

## Lesson Five

# The Certainty of Our Predestination

*Predestination*, pp. 49-67

### Goal

To set forth on the basis of Scripture the reason why God has given us this teaching: to comfort us with the assurance that our salvation depends on God's grace from first to last.

### Introduction

The purpose of studying election, or predestination, is to grow in the assurance of our salvation. But there are forces at work trying to undermine our certainty.

- What are some of the things that cause you uncertainty or confusion about your predestination in Christ?

In this lesson we will see how the Bible uses the teaching of predestination for our comfort.

### The comfort of predestination does not lead to security

*1 Corinthians 10:12* So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

*1 Corinthians 10:13* No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

*Luke 12:32* "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."

- A person may fall from faith and therefore reveal himself or herself not to be of the elect. Should this make us worry?

*Philippians 2:12,13* Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

- Evaluate: Do Paul’s words imply that the Christian must cooperate with God in order to be saved? Explain your answer.

*2 Peter 1:10* My brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall.

- If our election is secure, why does the apostle Peter say “make your calling and election sure”?

## Overcoming how Satan confuses this comforting doctrine

Predestination comforts Christians. It assures them that their salvation is entirely in God’s hands. God, who elected them in the eternal past, will be with them into the eternal future. Nothing can take them out of Jesus’ hand.

Satan, however, uses this teaching to achieve an opposite and wicked goal. He wants to use it to lead us away from faith.

- How would you answer the following challenges Satan often throws at Christians?

“If you call yourself one of the elect, why do you continue to sin?” or “If you claim to be chosen by God, why aren’t you so faithful in studying the Word and in your prayers?”

“Don’t worry about sin. If you are one of the elect, God will see to it that you remain in the faith until the end. Think of the thief on the cross.”

“You can’t escape your fate. If you are not elected, nothing will help. If you are, you have it made.”

“If God chose some to be saved, he must have chosen others to be condemned. How can you be sure that you fall into the first category?”

“Since it is up to you to choose to believe, God chose to predestine you because he saw you would accept his offer of salvation.”

“The stronger your faith, the more sure you can be that you were elected. So grow in faith so you can be sure.”

“Being certain that you are predestined is a mark of arrogance. Isn’t it a mark of humility to be uncertain to a small degree?”

- What do all these temptations have in common?

## Being sure of our predestination

- Read the following passages. How does each assure you that God elected you?

**Romans 8:38,39** *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Hebrews 13:8** *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

**1 Peter 1:18,19** *You were redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

Luther summarized the matter of certainty well:

When sins trouble you, flee to the gospel. . . . “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). When doubts arise, cling to the promises in Scripture, which can never be taken away: Christ has come into the world, taken on flesh and blood, lived and died that sinners may have life everlasting. The punishment we had coming was placed squarely upon his shoulders. God can never deny the sinner entrance to heaven, when the reason for entry is the plea, “Not me, O Father, but the merits of your Son!”

When predestination is taught in this context, it comforts us with knowing that God alone is responsible for our faith and salvation and that he will keep us in faith until the end.

**Romans 9:11,12** *[God chose Jacob before he was born] in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls.*

**Romans 11:5,6** *So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.*

**Read Ephesians 2:8-10**

- If you were asked, “Why did God choose you?” what would be your answer?

- What strength and motivation should God’s election give us?

**John 14:2,3** *“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”*

**Matthew 25:34** *“The King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’”*

- How did Jesus assure us and his disciples that we will enter eternal life?

**John 8:31** *Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

- Why does the doctrine of predestination drive us to the Word?

## Summary

We who believe in Christ can be sure that God has predestined us to believe and receive eternal life. As long as we focus on Christ, the teaching of predestination gives us the comfort God intended it to give us. Satan, in order to rob us of comfort, tries to make us think about predestination apart from Christ. Knowing this, we will want to use God’s Word where the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to make us sure that God’s mercy is ours.

## During the week

1. Review this lesson by reading *Predestination*, pages 49-67. Or, look ahead to the next lesson by reading pages 69-81.
2. Ask a friend who belongs to another church what he or she believes about predestination. Be ready to share what you find with the class.