

# God Chooses Who Will be Saved

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## Why is predestination important?

Because it deals with who we are and who God is, the nature of our faith and the nature of God's grace, the greatness of His love in spite our terrible sin. Ultimately, it is at the core of the biblical gospel. If you think that these things are important, then predestination is also important. A wrong view of ourselves will lead to pride, a wrong view of God reduces the joy of His supremacy in our hearts, a wrong view of faith and grace takes glory from God.

## What must we do to be saved?

We must acknowledge to God that we are sinners and with a loving trust believe in Christ to save us from eternal punishment and give us a happy eternity with Him and His Father (Romans 10:9-13; Matthew 13:44-46).

## The unsaved person's condition before God--why predestination is our only hope.

**I. Before you were saved, were you simply drowning in the sludge pit of sin, in need of a life preserver so that you could grab onto it and be saved? Or, were you *dead* on the bottom of the sludge pit-- and thus unable to do anything to contribute to your salvation? In other words, were you dead or just mortally ill?**

A. Ephesians 2:1-5. How does the Bible answer this question?

1. What does Paul tell us? (v. 1)
2. Were we born this way? (v. 3)
3. Children of what? (v. 3)
4. Did we grab on to a life preserver to get saved? (vv. 4-5)

B. 1 Corinthians 2:14. Here is a verse that confirms our interpretation of Eph. 2:1-5.

1. "Natural man" means one who is unregenerate (not born again) and thus spiritually dead and not saved.
2. Does the natural man accept (welcome) the things of God?
3. What does he think of God and His ways?
4. Can the natural man understand (and thus believe) the things of God?

**II. Thus, the Bible answers that we are dead at the bottom of the sludge pit of sin before we are saved. Dead people cannot choose life. Instead, they must be made alive by someone else. Thus, Christ had to dive down into the sludge, bring us up**

**from the bottom, and breathe new life into his with His spiritual CPR. Then, *because of this*, we believed. You did not choose to be born again (John 1:13)--you couldn't because you were dead. Rather, your spiritual rebirth came before faith and caused you to believe.**

**III. Therefore we see that while we must believe in Christ to be saved, we cannot do this unless God first makes us alive and causes us to believe. But this raises the question: “What about those who do not believe--how can they be held accountable to do what they are unable to do?”**

A. The reason the unregenerate person does not believe is because he does not want to. Therefore, he is still guilty for his sin and accountable to change. You are not excused from your duty just because you don't want to do it. We must distinguish between *moral ability* and *natural ability*. Natural ability means having the mental and physical capacity to do something if you want to do it, and is necessary for being held accountable. Moral ability means having the desire to do something, and is not necessary for accountability. For example, if someone told me to fly like a bird to Chicago, I could not be held accountable for not doing it because I lack the necessary physical capacity to carry out the command --wings. But if my teacher tells me to do an assignment but I can't do it because “I don't want to” I am still accountable for not doing it.

**IV. The Scriptures teach that our inability to come to God is because of our sinfulness--we are dead *in sin*. In fact, we are so sinful by nature that if left to ourselves we would always reject Christ. Because we are born sinners, we do not want Christ. As you consider the following verses, ask yourselves these questions: How can a person repent of his sin when he loves it? How can a person come to God when he hates Him?**

A. A person will never come to God unless God first changes him.

1. John 3:19-21. Compare with Matthew 7:18.
2. John 6:44; 1:13; 3:3
3. John 8:43-44, 47

B. Humans are not basically good, but instead basically evil.

1. Romans 3:10-13
2. Genesis 6:5

**V. Therefore we see that if God left salvation up to us, we would all reject Him. If He did not predestine, no one would be saved because no one would believe.**

A. Throw out the notion that the unsaved person has the ability to believe of his own free-will.

B. If you are saved, remember where you came from (Ephesians 2:11-12).

### **God chooses who will be saved**

**I. This is evident from the section above, because God must first turn our hearts to Himself before we will believe.**

### **II. God's choice is not based upon His foreknowledge of our good works.**

A. Because no one is good or does good, as we saw earlier (for example, Romans 3:10-13).

B. Scripture declares this.

1. 2 Timothy 1:9
2. Romans 9:11-13

C. Thus, good works are the result of predestination, not the basis of it.

1. See Ephesians 2:10

### **III. God's choice is not based upon His foreknowledge of who will believe**

A. Because we would never believe unless He first chose us and caused us to believe, as we saw.

B. This is evident from the many verses that call faith and repentance gifts from God.

1. Philippians 1:29
2. John 6:65
3. 2 Timothy 2:25.

C. God can bring to faith anyone He wants

1. Isaiah 55:11
2. Job 42:2
3. Psalm 115:3; 135:5
4. Genesis 18:14

D. Scripture declares our faith to be a result of our election, not the cause of it.

1. Acts 13:48
  - a. Why did these people believe?
2. John 10:26
  - a. Why did these people *not* believe?
3. John 15:16
  - a. Who chose whom?

**IV. God's choice of whom He will save is based only upon Himself and His holy purposes. It is based upon nothing in the individual.**

A. The verses above cited show this.

B. Romans 9:11-24. Pay special attention to verses 11, 16, and 18.

1. Why did God love Jacob and hate Esau? (v. 11)
2. Who does salvation ultimately depend on? (v. 16) Who does it not depend on?
3. Why did God raise up Pharaoh (v. 17).
4. Does God have the right to choose some to be saved and leave others in their sins and let them perish? (v. 21).
5. How does Paul feel if we deny God this right? (vv. 19-20)
6. How do you see predestination in verse 21?

C. Ephesians 1:4-6, 11

1. What does it say that God's choice is based upon?

D. 2 Timothy 1:9

**V. Why doesn't God save everyone?**

A. How is this answered in Romans 9:22-23? Proverbs 16:4?

B. Remember that God's goal in everything He does is to glorify Himself. This means that His goal is to make known His greatness and excellency in all things so that He is exalted for who He is--that is what it means for God to be glorified. Can you think of some attributes of God that would not be made known if God did not choose to leave some people in their sins to endure eternal punishment? Can you think of some attributes of God that are more fully highlighted and appreciated by us when seen in contrast with the eternal punishment of the wicked?

1. Consider this quote, though don't let it limit your thinking. "The condemnation of the non-elect is designed primarily to furnish an eternal exhibition, before men and angels, of God's hatred for sin, or, in other words, it is to be an eternal manifestation of the justice of God."

## **Problems?**

### **I. Do commands to repent and believe prove that God leaves it up to us to decide if we will believe?**

A. No, see above on how God can hold us accountable for things that we are unable to do.

B. Both Calvinists and Arminians agree that we must believe in Christ to be saved. So Scriptures that teach this do not settle the issue in favor of Arminianism (the belief that man and not God has final say in salvation). Rather, these verses create the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism. The issue is not “Do we have to believe?” but rather “How does a person come to believe in Christ? Why do some believe and not others?” The Arminian says that God is the reason people believe. The Calvinist says that the reason is in us. Commands to believe in Christ do not settle the issue either way, so instead we must look for the answer in other passages of Scripture (as we have done).

### **II. What about verses that seem to say that God wants all to be saved? (1 Timothy 2:14, Ezekiel 33:11)**

A. In one sense God really does want to save all. But in another sense He does not want to save all because *He desires something more*. Considered in and of itself, the salvation of all people is very pleasing to God and that is what we see in these verses. But all things considered, God does not want to save all people (for if He did, He would--see Isaiah 46:10) because this is a righteous way to make known His glory in ways that could not otherwise be done.

### **III. If God determines who is saved, why preach the gospel?**

A. Because God works through means, and the preaching of the gospel is the means that He uses to bring the elect to faith.

B. One reason for this objection might be that if God chooses who will be saved, there are some people whom no matter how hard we work will never be saved because they are not chosen. But a similar thing would be true if salvation was determined by humans--there would be some people who no matter how hard you work will never believe because they just won't choose to. Thus, it is ultimately out of your hands either way whether a person will believe. But if God is in control, there is great hope because you know that He can answer your prayers and save the person, and that your efforts for someone's salvation might be signs that God is drawing them to Himself.

C. Predestination means that if you share your faith, you are on the winning team--though you aren't the coach. Who would be discouraged by a doctrine that guarantees victory for the gospel --for without predestination, no one would ever believe.

## **Applications of predestination**

### **I. It Glorifies God.**

A. It exalts His *supremacy* because a God who is not subject to the sinful will of His creatures is greater than a God who is.

B. It exalts His *grace* because a God whose grace jumps into the pool of sludge and raises you up is greater than a grace that just throws a life preserver and waits for you to grab it.

C. It magnifies His *love*.

1. As J.I. Packer said, we often think of God's love as “a powerless wish that cannot keep anyone from hell without help, and as faint as the human help which God needs for this purpose.” Surely a love that saves is richer and sweeter and more glorious than one that needs our help.
2. Imagine if a man said to his wife “I love you in the same way that I love every other woman.” Or if a parent said to their child, “I love you just like I love everyone else's child.” We would be shocked and saddened. But we often think of God's love in this way. Christians are the bride of Christ (Eph. 5) and children of God (Romans 8), yet we often think that He loves us in the same way as He loves those who perish! This keeps us from experiencing more deeply the wonderful sweetness of God's love. He loves His church in a special way that is greater than His love for those who are not His children nor His bride. But if you deny predestination, you deny this.

**II. It is a great source of joy and satisfaction in God. God takes pleasure in election (Eph. 1:5) and we can share this pleasure with Him. As we do this, we will become more like Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). We are satisfied by God's glory. The more glorious He is to us, the more satisfied we will be in Him.**

**III. It deepens our trust in God because it shows us that we are absolutely dependent upon God for everything.**

**IV. It is a solid hope for missions, source of humility, and fuel for worship.**

