

# Predestined!

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Many people have been troubled by the thought that God predestines people to this or the other future. Some have feared lest they be regarded as robots without free will, or morons without responsibility. To some, it seems obvious that people become Christians when they choose to do so. I would like to show that objections or fears about predestination are unnecessary. To those who believe, God has revealed that he predestined them to salvation so they would be secured and encouraged and enabled to live strongly and freely.

No one should write about predestination because they have 'worked it out'. The best minds in the world have never done that. The reason for writing or reading about predestination is, rather, because we cannot do without it.

Some teachers have been eager to maintain the teaching of predestination and so emphasised this one point that there seems to be no room left for the breadth of affection which God revealed in the death of his Son for us. This has produced painful insecurities and reactions. Others have made it seem as though a human being is without responsibility, and this has been irresponsible.

All of these things make it difficult to talk about predestination, but they don't make it unnecessary to do so. The possibility that we are destined for something will not go away. It remains a teaching in the Bible. All of us need to know the thoughts God has concerning us.

Many people these days feel that they have been predestined to be certain things by society, or by some other power. They may fight or resent this or may excuse themselves because of it. They may feed their ambition on it. The fact of something or someone predestining us is powerful.

My main reason for writing about predestination at the moment is that it proclaims that the will of God to save us is stronger than our will to ignore him. God's election and predestining us to be his people is his love in action. So, just what does it mean to be predestined?

[Acts 13:48; 2:38-39; Deuteronomy 7:7-11](#)

Election, predestination, foreknowledge and calling belong together, although each action has a particular focus. 'Election' speaks of God choosing his people, 'predestination' refers to him choosing their destiny, 'foreknowledge' is used of God's setting his affection on a person or people to bring about his purpose for them, and 'calling' emphasises the revelation of his choice to particular people or people groups.

## **God's goodness triumphs over our wrong**

Human beings constantly make many wrong choices. Does this mean that there is no hope for the world? Certainly not! God has predestined that the very scene of our greatest evil would be the revelation of his love.

On the day the church was born, Peter said Jesus had been 'handed over to [the Jews] according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God'. They could not have done such evil if Jesus had not been handed over to them for that purpose. Israel had meant to do evil, but God foreordained the same event for their good, as had been the case with Joseph many years before.

[Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Genesis 50:20](#)

Isaiah had predicted: '... it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper.'

[Isaiah 53:10](#)

It is worth noting that predestination was very powerful in Christ's mind. He had taught beforehand that he 'must' die and rise again. Israel's Scriptures all proclaimed to him that the Messiah would have to die and rise again. He did not find that this limited his humanity. Rather, it enabled it. He was full of the love of his Father and gave himself up freely for us.

[Mark 8:31](#)

## **Christ is God's Chosen One**

When Jesus was glorified before his disciples, they heard a voice from heaven saying, 'this is my Son, my Chosen One'. This meant that Jesus was not just one chosen along with many others but the one especially chosen to fulfil all God's purpose. From the beginning, God had a chosen Son through whom he would fulfil his purpose to do us good. This was Christ. Apart from him, there would not be any choosing of us.

[Luke 9:35; Isaiah. 42:1; Galatians 3:16, 29](#)

Anyone who wants to 'understand' election or predestination should begin here. When God's Chosen One came among us, what did he do? Firstly, he questioned whether Israel understood their calling. Many are called, he said, but few are chosen. You think you belong to Abraham, but you reject the very one he was expecting. So, you can't be God's chosen people at all!

[Matthew 22:14; John 8:39-40](#)

Secondly, he reached out far beyond those who Israel thought could be saved. He said his 'sheep' recognised the voice of the one God had sent to save them. He also said he had other sheep that were not of this fold (Israel) and he would bring them as well.

[John 10:14-16](#)

Best of all, Christ died for the sins of the world. Those who want to understand how wide election is should not look any further than the cross. There is no deeper place to look than there and no clearer place to understand the power of God's choosing. His predestining will remain a mystery, but we can understand that it is by revelation only.

[John 1:29; II Corinthians 5:19; I John 2:2](#)

### **God's elect people are chosen in Christ**

Christian people are not chosen in the same way as Christ was chosen or alongside of him but 'in' him. That is, in his being chosen and predestined they are chosen and predestined. The fact of this is taught by Paul in his Ephesian letter. This means that God has never had any independent plan for anyone apart from the plan he has for them in Jesus Christ.

[Ephesians 1:4-7](#)

The practical effect of this is that, if anyone wants to have some idea of what God has predestined them to, they should look at Jesus Christ and at his cross and his resurrection. Can you see the love of God there? Can you see God's hatred for your sin there? Can you see that there is a power greater than the sin of the whole world? Then, you are seeing God's choosing and predestining love embracing you. If there are any doubts that you are included, consider that Christ has died for the sins of the world.

Remember Jesus showed that election did not work automatically, as though the moral choices of people in Israel did not matter. God chose Israel, and his choosing sifted and sorted and purged his people and brought those who were truly his people to faith in Jesus Christ. Election is not like a numbered marble coming out of a barrel. It is the Father acting in his world in love and purposive grace to lead people to his Son.

### **God's choosing directs us to his mercy**

One of the major passages on election is Paul's letter to the Romans, chapters 9-11. God's choosing is his mercy. The human contribution to our being the people of God is nil. Those who tried to ensure that they were the people of God by their works misunderstood God's purpose and never came to true faith in him. In fact, God consigned everyone to disobedience so that he could have mercy on all.

[Romans 9:7-12; 10:1-4; 11:32](#)

If we think that, in order to understand predestination, we must find a place for human 'free will', we have not begun to understand the purpose of God. He knows he is dealing with sinners, not free men and women. Of course, we are responsible to choose well and will be rewarded for doing so, but how is a sinner going to choose well? This brings us to what predestination is all about. What we would not choose for ourselves, God has chosen for us. His way of bringing us to know him as the God of mercy is to deliver us up to disobedience, so that we know that our will is incapable of any good. When we recognise God in the face of Christ, we know he has had mercy on us.

## **Predestination leads us to faith and love**

On Pentecost day, Peter said that God's promise of salvation was to 'everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.'

[Acts 2:39](#)

To Peter, the idea of a person joining themselves to God had become unbelievable. He had seen the Chosen One move through Israel and reveal what was in the hearts of people. He had seen what was in his own heart when he denied the Lord. But he had also heard Jesus say: 'You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.' Jesus had prayed for him that his faith would not fail, and so he had come to true faith in his Saviour.

[Acts 2:39; John 15:16](#)

Later on, Paul was preaching to Gentiles, those whom Jesus said would be included among his 'sheep'. We are told that 'as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers.'

[Acts 13:48](#)

## **The destination!**

Jesus said his disciples were destined to bear fruit that would remain. Israel had not borne fruit of grateful love to God and not been a light to the nations, but Jesus announced that his disciples would do so. This was their destiny.

[John 15:16](#)

Paul said all who believed the gospel were destined, in Christ, to be children of God and to live for the praise of his glory. God has destined us to be conformed to the image of his Son. We are not destined for wrath but to obtain salvation. We are destined to know the mind of God. Even now, the Spirit takes these things of God and reveals them to us. They are the things of mercy.

[Ephesians 1:4-5, 11-12; Romans 8:29-30; I Thessalonians 5:9; I Corinthians 2:7](#)

No one could imagine for themselves such a high calling as that which is promised to believers. No one, by willing it to be so, could secure it for themselves. The mystery of how God has chosen for us what we would not choose for ourselves, is not so much a puzzle of logic but a wonder of grace. The morality of God making us strong in faith when we were helpless is no cause for complaint but God's equipping us for faith, hope and love.

When Paul thought on these things, he said: 'How unsearchable are [God's] judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.'

[Romans 11:33-36](#)

