

What Does the Bible Teach About Predestination?

Are we locked into a life plan developed by the foreknowledge of God, or are we free to make spiritual choices that will impact our lives and our eternal future?

Part One

Background

- Sweep away the detritus of error.
- Present what the scriptures teach.
- Examine Bible uses of election, predestination, foreordination.
- Answer the question of God's foreknowledge of one's future actions.

Background

- 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 in that it has 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 unconditional election is 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 one does the Bible teach?

Background

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 predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated 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 predestinated 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 dishonor and wrath for their sin ...” (*Chap. III, p 1-7*)

Background

Quotes from the Westminster Confession of Faith:

“All those whom God hath predestinated 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 any thing 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 ...”

(Chap. X, p. 1-4)

Background

- According to Calvinism, 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.
- Are election, predestination, and foreordination conditional or unconditional?

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- The Bible definitely teaches that the elect have been predestined by God to eternal life.
 - Rom. 8:29-30 - “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. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Eph. 1:3-10 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 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, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him."

Eph. 1:11-14 - "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, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- 2Tim. 2:10 - “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”
- 1Peter 1:1-2 - “...To the pilgrims of the Dispersion... elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”
- 1Peter 2:9 - “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.”
- 2Thes. 2:13 - “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- However, the scriptures also teach that God offers salvation to all men, and then gives each individual the power to choose for himself whether to accept or reject that offer. This must be harmonized with the Biblical use of the word “elect.”
- The Bible nowhere states that God chooses which individuals will be numbered among the elect.
- All passages that speak of the elect, address the nature of the elect, not the individuals that constitute the elect.
- To suggest that the elect of scripture are selected and individually chosen from among all humankind is saying more than the scriptures.

The Salvation Of Individuals Is Offered Universally

- Salvation is offered by God to everyone.
- God desires everyone to be saved.
 - 1Tim. 2:3-4 - “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”
 - 2Peter 3:9 - “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

The Salvation Of Individuals Is Offered Universally

- If God wills all people to be saved and 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 necessary conclusion of unconditional election is universal salvation for everyone.
- Yet we know only a few will be saved; most will be lost.
 - Matt. 7:13-14 - “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”
 - Matt. 22:14 - “For many are called, but few are chosen.”
- Therefore, either God does not sincerely want everyone to be saved, or else everyone truly does have a choice in the matter of his salvation.

The Salvation Of Individuals Is Offered Universally

- God's grace is extended to everyone.
 - Titus 2:11 - "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men."
- Jesus died to offer salvation to everyone.
 - 1Tim. 2:6 - "Who gave Himself a ransom for all."

The Salvation Of Individuals Is Offered Universally

- Heb. 2:9 - “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”
- John 3:16 - “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”
- Rom. 5:18-19 - “Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.”

The Salvation Of Individuals Is Offered Universally

- God's offer of salvation is preached in the Gospel to everyone.
 - 2Thes. 2:14 - "He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."
 - Mark 16:15-16 - "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."