

# PREDESTINATION

*Shaun Willcock*

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The biblical doctrine of Predestination is simply this: that God, from all eternity, ordained whatsoever would come to pass in His creation, from its very beginning to its very end. He *foreordained* all things – *including* who would be saved, out of the race of mankind.

Many professing Christians shrink from this doctrine in horror. “It cannot be!” they cry. “It is a monstrous doctrine! A false doctrine!” Very well, then: let us consider the alternative.

If Predestination is not true; if God did *not*, before the foundation of the world, ordain, down to the minutest detail, whatsoever comes to pass; then what would we have? In a word – chaos. We would have a God who (if He exists at all) does not control His own creation, and a universe which operates according to blind chance.

And it is false to claim that God simply knew what was going to occur throughout all ages, but did not actually ordain all things in eternity. For He could only know, if He *had* ordained all things! It is only the one who has the power to decree, with absolute certainty, what will occur in the future, who can *know*, with absolute certainty, what will occur in the future.

This universe is not a chaotic universe. It is a universe of order, from the smallest object to the largest galaxy in the heavens. Creation is not in chaos. With this, no doubt, most of those professing Christians who oppose Predestination will agree. “But,” they will then say, “man has a free will. And therefore, although God may control all *other* events, He has not sovereignly ordained in eternity who will be saved, and who will not.”

The trouble with this erroneous view, apart from the fact that it is completely unscriptural, is that if just *one part* of God’s creation does not operate according to divine Predestination, there cannot be any order, or harmony, in the whole. We all know how the most carefully-laid plans can be upset by one small snag which we had not taken into consideration. God is either in full control of all events, or He is in control of none. A partial control is no control at all. If mortal men can frustrate the purposes of the Lord, then God is not God.

As with all things, the duty of the Christian is to discover what the Scriptures teach. Away with man’s feeble and foolish views and opinions! To the Word of the living God!

Jesus said, “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father” (Matt. 10:29). A sparrow is a very small, insignificant bird; yet even the falling of a sparrow to the ground does not occur but by the Father’s decree. Such is His sovereign control over His vast creation.

“Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?” (Isa. 40:12). From the expanse of the heavens to the very dust of the earth: the Lord’s sovereign hand is over all. Nothing is unknown to Him. Nothing is left to chance.

From eternity He predestinated all that would ever occur in the world He created. This must be true, if God is God! If any creature has the power to act outside of divine Predestination, then God is not all-powerful. God is then not God.

He is working to a definite, predetermined plan. Any wise master-builder would do the same. Let us not suppose, then, that the all-wise God would work without one! Since everything in the whole of creation was made by Him, it follows that everything that comes to pass does so in accordance with His foreordained plan.

*Nations* are under His sovereign control: “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan. 4:17). It is God who “removeth kings, and setteth up kings” (Dan. 2:21). “All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity” (Isa. 40:17). It is God who “hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their [the nations

of men] habitation” (Acts 17:26): where each nation would dwell, the extent of their territories, who would rule over them at any given time.

But nations are comprised of *individuals*. And God is in absolute control of all individuals who have ever lived, are living now, or will yet live. In Acts 18:9,10 the Lord spoke to Paul and said, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.” How could the Lord have said this to Paul, if He had not foreordained whatsoever would occur in that city? Precisely because the Lord was controlling all events down to the minutest detail, He could say to Paul, “No man shall hurt thee”. I cannot be absolutely certain of what will happen to me tomorrow, unless I am able to control all the events of tomorrow down to the smallest detail. This, of course, I am unable to do (Jas. 4:13-15). But God *is* in full control of tomorrow, and of all tomorrows, just as He was of all yesterdays, and as He is of today, and of eternity beyond.

Yes, the Bible plainly teaches that everything that takes place in the whole of creation, does so because of divine Predestination. And we cannot raise our voices in feeble protest and say that this is true of everything *except* the matter of who shall be saved.

Even the fall of man was part of God's plan. This is clear from the following. First, the Scriptures speak of the death of Christ as being “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet. 1:18-20). When Adam sinned, he did not catch God off-guard! His fall did not startle God, forcing Him to hastily formulate the plan of redemption in Christ. No! If the death of Christ was foreordained before the world began, then it is clear that even the fall was part of God's plan. Let it be plainly understood: God is not the author of sin, but He certainly did permit sin to enter the world. If He had not permitted it to enter the world, it could never have done so.

Second, the Scripture says of believers that God “hath chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world... having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself” (Eph. 1:4,5). Quite obviously, then, if God, before the world began, actually *chose* some of mankind to salvation in Christ, the fall of man into sin was part of God's plan.

The Lord has not left salvation to man's own choice – an act of his “free will”. This is something the Bible makes abundantly clear. Salvation is not the choice of man, it is the *gift* of God. And it is a gift that is not given to all, but to those whom the Lord elected unto salvation from eternity.

“For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Rom. 9:15). Does He have mercy on all? No; for vs.18 says, “whom he will he *hardeneth*.” Pharaoh was one whom the Lord hardened (vs.17; see also Exod. 7:3). Some are “vessels of mercy”, and some are “vessels of wrath *fitted* to destruction” (Rom. 9:22,23); men, in the inspired language of Jude, “*ordained* to condemnation” (Jude vs.4). These Scriptures, and many others, are crystal clear.

Do you rebel against the Word of the Lord, reader? This doctrine is true, whether you like it or not. It is true, regardless of your opinion about it. Some rage against this plain truth with all the malice that is in them; but all their rage does not alter a single part of it.

And furthermore, this doctrine is not a monstrous one. *All* have sinned – not so? (Rom. 3:23). *All* are dead in sin from their mothers' wombs (Psa. 51:5). There is none righteous, no, not one (Rom. 3:10). God is not the author of sin. Man sinned against God. *Man* rebelled. And out of a world of sinners, God saves some. He saves those whom He elected in eternity. Is this unrighteous of God? Not at all. *Man* sinned! God does not take good men and make them evil. *All* are sinful! And from a world of sinners, the Lord saves some. This is not unrighteous. Since man rebelled against God, God was under no obligation to save *any*. He was not duty-bound to save a single human soul. He is free to do what He wills with His own. He could have saved all, or none, or some. He elected to save some. Is this unrighteous of Him? No. He would have been entirely just to leave *all* to die in their sins and drop into hell. The fact that He saves some is an act of His grace and mercy alone. If He had saved all, His mercy would have been displayed; if He had saved none, His righteous wrath would have been displayed; but He elected *some* to salvation, thereby revealing His mercy towards them, and showing His wrath in the damnation – the *just* damnation – of the rest (Rom. 9:22,23).

Predestination must be rightly understood. God does not take a righteous man, and make him unrighteous, so that He can damn him. God originally made man *upright*; but *they* sought out many inventions (Eccl. 7:29). Man rebelled against God. God simply leaves already-wicked men to go on in their wickedness, following their own lusts, until they die. He withholds the grace which alone could save them; grace, let it be remembered, which He is under no obligation to bestow upon any.

Nor must it be thought that, if a man cries out for the Lord to save him, the Lord will not do so if he is not one of the elect. Oh, how men have stumbled at this point! They have this picture in their minds of a poor, wretched sinner, broken-hearted over his sins, crying out to the Lord for mercy and pardon, and the Lord refusing to extend mercy to him because he does not happen to be one of the elect. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Word of God says, “*whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). If any broken-hearted sinner calls upon the name of the Lord, he will be saved (Rom. 10:13). However, the only ones who ever truly call upon the Lord are the elect! This, too, is plainly taught in God's Word. Jesus said that he who comes to Him will always be received; but in the same breath He declared, “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me*” (Jn. 6:37). And a little later: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me *draw him*” (vs.44).

If a sinner, conscious of his dreadful state, truly calls upon the Lord to save him, that sinner is one of the elect. No others will ever truly come to him.

But does this truth make man a robot? Not at all. It boils down to this: if all are dead in their sins, then unless God gives life to some as a free gift, none will ever live. How can a dead man *choose* life? Impossible! One who is dead cannot “decide” to live. So with the spiritually dead. They cannot “decide” to live. But when, in regeneration, God *gives* life, then they are able to see what they were never able to see properly before. They see their own vileness, and they see the beauty of Christ; and *willingly*, without any compulsion, they flee to Him for salvation. God first gives the will to come, and then they come freely.

Is there any need to preach the Gospel, then? Absolutely! For “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). “Go,” said the Lord, “and preach” (Mk. 16:15). This is the God-ordained way. The doctrine of Predestination is not a hindrance to evangelism; it is a *spur* to it. Preaching is the means the Lord uses. And he who understands this is the one who will be the most zealous in evangelism.

Predestination is not a monstrous doctrine! If Predestination were not a fact, no man would ever be saved! Rather than being a dreadful doctrine, it is a most glorious one. Every true child of God has reason to praise the Lord that he was predestinated unto eternal life. Since all men are absolutely dead in sins (Eph. 2:1), heaven would not have one soul in it if it were not for God's predestinating of some unto eternal life. Those who are elect, are elect only because of God's good pleasure, and not because of anything in themselves; and thus they can only praise Him for His grace. And those who die in their sins cannot accuse God of unrighteousness; for they were not *forced* to sin.

Without divine Predestination, the universe would be chaotic, not one soul would ever be saved, and God would not be God.

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