

## **Canons of Dort – 1<sup>st</sup> Head of Doctrine, Art:15-18 – Left Alone: Reprobation**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You **were saved because God loved you and chose you. You weren't saved because you were good or because you had faith. No one is saved by faith. You were saved by grace – through faith.**

And even faith to receive what Jesus did was a gift. God then gave you assurance of your election – an objective and subjective assurance!

**But what about those who are not saved?** The Bible teaches there are **2 types of election: election to eternal life and election to eternal death.**

Election to death is called reprobation.

These 2 types of election are sometimes called “**double predestination.**” Hear about this **2<sup>nd</sup> type of election today.** Pay careful attention as this doctrine. Some people are confused by it.

Our headings are:

**Reprobation: What is it?**

**Reprobation: Should you panic?**

**Reprobation: Are Christian Children reprobate (since they don't have faith)?**

Our goals are: **That seeing the doctrine of reprobation, you will love your election even more, and you will labor for those who are still under the just condemnation of God.**

### **Reprobation: What is it?**

**Article 15: Reprobation:** Moreover, **Holy Scripture** most especially highlights this **eternal and undeserved grace** of our election and **brings it out more clearly for us**, in that it further bears witness that **not all people have been chosen**, but that some have not been chosen or have been **passed by** in God's eternal election—those, that is, concerning whom God, **on the basis of God's entirely free**, most just, irreproachable, and unchangeable good **pleasure**, made the following decree: **to leave them in the common misery** into which, by **their own fault, they have plunged themselves**; not to grant them saving faith and the grace of conversion, but finally to condemn and eternally punish those who have been left in their own ways and under God's just judgment, **not only for their unbelief but also for all their other sins**, in order to display divine justice. And this **is the decree of reprobation**, which **does not at all make God the author of sin** (a blasphemous thought!) but rather its fearful, irreproachable, just judge and avenger.

**1. God does not save all men but he leaves some behind in their sins, passing over them.**

They are called reprobates. They won't be saved – not ever.

**2. God did not block reprobates from being saved, so he is not the author of evil, he simply didn't help them.**

*They are not saved because they live in sins and they love their sins.* They do not have the slightest desire to leave their sins behind.

**God is not the cause of their reprobation.**

**3. Look at the biblical proof for reprobation.**

(And it really doesn't matter if you like this doctrine or not. If it is taught in the Word of God, accept it.)

Revelation 17:8 "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, **whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world,** when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Romans 9:11 (**for the children not yet being born**, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), 12 it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." 13 As it is written, "**Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.**"

**Esau was wicked and rejected God in his life.** His rejection was natural. It was just for God to reject Esau.

**That doctrine seems hard, but it is only hard if you ignore God's justice and think man is not sinful or sin is not so bad.**

1Peter 2:8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, **to which they also were appointed.**

**Trouble makers were appointed to be troublemakers,** but are condemned **because they chose to be troublemakers.**

“Appointment” and “cause” are two very, very different things. Left on their own, the wicked walk to hell of their own free will.

#### **4. Arminians are quick to attack this doctrine, claiming this doctrine makes God unfair or callous.**

**But reprobation is justice.** The *wicked are not condemned for their reprobation, but because of their sins.* If all men were innocent and God reprobated some, *that* would be unfair. But all are guilty before him; none is on neutral ground.

This is why even babies can be justly condemned. Don't question God. Know your place. You must never accuse God of injustice.

#### **Reprobation shows the greatness of God's mercy when he does save!**

Romans 9:20 But indeed, O 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?" 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? 22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that **He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy,** which He had prepared beforehand for glory...

Apostle Paul does not explain more when others questioned why God elected some and reprobated some! He stated a fact!

**Those who reject this doctrine and think God is wrong to condemn some to death, don't understand grace.** The **elect of God get what he doesn't deserve.** The reprobate gets what he deserves. God is a generous God who saves some, though they do not deserve it.

**Those who reject the doctrine of reprobation love injustice,** as they are demanding **that God is bound to give a gift to undeserving people.**

#### **Reprobation: Should you panic?**

**Article 16: Responses to the Teaching of Reprobation:** Those who do not yet actively experience within themselves a living faith in Christ or **an assured confidence of heart,** peace of conscience, a zeal for childlike obedience, and a glorying in God through Christ, **but who**

**nevertheless use the means** by which God has promised to work these things in us—**such people ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to count themselves among the reprobate**; rather they ought to **continue diligently in the use of the means**, to desire fervently a time of more abundant grace, and to wait for it in reverence and humility. On the other hand, **those who seriously desire to turn to God, to be pleasing to God alone**, and to be delivered from the body of death, **but are not yet able to make such progress** along the way of godliness and faith as they would like—such people ought much less to stand in fear of the teaching concerning reprobation, since our merciful God has promised not to snuff out a smoldering wick and that a bruised reed will not be broken. However, **those who have forgotten God and their Savior Jesus Christ and have abandoned themselves** wholly to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh—such people **have every reason to stand in fear** of this teaching, as long as they do not seriously turn to God.

**1. For the serious seeker who is not yet a Christian: Should you fear that you are not elected and that you constantly sin...don't always speak the truth...tempted to lust...don't always worship?**

God is merciful. Keep at the work. Keep calling on the Lord.

Even Christians feel like this sometimes.

**As a Christian, encourage the serious seeker!**

**2. For a believer: Suppose a believer doesn't have 100% assurance, full confidence he is a Christian, should he give up hope that he might not be elect and God passed over him and left him?**

Not at all. Continue learning the Bible, putting the effort to understand who God is and how you can be reconciled to him. Continue to worship and listen to the preaching of the Word. Keep studying God's Word.

Assurance may be long time in coming, but it will come as the Holy Spirit works through these means. **Cultivate faith like you do your plants.**

**Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;**

Don't fear at all. *God does not snuff out a smoldering wick.*

**3. For the backsliding brother: Suppose someone has abandoned serving God, should you be afraid?**

Yes. Be very afraid of eternal damnation in hell.

Hebrews 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

**Article 18: The Proper Attitude toward Election and Reprobation -**

To those who complain about this grace of an undeserved election and about the severity of a just reprobation, we reply with the words of the Apostle, "**Who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God?**" and with the words of our Savior, "**Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?**" We, however, with reverent adoration of these secret things, cry out with the Apostle: "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen."

**4. Everyone who believes in God, with reverence, praise God for how he graciously helps the elect.**

Simply put, the more you learn about election, the more you will praise God.

**Reprobation: How about young children who die?**

**Article 17: The Salvation of the Infants of Believers:** Since we must make judgments about God's will from the Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the gracious covenant in which they together with their parents are included, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy.

**1. While Christians are called to bear fruits of their election, children do not and cannot bear fruits, like a child who dies in infancy.**

(When the Canons were written there was a very high infant mortality rate.)

Can you argue that since infants and children have not produced fruits of election they are therefore to be condemned?

## **2. Christians do not (and must not) worry about the salvation of their children who die in infancy.**

Christians claim the covenant promises of God that he would save you and your household. **Christians do not claim their children are innocent.** (Arminians, say we do, but we don't!) **We know they are not innocent.** They inherited Adam's sin and our sin and very early they add to their sin account.

**Rather, children of believers who die in infancy are saved because God counts their sins upon Jesus on account of their parents' faith.** What amazing comfort that is to God's people, especially to those who have lost children in infancy or in the womb. (Were not children condemned on account of their parents' sin, not their own?

Why couldn't God save them through their parents' faith?)

**Acts 2:39 "For the promise is to you and to your children..."**

God views your children differently from the way he views children of non-believers.  
Yours are clean!

1Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, **but now they are holy.**

## **3. Finally, consider how some Arminians (Pentecostals/many Baptists) argue against the fact that God saves covenant children who die in infancy through the faith of parents.**

**a. Some Arminians say God made man with a free will and man, of his own, must choose.** And since a baby cannot choose, he cannot be saved. They treat their children as pagans.

**b. Some Arminians combat their error with creating a new way to be saved: That God would accept an infant because he never sinned** – ignoring Romans 3:10 and that Jesus is the only way to God.

Romans 3:10 As it is written: **"There is none righteous, no, not one;**  
11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through Me.**

If no one is righteous, and since men can only be saved through Jesus Christ, then graciously God counts the child's sin upon Christ through the faith of the parents.

### **Conclusion:**

God justly passed over some (reprobated) and reserved them for justice because of their inherited and actual sins.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

**1. Don't fear the doctrine of reprobation.** If you are a believer, but have doubts about your election, make use of the Bible and depend upon God's Holy Spirit. In doing this, your assurance of your election will be stronger.

**2. When you think of reprobation and realize God could have justly passed over you, but he didn't, but saved you in Jesus, let God's praises flow from your lips.**

Yes, this doctrine leads to praise! Let God's praise be found in your life.

**3. Don't assume a bad person is reprobated. Proclaim the Gospel to him.** You don't know the heart. You were likely no better – maybe worse, but God saved you anyway. It may take a long time, but for most people, salvation is a very long process.

Finally: If you are seeking God, maybe you are beginning to realize you are a sinner and need a Savior, don't worry about whether you are elect or not.

Do what God expects his children to do.

Attend worship.

Read his Word.

Ask questions.

Pray for help.

In due time the Lord will save you and give you the assurance you are saved!