

THE MYSTERIES OF GOD

Week 1: Choose or Be Chosen – Predestination vs. Free Choice

The first mystery in this series is one that has been pondered for many years ... in fact, whole theological movements have been based on this foundational question: Do we choose God? Or does God choose us? The implications of this concept are enormous. If God pre-ordains those who will enter heaven, then why evangelize? Is it fair, that some were created for heaven, and some for hell? And maybe most simply, why would some be chosen ... and some not? Let's explore together!

Introduction: Head Knowledge vs. Heart Knowledge

1. Predestination

A. Defined: Predestination is doctrine which teaches that God predetermined who would go to heaven and who would spend eternity in hell. Furthermore, it teaches that each person has absolutely no choice in accepting or rejecting salvation through Christ. Every move you make and everything that happens to you, good or bad, was predetermined by God. If you reject Christ it is because you never had a chance or option to believe.

A. Scriptural Evidence

> Romans 8:29-30; 9:14-23; Eph. 1:5,11;

B. Calvinism

> **John Calvin (1509-1564):**

> *God preordained, for his own glory and the display of His attributes of mercy and justice, a part of the human race, without any merit of their own, to eternal salvation, and another part, in just punishment of their sin, to eternal damnation.*

> *Some are predestined to salvation, others to damnation*

> *God "saves whom he wills of his mere good pleasure"*

> *Regarding the lost: "it was his good pleasure to doom to destruction."*

> *Since the disposition of all things is in the hands of God and he can give life or death at his pleasure, he dispenses and ordains by his judgment that some, from their mother's womb, are destined irrevocably to eternal death in order to glorify his name in their perdition.*

> *All are not created on equal terms, but some are predestined to eternal life, others to eternal damnation...*

> 5 Pts. of Calvinism: TULIP

T - Total depravity of man. U - Unconditional election. L - Limited atonement.

I - Irresistible grace. P - Perseverance of the saints.

C. Family Tree: Roman Catholic Church > Protestantism > Calvinism > Anabaptist > Baptist

D. Troublesome Episodes: Pharaoh & Saul

> Exodus 7:3 – The Lord HARDENED Pharaoh’s heart!

Q: How is this possibly fair?? Notice the progression:

Plague 1 – 7:23 Pharaoh’s heart *wasn’t moved*

Plague 2 – 8:15 *Pharaoh* hardened his heart

Plague 3 – 8:19 Pharaoh’s heart *grew hard*

Plague 4 – 8:32 *Pharaoh* hardened his heart

Plague 5 – 9:7 The heart of Pharaoh *became* hard

Plague 6 – 9:12 **The Lord** hardened the heart of Pharaoh

Plague 7 – 9:35 The heart of Pharaoh *was hard*

Plague 8 – 10:20 **The Lord** hardened Pharaoh’s heart

Plague 9 – 10:27 **The Lord** hardened Pharaoh’s heart

* 2 ideas are at work here:

(1) Because Scripture is clear when the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, it must be understood that Pharaoh clearly hardened his own heart, as well. Otherwise, there would be no need for the literary distinction!

(2) The Lord USED Pharaoh’s spiritual condition – and even elevated it – for His own glory. Which is consistent with God’s taking what we consider to be “bad” situations and bringing about “good.”

> 1 Samuel 16:14; 19:9 – An evil spirit FROM THE LORD tormented Saul

* 1st Option: Many ancient Jewish authors recognized God’s authority and that nothing occurred without God’s being behind it – i.e., God allowed it, so it’s “from God.”

* 2nd Option: Again, because Saul demonstrated his spiritual position ... the LORD sent this evil upon him ... as judgment? For His glory? YES

2. Free Choice

A. Defined: Free will teaches that when presented with the facts of God’s plan for salvation that every individual person has a choice to make, to either accept or reject God’s gift of salvation. God desires that every person accept His gift. What was predestined was God’s plan for salvation through Jesus for those who accept it. Therefore if you accept that Jesus died for your sins and you have made Him Lord of your life then you are a part of the predetermined plan.

B. Scriptural Evidence

Christ died for some?

Some in the radical predestination camp claim that Jesus Christ died only for the elect. However, the Bible teaches quite clearly that Jesus Christ died for the sins of all people and wants all people to come to repentance. This does not mean that Jesus’ death provides salvation for those who resist God’s call.

- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. ([John 3:16](#))
- "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw **all** men to Myself." ([John 12:32](#))
- For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for **all**; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ([Romans 6:10](#))
- For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ **all** shall be made alive. ([1 Corinthians 15:22](#))
- For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for **all**, therefore all died; and He died for **all**, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. ([2 Corinthians 5:15](#))
- For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of **all** men, especially of believers. ([1 Timothy 4:10](#))
- For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to **all** men, ([Titus 2:11](#))
- The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for **all** to come to repentance. ([2 Peter 3:9](#))
- For Christ also died for sins once for **all**, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; ([1 Peter 3:18](#))

C. Arminianism

> James Arminius (1560-1609) – Came up with his ideas as a response to Calvinism. His ideas: salvation is available to every person. Once a person has accepted Christ, it is up to that person to participate in his/her salvation by works – thus, a person can lose his salvation.

> Family Tree: Roman Catholic Church > Protestantism > Arminianism > Methodism > Holiness movement > Pentecostalism

Conclusions:

(1) Predestination does not mean that some were not chosen to be saved while others have been chosen. Instead, the concept is that everyone who is saved is reaching his or her DESTINY!

> The terminology confirms that we didn't choose Christ – He wanted us as INDIVIDUALS from the beginning. You have been on Christ's mind since before you came to be!!!

(2) Election is something that WE CAN CONTROL! (see 2 Peter 1:10)

Q: What are we told to do concerning our election? Who does the work? What is the work?

(3) While anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, we are simply not in a position to judge the FAIRNESS of Christ's mercy and grace – we don't have the entire mind of God to know a person's spirit. Much remains a mystery!

For further consideration ... here is an informative article that attempts to combine both concepts into one theological belief system (not an uncommon or unwise attempt).

Question: "What is predestination? Is predestination Biblical?"

Answer: [Romans 8:29-30](#) tells us, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." [Ephesians 1:5](#) and [11](#) declare, "He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will... In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will." Many people have a strong hostility to the doctrine of predestination. However, predestination is a biblical doctrine. The key is understanding what predestination means, biblically.

The words translated "predestined" in the Scriptures referenced above are from the Greek word *proorizo*, which carries the meaning of "determine beforehand," "ordain," "to decide upon ahead of time." So, predestination is God determining certain things to occur ahead of time. What did God determine ahead of time? According to [Romans 8:29-30](#), God predetermined that certain individuals would be conformed to the likeness of His Son, be called, justified, and glorified. Essentially, God predetermines that certain individuals will be saved. Numerous scriptures refer to believers in Christ being chosen ([Matthew 24:22, 31](#); [Mark 13:20, 27](#); [Romans 8:33, 9:11, 11:5-7, 28](#); [Ephesians 1:11](#); [Colossians 3:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:4](#); [1 Timothy 5:21](#); [2 Timothy 2:10](#); [Titus 1:1](#); [1 Peter 1:1-2, 2:9](#); [2 Peter 1:10](#)). Predestination is the biblical doctrine that God in His sovereignty chooses certain individuals to be saved.

The most common objection to the doctrine of predestination is that it is unfair. Why would God choose certain individuals and not others? The important thing to remember is that no one deserves to be saved. We have all sinned ([Romans 3:23](#)), and are all worthy of eternal punishment ([Romans 6:23](#)). As a result, God would be perfectly just in allowing all of us to spend eternity in hell. However, God chooses to save some of us. He is not being unfair to those who are not chosen, because they are receiving what they deserve. God's choosing to be gracious to some is not unfair to the others. No one deserves anything from God; therefore, no one can object if he does not receive anything from God. An illustration would be a man randomly handing out money to five people in a crowd of twenty. Would the fifteen people who did not receive money be upset? Probably so. Do they have a right to be upset? No, they do not. Why? Because the man did not owe anyone money. He simply decided to be gracious to some.

If God is choosing who is saved, doesn't that undermine our free will to choose and believe in Christ? The Bible says that we have the choice—all who believe in Jesus Christ will be saved ([John 3:16](#); [Romans 10:9-10](#)). The Bible never describes God rejecting anyone who believes in Him or turning away anyone who is seeking Him ([Deuteronomy 4:29](#)). Somehow, in the mystery of God, predestination works hand-in-hand with a person being drawn by God ([John 6:44](#)) and believing unto salvation ([Romans 1:16](#)). God predestines who will be saved, and we must choose Christ in order to be saved. Both facts are equally true. [Romans 11:33](#) proclaims, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!"

Recommended Resource: [Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God by J.I. Packer.](#)