

William Perkins

Divine Election & Reprobation

The book of life, in which are written the names of those who are to be saved; Phil.4:3, Paul saith of Clement and others his fellowlabourers, that their names were written in the book of life. Now, by these books we may not grossly conceive material books, such as men note what they would remember in; but the counsel, election, providence, pleasure, and knowledge of God, wherein all these things are so certainly set down, as if any man should write them in a book. Out of which, we note two things: First, that in regard of God there is no chance, neither any event by it; in regard of men indeed who know not the causes of things, many chances may be; but God's providence, and chance are contrary; He having all things written before Him with their causes. Secondly, that nothing comes to pass without the decree of God, no not the wicked actions of men; which God not only foresees, but decrees; for this Jude insinuates; saying, they were ordained to this judgment; and even that which is against the will of God comes not to pass without His will, God willing the being of that which He wills not to effect; and though He esteems not evil to be good, yet He accounts it good that evil should be. Further, where He saith - ordained of old to this condemnation - we learn, that as God hath before all worlds decreed the electing of some to salvation; so He has decreed the refusal and rejecting of others to condemnation. I Pet.2:8 - Many were disobedient; unto which they were even ordained. I Thes.5:9 - God hath not ordained you to wrath, but to obtain salvation through Christ; showing that some are ordained to wrath, who are not to obtain salvation through Christ. Rom.9:22 - God is compared to a potter, framing vessels of honor and dishonor, vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath. In the same place; I have loved Jacob, and hated Esau; that is, I have decreed so to do. For the whole chapter speaks of God's counsel and unchangeable decree. Objection: If this be so {will some say} then God deals unjustly, that absolutely ordains some men to condemnation and perdition. Answer: We must know, that we are creatures, and may not presume to prescribe a law of justice to the Creator; whose will is justice itself {whatsoever we may conceive}, and makes the thing willed good, because it is willed, and not willed because it is good. Secondly, though God refuse and reject men, yet He does it in most wise order and just proceeding, in these two degrees: First, He vouchsafes to some men the riches of His grace tending to life everlasting; which special abundant grace He denies to some other, passing by them, who left of Him unto themselves, fall into sin. Secondly, for sin God decrees judgment and condemnation, so as He does not simply and absolutely ordain His creature to hell, but in regard of sin; not that sin is a cause of the degree moving Him unto it, but that He decrees not condemnation without respect of sin and relation unto it, which speech we need not scare to speak, because the Holy Ghost so speaks. Application: First; if some men be passed by of God, we must humble ourselves under His mighty hand, and with fear and trembling work our salvation. Rom.11:20 - some are cut off, thou standest by faith, be not high minded, but fear. Second, we may not be offended when we see the gospel not received; yea, hatred of men, and the professors of it persecuted; for many are of old ordained to be underminers of the truth, even to this condemnation, which by disobedience they fasten upon themselves. If the gospel be hid to

any, it is to them that perish. Thirdly, many Divines overshoot themselves, that seek to obscure or overthrow this doctrine of reprobation, teaching that God for His part elects all, and that man himself is the cause of reprobation; so as man is either the savior or damner of himself, by receiving or refusing grace offered; whereas the scripture speaks otherwise; and here teaches us, that some men were enrolled to certain judgment by God before all worlds. The darkening of this doctrine breeds security of spirit, wherein grace is made so large, and salvation so easy, that if men will they may be saved; whereas our doctrine leads to the fear of God, and a care to walk as in His presence continually. Lastly, in that it is added, they were ordained of old, note that the time of the rejection of some men - namely, before all worlds. Secondly, the proper cause of the decree of God, which must needs be in Himself, because it was before the creature was. Rom.9:11. - Before they had done good or evil; that is, before He considered of their good or evil in His decree. He decreed to love the one and hate the other. So, Eph.1:9 - whom He chooses, He chooses in Himself. Not informing His judgment, not framing His counsel, as man does from outward respects; He goes not out of Himself for any motive to choose or refuse, but as Mat.11:26 - because His good pleasure was such. This confutes the popish error, which affirms that God did decree according to His foresight of faith or infidelity, the saving of some, and refusing of others; but this cannot stand, seeing God's decree is in order and time before the creature; which being the latter, cannot be the cause of the former. William Perkins {An Exposition upon the Epistle of Jude - 1631}