

Who Chooses? (Predestination)

Read Romans 8:28-30

predestination:

the belief that events in life are decided in advance by God or by fate and cannot be changed – *Cambridge English Dictionary*

the doctrine that *a)* God foreordained everything that would happen;
b) God predestines souls to salvation or to damnation – *Webster's New World Dictionary*

These are the common beliefs about predestination

But what does it really mean for Christians?

“...the doctrine of predestination **does not** say that every good or bad thing that happens to us and in the world around us is predetermined by God and that we should therefore accept everything that happens as the foreordained will of God.” – *Shirley Guthrie Jr.*

Attempts to understand how God chooses or “elects” people

THREE VERSIONS

“**Double Predestination**”– Some are included, some excluded

“By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.” – *Westminster Confession Chap. 3, 3-4.*

John Calvin once estimated that 20 percent of the people were “chosen”
See Matt. 22:14

Is this just? Remember *ALL* have sinned and fall short...

- Problem 1: Double Predestination seems to ignore Christ
- Problem 2: DP means everything already set, God isn't active now
- Problem 3: Are some people made superior to others? (Romans 2:9-11)
- Problem 4: We are told God wants *all* to come to the truth (Romans 5:18)

God loves all!

“Universalism” – No one ever is excluded

Salvation is universal, no “buts”

Works within the declaration of “saved by grace alone”

- Problem 1: Ignores judgment of God altogether (sheep vs. goats)
- Problem 2: God wants two-way relationship

“Pelagianism” – everything depends on our either choosing or rejecting God

“It crops up every time [someone] says ‘God helps those who help themselves’ instead of ‘God helps those who cannot help themselves’” – *Shirley Guthrie Jr.*

Also shows up when we set qualifications for others... you must believe this or you can't be saved. (You can't be a Christian if you believe that... fill in the blank).

- Problem 1: Relies on “works” rather than grace (Us vs. God)
- Problem 2: Can we simply decide to let Spirit work in us?
- Problem 3: Leaves us worrying whether we are “good enough”
- Problem 4: Makes it look like God will only love us if we first declare our love

Guthrie's Rules for Dealing with Predestination:

1. Consider whole Biblical witness, not a few passages
2. The Gospel is “good news” not bad, and for everyone

WHAT OUGHT WE THINK ABOUT PREDESTINATION?

What would total “free will” look like? What factors determine our free will?

How might predestination actually give us freedom? Does God seek to dominate and control our lives? Or does he want us to come to him freely?

What has Paul already said about freedom?

What does predestination mean for Christians (by Guthrie)

1. If we see God's grace in Christ as the basis for our election to salvation, we will not dream of looking for it in ourselves and in our superiority to other people.
2. As the grace of God in Jesus Christ is the *reason* for our election, it is also the *assurance* of our election.
3. To be among those who are chosen to receive the saving grace of God and all its benefits is to belong to the community of God's people in the world.
4. If we understand the meaning of predestination in light of the biblical witness to God's grace in Christ, we will understand it as *both a gift and a task*. (grace and gratitude)
5. We have a responsibility to spread the Good News to all who have not yet heard... that it is the way to true freedom here and now on earth. Does God think less of the non-believer or the believer who never shared?

“Predestination rises out of the conviction that God will ‘do right’ by creation and that Jesus’ death and resurrection reverses the curse upon all of creation brought on by the sin of Adam and Eve.” – *Art Ross and Martha Stevenson*

“The love of God is not a ‘property,’ which humans may achieve or inherit, or which inheres (exists) in them. Rightly understood, there are not Christians; there is only the eternal opportunity of becoming Christian – an opportunity at once accessible and inaccessible to all people.” – *Karl Barth*

So... is it predestination vs. free will? Or predestination and free will?

Are we the “Chosen People?”