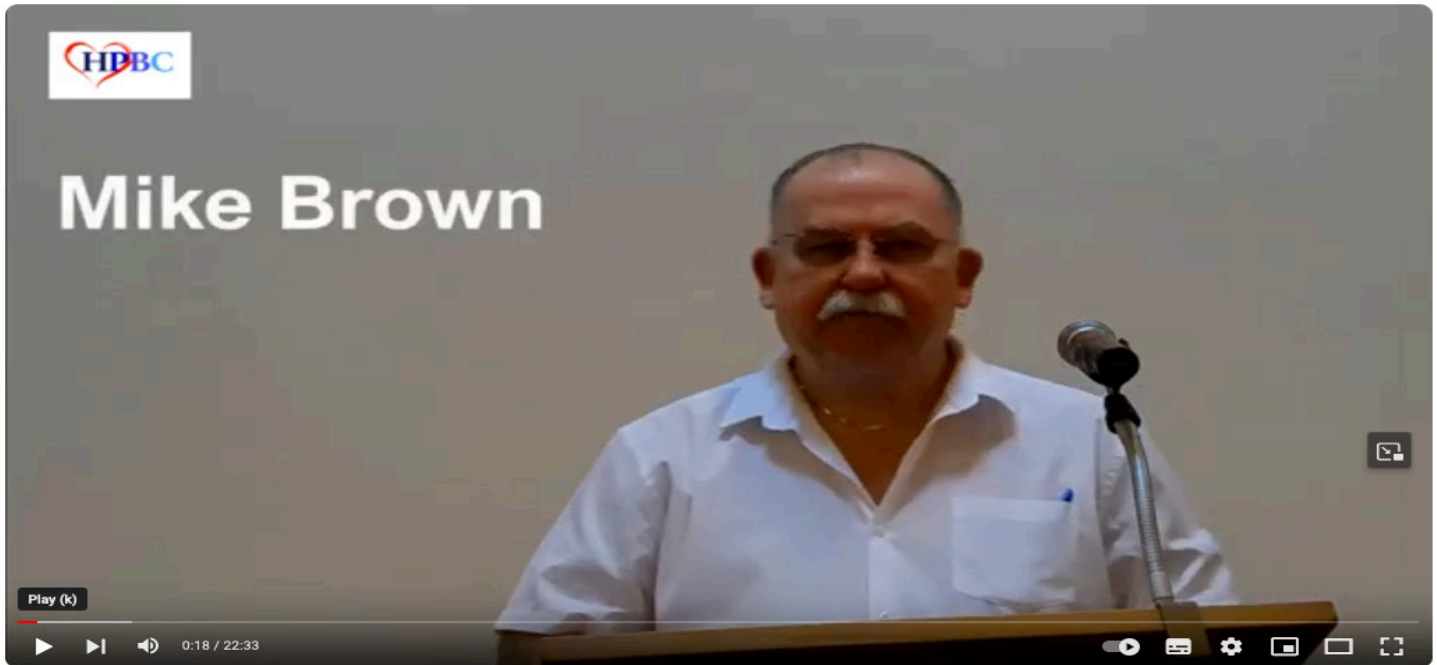


Mike 20 Feb 2022 Hill Park Baptist Church

This sermon was delivered at the church I attend (I am not a member and you can probably guess why)

Your take is to dissect the sermon, identify the errors and present a succinct summary of predestination answering the objections made in this so called sermon.

The paradox of free will and predestination (Romans 9)



Mike 20 Feb 2022

<https://youtu.be/Z1RjXBCtMjk?si=QVQSCjeAMeLuYgkf>

Good morning everybody, my name is Mike and I'm a bear of little brain.

I'm going to read to you from Romans chapter 9 the context of chapter 9 10 and 11.

Actually Paul is addressing his grief that Israel as a nation has rejected Christ and the Jews in Rome who heard Paul's teaching were appalled to think that they were not after all God's chosen people and Paul suffered greatly from harassment and violence at the hands of Jewish leaders wherever he preached the gospel.

So I'm going to read verse 14 to verse 24. It's quite a long chapter and this is the most important bit so Romans 9 starting at verse 14. What shall we say then is there unrighteousness with God, certainly not for he says to Moses I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion so then it is not of him who wills nor of him who runs but of God who shows mercy for the scripture says to Pharaoh for this very purpose I have raised you up that I may show my power in you and that my name may be declared in all the earth. Therefore he has mercy on whom he wills and whom he wills he hardens.

You will say to me then why does he still find fault, for who has resisted his will. But indeed oh man who are you to reply against God, will the thing formed say to him who formed it why have you made me like this, does not the potter have the power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and one another for dishonor. What if God wanting to show his wrath and to make his power known endured which with much long suffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction and that he might make known the riches of his

glory on the vessels of mercy. which he had preferred prepared beforehand for glory. even us whom he called not of the Jews only, but also of the gentiles. You remember in chapter 3 of Romans, Paul is clear that Israel as a nation was the vehicle by which God's universal plan of redemption was communicated to the world. They were chosen for this purpose there was no promise of salvation for all Jews, only a promise of vocation and now the gentiles who had no part in bringing that plan to fruition are granted salvation simply on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ. While the descendants of Adam (I think he meant Abraham) who believed that their genes and their observance of the law ensured salvation, God hardens as it says in verse 18 hardens in their unbelief just as pharaoh's heart was hardened against the enslaved israelites in egypt verse 17 says, for the scripture says to the pharaoh for this very purpose i have raised you up that i may show my power in you and that my name may be declared in all the earth. Paul is quoting from Exodus and to any of the jews who might say that's not fair. Paul reminds them of God's words to Moses, God says I will have mercy on whom whomever i will have mercy and i will have compassion on whomever i will have compassion, and paul uses a potter and clay analogy, but indeed o man he says who are you to reply against God, will the thing formed say to him who formed it why have you made me like this, does not the potter have the power over the clay from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor, and all this sounds rather cold and deterministic.

Deterministic Determinism is the doctrine that all events, including human action, are ultimately determined by causes regarding so regarded as external to the will. So this is a picture of God fashioning individuals at the dawn of creation as vessels of honor programmed to glorify him and other individuals as vessels of dishonor programmed to reject him. Well I have a problem with that doctrine, in fact I have a few problems but you might say to me well mike if you have a problem with this cold deterministic doctrine of predestination then you should lay aside your objections and jolly well accept it, as God breathed scripture and you might be right but i don't believe that that's what paul is saying here. Is Paul really saying that however much an individual strives and yearns to know God and truly repents of his sinfulness, if he's not been pre-programmed to receive the gift of faith, he's eternally dead, and is Paul really saying that however much someone spends their whole life delighting and wallowing in the depths of their sinful behavior and continually and repeatedly the gospel message that if he's been programmed to receive the gift of life he'll be saved and all this pre-programming done before Jesus Christ has come and lived and died and been resurrected. I think not and if we look at jeremiah we find this potter clay analogy to which paul was referring and i think it's worth looking closely at that it's in Jeremiah chapter God shows jeremiah a potter whose vessel that he was making didn't turn out right so the potter revises his plan and formed a different type of vessel and i'll read to you briefly from jeremiah 18 starting in verse 5 then the word of the lord came to me he said can I not do with you israel as this potter does declares the lord, like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand Israel. if at any time i announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted torn down and destroyed and if that nation i warned repent of its evil then i will relent and not inflict on it the disaster i have planned. If at another time God says i announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me then i will reconsider the good i had intended to do for it.

So it's clear from jeremiah that God reserves his right to alter his plans in response to human decisions and actions the great polemicist winnie said i am a bear of very little brain long words bother me. There are some things which we as humans cannot understand and eternity is one of them the trinity is another. Paul says in corinthians now we see through a glass darkly but then face to face and that's why the interplay of predestination and free will must remain for us a mystery. A paradise (paradim?) and it's very dangerous for us to simply jettison the idea of free will in a misguided and futile attempt to resolve that paradox and thereby make our theology simpler and more comfortable. For God the whole of the history of the universe that's past present and future is like a sheet of paper on God's desk, for a God who is eternal and all-powerful what would be the point in creating creatures programmed to reject him. And equally what would be the point in creating creatures programmed robotically to worship and glorify him. I don't think that that is the image of God portrayed in scripture in scripture there's plenty of evidence of God's willingness to take action based on the quality of human responses.

So does this mean that God can be surprised by what a human does, no why because God already knows

what we're going to do in any situation but that doesn't absolve us of responsibility for the choices we make.

Yes we were slaves to sin but slaves can yearn for liberty they can strive to escape the yoke which oppresses them it's true that we can't earn our salvation but we can reach up a little feebly in response to God's free gift of redemption. Perhaps the true mark of an all-powerful eternal creator God is the capacity to surrender a portion of that power to permit true freedom of choice to the creatures who are at the pinnacle of that creation. Perhaps an all-powerful eternal creator god would surrender something so unique and valuable as his orally begotten son Jesus Christ to come down from glory to become flesh and for Jesus Christ to choose to surrender to death on the cross in our place. Perhaps brothers and sisters at the center of all of this is love where there is no freedom of choice there can be no love our God is a God of love universal unconditional and God's earnest desire is that all are saved. In 2 Peter it says the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise as some understand slowness instead he is patient with you not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance. God already knows everything you've done and everything you're going to do but that doesn't mean that you don't have responsibility as a free agent. He knows all the times you walked away from the gospel message and he knows exactly the time you started to walk towards the still small voice you have to have a real choice. C.S Lewis said hell is the greatest monument to human freedom walk away from Jesus again and again and again and eventually God will harden your heart, as he hardened the hearts of the unrepentant Jews, and a Pharaoh. C.S Lewis also said there are only two kinds of people in the world those who say to God thy will be done and those to whom God says in the end thy will be done. Christ is the author and perfecter of our faith. Christ is love Christ is the word of God and the person of Christ is revealed in scripture, and before there were any New Testament writings Paul said he resolved to know nothing but Christ and him crucified. The Baptist tradition that we're a proud part of recognizes and embraces the truth that we don't know everything. There are some things we will only fully understand in glory, and there are some things that we don't need to agree on, and we do no credit to Christ and his church if we pretend to others that Christianity has all of the answers apart from the answer being Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior we don't have all the answers we have all the right questions and we live our lives as the willing play in the Potter's hands giving ourselves to be transformed into the likeness of Christ even worse if we pretend to ourselves here on earth that there are no paradoxes no mysteries of the kingdom of God then we can't be fully used for his purpose.

tell your story about when the boys were very small they all slept in the same bedroom and like all young children they would misbehave at bedtime they'd employ every trick and turn to put off the faithful switching off of the bedroom light and there was one evening after lots and lots of the usual delaying tactics Stevie was sat in bed and he asked if he could read to me and I said no no no it's time for bed lie down go to and Stevie said please please please he really persisted I just want to read to you just a short piece so in the end I relented and said go on there Stevie said reading from the book he had he said suffer the little children to come unto me for of such is the kingdom of heaven and I resolved there and then never to allow my theology to get in the way of my relationship with Jesus we must keep Christ and Christ alone front and center and if this be error and upon me proved I never ripped not no man ever loved amen so um