

# Predestination

Calvinism teaches that each individual was unconditionally predestined or foreordained by God's sovereign decree before the world began. This predestination or foreordination is unconditional, having nothing to do with the will, choice, obedience, or character of the individual. Those who are saved and destined to eternal life are said to be "elect."

The alternative to Calvin's view of unconditional election would be free will or free moral agency - the doctrine that salvation is conditional, and each individual has a choice whether or not to meet the conditions of forgiveness. Which view does the Bible teach?

One of the fundamental doctrines of Calvinism is "unconditional election," also known as predestination or foreordination.

Consider these quotes from the Westminster Confession of faith: "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: ... By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestined and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it

cannot be either increased or diminished. Those of mankind that are predestined unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his free grace and love alone, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto ... The rest of mankind God was pleased ... to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin ..." (Ward, 2021; PCA, 2022)

"All those whom God hath predestined unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ ... This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein ... Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, ... yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved ..." (PCA, 2022)

Hence, God unalterably decreed certain individuals to go to heaven and others to go to hell without in any way considering the character, conduct, obedience, choice, attitudes, or desires of the individual. This

denies that man has free will or free moral agency (Ward, 2021; PCA, 2022).

### What does the bible say?

The Bible teaches that God has predestined the elect to eternal life (Ephesians 1:3-14). [Cf. Rom. 8:28-33; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1; 2:9; 2 Thess. 2:13.] The question is: How is it determined whether any specific individual is among the elect? Is this determined by an unconditional, unchangeable decree of God? Or does God offer salvation to all men and give everyone the power to accept or reject that offer?

Calvinism says that deciding whether a particular individual will be saved is entirely up to God, and man cannot influence that decision. If we can prove that God offers salvation to all men, it must follow from Calvinism that all people will be saved! But that conclusion is false. Hence, the Calvinistic concept of unconditional election must be false.

#### 1. **God Desires All Men to Be Saved.** 1

Timothy 2:4 - God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. [Note: This is the same "all men" for whom we should pray - v1.] 2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. If God sincerely wants all people to be saved and wants none to

perish, and if the decision is entirely up to Him (man has no choice), then all people will be saved, and none will be lost! The logical conclusion of unconditional election must be universalism! Yet we know only a few will be saved and most lost (Matt. 7:13,14) [22:14]. Hence, either God does not sincerely want everyone saved, or else man does have a choice!

#### 2. **God's Grace Is Extended to All**

**Men.** Titus 2:11 - For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men (Barker, Strauss, Brown, Blomberg & Williams, 2020). Note that what God's grace brings to all is "salvation."

#### 3. **Jesus Died to Offer Salvation to All**

**Men.** 1 Timothy 2:6 - Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all (the same "all" that God wants to be saved - v4). Hebrews 2:9 - By the grace of God, Jesus tasted death for everyone. This "everyone" refers to those who are subject to the fear of death (v15), which is every human. John 3:16 - God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Note that the ones Jesus died to save are all those in the world whom God loves. Yet He

loves even His enemies (Matt. 5:43-38). Romans 5:18,19 - Justification came unto "all men" by Jesus' righteous act (His death). This was the same "all men" on whom condemnation came as a result of Adam's sin. So, however many people are condemned by sin, that is how many can receive the benefit of Jesus' death.

4. **Jesus' death intended to offer salvation to all men.** If these passages are true, then either all men will be saved (which cannot be), or else there is something each man must do to determine whether he will receive the benefit of Jesus' death.

5. **God's Offer of Salvation Is Preached in the Gospel to All Men.**

2 Thessalonians 2:14 - Men are called to glory by the gospel. To whom is this call extended? Mark 16:15, 16 - The gospel should be preached to every creature in the whole world. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved. [Matt. 28:19] Acts 2:38,39 - The promise of remission and the gift of the Holy Spirit is for ALL, as many as God calls. But the call is sent to everyone in the world!

Calvinists respond to these points by saying that the gospel should be preached to all (Cornell Jr, 2024). However, no one can

respond to that call unless the Holy Spirit unconditionally works directly on their heart to empower them to respond. But this makes the preaching of the gospel simply a pretence. If the Holy Spirit chooses unconditionally, why doesn't the Spirit lead the person to salvation and forget the preaching?

Maybe a more straightforward view to approach the issue of predestination is to at least agree on common concepts and deal with what the passages teach; these points I made on my Facebook page "Majola K"

- I. We need to notice that predestination is a biblical concept. In Ephesians 1:5 Paul wrote, God "predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will." Then, a few verses later in Ephesians 1:11, he added, "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will."
- II. In both verses, Paul indicates that God decided before the creation of the world who could be adopted as sons and receive His inheritance.
- III. Based on Paul's words, some have developed a theology of predestination that associates it with predetermined salvation for the

individual. However, such an understanding of predestination is inconsistent with the whole of Scripture because the Bible identifies predestination as the foretold acceptance by God of a corporate body based on revealed conditions.

IV. The significant component of predestination has to do with WHO being predestined, and the Bible consistently identifies predestination as a corporate status rather than an individual status. In other words, a group is predestined rather than an individual.

V. In the Old Testament, God chose the Israelites as a nation. Moses told the Israelites in Deuteronomy 7:6, "*you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth*" In this passage, the "chosen" status is associated NOT with individual ISRAELITES BUT with the NATION of ISRAEL as a WHOLE.

VI. Likewise, the chosen status transfers to the church in the New Testament. Using the language of Deuteronomy, Peter said in 1 Peter 2:9-10, "YOU [referring to the church] are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy

nation, a people for his own possession." Peter indicates that the CHOSEN STATUS in the New Testament is associated NOT WITH INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS but with ALL BELIEVERS who as a collective group COMPRISE the CHURCH.

VII. Thus, Scripture indicates that God's people, whether it was the Israelites in the Old Testament or the church in the New, are "chosen" by Him as a COLLECTIVE GROUP. Such implies CORPORATE PREDESTINATION NOT INDIVIDUAL predestination.

VIII. The bible also identifies predestination as a conditional state, meaning those desiring to be a part of the predestined group must meet certain conditions in order to obtain entrance into that group.

IX. In the Old Testament the ISRAELITES were CHOSEN by GOD, BUT EACH INDIVIDUAL STILL had to choose to be a part of the COVENANT PEOPLE. Do you remember Joshua's final address to the Israelites? He presented them with a choice in JOSHUA 24:15, saying, "*IF it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, CHOOSE THIS DAY WHOM you will serve, whether the gods your*

*fathers served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Yahya & Ilahi, 2021)*

- X. The conjunction “if” indicates that the DECISION was up to EACH ISRAELITE as to WHETHER he or she WOULD be ASSOCIATED with GOD'S PEOPLE. It also shows that choosing God possessed a condition, and that CONDITION was to “SERVE” HIM, which necessitates adhering to the conditions He identified in the Mosaic Covenant for inclusion among His people (e.g. circumcision, kosher diet, sacrificial system) (Yahya & Ilahi, 2021).
- XI. Likewise, according to the New Testament, the CHURCH is CHOSEN by GOD, but everyone still has to CHOOSE WHETHER or not he or she will be a PART of the CHURCH. Jesus gave people the choice to follow Him when He said in Luke 9:23, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Edwards, 2020)
- XII. Once again, the presence of the conjunction “if” indicates that the decision to follow Jesus is up to every individual. It also indicates that choosing to be a disciple possesses a condition. That condition is to “FOLLOW ” Him, which necessitates adherence to the conditions that He presented for inclusion in His church (e.g. belief, confession, repentance, baptism).
- XIII. Based on these biblical examples, association with God is a CHOICE made by INDIVIDUALS who WILLINGLY accept His CONDITIONS for inclusion among His people. This means that PREDESTINATION is a CONDITIONAL STATE since an individual must meet conditions to be included within the predestined group.
- XIV. Since Scripture identifies predestination as a corporate status and a conditional state, it should not be viewed as predetermined salvation for the individual but as the foretold acceptance by God of a corporate body based on revealed conditions.
- Maybe one example of predestination is travelling by flight. The airlines schedule flights between cities months in advance, meaning particular flights have predetermined destinations. While the flight has been predestined to travel to Cape Town, the passengers who will board on that flight have not been predetermined. Anyone can

purchase a ticket to board a flight as long as space is available, and the flight has not departed. The responsibility of prospective passengers is to secure a flight ticket and be in the aircraft when it is scheduled to depart. The group of passengers on board the plane will then travel to the predetermined destination because they met the conditions for inclusion on the flight. Once again, the flight is predestined, not the people. In the same way, God has predetermined the status (Salvation) and destination of the church (heaven), and it is up to individuals to secure their place in the church in order to be predestined themselves. When one meets the church, he or she secures his or her place among those who are “predestined for adoption to [God] as sons through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:4).

#### Sources

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