



# Spurgeon Baptist Association of Churches

Weekly Update ~ February 15, 2007

Volume 3, Issue 7

## Associational News & Prayer Requests

- Congratulations to the Knapps on the birth of their daughter!
- Please pray for a possible church start in Fremont, Nebraska.
- Please continue to pray for John Sneed in Davenport, Iowa.
- Pray for a church in Waterloo, Iowa, as it makes several decisions about the future.
- Pray for the churches in Seneca, Kansas, and Dubuque, Iowa as they strive to find ways to proclaim the Gospel in Roman Catholic areas.
- Pray for the Lord to send workers into the harvest. While Kansas and the surrounding areas are certainly in a time of severe drought and famine spiritually, in our poverty let us pray and desire to send workers into other areas where the Gospel has never been heard or has been wiped out by years of Communism and that form of worldview. Pray that the Lord would send workers into the Czech Republic and Indonesia and don't refuse if one of those workers is you. Pray for the Lord to give you a broken heart and a true spirit of intercession for these places. Our greatest desire should be to seek His glory in the whole world in accordance to the Great Commission.
- If you would like to submit information for the weekly update, please e-mail it to [trinityb@wamego.net](mailto:trinityb@wamego.net).

**Spurgeon Baptist Association of Churches blog:**  
<http://spurgeonbaptistassociation.org/blog/>

**To view back-issues of the Spurgeon Baptist Association weekly update, visit our website:**  
[www.spurgeonbaptistassociation.org](http://www.spurgeonbaptistassociation.org)

## Predestination and Tithing

A few weeks ago a very nice lady asked a question that has been asked numerous times in differing ways. It was this: "If God predestines, then why do I need to go to church and tithe?" I thought I would step out of the Beatitudes long enough to attempt an answer to that question since it appears to express a question that so many are asking in one form or another. First, predestination is taught in the Bible. There is no real argument about that, but the dispute is over the meaning of predestination.

"For those whom He foreknew, He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He **predestined**, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified" (Romans 8:28-29).

"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 He **predestined** us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph 1:4-6).

"In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's gracious choice*. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace" (Romans 11:5-6).

In light of those verses, the Bible clearly teaches predestination. The words are in the text and the words mean something. So if one believes in predestination, one believes in a biblical term. If one totally denies anything about predestination, then one is denying what the Bible teaches. Usually it is a specific teaching that is denied. Some are denying a form of fatalism that makes human beings out to be robots. That is denied by virtually all.

*(Continued on page 2)*

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## Predestination and Tithing (Continued)

*(Continued from page 1)*

Some want to deny predestination in that they say it denies that human beings don't have free will or that human beings can't do anything for salvation. There are also many other issues raised, but what predestination is meant to do is to preserve a Gospel of total grace. Notice the text in Romans 11:5-6. In the present day there is a remnant (literally) "according to the choice of grace." In other words, salvation is all of grace or it is not. The doctrine of predestination, once stripped of all the horror stories and misrepresentations, simply means that God saves according to total grace and not according to the works of man. It also means that from eternity God knew this and decided this. It does not mean that He forces some away from Himself and forces others to come. A lot about predestination is hidden in the mysteries of the decrees of God and no man knows those things. What man must be concerned about, however, is that salvation is all of grace and therefore must be in the hands of God alone.

We can illustrate this with an example. What if God has predestined me to starve to death? I don't have to wonder if that is the hidden will of God, I simply need to eat. If I desire to eat and am able to find food, apart from certain diseases of the body, then I will not starve. By the appearances of many Southern Baptist (including myself) ministers, we are not real worried that God has predestined that we starve. Maybe we are afraid that we will starve so we are storing away extra now. However, we show that we are not concerned to pry into the hidden things of God. Why are we so concerned to pry into the hidden things of God regarding salvation? Scripture teaches that God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass, but that does not stop us from eating. Should this stop us from seeking God for the salvation of ourselves and others? It should not stop us, but actually encourage us to do seek Him.

Though the Bible clearly teaches predestination, it has been obscured by many people in many ways. The Bible also teaches that people should not sin and should do other things. Could it be that God has ordained that we not starve through eating food and that people would seek Him by doing some things and not doing others? There is no real tension in this matter, though we have tensions in our understandings because of misunderstandings. In fact,

it is only because of the truth of predestination that our efforts at going to church, tithing, and working in His name have any real meaning. It might take a bit to get beyond where people are in their thinking, but it is true.

If we tithe and do our works in an effort to obtain heaven, then we are trying to work our way to heaven. That sounds so awful when it is put that way, but yet that is the logical end. We need to ask ourselves why we do those things. The Pharisees prayed, tithed, and gave alms too. But they were condemned for them. Why were they condemned for those things? Because they were doing them in their efforts at self-righteousness rather than love for God. I Corinthians 13 Paul taught that no matter what we do, if it is not out of love, there is no benefit. So we can know without doubt that if we believe that our efforts in religious duties are an effort to enter heaven, we are not going about it the right way.

Here is where the beauty of the Gospel of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ comes in. Not only did Christ suffer the wrath of the Father as a propitiation and left no sin unpunished for those who believe (Rom 3:24), so He also earned a perfect righteousness to be imputed or reckoned to all that believe in Him (Rom 4:1-6). What does that mean? It means that for sinners that come to Christ all their sins have been punished in Christ and their debts and hell have no claim on them. But it also means that the righteousness of Christ is all that a person needs and is the only righteousness acceptable to God to enter into heaven. It means that the Gospel is a full and glorious Gospel. It means that the person that truly has Christ does not have one sin left to suffer for. It means that the person that has Christ does not have any righteousness left to earn in order to enter heaven. It means that the Gospel is all of grace and that the work of Christ comes to human being that receive Him and His work by faith alone without any works on his or her part. Grace is the love of God that finds its cause within God and not the one receiving it. Grace, as moved by God, also points to the unworthiness of the person receiving the love of God. To be saved by grace is to give up all works for salvation and trust in Christ alone apart from our works.

*(Continued on page 3)*



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## Predestination and Tithing (Continued)

*(Continued from page 2)*

Predestination, then, is at the very least linked to the biblical teaching that preserves the biblical doctrine of grace. While man does not know the things that only God can know, the real intent behind predestination is to exhibit the glory of God's grace. This removes salvation from the realm of the works of man. It leaves salvation and grace in the hands of God and says that no human being has the power or will to supersede the power and will of God to dispense grace as He pleases. If we believe (though we may not say) that our works move God to save us, then essentially we are trusting in our own works for salvation and not the grace of God. Justification by grace alone through faith alone (apart from works) preserves and sets out the Gospel that it is God that saves. Faith is not taught in the Bible as something that man does, but as that which receives the promises of God. Salvation does not come to humanity by works or by working up faith. Faith is meant to destroy the idea of man's ability to contribute to salvation and if faith is something that man works up salvation is no longer by grace alone. The glorious doctrine of justification by faith alone is meant to destroy any hope of humanity in works as a way of salvation.

Now we can see how predestination is what provides the basis for good works. Ephesians 2:10 follows 2:1-9 on grace: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." Works are ways given to use as a means for God to glorify Himself through us by love. If we are not saved by grace and are left up to works that assist in salvation or merit something toward salvation, then we really love ourselves in what we do rather than being free to love God in what we do. We are to die to the Law in order that we may live to God (Gal 2:19). In this way it is no longer the self that lives but it is the life of Christ in us (Gal 2:20), because if righteousness could come from the Law, then Christ died needlessly (Gal 2:21). Grace frees us from works for salvation in order that we may live and work out of love for God. The works we do are prepared for us to do by the love of God as an expression of love for Him and our neighbors.

But what of the person that claims to believe that God has not predestined him or her for salvation? Should people

go out and be given over to sin? No, because all that is doing is treasuring up wrath as Romans 2:4-5 teaches. The commands of God are also for the good of man. If we walk in sin it heaps up wrath on ourselves in this life and the eternity to come. A full understanding of all this disappears into the beauty of His character, decrees, and mysterious will, but that doesn't mean that the Bible doesn't teach it. Because the Bible teaches it, we must not back away from it at all. Since the Bible only teaches one Gospel and that is a Gospel of grace, we must take great pains not to teach anything else since Galatians 1 teaches that another Gospel is anathema. Whatever else predestination does, it teaches us that salvation is not in the hands of fallible men but in the hands of the living God. It gives man hope that God will save him and that he does not have to try to do enough good works with good enough motives in order to be saved. It teaches us to rest in Christ and Christ alone. It also teaches us that we can be free to love God in all we do since there is a Gospel of grace that saves to the uttermost. While no one understands predestination with the utmost clarity, let us not flee from it since it is taught in the Bible. After all, as Romans 11:6 points out, "but if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace." If we take away a full and a free grace, it is no longer grace at all which means it is no Gospel at all. May that free and glorious grace of God lead us all to Himself and keep us close as He manifests His glory through us. After all, our God-given purpose in life is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. That is by grace too.

Richard Smith

### ***SBC Prayer Lines***

*Use these numbers year round to obtain current missions prayer requests.*

*North American Missions ~ 1-800-554-PRAY  
International Missions ~ 1-800-395-PRAY*