

**Soteriology**  
**Lesson 2**  
**Predestination Part Two**

By  
**Dr. David Hocking**

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I guess one of the things that because we struggled so greatly with this, we need to deal with—is our own human reaction. Human reactions. One of our ladies here was asking questions that all of us would ask. And I guess that’s part of the problem we have with this doctrine. People love to, after seeing what God’s Word says, then to say, “But what I want to know is....” “Now, if you ask me...” “David, do you understand what you’re reading?”

I’m trying. There’re a lot of things I don’t understand. And I have to be truthful with you, it’s not what I don’t understand that bothers me. It’s what I do understand! And I think it’s important, class. I told you it was going to happen. It already did. “I don’t understand! This doesn’t make sense! I mean why did God choose me...?”

See, you’re like me. I’ve got more questions than I’ve got answers. But again, we come back and say, “Wait a minute. Did God’s Word say that?” The problem lies in our handling it and how we interpret that. What do we mean by that?—which is a part of the question of course. So, I put this together for you that I hope will be helpful to you.

What is the manner in which these doctrines coincide with my human responsibility? If you tried to tell me as some “hyper-Calvinists,” at least in my opinion, not in theirs, say: “There is no such thing as human responsibility.” Well, I don’t agree. And by the way, the fact that I don’t agree shows that I have human response. Is everybody following me? See, I don’t need you to discuss with me whether I’ve got human responsibility or not.

My wife appealed to it as I left the house and said, “Be careful. It’s pretty rainy and foggy up the mountain.

“Well, I can’t help that. I’m not responsible. I’m not even going to put my hands on the wheel of the car. If God wants me up there, He’s going to put me up there. I may not even get into the car and see if God can put me in.” Do you understand how foolish you can get? You can just drive yourself insane. So how do you handle it? Well, I came up with these five things and I

hope they'll be helpful to you. They're not going to answer everything for you. But I hope they'll be helpful.

## Five Areas of Man's Responsibility

- 1) God created man with the ability to reason and a desire to understand Him.
- 2) Man is responsible to God's revelation of Himself in creation.
- 3) Man is created in the image of God and has a limited ability to make choices.
- 4) Man has the responsibility to adhere to what the Bible teaches and his conscience dictates.
- 5) Man does not have the right to question God's authority or His plans.

One, I always have to come back to this. We will never fully understand. It is something about us as humans that God makes us this way, and that's what makes us distinct from animals is that we have a desire to understand. I want to figure this out. An animal reacts to the stimulus of his immediate environment. It's all he can do. And he can be trained by it. But he cannot reason and think ahead and rationally explain things.

So, God created me with a unique ability and many times I have to come to Romans 11:33-36.

33 Oh the depths of riches of both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? And who hath been his counselor?

35 Or who hath first given to him and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"

36 For of him, [Out of him, that's the word source, *ek* in Greek.] and through him, [He's the channel, *dia*.] and to him [He's the source, channel, and object] of all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

He's not done with his epistle, but after saying that, he had no choice. Amen!

That is the truth! In other words, we will never fully understand. His ways are past finding out. In heaven, I'll know more than I know now. But I will never fully know.

You say, "Doesn't the Bible say we will know fully as we are known?"

You'll know more completely than you do now, okay. But you will never fathom the depths of our God. Never! You will always eternally remain the created. You will never be the creator. Something to just sit back and say, "You know, that's true."

Number two is that we are responsible to God's revelation. You see, people who carry this to the nth degree don't want to see this. But it's true—Romans 1. When you look at creation, you're accountable for what you see. Now, what do you learn from creation about God? Well let's see, I'd say He's pretty big. At least I have found it greatly troublesome and difficult in my life to make a galaxy. I haven't been good at oceans or mountains either. So, whoever did this thing...whatever the "force" is, He certainly is bigger than you and I. Did you know that God holds you accountable for that?

"Well, what's that? You're just saying whoever it is, is powerful." That's true. Because you know what human nature does? It exchanges that glory into the created thing. Something you designed so that you can be god. So you are playing 'God' now.

Isn't it interesting the height of idolatry is rejecting what we see even in Creation? Whoever made this thing is bigger than you and I. Oh, by the way, if He made it then He obviously was in existence before it was made. Now look at Romans 1:20, "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world are clearly seen." How?—"being understood by the things that are made even His eternal power and Godhead." There it is. He had to exist before it

was made. And if He made it He had the power to do it, “so that you are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). Do men live up to that light of Him and creation? No.

God says, Romans 1:21-23,

21 Because when they knew God, [certainly in that way] they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain or empty in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 And changed the glory of the incorruptible God [they saw in the universe] into an image made like to corruptible man, birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

A guy handed me an article out of *The Journal of Scientific Knowledge* and it’s all about the neo-paganism that has hit the intellectual world. It was Romans 1 like you cannot believe! They literally said, “The evidence of early man is worshipping animals.”

Do you understand? I can see it. I can see how that paganism would conclude that. And I read this very erudite article and thought to myself, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of God into an image made like four-footed creatures and creeping things” (Romans 1:22-23). That’s it exactly! They had pictures in the article of animal creatures like little reptile, bird-like things and all that.—“These were our god.” And you are now seeing the total, philosophical deterioration of evolutionary minds. They have suggested that we return to original worship of ancient pagans to find our *real* selves. Imagine it! Brilliant scientists telling us that we now ought to worship animals! That’s right in Romans 1.

So, I say to you. No, we are responsible for God’s revelation. None of our teaching on the doctrine of salvation eliminates that. And God says that we are without excuse because we’ve got to back up and talk about Creation. You see, the fact is that God did give us a revelation of

Himself. So let me put it to you another way. According to what I read in the Bible—now this is David just reasoning with it—according to what I read in the Bible, apparently God doesn't hold a man accountable for what he doesn't know. Now, I want you to think about that for a moment.

Would this not explain why we see babies who never had a chance to receive Christ being considered as creatures of heaven now? Such as in the case of David's baby that he lost. He said, "That child shall not come to me, but I shall go to him" (2 Samuel 12:23). When I speak of my grandchildren I speak of three grandchildren not two, because one died. But I believe that grandchild is in heaven. And that's one of the great blessings that my daughter and her husband face also, to think about that little child is in heaven. How do you know he's in heaven? Because it says right over here in the book of Samuel and I'm able to show her that David said, "The child will not come to me, but I will go to him." And we know David's in heaven. So, you see, babies are in heaven.

I don't know if you've caught the impact of that. When David said "In sin did my mother conceive me," he wasn't an illegitimate child. He's talking about the presence of the sin nature at the moment of conception. And since sin is not in the human body, but is rather in the soul, we have clearly the fact that there is a real person from the moment of conception. God says, "All souls are mine" (Ezekiel 18:4). It's interesting, isn't it? I'm against abortion because they are real people in the womb. I do not believe life begins at birth. Life begins at conception.

So do you understand? We're just thinking through things. I am responsible as I come into this world for what I can know and understand. People ask me sometimes about those who are mentally deficient. People can't seem to understand and they ask me about them. Hey, I believe those folks are going to be in heaven. That's my view.

The atonement of Christ propitiated the whole world. And you will learn later what the meaning of that is. Jews have a heritage where the high priest went in once a year on the Day of Atonement and provided atonement for the entire nation. In my doctrine, you, by your own actions are accountable. And if you don't bring the individual sacrifice during the year, you are

cut off from Israel forever. So only those who bring the sacrifice are ever redeemed. So I do understand the Calvinist.

But I don't understand him in another sense. I believe the atonement of Christ cares for those who do not have the ability to understand what God has revealed. Is everybody listening? So you see a man is not held accountable in the Bible for what he doesn't know. Now some of you are going to think that's good news. But actually it's not. Why? Because the other side of the coin, if you flip it over is God does hold a man accountable for what he does know.

So what does that "heathen" out there in Africa...By the way, I have been in one of the poorest country on the face of the earth, in dark central Africa, and frankly they seemed a lot smarter than commonly believed. So don't talk to me about those "uncivilized heathens"—uneducated people out there in the jungle. I've been with them and ministered to them. But there is something interesting. When you go into a new village, often there's a witch doctor or shaman or someone who is controlling people by his doctrines and whatever. But there are many people in the village who by looking up and seeing all those stars do not buy what he's saying. They don't have the foggiest idea what the answer to life is. But they don't believe what he's telling them. Why? They're living up to the light they had received. And you know something? When you go in with the gospel, it's those people that immediately respond to the gospel. Why? They've already been living up to the light they received.

You see, it's a truth of God's Word that if you live up to the light God has given you, He will give you more light. What light does he [speaking of the African] receive? Well, from creation. We also know from conscience in chapter 2 of Romans. There's a moral determiner in the heart of every man, setting up standards of right and wrong even when he has no law. Figure that one out!

Why do pagan cultures, which have never been exposed to written law, why do they develop laws within their own minds? Because God says there is a conscience that accuses or excuses your thoughts. So God even holds you accountable for whether or not you are living up

to the conscience you yourself have determined is what's right or what's wrong in a situation. Isn't that interesting?

So in other words, God continues to give light. Then when God gave us His revelation at Mount Sinai, we are accountable. And by those oracles that the Jews gave us, we now have the law of God. And we don't live up to that either. "There's none that doeth good, no not one; all are unrighteous" (Romans 3:12). And so Romans concludes in chapter 3:19-20. The whole world is guilty before God. But backing it up, God doesn't hold you accountable for what you don't know. But He does hold you accountable for what you do know. And what you do know is far greater than what you've ever admitted. That's why people are without excuse.

So again in trying to answer this from the standpoint of human responsibility, I don't go as far as saying we are not responsible. We are responsible. And we're responsible for what God has revealed. And the heavens do declare His glory. They give us some understanding of God, at least that He's bigger than you and I. And at least that He existed before this thing started and I'm accountable for that. If I live up to the light of that, God will give me more light. If I don't, and I rebel and turn it into the thing I've designed, then God is going to hold me without excuse.

You say, "Well, they haven't heard the gospel." It doesn't make any difference. God holds you accountable for the revelation you have. Abraham never met Jesus Christ, but Jesus said "he rejoiced to see My day" (John 8:56). It was because of a simple promise of God to him that "In you, Abraham, will come a seed that will bless all nations of the world. Believest thou this?" (Genesis 26:4). "Abraham believed God and it was put to his account for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). Abraham will be in heaven though he never saw Jesus Christ in his earthly life.

It's interesting isn't it? You have to think these things through.

The third thing that I would say is that we are made in the image of God. That's clear from Genesis 1, isn't it? And if we are, therefore we possess a limited ability to choose just as God chose. Think about it. If God didn't have a body, and He didn't, then in what sense were we made in His image? By the way, your children are in your image. But their bodies have a

tendency not to look like you. For which my daughter is extremely thankful. I've noticed that you can have two boys out of the same home look totally different. My oldest son, close haircut, neat, financier, athlete, likes to work out, very quiet strong type. My youngest son: long hair, musician, effervescent, life of the party. I've looked at them both and said, "Were those our kids?" And yet the Bible says they are in my image. Right there in Genesis 5:3, it says that "The children of Adam were after his own likeness and after his own image."

Then what is it? It's not material and it's not visible. It is invisible. I think because God thinks. I have emotions because God does. I have a volitional choice because God does. Now certainly mine is limited; it's not equal to God's. Mine's limited by even laws of gravity.

So you see, when I deal with these doctrines, I don't cancel out one thing in order to support a previously-held opinion. If I don't understand God's choice, it's not going to make me forsake what I know also is true about my ability to choose. Is everybody listening? Because some of you will jump quickly with the questions as I warned you about, which we do all the time. I understand that, but if you just be patient and walk through, you will see we will come out fairly decent, fairly balanced.

You have to be careful, class, that in your effort to understand how God chose without any cause in you at all, it does not mean that you do not have the ability to choose. And people have a hard time putting those two things together. "Well, if I have the ability to choose and God did all the choosing, then what point does it make?" We will keep at this over and over again, looking at it from many different ways. But I know I had the ability to choose. And I know God has chosen me without any thought for what I'd do, whether I was born, whether I had done any good, nothing. He chose me before the foundation of the world. Tough stuff!

Number four, I have found, class—and I hope this will bring balance to you—that it's always best to adhere to what the Bible actually says. And not draw too many conclusions from it.

In Joshua 1:7, he was told “not to turn to the right or to the left.” Revelation 22:18 puts it another way, “Don’t add or take away.” And I think this, while we use this to fight cults, let’s use it to fight ourselves. Isn’t it interesting, we always have to interpret and add what something means.

The other day I was talking with a guy after the service. I said, “Hey that was a great message.”

He says, “Well I don’t know, he didn’t explain a lot of things.

“In other words, he basically just kind of stuck to whatever the Bible was saying.”

And he said, “Yeah that’s all he did.”

I said, “You know what? I consider this to be an outstanding testimony. I am so glad that is your opinion because that tells me once again why I like being here. I’d rather listen to a guy *read* the Bible than sixty minutes of discussion that has nothing to do with the Bible.”

You see, sometimes, folks, you’ve got to back up and say, “Wait a minute! That’s what God’s Word says. Now just do it!” You know I’ll study about what’s the meaning of the construction and all that. I want to make sure I know what this really says, manuscript evidence and all that. I’ll do all that, but then there comes a point in which I’ve got to stop trying to interpret it and I just say, “You know what? That’s what it says!”

The fifth thing I find, in terms of human responsibility, is what we’ve already mentioned. And I won’t take long on it. Is that we don’t really have a right, class, to question God or His plan, or to charge Him with being unfair or unjust. That’s what we read in Romans 9:20. And, you know, I’m always the opposite. I’m like you, asking questions. And sometimes I have to back up and apologize to God. I just say, “Lord, I don’t understand this. And I know it’s what You said. And I know that the Judge of all the earth will always do right. So I thank You.”

I felt that way this week. I got one of the most heart-rending letters from one of our young guys. He’s got a wife and two small children and he just found out, never had any warning before, he has inoperable cancer and has about eight weeks to live. He wrote to me one of the

most beautiful letters I have ever read in my life. And I thought of the wisdom God has given this young man, young disciple of the faith. He hasn't known the Lord that long; I think he said twelve years. But this guy just unraveled the beauty of what we are discussing about—trying to understand. And he's walked through everything like, "Well, maybe because there is somebody else that God knows would take care of my children better than I would." All those human reactions, right? "Maybe God is just taking me home. I know I'm going home. I'm not afraid to die, but I just wonder about my wife and my children and why now? Why would God do this? And my kids and I'm abandoning them. And why would God do that?" Just walking through every issue and as he came to the end he said, "You know, I've been wrestling over this ever since I heard. And I can't figure anything out, but it just occurred to me that God is doing right. So, I'm just going to trust Him." It's good. Psalm 119:68 says, 'He is good and does good.' So this is a really good thing. I don't understand it. But it's really good and He's doing right."

And I just cried reading that letter. You know sometimes you and I, we can sit in the classroom and have fun arguing over it. But sometimes we walk into a crisis in our life, and we've got to figure out what we believe. And sometimes the only thing that keeps you steady at that moment is that God is good and He does what is right.

I remember that first call from my daughter. "Daddy, why did my baby die?"

"I don't know, honey. I really don't know."

Had a little junior high boy come up to me after chapel. He said, "Why did God give me a drunken daddy?" Little kid was crying. I sat down with him; talked to him a little bit. He beats him up. Says, "He's drunk every day; he screams and yells at my mom. Why did God give me a drunken dad?" Little junior high boy! You know, you can try to answer questions folks, all you want. And we're going to all go to the Bible and try to find where those key answers are, you know. But ultimately you have to rest in the goodness and kindness and knowledge of God. God knows and we don't. God is good and God is just. And you can depend on that. It's not easy is it?

Well, we have a message to learn from the great doctrine and that is to praise and thank the Lord forever. Amen? To even live in conformity to His Son, when we say you're *predestined*, I think a lot of folks think the big issue is heaven or hell. I guess in one sense I understand that. We certainly want to know that we're going to heaven. But predestination is a doctrine referring to being conformed into the image of His Son and that's Romans 8:29.

And I think another great principle that we learn by studying the doctrine of predestination is that we are to rest in the power and plan of God, knowing that He does all things for our good and His glory, Romans 8:28. "And we *know* that all things work together for good." And I hope you know that.

And a fourth application is to accept our trials and difficulties with thankfulness, knowing how He's using them to build our lives. I guess that's one of the practical aspects of predestination that a lot of people forget. Because when you're going through a hard time you have a tendency to ask why. And perhaps God should shout out from heaven and say, "Why not?" since He teaches us so many wonderful things through trouble and difficulty, more than He does through times of blessing. So we should praise Him and thank Him even though we don't understand why. We know that His purposes will always be good for us. And that's very important.

Even when the devil attacks you, you don't need to worry. God uses the devil to make you stronger. 1 Peter 5:8-11 says so. "He'll perfect and strengthen and establish and settle you." And those afflictions that the enemy brings to you and me, and attacks that he brings are all intended to make us stronger. Not to make you weaker. Not to wipe you out. But God has a wonderful plan and He laid it out before the foundation of the world.

Let's pray.

Lord, life is hard sometimes. There are things we don't understand. Lord, I remember twenty-three years ago being told I'd never speak again. But You had

something else in mind. And I feel bad about questioning You and complaining at that time. There are a lot of things I don't understand, Lord. Why You allow them? Why they take place? Sometimes things seem so senseless. And Lord, there are many things that in this discussion of Your sovereignty and Your choice and Your calling, that we confess we don't understand. We're having a hard time putting it together. But Lord, I pray that we will once again come back to what we started with, that we need to focus on God not man. That we'll think more of who You are. Your kindness, Your graciousness, Your love, Your tender mercies, Your faithfulness, Your goodness that leads us to repentance. You always do good and You always do right. Lord, I don't understand it. But that means I have to trust You. Your ways are past finding out. But what You have told us is so wonderful! It's hard to believe. Thank You, Lord, for bringing us to Yourself, for making us Your children. And as we continue to study these great doctrines, may we have a heart that truly desires to worship You. And we thank You, in Jesus' name. Amen.