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Section: Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology)

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**HANDOUT NOTES**

**Q77. Why did God ordain creation and the plan of salvation?**

God ordained creation and the plan of salvation for the display of His glory, highlighting especially His grace and power.

**Q78. Who will be saved?**

Only those whom God has chosen for salvation—the elect—will be saved.

**Q79. When did God choose individuals for salvation?**

Based on His will alone, in love, God chose and predestined each of the elect before creation.

* **Introduction: “Part 8: Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology)”**

Tonight is our first lesson in the next section, or part, of our catechism.

In these things, there is a tendency *in the flesh* to submit to popular ideas, humanistic teaching, or other rationale of our own human mind *instead* of the authority of the almighty, eternal God’s holy word. But as Christians, we need to acknowledge the full authority of the Bible—the full authority of what God has said about all things—and submit to God, conforming to His image—*not* trying to make Him conform to our ideas.

A right view of soteriology shapes so much about how we view and worship God and testify of His life-changing gospel to others.

May God be gracious and do a good work in us as we come faithful and hungry to His word, being humble as we take the journey to further see what *Scripture says*.

* **Why Did God Ordain Creation and the Plan of Salvation?**

**Q77. Why did God ordain creation and the plan of salvation?**

God ordained creation and the plan of salvation for the display of His glory, highlighting especially His grace and power.

Scripture teaches the primary reason that God is, and acts, and saves is in accordance with His will and *ultimately* for His sake and His glory, and not ours.

**Romans 11:36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

**Ezekiel 36:22** “… Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name …”

Creation is God’s creation. God owns everything and as Owner-Creator, He may do what He wills with creation. Everything that exists, including our lives, exists ultimately for the glory of God.

* **Presuppositions**

To presuppose something is to assume beforehand, or have an understanding or opinion based on the idea that something is true because of previous assumptions or teachings.

When it comes to our topic tonight, everyone has presuppositions. Everyone has an opinion or understanding based on a lot, some, very little, or zero careful Bible study or teaching on *this* topic.

We must get our starting point from God. God’s word teaches us that *being chosen by God for salvation and being saved by God “depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy”* (**Romans 9:16**).

This passage teaches us clearly, directly that the one true, gracious God is the one (of Himself and by His will—not our will or effort) *who determines who is saved.*

* **Woven into other core truths**

The specific doctrine we study tonight should not be seen as something that stands *alone*. We must keep the other foundational truths of Scripture in mind as we study these things.

The doctrines within this section of our catechism don’t stand alone; they explain (and are firmly connected to) realities within the bigger context.

* **Unconditional Individual Election and Predestination Defined**

**Q78. Who will be saved?**

Only those whom God has chosen for salvation—the elect—will be saved.

**Q79. When did God choose individuals for salvation?**

Based on His will alone, in love, God chose and predestined each of the elect before creation.

**Unconditional Individual Election:** Before creation existed, God chose which individual human beings would receive salvation from sin, death, and God’s eternal wrath. This choice to redeem certain ones is not based on any so-called goodness, will, or work in them; rather, it is based on the freedom and grace of God in Christ Jesus alone.

**Predestination**: In love, based on the perfect will of the Triune God, the destiny of salvation unto eternal life for God’s chosen people was planned and ordained from start to end before creation began. Predestination is not based on foreseen deeds or faith in anyone; it is based on God’s will alone.

these are two distinct sides of the same coin.

Before creation, God chose *who* specifically He would save from all of humanity, and this choice was *unto salvation*; the choice was made in such a way that unchangingly destined these individuals for *sure salvation*: eternal life in blessed communion with God.

Unconditional individual election highlights *the choosing of specific persons* based on *God’s will alone*. And predestination highlights that the *destiny of salvation unto eternal life* was planned and ordained for this elected—this chosen people—*before time began*.

* Unconditional is in our term because there are no conditions and were no conditions *in a person* that influenced or caused this choice of God. “This choice to redeem certain ones is not based on any so-called goodness, will, or work in them; rather, it is based on the freedom and grace of God in Christ Jesus alone.”
* Individual is in our term because God sovereignly choses *specific individuals*, loving them *in a personal way*. The elect are not a particular earthly group (such as a national or ethnic group), and they are not haphazardly or indifferently chosen. Rather, the elect consist of actual persons from all tribes, tongues, and nations, who were known by God, and in time, sought, *and brought into the unified body of Christ* because of God’s eternal love for each of them individually and them being individually chosen by God before time began.
* **Seeing the Truths in Scripture**

**Ephesians 1:3-11** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will

**2 Timothy 1:8-9 (NASB)** Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity

The choice/election/predestination of specific individuals to be brought into the unified body of Christ was made before time. And this was decreed in the Covenant of Redemption that we have studied. The Covenant of Redemption is the plan and decree made before creation between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit to graciously redeem *the chosen ones* from sin and punishment based on the work required of Jesus.

**Revelation 13:8** … all who dwell on earth will worship it [the satanic beast], everyone whose name has *not been written* before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

See *when* those names were written in the book: “before the foundation of the world.”

Therefore, this passage also helps us see that God elected the individuals and predestined them *before creation*.

If you are of the chosen ones, your name was unchangeably written in Christ’s book of salvation before the foundation of the world!

* **God had Paul address objection**

**Romans 9:19** You will say to me then, “Why does he [God] still find fault? For who can resist his [God’s] will?”

Paul’s readers heard the teaching; they understand what is being taught: God chose whom He would give saving grace to, *by His will alone*–that is, election and predestination.

Paul knows they might ask, “So with that being the case, how is it right for God to hold those accountable whom He didn’t choose to save?”

The reply that God inspired Paul to write is the humbling truth that *we are finite created beings,* ***not capable of or worthy of questioning the Creator****.*

God’s position and ways should not be questioned.

*What is just is just because God is just, and therefore God defines justice.* What is righteous is such because God is righteous, and therefore God defines righteousness.

**Romans 9:20-21** But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?

Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”

**21**Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

There it is: the humbling truth that we are finite created beings, not capable of or worthy of questioning the Creator. *Who are you, O man—finite man, created man, sinful man—who are you to question God?*

How God determined to decree for each of us is not to be questioned. God’s answer (through Paul) is “because I, as the creator and owner you, have the authority to say so and do so.”

* **Christian humility**

*Humble willingness to conform our minds and hearts around God’s truths is critically important.* It is Christianity.

**Proverbs 29:23 (NASB)** A man’s pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor.

**James 4:6-7**… “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” **7** Submit yourselves therefore to God …

**James 4:10** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

I pray this is where you are in these things and in all study of God’s word.

God’s answer to pushback questions of Him or objecting to His ways of working *is for us to be humbled—to remember who we are in relation to Him*. He is Creator; we are created. He has full rights over us. He has decreed, and He has done so wisely and righteously.

I pray you remember that as you continue on the lifelong journey in your fallen flesh, seeking to know and honor God *in truth*.

* **Seeing the Truths in More Scripture – Romans 8**

**Romans 8:28-30** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

See that it’s God who did the foreknowing of those specific individuals, God who did the predestining of those chosen ones, God who does the effectual calling of the chosen ones, God who does the justifying of the chosen ones,

and God who does the glorifying of the chosen ones.

*All of this is dependent upon God*, not man or any other thing else outside of God.

* + **Rightly understanding “foreknew”**

In Scripture, the words "know/knew" and "foreknow/foreknew" *sometimes* mean "choose" or "set favor upon" or "intimately loved."

Based on how the words "know/knew" and "foreknow/foreknew" are sometimes used in Scripture and based on who God is, how He makes decrees, and how He works, we know that the word foreknew here in Romans 8 means *chose (elected) in love*. God has had eternal love for specific individuals, and this is an *electing love* that equaled them being *predestined unto salvation*.

“He foreknew” in Romans 8 means “He lovingly chose” … “He lovingly elected.” God has had eternal, sovereign love for specific individuals, and this was an electing love that equaled them being predestined unto salvation. This election was decreed before creation and was not based on any *foreseen* faith or so-called good deeds in any humans; rather, it is based on God’s will alone.

For further study later, you can see how know/knowing/knew/foreknew is used as a version of chosen or elected: Romans 11:1–2; Amos 3:1–2; Genesis 18:17–19; Hosea 13:4–5; Matthew 7:23; 1 Corinthians 8:3; 2 Timothy 2:16–19

Now, let’s address the unbiblical idea some have about this word “foreknew” in Romans 8.

The misunderstanding of the word asserts that *God looked into the future to observe* the actions of humans, saw *and learned* who would choose Him, and *in response to that,* He affirmed who would be saved and decreed such things to happen.

This unbiblical idea means the choice wasn’t first or truly God’s to make; the choice to elect persons was *dependent* upon God learning about the future actions of humans and basing His decree and actions upon that information.

Let us consider why that idea is completely impossible and *categorically unbiblical.*

As an aside, know that historically, faithful theologians of old have denounced this false view. For example, the 1689 Confession of Faith says, “[God’s] decree of anything is not based on foreseeing it in the future.”

Biblically, we know that before creation existed—before any humans were alive, before any angels existed, before there was anything made that was made—*God was*. We’ve studied this in our catechism journey. God is eternal. God is timeless, having always existed. And in this eternal existence before anything was created, *God has been the same all-powerful, all-wise, all-sovereign God that He has always been*.

God is eternally *omniscient*.

In Himself, God has always had pure and complete knowledge. This is very important. The unbiblical idea of God looking into the future before creation to see who would choose Him requires God to learn something. This is categorically impossible.

God possesses *wisdom* perfectly and has decidedly ordained all things perfectly, including the best ways to accomplish His decisions.

God knows all because *He* has ordained all that comes to pass.

Note that a person can only have saving faith in Jesus because God first chose him/her (before time began) and then, in time, God causes him/her to have this faith. Biblically, this order cannot be altered.

God is eternally *sovereign*.

**Isaiah 46:9-10“**… for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, **10**declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose’”

According to His own purpose and pleasure, God has preordained all that has and will come about.

**1689 Confession of Faith**: “God has decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass.”

Therefore, the reality of someone believing in Christ is because God decreed it *apart from any foreseen faith or so-called good deeds in any humans*.

God is eternally *immutable*. God, in His being, perfections, purposes, ordinations, and promises, does not change in any way. He has always been and will always be exactly the same.

God’s eternal choice in eternity past didn’t come about by learning or seeing something outside of Him; rather, He made His eternal choice based on His omniscience, wisdom, sovereignty, etc., and this choice is unchanging. It cannot change because God cannot change.

Without destroying the Bible’s teaching on **who** *God* **is**, **how** *God* **makes decrees**, and **how** *God* **works**, it is impossible to claim that God looked into the future before creation to see who would choose Him in order to make His choice of the elect.

**Isaiah 55:8-9** “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord … my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

We cannot reject who God is, how He makes decrees, and how He works in order to accept an idea that seems more palatable to us or others.

In love, God chose who would be saved. This election is not based on any foreseen faith or so-called good deeds, rather on His will alone, decreed before creation.

* **Application**
	+ **God revealed these truths for our good**

As is often done in Scripture, the doctrine of election/predestination is being used as a comfort to the believer! Christian, because God unchangeably *chose you,* you are safe and secure with Him forever! Nothing can change that!

**Romans 8:31-39** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32**He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? **33**Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. **34**Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. **35**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

**36**As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” **37**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38**For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39**nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing can “separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Why? Because your salvation—your new standing with God—didn’t depend on you; rather, **God chose you**, God **caused** you to be saved, and **He keeps** you forever.

“We are more than conquerors.” Why? Because your salvation—your new standing with God—didn’t depend on you; rather, God has an eternal, electing, redeeming love for you; God caused you to be saved, and He keeps you forever.

* **“How do I know if I am elect?”**

To this, we must see that the answer is actually fairly simple: **You know who the elect are because they have saving faith in Jesus**! True saving faith only exists in those God has chosen and subsequently gifted saving faith to.

So, do *you* have saving faith in Jesus? If so, then you should take comfort in your God as one of His elect. This is not a haphazard presuming of Him but an active trusting in Christ, knowing your salvation is all of Him, and living a life consistent with repentance, therefore, confident in His promises.

But those who do not claim to trust in Christ or do not have a credible profession of faith should not presume to be of God’s elect. Rather, they should know that as long as they do not have saving faith in God, there is no comfort. They, by God’s effective power and will, must repent and believe in Christ alone, and if they do so, *only then* would they know that God has chosen them before time began.

It’s quite simple: We don’t presume of God, but once God works saving faith in a person, we confidently believe what His word says about him/her/you being *of His beloved, chosen people*.

All those who truly trust in Jesus alone show that God has eternally loved them, chose them before time began, and that Jesus died to save them! How amazing!

* **How does this lesson spur on evangelism?**

We go with confidence—not in ourselves, but in our God. God has the plan and power to change hearts. He will do what He has decreed. Let’s go with confidence and tell others about the God who saves people from sin by the person and work of Jesus Christ; let’s call them to repent and trust in Jesus.

Knowing about election and predestination should put loving boldness in our heart. Our God saves!

* **Identity of a Chosen One**

**Colossians 3:12-13** Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

On what basis does God through Paul command these things? On the basis of the gospel good news that you are chosen, set apart, and loved in Christ! On the basis of election and predestination! You know you were undeserving and incapable; therefore, it is fitting that you would be compassionate, kind, humble, meek, patient, forbearing with Christians, and forgiving.

Because God chose you for salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ, *be this way*. Let your personal election into Christ be the reason and motivation for you to be like Christ!

The doctrine we studied tonight is not about mere head knowledge or anything superficial. No, it’s about knowing who God is, how He decreed all things, and how He works *unto* us glorifying Him through it. God revealed these things to us in His Bible so that we understand rightly unto worshipping and serving Him correctly!

* **Standing with the Faithful Before Us**

**1689 Confession of Faith**: “By God’s decree, and for the demonstration of his glory, some human beings and angels are predestined (or foreordained) to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace. Others are left to live in their sin, leading to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice.

“These predestined and foreordained angels and people are individually and unchangeably designated, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or decreased.

“Those people who are predestined to life were chosen by God before the foundation of the world, according to his eternal and unchangeable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will. He chose them in Christ for eternal glory, purely as a result of his free grace and love, without anything else about them serving as a condition or cause moving him to do so.

“Just as God has appointed the elect to glory, so he has by the eternal and completely free purpose of his will foreordained all the means. Therefore, those who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ and effectually called to faith in Christ by his Spirit working at the appropriate time. They are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith to salvation. No one but the elect are redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved.

“The doctrine of the high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care so that those heeding the will of God revealed in his Word and obeying him may be assured of their eternal election by the certainty of their effectual calling. In this way this doctrine will give reasons for praise, reverence, and admiration of God, as well as humility, diligence and rich comfort to all who sincerely obey the gospel.”

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