

Week 7: On Predestination and Reprobation [readings pp. 43-47]

9. What does it mean, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated?”

Read Romans 9:14-18

10. What was the Jew’s response (and perhaps yours as well) to Paul’s teaching?
11. How did Paul defend God’s honor? Cf. Exodus 33:12-33

Define double predestination (readings p. 36)

God predestines some, but not all, to eternal salvation, so he predestines others to eternal punishment; this second part of “double” predestination, God’s appointment of all but the elect unto eternal destruction, is sometimes called “reprobation”; and those who are not the elect are thus called the “reprobate”. Logically, the doctrine of reprobation is necessarily true if the following premises can be established: 1) God sovereignly chooses some men for salvation; 2) God does not choose all men for salvation; 3) there is no possibility of obtaining salvation apart from God’s sovereign election thereunto. In other words, if God has chosen infallibly to save some, and has cut off any other means of salvation for all others, he has effectively made a choice concerning every person that has lived; he has chosen either to save him or to cut him off from all hope of salvation. Each of these premises may certainly be found in the bible; and so, it is manifest that God’s eternal choice involves the salvation of some and the damnation of others.

12. Does God “equally” predestine the elect and the reprobate?

Read Romans 9:19-24

13. How did God harden Pharaoh’s heart?
14. Is not God, then, the author of sin?

Week 7: On Divine Election and Reprobation

The Enigma of Divine Hatred by Dr. S. Lewis Johnson

Now then, we come to the controversy. "I have loved you," says the Lord. But you say, "How hast Thou loved us?" Now isn't it strange to find God defending his love for Israel? If there is anything that we see from the study of the history of Israel it's the love of God for a sinning and wayward people. And he still loves them, constantly loves them, in spite of their failures. They spend their time in departing from him. He spends his time in seeking to bring them back to him. But we have a strange thing here: God defending his love for Israel. "I have loved you."

Now, what is meant by that? Well, as the rest of the Old Testament and the rest of this prophecy indicates, what he has in mind is the Abrahamic covenant as the source of the sovereign love of God. Out of that Abrahamic covenant there came the marriage of God to Israel. He was a faithful but spurned husband. "I have loved you."

Electing, covenant love and the consequent care of Israel is what is intended by these words, "I have loved you." And he's just brought them back from captivity, enabled them to rebuild the temple, to restore the walls, enabled them to be restored to their own home and they're still complaining about no evidence of the love of God. Isn't it an amazing thing?

By the way, in the Hebrew text, that expression, "I have loved you," is in a state which indicates that he is not simply speaking about the past. But he is speaking about the past all up to and including the present. "I have loved you," that is evident from the verbs that follow, "says the Lord. But you say, "How hast Thou loved us?" This shocking reply that God puts in the mouth of the nation at this point sets the tone of the book. How quickly men forget. And how quickly it is, how quickly and how easily we forget too. How quickly we forget what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. How easy it is to fall into the same kind of trap that these people had fallen into.

Oh, the chances are that the reason that they had begun to complain about the Lord is because they had misunderstood the prophecies of the Old Testament, such as the prophecy of Haggai. They had thought that in the light of the fact that Haggai and Zechariah spoke of the prophecies of the kingdom that it wouldn't be long before the king would come. And now it's been a hundred years and nothing has happened. And so they're complaining.

And they probably had all of the other reasons to complain that we have too. Our health is not so good. Our environment is not exactly that which we would like. We have a job that is not very happy. Insurance business, whoever wanted to be in the insurance business? Or whatever it may be, I know exactly what you're talking about, since I was in it for eight years myself.

And we have all of these means by which we complain over our present circumstances. "You say, "How hast Thou loved us?" What an amazing thing for people to say. In the light of Calvary, that should still all of our complaints about God and his dealings with us. If he has loved us enough to deliver us from hell fire by the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross, then it doesn't make a bit of difference what kind of life he ordains for us here. We are far better off than we could ever imagine as a result of the redemption that we possess. Complaining Christians.

Now then, let's look at God's case. He has a pretty strong case. He says, "I have loved you." You say, "How hast Thou loved us?" Now he begins his answer by saying, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Think how close they were. They actually were twins. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau."

Now God's hate has perplexed almost every Christian at one time or another. That's because we still inherit some of the thinking processes that have come from those days when we were not sons of the palin genesis. And we don't think straight.

What does it mean: God has hated Esau? I'd like to take that one first. Does it mean simply that God loved Jacob more? Well, there is a sense in which that's true. You can turn to the New Testament and you will find in Luke chapter 14 when the Lord Jesus said if you're going to be my disciple you must hate father and hate mother and hate brother and hate sister and hate your own children, also. And then in the parallel passage, Matthew says what that means is to love father and mother more than me. So that it's possible to interpret this as to love more, that is, he loved Jacob more than he loved Esau.

But now, is this really a question of degrees here? Does he say anything that indicates that he loved Esau at all? No, all he says is "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated." It doesn't say anything about degrees of love in the context. That is imported into the context by those who don't like to face up to the question that says God hated Esau.

What then does it mean? Well, I think that in the light of the context it can only mean one thing, that he refused to elect Esau. Or to put it in theological terms, he reprobated Esau, that is, he determined the future of Jacob and it was the future of election and faith and salvation and eternal blessing. And he also chose the future of Esau, and the future of Esau was reprobation.

Now those are very strong words but I want you to know now, I'm not adding anything to this text. This is exactly what it says. "Jacob have I love, Esau have I hated." And if you want the final commentary upon it, turn to Romans chapter 9, verse 14 through verse 29. Now we're not going to turn there, just a moment yet. But when you turn there you will see that that is exactly the interpretation that the Apostle Paul puts upon it. And if you have any question about it, if you want to sit down and have a little disputation over it, we'll turn to [Romans 9](#) and perhaps you give me a better interpretation than the one I've suggested. I'll certainly be happy to listen because there's some things about Paul and [Romans 9](#) that are very startling and hard.

Now when did this happen? "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated." Well, Paul tells us it happened before they were born, as we shall see in just a moment. So in other words, it was the expression of his sovereign right.

Now you say, that's terrible. Yes, it is terrible. Of course, it's terrible. It's a serious thing to be a member of the human race and a creation of God, very serious. We must take these things seriously.

Now the other, "I have loved Jacob." Ah, I can see how God could hate Esau a whole lot easier than I can see how he could love Jacob. If I had any problem, it's not with the fact that God should hate Esau. It's the how in the world could he possibly love Jacob? He was equally unworthy. But God made Jacob ultimately by his marvelous grace Israel, a prince with God. I think I can almost hear Jacob say, Hallelujah.

Now then, just for the sake of time, let me pass on. He says, "I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness." Now let me say that in the Malachi context here, he is talking about the nations. When he says Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated," he is laying stress upon the descendants, that is, the head and all of the members of the nation. As you can see from verse 3 and 4,

"I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness. Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says the Lord of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever." "

Now you can see here that the stress in Malachi then rests upon the national destinies of the head and the members of the two families, nations. Now it's possible, and some people do do this, they will say, Now wait a minute. In the case of Jacob and Esau, when God says Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated, he's not talking about individuals, he's talking about nations. And so we shouldn't make any personal application about God hating individuals. This has to do with nations.

Now, there could hardly be anything more irrational than a statement like that as we see now that we turn to Romans chapter 9. Jacob, Esau and [Romans 9:11](#) through 13. Now there are just two points that we have time to make. I hope I have time to make them. Romans chapter 9, verse 11 through verse 13.

I want you to notice first the sovereignty of the divine choice. And I want you to notice now these harsh things that I've been saying are nothing more than that which the Apostle Paul says. So if you want to blame anything, don't blame it on Dr. Johnson. Go out and blame it on Paul, he's the one that started it all.

Verse 11, "For though the twins were not yet born." Notice, "the twins were not yet born." That's true to the context there in [Genesis 25](#). He spoke to Rebekah when she noticed that she had twins in her womb.

"Though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad." Notice, it's not based on any moral distinction between them. "In order that God's purpose according to His choice." You see that? His election is based on his purpose. "According to His choice." Please read that, ponder it. "That God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works but because of him who calls." The reason is in God. "It was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Now notice that Paul stresses that the purpose is not grounded in works. It's grounded in election and calling. Election is the fountain of the divine blessings. And election proceeds out of God's determination, his determinant will. That why we talk so much about election, because it is God's determinant will, and he carries it out by means of his election. And all of the blessings that come to us, come out of the fountain of election. That's why this doctrine is so important. I know you think I overdo it. Well think, the Bible overdoes it. But all of our blessings proceed out of this. That's why it's so important.

Now notice the particularity of the divine choice. "It was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." Now did you notice what part of the prophecy Paul cites? There are individuals who say when we come to Romans chapter 9; it's a very popular interpretation today. [Romans 9](#) has to do with nations and how he chose the nation Israel and he did not choose the Gentiles. It doesn't have to do with individual election, in spite of the fact that there are countless texts in the Bible that speak about individual election. But it's said, No, Paul doesn't have to do with individual election in [Romans 9](#). It has to do with national election.

Now I say there couldn't be anything weaker than that, because, listen, if it is unjust for God to choose one man and not to choose someone else, how much more unjust is it for him to choose countless thousands and millions or a group of people and pass by countless thousands and millions? How much more unjust is it to choose a nation and reprobate nations? So if we're talking about what is just or unjust, the choice of a nation as over against the nations, it's far more unjust.

But furthermore, what is the choice of a nation but the choice of so many units, so many persons, so many individuals? Isn't that right Mister? You cannot choose a nation without choosing the members of the nation. And did you notice that when Paul quotes this prophecy, he doesn't quote that part about two nations are in the womb? Two peoples shall be separated one from the other, one shall be greater than the other. He centers his attention on the last line of that Old Testament prophecy, "The elder shall serve the younger." So you see that he's interested in the individual when he says, "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated."

Now how wonderful it is in the light of this that we belong to him? The love of God, what a tremendous thing it is, the love of God which he has manifested to us. We can see the love of God in the fact that he has chosen us. He has brought us to faith. He has given us life. Yes, and we can see the love of God in his afflictions, because after all, the gardener prunes the grape but he doesn't bother with the thistle. It's the thing that he really cares for that he's concerned with. And the afflictions of life are part of God's tender nurture of his plants which he's going to bring to their beautiful fruitfulness ultimately in the presence of God.

Well the sovereign purpose of God then is the stress of this, and it's the ground of his favors. And it's the ground of his curses. There may be difficulties in referring salvation to his election, but it's greater if it's referred to the election of men and more contrary to the word of God. I'm sorry; I've gone over two minutes. I apologize to you, but this is a great passage.

<https://sljinstitute.net/the-prophets/malachi/the-enigma-of-the-divine-hatred/>

Predestination and Reprobation

Every coin has a flip side. There is also a flip side to the doctrine of election. Election refers to only one aspect of the broader question of predestination. The other side of the coin is the question of reprobation. God declared that He loved Jacob but hated Esau. How are we to understand this reference to divine hatred?

Predestination is double. The only way to avoid the doctrine of double predestination is to either affirm that God predestinates everybody to election or that He predestinates no one to either election or reprobation. Since the Bible clearly teaches predestination to election and denies universal salvation, we must conclude that predestination is double. It includes both election and reprobation. Double predestination is unavoidable if we take Scripture seriously. What is crucial, however, is how double predestination is understood.

Some have viewed double predestination as a matter of equal causation, where God is equally responsible for causing the reprobate not to believe as He is for causing the elect to believe. We call this a *positive-positive* view of predestination.

The **positive-positive** view of predestination teaches that God positively and actively intervenes in the lives of the elect to work grace in their hearts and bring them to faith. Likewise, in the case of the reprobates, He works evil in the hearts of the reprobate and actively prevents them from coming to faith. This view has often been called "**hyper-Calvinism**" because it goes beyond the view of Calvin, Luther, and the other Reformers.

The Reformed view of double predestination follows a *positive-negative* schema. In the case of the elect, God intervenes to positively and actively work grace in their souls and bring them to saving faith. He unilaterally regenerates the elect and insures their salvation. In the case of the reprobate He does **not** work evil in them or prevent them from coming to faith. Rather, He **passes over them**, leaving them to their own sinful devices. In this view there is no symmetry of divine action. God's activity is asymmetrical between the elect and the reprobate. There is, however, a kind of equal ultimacy. The reprobate, who are passed over by God, are ultimately doomed, and their damnation is as certain and sure as the ultimate salvation of the elect.

The problem is linked to biblical statements such as those regarding God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart. That the Bible says God hardened Pharaoh's heart is beyond dispute. The question remains, how did God harden Pharaoh? Luther argued for a **passive rather than an active hardening**. That is, God did not create fresh evil in Pharaoh's heart to incline him to resist the will of God at every turn. All God ever has to do to harden anybody is to remove His restraining grace from them and give them over to their own evil impulses. This is precisely what God does to the damned in hell. **He abandons them to their own wickedness.**

In what sense did God "hate" Esau? Two different explanations are offered to solve this problem. The first explains it by **defining hate** not as a negative passion directed toward Esau but as simply **the absence of redemptive love**. That God "loved" Jacob simply means that He made Jacob the recipient of His unmerited grace. He gave Jacob a benefit that Jacob did not deserve. Esau did not receive the same benefit and in that sense was hated by God.

The first explanation sounds a bit like special pleading to get God off the hook for hating somebody. The second explanation gives more strength to the word *hate*. It says simply that God did in fact hate Esau. Esau was odious in the sight of God. There was nothing in Esau for God to love. Esau was a vessel fit for destruction and altogether worthy of God's wrath and holy hatred. Let the reader decide.

From The Reformation Study Bible, R.C. Sproul, General Editor. Reformation Trust: Orlando, Florida. 2015. p. 1997. (Highlights mine.)