
LESSON 1: ETERNALLY SECURED

Introductory Overview

Before diving headlong into Reformed Theology Proper, it is important to first establish theological truths & presuppositions rooted in Scripture & reality to better comprehend the Reformed Tradition. John Calvin said that nearly all wisdom we possess consists in knowledge of God & of ourselves. Thus, we are starting, in regard to Reformed Theology, with a proper knowledge of God; namely in how He has faithfully chosen & preserved His people, that they may always be reforming into the image of Christ until the Day of Christ. This is our hope & standard as we seek Him by faith.

I. God Has Eternally Decreed**Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12**

- 3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*
4 *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love,*
5 *by predestining us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,*
6 *to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He graciously bestowed on us in the Beloved.*
11 *In Him, we also have been made an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,*
12 *to the end that we who first have hoped in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.*

The Lord has chosen us in eternity past to be His people according to His good pleasure. There are many who say this choice of God predestining us is because He looks down the corridors of time and chooses us because He foresees that we will choose Him.

While many Christians have understood election in this way, Scripture never explicitly grounds God's electing choice in a foreseen decision on our part. Instead, Paul directs us to God's purpose and mercy as the basis of election.

Romans 9:10-15

- 10 *And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac;*
11 *for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that the purpose of God according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,*
12 *it was said to her, "THE OLDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER."*
13 *Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."*
14 *What shall we say then? Is there any unrighteousness with God? May it never be!*
15 *For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."*

Question #1: What does this passage reveal about God? Why did He choose Jacob & not Esau?

In this passage, we see that God chose Jacob, but rejected Esau. Even though Esau was the firstborn, God went against the cultural expectation to choose Jacob. Not only does this passage show us that this electing work of God was done before they existed, but that His choosing was not influenced by anything that they would do in their lives. This passage of course does not teach against the omniscience of God, but it does tell us that His knowledge about what they would do in their lives had no effect on His electing will. The purpose clause *so that* in **V. 11** tells us that this choice was made independently from Jacob's & Esau's existence & actions, so that it was clear God chose according to **His** purpose, independent from His creation.

And because God is righteous in this eternal election (**Romans 9:14**), we can have the peace & hope of our calling, knowing that God had this perfect plan planned out in eternity past. God is the Master Storyteller, & He has not worked in our lives in a last-ditch effort to save what He messed up; it has all gone according to His plan.

We have a loving, caring Father Who loves us so much that our entire existence, salvation, & eternity, were all planned long before He created anything or anyone. In **Isaiah 46:8-10**, God generously provides assurance in His plans & works. ***Remember this, and be assured; cause it to return to your heart, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My counsel will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'*** God declares the end from the beginning because He has established the end at the beginning! Unlike fallible, created beings, God will not be mocked; all He plans & decrees will come to pass. He is the Master Builder, & He will see His creation to the very end; His planned out, perfectly executed end.

Question #2: How does understanding God's sovereign election affect your life decisions?

II. God Eternally Preserves

Matthew 16:16-18

- 16 *And Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*
- 17 *And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."*
- 18 *"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."*

Christ's Preservation

God is not an equal opponent of Satan; Satan is a rebellious, fallen angel who stands against the Almighty God of Heaven & Earth. Our God stands immovable against Satan; what God has built Satan cannot destroy; rather he is destroyed by God & his plans are nullified by God's work through His Church. No matter what the sinful world around us looks like, no matter what sins the Church falls into, we will always & forever, as His Church, confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Our confession rests on Christ because He is God in the flesh. He lived & died for sinful men. His works are not like our works. Hebrews tells us after accomplishing redemption, He sat down at the right hand of the Father. There is no more righteous works that need to be accomplished, because Jesus once for all satisfied the wrath of the Father. The Church is preserved because Jesus' works are perfect, complete, & sufficient for the eternal salvation of His people. Jesus builds His Church upon Himself; He will build His Church & keep His Church according to His Truth & faithfulness, not on the mere self-will of man.

A Persevering Confession

Because God has declared the end from the beginning, He is also in control of everything in between. Look at **Ephesians 2:20-22**. *So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, is growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.* Here we see that Christ building His Church involves individual Christians being built together as one household/one temple of God, founded on the teachings of the Scriptures, and matured in holiness in the Spirit. God's preservation looks like something. Parents do not keep their children safe by locking them up in their rooms, away from the dangers of the world. Rather, they are diligently taught how to handle those dangers, manage difficult circumstances and tasks, and, as they get older, maneuver the battlefield that is the opposite sex. The doctrine of God preserving His people is also God causing them to persevere in the faith. They are kept safe from falling away, not because of their maturity, but because of God's faithfulness. Yet a true mark of God preserving His people is this growth in holiness.

Question #3: How can we reconcile seemingly true Christians falling away from the faith, all the while believing God at His Word to keep His people? Jesus said in **John 10:28-29** that *I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish—ever; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*

Question #4: How should God's preservation of you affect your prayer life?

III. God Is Eternally Faithful**Deuteronomy 7:6-9**

- 6 *For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God; Yahweh your God has chosen you to be a people for His own treasured possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*
- 7 *Yahweh did not set His affection on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples,*
- 8 *but because Yahweh loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your fathers, Yahweh brought you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*
- 9 *You shall know therefore that Yahweh your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.*

We trust in God's eternal decree & take comfort from the preservation of His people because of His faithfulness. We rest in the hope of our eternal security in Christ because of the sufficiency of Christ's work, based in the faithful promise of the Father. **God is not like a man, that He should lie (Numbers 23:19).**

When we feel our faith has plateaued, when we do not feel like reading another verse of God's Word, or when we worry about the trials that seem to infinitely pile up in our lives, we can be encouraged when we look to Christ. He is the living evidence of God's faithfulness. In the Garden of Eden, God promised there would be a descendent of Eve who would crush the head of the serpent. He promised Abraham that through his seed He would bless the nations, & that his people would dwell in the land. Thousands of years later, the Skull Crusher came at the right time to defeat sin & death, send His disciples into all the nations, & lead His people into the Promised Land.

There is room to lament about circumstances in our lives without challenging His faithfulness. We can grieve at loss or injustices in the world without blaming God for things going wrong.

The Church shall never perish from the face of the earth. The Apostle Paul said that the things written in the Old Testament were written for our instruction; as our example. The faithfulness of God seen in the Old Testament Scriptures is seen throughout the centuries after Christ, as well as before Him. We see the evidence of this faithful preservation all throughout church history. It is to this proof we now turn to in our next lesson.

Question #5: What do God's faithfulness, especially regarding His eternal decrees & His promised preservation of His people, have to do with Reformed Theology & Reformed Churches?

Answer: Reformed Theology emphasizes God's predestining work of election & the preservation of His people, both of which display His covenant faithfulness.

- ❖ The Reformed Christian knows their purpose, from eternity past, has always been to be an adopted & beloved child of God.
- ❖ The Reformed Christian takes comfort in knowing that God will always preserve & reform His Church & them, making them holy & blameless before Him in love.
- ❖ The Reformed Christian rests content in God's covenant faithfulness, because God's redeeming & sanctifying work is according to His faithfulness, not the strength of their own hands.