism (the doctrine that everyone is going to be saved). He said only some are going to be saved. And he came up with the doctrine of predestination. He said, "The truth is that we are so far gone, so dead in our trespasses and sins, that none of us can find our way to God. God must find his way to us. God must do it. God has to come in, and move upon us." All that is true. Then Augustine said: "And what God does, he does well. When God comes in, you only have to go with the flow, and you'll be saved. I'm sorry though. God will do this for only a selected "predestined" few.

The terrible decree

There the doctrine lay for centuries. Then along came **Gottschalk**, who refined the teaching of predestination. He taught both the predestination of the saved and the predestination of the lost. You really can't have one without the other. If I'm the nurse in charge of two children and a fire comes, and I only put my arm around one and save her from the fire, and I don't put my hand around the other, well, I'm responsible for the death of the other. Augustine really taught the doctrine of "**the terrible decree.**" (**That is what theologians call John Calvin's thorough restatement of predestination.**) The horrible decree is that God said from eternity, "most of the souls I have made will be lost." My friends, it's far worse than that. The full reality of the doctrine is this: that for every sweet moment you have in this life, there will be a trillion years of pain in hell—and you never asked to be born! Again, I'm not saying one thing against predestinarians, (the people) because they are often very great people. But the orthodox teaching of predestination (the doctrine) is that for the vast majority of people who have come into the world, every single moment of joy will reap a trillion years of torture in an everlasting, everburning, fiery hell. Can you see how terrible this teaching really is?

Thomas Aquinas

Augustine began the doctrine of predestination, and Gottschalk boosted it. Next came Thomas Aquinas [1224-1274], the great Catholic theologian. He also taught predestination. Aquinas was a very great genius. But at the end of his life, he said the wisest thing of his whole life: “As I look back, all my theology is only straw.”

John Calvin

But the man who taught the doctrine so powerfully that it is still influencing us late in the twentieth century was the Reformer, John Calvin [1509-1564]. (Calvin was a lawyer.) Calvin influenced the other Reformers, too. John Calvin was very smart. At 25 he wrote one of the most famous books of history. If you were to select 20 books that have influenced the world most, one of them would be John Calvin’s, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. *Institutes* went through approximately 80 revisions, but was first written when Calvin was only 25. Calvin was a genius, but men of genius can be dangerous. In his *Institutes*, Calvin set out the teaching of a double-barreled predestination (“some elected to be saved, and some elected to be lost”) with great clarity.

Luther and Melancthon

Almost all the Reformers were predestinarian. Martin Luther [1483-1546] wrote a book, mainly biblical, called *The Bondage of the Will*. Then Philipp Melancthon [1497-1560], who started off predestinarian said, “We must study this doctrine from the word of God. We can’t just take it from Calvin. We can’t just take it from Augustine.” Melancthon said, “The Bible doesn’t teach limited atonement. It says, ‘God so loved the world that whosoever believeth . . .’ (John 3:16KJV). Melancthon wrote against predestination, and Luther commended Melancthon. So the Lutheran church turned away from Calvinism. The Anglican church (Episcopalian) also turned away from it.

Europe and predestination

During the days of John Calvin, the Scottish Protestants sent their young men to Geneva, Calvin’s city. The British sent their sons to Geneva. The people of Holland and France sent their young Protestants to Geneva. The great majority of Christians of the sixteenth century believed in double-barreled predestination.

Arminius

Predestination was challenged by a man called Jacob Arminius [1560-1609]. Arminius was a very wonderful Christian, always courteous, always kind. He sat too much, though. He studied too much, and his health fell apart when he should have had another twenty or thirty years of life. But he did a tremendous amount of work, and his main work was combating predestination. From his name we take the term “Arminianism.” I must warn you: Arminius was not an Arminian. By that, I mean that, because of his success and many followers, his teaching was somewhat abused.

Arminius’ teaching

Arminius put as much stress on the need for grace as did Augustine. Arminius also taught total depravity. Arminius said: “Unless God moves on us, we are done for. We need the grace of God. But God’s grace never comes in such a way as to rob us of freedom. It is simply not biblical to say that Christ only died for some. The Scriptures teach:

‘We are convinced that **one died for all**, and therefore all died’ (2Corinthians 5:14-15).

Christ ‘gave himself as **a ransom for all men**’ (1Timothy 2:6).

‘For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost’ (Luke 19:10)—not just some of them.

Jesus suffered death, so that by the grace of God, he might **taste death for everyone**’ (Hebrews2:9).

‘Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also **the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men**’ (Romans 5:18).”

Religiously, there was quite an upset in Europe after Jacob Arminius pointed out some of these texts. A group called the Remonstrants rose up, making a protest against Calvinism. Since then, there have been the two groups in Protestantism – the predestinarians and the Arminians.

Contemporary Calvinists

I can make mention of contemporary men you know, men beside whom I am unworthy. Arthur Pink was a Calvinist. J.I.Packer is still alive, teaching at Regent College. (I've corresponded with him. A very wonderful man.) There are others whom you know, yet you may not know they are thoroughly Calvinistic. Why don't you now? Because they don't talk about their predestination doctrine much. Why not? Because it is, indeed, as Calvin said, a horrible thing - a horrible decree. It would be horrible to believe that the majority of humanity are to suffer infinitely for their finite sins—and they have no choice in the matter! Happily, Scripture plainly says otherwise:

THE TRUTH ABOUT PREDESTINATION PART THREE

**The greatest weakness in the predestinarian doctrine
is that the Bible is so clear in statement after statement that Christ died for all:**

“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2 NIV).

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9 NIV).

“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died”
(2Corinthians 5:14).

“Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all” (Romans 5:18 NRSV).

“Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all—this was attested at the right time” (1 Timothy 2:5-6 NRSV).

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9 NIV).

“We have put out hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe” (1 Timothy 4:10).

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Jesus died for those who will ultimately be lost:

“Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died” (Romans 14:15 NIV).

Note: People for whom Christ died can lose their way. This means that Christ died for the lost. These people who will not finally be lost because Christ did not die for them. They will be finally lost because they refused to accept the Spirit which is given to change us. They refused the gift of salvation.

“There were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves” (2 Peter 2:1).

Note: This is a clear text. Here we have wicked people denying the Lord that bought them. Clearly, all of us were bought, including the wicked.

Potentially, God saves all. But he won't force people to surrender, because God is a Gentleman.

Calvin and Augustine's "all."

Naturally, you ask, "If John Calvin was so intelligent, why didn't he see that?" Calvin was intelligent, but he was wedded theologically to Augustine, and Augustine had been a thorough student of philosophy. It is easier to make a philosophical case for predestination than it is to make a Biblical case. Calvin (and Augustine) reasoned away the difficult texts. When they came across a text that said Christ "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6 NRSV), they said that the "all" means some individuals out of all classes, in all places.

Note: It is true that occasionally the word "all" has a restricted meaning in the Bible. For example, "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed" (Luke 2:1 KJV). I'm quite sure the Aborigines in Australia were not included in that tax. In this text "all the world" would mean "all of the world known to Caesar Augustus." So there are places in the Bible where the word "all" has a limited meaning. Only by studying many, many texts can we see clearly that Christ died for the whole world of men, women, and children.

THE TRUTH ABOUT PREDESTINATION PART FOUR

Let me make a parenthetical statement before we continue: Why don't we hear more about the doctrine of predestination these days? We don't even hear much from those great preachers who believe it. Why? Because of "the terrible decree." Many people have suffered great agony—possibly gone mad—worrying about predestination. "Am I predestined to be saved or not?" What is the use of my reading the Bible, praying, going to church, being faithful with the tithe, being a missionary—if I don't even know whether I'm saved? It may be that God has decreed I am not among the elect.

Predestination is a horrible teaching, because, statistically speaking, the chances are you are not among the elect. Calvinistic predestination suggests that the chance of your being elected to salvation is small.

"Predestination" not in the Bible

Now note: There is a tremendous difference between the statement of predestination in the Calvinistic creed, with its gloom and doom, and the passages in the Bible that speak of God's intended destiny of man. The latter are full of joy and hope, the very opposite of Calvin's "horrible decree." This contrast is very striking and in itself rebuts Calvinism. Now, how many Bible passages are there using the word "predestination?" If you take a Strong's Concordance, **you won't find any!** Obviously a doctrine that affects the destiny of everybody ought to be clearly spoken about in Scripture. And often. Correct? If a topic is a big deal, there ought to be big things written about it in the Bible. Yet, you don't find the word "predestination" anywhere in Scripture.

"Predestined" is in the Bible

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he **predestined**, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30 NIV).

"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, where he has freely given us in the One he loves" (Ephesians 1:4-6).

Note: In the verses above no one is excluded. He predestined everyone to adoption. He wanted everyone. Those who responded to God's call, HE justified.

Acts 13:48

“When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48).

Note: This verse only means that all who believed and accepted Christ, fulfilling God’s appointed way of salvation, found eternal life.

Major passage

The most important passage used in support of predestination is in Romans 9:11-21.

“Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ **Just as it is written: ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’**”

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: ‘I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.’ Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

One of you will say to me: ‘Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?’ But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? ‘Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’ Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?’”

Main passage and predestination

Read on its own, the passage seems to offer support for predestination. What, then, can we say about this passage? God says that he has loved Jacob, but hated Esau. It does not depend on a person’s desire or effort, but only upon God’s mercy. If God wants to harden Pharaoh’s heart, then God can harden it. Doesn’t the potter have power over the clay, to use it for a vessel of honor or a vessel of dishonor? This is the main passage of Scripture supporting the idea of “the horrible decree,” that most of us were born lost, and despite anything we can do, we will burn forever and forever and forever. A trillion years of agony for every second of existence here. That’s a pretty horrible decree, all will admit, but a closer look at this passage will prove that the Bible teaches no such thing.

THE TRUTH ABOUT PREDESTINATION

PART FIVE [edited with small additions for clarity by Rachel Cory]

What does the major predestination passage of Romans 9:11-21 really teach?

Two purposes of Romans

The more you know about the whole book of Romans, the better you can understand this isolated passage. In the last two centuries, Bible exegetes have forsaken the Calvinistic interpretation of this passage, and left it behind. See, for example, the recent monumental commentary on Romans by James Dunn. What is the reason for this contemporary agreement against Calvinism? Because in this book, Paul has two major goals, or two big problems: 1) he wants to tell people the gospel, and 2) he wants to say why the Jews, God’s people, have not accepted it. So, in chapters 1-8, he explains the gospel. In chapters 9-11, he deals with the problem of why God’s own people, the Jews, did not accept it.

Why did the Jewish nation not accept the gospel?

When we read chapters 9-11, we must always remember that Paul is addressing the question as to why Israel as a nation has not accepted the gospel. (And our passage for study, Romans 9:11-21, is found in these chapters.) Paul, a Jewish Christian, is asking, “Why don’t most of our people—God’s chosen people—accept the gospel given by God?” Truth is often so clear, we hit our heads against the wall in frustration, asking, “Why can’t people see it?” This is Paul’s dilemma. “I can see the truth of the gospel. Why can’t the rest of my people see it?”

Predestination is not the answer to Paul’s question.

Paul could have answered the question as to why the Jewish race had not accepted its Messiah by saying, “Here’s the answer: God has selected only one person here-or-there to be saved. The others God has selected to be lost.” But would that answer the question as to why most of the nation of the Jews had rejected the Messiah? No. And to add that “God is going to save an occasional Gentile here-and-there, does not deal with the Jewish national issue at all.

The reason for Israel’s rejection of Jesus:

Paul writes:

“But Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works” (Romans 9:31-32 NRSV).

See also the opening verses of chapter 10 which say that the Jews refused to humble themselves to accept the gracious gift of justification. They preferred self-righteousness. When Paul answers the question, “Why aren’t the Jews accepting the gospel and becoming Christians?” He doesn’t say, “Because God did not predestine them to be saved.” Rather, he says, “Because they insist on practicing righteousness by works.”

Predestination lacks context

The number one difficulty with the way Romans 9:11-21 is used in support of predestination is that it does not fit the context. The context surrounding Romans 9:11-21 is dealing with why a whole nation has turned away and not accepted Christ. To give an answer that God has elected only a few people here-and-there to be saved, fails to answer that national problem.

Going to the source: Jacob and Esau in Malachi.

“‘The older will serve the younger.’ Just as it is written: ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated’” (Romans 9:12-13 NIV).

Paul is quoting from the last book of the Old Testament:

“An oracle: The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi.

‘I have loved you,’ says the Lord. But you ask, ‘How have you loved us?’

‘Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?’ the Lord says. ‘Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals.’

Edom may say, ‘Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins.’

But this is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘They may build, but I will demolish’” (Malachi 1:1-4).

Jacob and Esau’s descendants

What does Malachi mean? The context reveals that the phrase, “Esau have I hated,” is referring to Esau’s descendants, the Edomites (verse 4). When Paul quotes, “Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated,” from the book of Malachi, the quotation is talking about the races, or peoples, who descended from the two boys, Jacob and Esau. “Jacob have I loved” refers to the Israelites. “Esau have I hated” refers to the Edomites. Malachi 1:4 speaks of “Edom” (Esau’s descendants). Verse 3 speaks of “His mountains . . . his heritage” employing Esau as a representative of his descendants, the Edomites.

Peoples not individuals

Paul's statement in Romans 9 does not have to do with individuals, but races and peoples—the Edomites versus the Israelites. The Edomites had persecuted the Jews, and God said, "I'll lay waste your land and you will suffer and you will serve." Literally, Esau never served his brother Jacob. When it says in Romans 9:12 that "The older will serve the younger," the prophecy was only fulfilled in the descendants. And the prophecy has yet to be completely fulfilled.

The Esau attitude: [This section written by Rachel Cory]

Today we know that the descendants of Esau, are predominantly Muslim. The prophet Mohamed rewrote the Old Testament, substituting Ishmael for Isaac in the stories concerning the birthright, the blessings, and the lineage of Messiah. I believe that what God "hates" is something I call "the Esau attitude." This attitude is a complete refusal to accept God's choice, and God's appointment.

God chose the descendants of Jacob for a special role. First: Messiah would come through the lineage of Judah. Second: The symbols and festivals given to Israel taught the plan of salvation for a lost world. Third: The moral law gave a compass and guide by which to live. Fourth: The promises and covenants given to Israel would finally extend to everyone through Christ.

The Koran teaches something directly opposed to God's choice of Jacob and his descendants for this special role. This hatred of those people chosen for a special role, this jealousy, is open rebellion against God. And it will have consequences. Many prophecies describe the end of those people who fight against God, and His choices.

God did not chose Jacob and his descendants because they were more righteous. He made that plain. He simply chose them. He gave them great blessing, to be sure, but He also give them great responsibilities. Most of the descendants of Jacob and Judah (especially the rulers) rejected their Messiah. They taught another falsehood—that a man can be saved by works of the law. Their "attitude" was no less terrible - they rejected and sent to be crucified, their own savior.

Birthright and salvation

God promised the birthright to Jacob. Did that mean Esau could not be saved? Of course not. Nowhere in Scripture do we read that Esau could not be saved. True, Esau sought the birthright with tears, and was unable to get it, but nowhere does Scripture say that he couldn't be saved. As a matter of fact, the Bible says God softened his heart toward his brother Jacob, and he welcomed him at the end of his life (see Genesis 33:4). There is nothing at all in Scripture that takes this verse of Romans 9 and makes it apply to the eternal destiny of individuals. Similarly, the word "foreknew" is used in Romans 11:2 of whole nations, not of individuals.

Chosen

We do read in the Bible about being "chosen," or God's "election." The Calvinist says, "'Chosen' (or election) means being chosen for eternity—like it or not." But Jesus once said, "have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" (John 6:70). So being chosen does not necessarily mean eternal salvation. Is Judas going to make it to eternal bliss? No. (Matthew 26:24 and Mark 14:21).

All are called

To understand this more clearly, we must look to the beginning of Paul's letter to the Romans.

"And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God and Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:6-7).

Who are called? "All in Rome"—or, all the church, the visible church. All of them were called, according to Paul.

Through Christ, all believers are chosen:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves” (Ephesians 1:3-6).

Who is Paul talking to when he says, “For he chose us in him?” Verse 1, Paul’s greeting says, “To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.” That’s to all the faithful believers in Ephesus—they are all spoken of as chosen, the whole congregation!

All in Christ are predestined to be saved

My friends, when God says he calls, and chooses, and predestines, the truth is this: From eternity, God planned to save every human being, through His only Son. Whoever would accept His Son as his/her substitute and sovereign King would be saved forever. That is biblical predestination. Whoever comes to Christ is saved with Christ eternally. That and that alone meets the plethora of New Testament texts, not just the three or four passages that the Calvinists are stuck with.

“God so loved the world” that “whosoever will may come.” Whoever is thirsty may come. “He that cometh I will in no wise cast out.” “This man receiveth sinners.” “God is not willing that any should perish.” “He gave his life a ransom for all.” “He tasted death for every man,” that the righteousness of Christ might come upon all.”

(John 3:16; Revelation 21:6; Revelation 22:17; John 6:37; Luke 15:2; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9; Romans 3:22; Romans 5:18.)

STATEMENT REGARDING DESMOND FORD Ph.D. :

We believe Desmond Ford to be a mighty and sincere student of the Scriptures. That is why we asked his permission to reprint this article on predestination. We felt that our time would be better spent researching other areas, when such a wonderful article was already available.

While we are in agreement with Dr. Ford concerning much interpretation, we do not agree concerning every doctrine. I’m sure that he would agree, we must each one continue to search the Scriptures praying for wisdom concerning eternal truths.

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