

Lesson Four

Through the Holy Spirit and the Means of Grace

Predestination, pp. 35-47

Goal

Romans and Ephesians contain important passages on the doctrine of predestination. But the teaching is found throughout Scripture. Our goal today is to examine passages throughout Scripture and see how we have been chosen from eternity and brought to faith in time. At the end of this session, you will be asked to formulate a definition of the doctrine of predestination in light of the passages studied so far.

Introduction

- A builder makes his plans and then builds a house according to those plans. What house is the writer to the Hebrews speaking about in the following verse?

Hebrews 3:6 Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

How does God build this "house"? In this chapter we will look at our Builder's blueprint for building this house.

God's tools to produce and nurture faith in his elect

Read Ephesians 1:11-13

- Using the illustration of God building a house, what words in the above passage indicate the method or plan of the Builder?

1 Corinthians 1:18,21 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

- How does Paul describe the tools God uses to build his church?

Read Titus 3:5,6

- Why can Baptism be called a tool God uses to build his house?
- Evaluate: Although carpenters must use tools to build houses, God is not restricted to the tools described above.

Luke 22:19,20 *And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”*

- Why is the Lord’s Supper an important part of our election?

The Word and sacraments: tools of the Holy Spirit

2 Thessalonians 2:13 *God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.*

1 Corinthians 12:3 *I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.*

- Who implants the Word into our hearts and bestows the benefits of Baptism?
- Our election is connected to the work of the Holy Spirit using the means of grace. What are some of the truths Luther expresses in his explanation to the Third Article?

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

Ephesians 1:13 *You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.*

1 Thessalonians 1:4-6 *We know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with*

the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. . . . You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

- Evaluate this statement in light of the above verses: “If we feel like good Christians, that feeling should make us more sure of our election.”

Summary

In his plan for our lives, God says we are his chosen people according to his gracious will. He instituted a procedure to bring us to faith and keep us in faith. This work is performed by the Holy Spirit as we use Word and sacrament, the means of grace.

Look at the diagram on the next page. Note the order the Lord used in carrying out his plan for us. On the basis of what we have studied, how might you define the doctrine of predestination? Take a couple of minutes and formulate a one- or two-sentence definition.

During the week

1. Review this lesson by reading *Predestination*, pages 35-47. Or, look ahead to the next lesson by reading pages 49-67.
2. Satan often uses the teaching of predestination to trouble us. Think of any troubling questions you or someone you know has about this teaching.

