



Predestination



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The doctrine of predestination is a fundamental and comforting truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is also one that has caused a lot of confusion, misunderstanding and debate among theologians. Nevertheless, I feel that anyone of God's people, with a heart to please the Lord, can understand it and benefit from that understanding. The Gospel is for all to understand, receive and believe. It is not just for theologians to debate. The effect of an understanding of predestination will be an unshakeable peace and a life that is an example of godliness and faithful service to the Lord.

In this tract I will not be presenting the detailed arguments of the two theologically opposed camps of Calvinism and Arminianism. When people ask me if I'm a Calvinist, I answer, "no." "Then you must be an Arminian," they say. "No, I'm neither. I'm a Bible-believing, Christian." I look to the Scriptures, not man's writings, for my understanding of predestination and all the other truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The writings of man, like this tract, are helpful and useful only as they point you to the

Word of God. Calvin and Arminius took two different and extreme approaches in trying to understand and explain the doctrine of predestination. We want to understand the balance of the subject that is taught in the Word of God. If you know the truth of God's Word, you will be able to recognize error when you hear it or read it.

The doctrine of predestination has become a stumbling block to many because they understand it to mean that God has everything all planned out and that man has no choice in the matter. They feel that God has chosen some for eternal judgment and some for eternal life and that there is nothing we can do about it.

Such a misunderstanding often leads to a life of irresponsibility and an attitude of unaccountability. If you feel you are one condemned to eternal judgment and that nothing you do will change that destiny, you will choose to live how you want without any conscience of accountability. If you feel that you are one that has been destined to eternal life, you will not fully appreciate the love of God that sent His Son to die for the sins of His enemies. (*Romans 5:6—11*) Nor will you feel any urgency to preach the gospel to others because it really doesn't matter since the chosen will be saved and the lost will be lost. Many Christians are not motivated by love and appreciation for the grace of God to a life of service

and godliness because they believe their salvation was only an arbitrary choice of God. Those are dangerous, unscriptural misunderstandings and effects of the doctrine of predestination.

It is equally unscriptural and therefore equally dangerous to think that your salvation, your eternal destiny is something that is of your own making. It is foolish for you to think that you could choose God apart from His first having chosen you motivated by His own nature of love. (**John 15:16**) It is contrary to the teaching of the Bible to think that your daily choices are what determine your eternal destiny. There is only one choice that you will make that will cause you to have the assurance of your eternal destiny. It is the choice of accepting or rejecting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. That choice and the opportunity and the ability to make it, were given to you by the sovereign will of God who loved you and sought you out to reconcile you to Himself for the glory and praise of His grace. (**Ephesians 1:3—14**)

So, what does the Bible teach about predestination?

*“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. **Romans 8:29, 30***

This scripture is one of the clearest passages on the subject and ties predestination together with several other important companion truths; foreknowledge, calling or election, justification and glorification. Notice all of these verbs in these verses are past tense, even the glorification that we have not yet experienced. When did God declare these things to be true and determined concerning the believer in Christ?

*“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” **Ephesians 1:4***
God foreknew us, predestined us, called (chose) us, justified us and glorified us according to His own purposes before the world and man were created.

The destiny of the lost and condemned was also determined and settled from before the creation of the human race and the planet on which we live.

*“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.” **Revelation 17:8***

Our eternal destinies were settled from past eternity. Does that mean then, that we have no power to choose? Are we driven by God’s power and purposes to make choices about which we have no input? We need to understand what the Bible

teaches about what man, lost in sin, is able to choose and what he is not able to choose.

Man is born into sin because of Adam's sin. The unregenerate man is incapable of ever choosing that which is right in the eyes of God. Nevertheless, the sinner does have the ability to choose how he will live his life. The unregenerate man can choose to be a murderer and thief or he can choose to be a moral, hard-working and generous man. Nonetheless, his every choice is sin because he makes it in direct rebellion against His Creator because He has not trusted in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. *"For whatever is not from faith is sin."* **Romans 14:23** *"A haughty look, a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked are sin."* **Proverbs 21:4** The unsaved individual is not "free" to choose righteousness. (**Romans 3:9—18**)

However, God, by His own sovereignty, has chosen to give to each individual a measure of faith upon hearing the invitation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. With that measure of faith man is then given the ability to choose to exercise that faith and believe in Jesus as Savior or to choose to continue in unbelief. *"But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* **Romans 10:8, 9** *"...As God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."* **Romans 12:3** When the Gospel is heard and the

measure of faith is given, the individual then becomes accountable to God for his or her response. They are “free” to choose to accept or reject salvation.

The Calvinist objects to such a notion believing that it annuls the sovereignty of God. Make no mistake about it, God is Sovereign. God does what He wants, when He wants and how He wants. His plans and purposes cannot be undone or impeded by man’s choices. His rule and government is over all and controls all, but God’s sovereignty does not annul our power of free choice concerning salvation. It was God’s sovereign choice to give us the opportunity and ability to accept or reject His plan of reconciliation through faith in His Son Jesus Christ. He did not have to choose to redeem Adam’s race. He did not have to choose to send His Son to die for our sins, but He chose to do so to the glory of His grace.

This brings us to our first step in past eternity concerning our redemption as recorded for us in *Romans 8:29, 30*.

Foreknowledge

In understanding God’s foreknowledge we will understand how God’s sovereignty and our freedom of choice concerning salvation come together in harmony and determine our eternal destiny. The Apostle Paul teaches us that our predestination is based on God’s foreknowledge, and not solely on His sovereignty. Permit me to

use a simple illustration.

The founding fathers of the United States of America had a plan and a vision to create a new country and a new government. They determined that certain rights and privileges would belong to all citizens in good standing. They established a constitution to ensure those rights and to outline the rule of law. However, they also knew that there would be those that would break the laws of society. Knowing that some would make bad choices they made laws, punishments and prisons to deal with them. Since that time citizens of the United States have enjoyed the pre-established rights promised in the constitution and criminals have suffered the preset penalties for rejecting the rule of law. The forefathers didn't make some good citizens and some criminals, they just marked out the benefits of one choice and the consequences of the other choice. The individual chooses whether he or she will be a good citizen or a criminal.

God's foreknowledge goes far beyond that meager example. God's foreknowledge is more than knowing what might happen or what will probably happen. Being God, He is perfect in knowledge. He knows what will happen before it happens. Nothing takes God by surprise. (***Job 37:16 / Psalm 139 / Acts 15:18***)

“Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according

to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.” II Timothy 1:9

“Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.” Acts 2:23

Before Adam was created, the Trinity had a council meeting. The phrase, “had a council meeting” is inadequate to use when speaking of the infinite Trinity that is “Omniscient,” but due to the limitations of our finite human minds, I’ll use it for the sake of illustration. From that council meeting in past eternity several things were determined. Man would be created in God’s image to have fellowship together with God. Part of the image of God in which we were created was the power to make choices. God knew Satan would attempt to ruin His creation and He knew what Adam’s choice would be. Based on His foreknowledge of that choice, God determined that He would send His Son to die for the sins of Adam’s race who would all become criminals against God’s righteousness. It was an act of His will and grace, apart from man’s merit and man’s works.

Salvation is God’s work. He did not have to redeem anyone. He determined that all who accepted the gift of His Son would receive forgiveness of sin and eternal life. All who would not, would be left in their sin to suffer eternal

judgment. He does not determine the individual's choice for him or her by His own sovereignty, but by His foreknowledge He knows what we will choose; faith in Jesus or rejection of the Gospel. Those whom He foreknew to choose to exercise faith in His Son, He predestined to salvation and glory. Those He knew would reject the Gospel invitation, were predestined to eternal judgment. All are predestined according to God's foreknowledge and not according to His sovereignty.

Man's Choice

If individuals do not have a choice concerning eternal life, then the Gospel contradicts itself and is a fraud.

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” **I Timothy 2:3 - 6**

This passage tells me that if God were going to make an arbitrary, sovereign choice concerning man's destiny, apart from man's own free choice, He would make everyone believe in Jesus. He would not choose to send some to Hell and some to Heaven for He desires all men to be saved. The Bible is quite clear that there is a lake of fire reserved for the rejecters of Christ and a Heaven prepared for the redeemed so we know that this

passage is not teaching that all will be saved.
(Revelation 20:11-15 / 21:1-8)

I Timothy 2:3-6 is simply stating that God's will was to make the provision for all to choose life in Jesus. All have been given the same opportunity to make that choice. God's will has made it possible for every human being to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. That statement cannot be true if God, based on His sovereignty alone, chose some to go to Hell and some to go to Heaven. Here are some other verses that would also not be true if man has not been given the ability to choose to accept or reject the Gospel invitation and then to be held accountable to God for that choice.

*"For God so loved the world (not just the elect) that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever (not those that God forces) believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." **John 3:16***

*"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." **Romans 10:12-13***

Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved! From past eternity God knew what my choice would be concerning His Son. I didn't know what it would be until I made it. Those who proclaimed the Gospel to me didn't know, but God

did. Those whom God foreknew, He predestined.

Predestined

Based on His foreknowledge of my choice, God predestined me to several things. The word in the Greek that is translated “predestined” simply means “to limit beforehand or mark out before hand.” God marked me out and set borders and limits around my life that lead to a predetermined end that cannot be altered or hindered. What is the destiny of all who believe in Jesus Christ?

We are predestined to be like God’s Son in a number of different ways. We are like Jesus in regards to His relationship to His Father. Jesus is beloved and accepted in the presence of God and so is the believer.

*“To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” **Ephesians 1:6, 7***

Our destiny is to be placed as a son of God with all the rights and privileges afforded a son. Those rights and privileges begin right now in this life, but the fullness of them is yet to be entered into when Jesus comes. Nevertheless, the believer is destined to enjoy all the privileges of being a son of God.

*“Having predestined us to adoption (placing) as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” **Ephesians 1:5***

An inheritance of eternal life and a home in Heaven are guaranteed all who have put their faith in Jesus Christ. *“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.”* ***Ephesians 1:11***

All of these blessings are mine in and by Christ. In past eternity God knew what my choice would be concerning His Son and marked me out for this destiny of eternal blessing.

Called

The word in the Greek translated “called” means “to invite, bid, to be called (by name)” Though this word is used to speak of the invitation to accept the Gospel upon it’s proclamation, the context in ***Romans 8:29, 30*** indicates something else.

This calling is from past eternity apart from our personal experience in our lifetime. Several Greek words in the New Testament are used to express this aspect of our redemption; called, chosen, elect and ordained. The thought behind these words is one of appointment. God has appointed us as His own people. He has called us by His own name.

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people

of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” I Peter 2:9, 10

Justified

In that same moment, in the mind of God, according to His foreknowledge, He saw us in Christ and declared all in Christ to be without blame and guilt and free from the wrath of God.

“Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Romans 8:33, 34

It is God that justifies. It was settled in the mind of God from past eternity. It was based on His foreknowledge and His gracious provision of His Son as the perfect sacrifice for the sin of Adam’s race.

Glorified

In God’s mind and purpose our final and eternal glorification is a settled fact.

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on

immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." I Corinthians 15:51 - 58

Our resurrection with a glorified body fit for Heaven and for eternity is a settled fact from before the world began. Understanding the doctrine of predestination makes me know that my end will be certain glory.

What affect does an understanding of this glorious truth of predestination have on your life? When you believe and understand the doctrine of predestination you cannot help but be filled with the peace of God.

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither

death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:28, 35—39

Nothing can separate us from the love of God. His love has marked out and determined my destiny. That revelation makes me want to respond with an abounding service of love and appreciation for the Almighty God who loved me and who designed such a glorious plan of redemption that only His grace could make a reality.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:1, 2

An unconditional surrender to His will is our reasonable service of love. Furthermore, a life of godliness lived to honor God is the only life that is worth living. Unlike the unsaved, the redeemed have the liberty to choose righteousness in our daily, every day choices. The saved are now “free” to honor God and to enjoy the benefits and blessings of righteous living. It’s a privilege to serve Him who died for our sins. When your heart and mind have been enlightened by these truths you

readily see the foolishness of choosing sin rather than loving obedience to the revealed will of God.

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” **I John 3:1 - 3**

The doctrine of predestination declares God’s sovereignty in choosing to manifest His love and grace by providing His Son as the sacrifice for the sins of the entire human race. Predestination also states man’s ability to choose to accept or reject God’s offer of salvation as well as man’s accountability for that choice. To accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior is to know that you have been chosen by God from past eternity and that you are destined for eternal glory in the presence of the Triune God.

I do not fear death. I do not question where I will spend eternity. My salvation is not based on my daily choices, good or bad, but on the faithfulness of God who has predetermined my destiny knowing that I would choose to exercise the faith in His Son that He graciously provided for me. I am eternally secure, having been predestined from past eternity to eternal glory by the foreknowledge

of God. This is the assurance that all who believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior can have by believing what the Bible teaches about predestination.

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