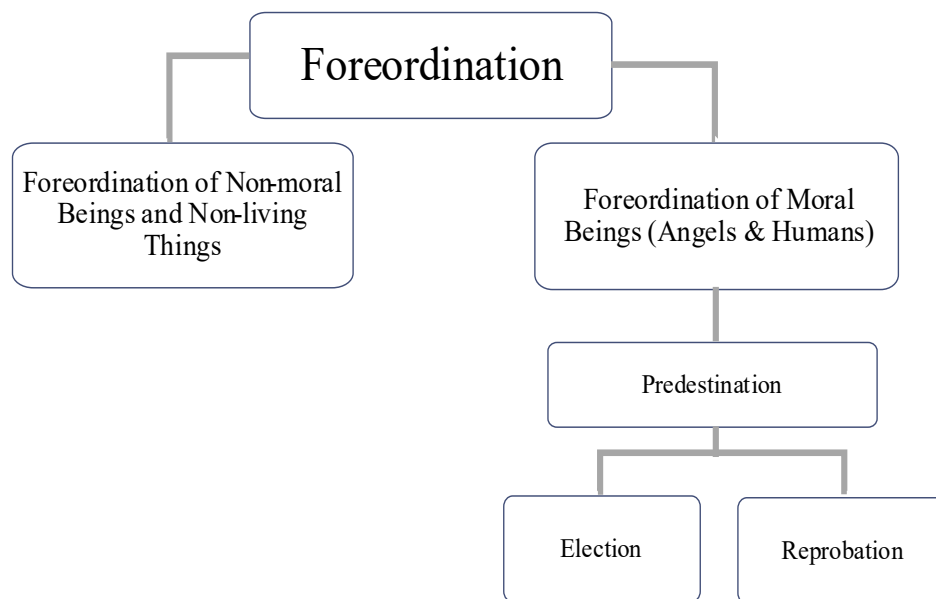


1. **Introduction:** Predestination is a sub-category of “foreordination.” The greatest difficulties in accepting the Bible’s clear statements about predestination arise from how a person views the process of choosing.
  - Does God sovereignly choose who will be saved? Or does omniscient God, knowing the end from the beginning, look ahead and see who will accept Christ as Savior and then predestine that person, i.e., is personal choice the determining factor in predestination?
2. **The “Free-Will” View:** (Also called the “libertarian free will.” The “will” itself chooses. The will is “free.” It is an independent neutral mental faculty making choices autonomously – free from prior prejudice, inclination, or disposition.
  - That would mean the “will” is free from bias introduced by interaction with mental faculties like intellect, emotions, memory. It is also free from bodily inputs like being tired, or ill, subjected to extreme heat/cold, or injured.
  - If the will were truly free in that sense, choices would be arbitrary, literally made for “no reason.” Reasonless choices would have no motive and no moral significance.
  - The human will in making choices does not appear to operate in that way.
3. **Edwards’ View:** Jonathan Edwards writing in 1754, said, *The will is that faculty or principle of mind by which the mind chooses.*
  - The will is one of the mind’s faculties along with intellect (understanding), emotions (affections), and memory (stored experience). The will is not an autonomous faculty.
  - Edwards says, the “will” operates by “evaluating” inclinations and desires presented to it by other faculties of the mind much like a balance scale. The strongest or most weighty inclination or desire at the instant of decision is the one that gets chosen.
  - By “the mind choosing,” Edwards means the inclinations and desires that determine choice, as well as the choice itself, are shaped by the whole mind.
  - The intellect, emotions, and memory interact with each other and the will.
  - The body delivers information about its state of well-being or harm via nerves.
  - Messages from the body to the intellect and emotions indicate all is well or maybe a sharp pain, a fever, or a headache says something is wrong. All such signals affect choices.
  - People are free moral agents but do not have a free will. People are only free to act according to their nature which without being “born again” is inherently sinful.
  - It is thus clear that the content and activities of the human intellect, emotions, and memory regulate and stimulate the will.
  - The will’s choosing is affected by emotions, imagination, pain signals, etc.
  - Many people believe each of the mind’s faculties operate independent of the others.
  - If you think about your own experiences, you will know that view is wrong.

- You don't need deep theological principals to understand that choices are strongly influenced by many factors that are communicated to the mind.
  - Edwards' view of the role of the "will" is important in exploring how predestination, a person's willful choices, and God's sovereignty work together without conflict.
  - To investigate predestination, we begin with foreordination, which is the broad term used for everything God predetermines.
4. **Foreordination**: God's ordaining, decreeing, or otherwise determining from eternity whatsoever comes to pass is called foreordination.
- There is nothing in all creation that is exempt from foreordination. Rock, tree, animal, person, or angel – past, present, or future – for anything and everything God has foreordained what it is, where it is, when it is, and what it does.
  - All things that are, have been, or ever will be are the outworking of God's eternal decrees. The next slide shows the relationship between God's foreordination as it relates to non-living things, non-moral creatures, and moral creatures. It is the last category where predestination comes into play.



- Predestination is the part of foreordination that deals with the state of being and actions of moral agents (as far as we know, created moral agents are limited to humans and angels, including fallen humans and fallen angels).
  - The doctrine of predestination teaches specifically that God foreordains the actions of moral agents. That sounds as if the sins of moral agents are preordained. At first thought, predestination also appears to be incompatible with human accountability.
  - But we should recognize that God, who foreordained all things, foreordained human liberty. Somehow it all works. We ask “how?”
  - God’s plan is infinite in variety and complexity and encompasses both time and eternity. It includes billions of free moral agents acting, interacting, and reacting upon each other.
  - In this vast complexity He preordained, God has ordained that humans shall have liberty as second causes under His sovereignty.
5. **Westminster Confession:** *“God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.* (First paragraph of “God’s Eternal Decrees”)
- How is it possible that God ordained everything that comes to pass and yet people are not robots? How can people whose actions are preordained make genuine choices for which they are held accountable?
  - There is an answer. It is neither as clear nor as detailed as we would like, but it is compatible with what God has revealed.
6. **A Question:** How would perfect humans - pure, holy, and righteous - respond to God? Being perfectly inclined to God and His righteousness, would mere knowledge of what would please God from moment to moment be sufficient to produce actions that please Him?
7. **Two Examples:** (1.) **Adam and Eve.** They were perfectly holy and righteous, but mutably so. When tested, we know they failed. They knew what God desired and did the opposite using their human decision-making process.
- Their will was free in the sense that their desire controlled what they decided to do. Where did the unholy desire come from?
  - They were created holy and righteous but mutably so. Desires and inclinations could lead to making a wrong choice that was intended to accomplish something good but led to sin.
  - They desired the “good” of being “more like God.” The wrong choice they made was the method they chose to make that possible.
  - When offered a fruit that was claimed to make them more like God, they ate the fruit, even though God had forbidden it, thinking it more important to be more like God than to obey. That is a warning to us. Trying to achieve a worthy goal by wrong methods is bad.

- (2.) **Jesus.** In the incarnate state, the Son said that He only did what He saw the Father doing (Jn 5:19-20, 30), only taught what the Father sent Him (Jn :16), and only spoke what the Father taught Him (Jn 8:28-29, 17:8).
  - Jesus said His “food” was to do God’ will (Jn 4:34) and finish His incarnate work.
  - Fallen human nature inclines away from God. Communication with Him is broken.
  - Regenerated human nature is inclined toward God but must battle the still present sin nature. Communication with God is restored, but it is not perfect because of our imperfections that will not be eliminated until glorification.
  - When a “born again” person is glorified, they are made holy and righteous like God.
  - They cannot sin. That is different from and better than Adam and Eve’s position.
8. **Another Question:** How has and does God communicate with people?
- God spoke directly to Adam and Eve both before they sinned and, at least for a time, after they sinned. God communicated with His prophets and with many other people including Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and David.
  - He communicates to Christians through His written Word and the Holy Spirit.
9. **God’s Intervention to Prevent Sin:** There are several examples in Scripture where God intervenes to prevent people from sinning yet does so without interfering with accountable willful action. We will look at one case involving Abraham.
10. **Genesis 20:1-3:** *“From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. <sup>2</sup> And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. <sup>3</sup> But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife.”*
- Was Sarah Abraham’s sister? Yes, his half-sister, same father different mothers.
11. **Genesis 20:4-7:** *“Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, “Lord, will you kill an innocent people? <sup>5</sup> Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.” <sup>6</sup> Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. <sup>7</sup> Now then, return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.”*
- God kept Abimelech from sinning and Abimelech was not even aware of it. He followed his desires and inclinations and God supplied inputs through dreams.
  - Another broad example of God’s intervention to prevent sin is His common grace.
  - God’s common grace restrains unredeemed people from being as bad as they might.
  - Romans 1 tells us what happens when God removes that restraining influence.

- It appears that God's restraining influence is exercised through interaction with people's minds. As Christians, we usually think of the Holy Spirit interacting with our spiritual heart which includes intellect, emotions, memory, and will.
- Paul says that all people know of God's eternal power and divine nature from what God has revealed in creation. Yet, many people neither glorify Him nor give thanks to Him, and instead exchange the glory of God for idols.
- Therefore, God gives them over to the sinful desires of their hearts for sexual impurity, for the degrading on their bodies with one another. They exchange the truth of God for a lie, and He gives them over to sinful lusts and a depraved mind.
- That is what happens when God removes His restraining factors so that people fall further and further into sin, pulled down by the weight of their own sin nature. The absence of God's active influence on people's mind is a dreadful thing.

12. **Another example:** Think about how God's sovereignty interacted with man's moral freedom and responsibility in God's acts of giving us the Holy Scriptures.

- In communicating His Word, God was pleased to employ human instruments, and in using them He did not reduce them to mere mechanical instruments recording what He dictated.

13. **2Peter 1:20-21:** *"Above all you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man; but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

- These blessed men of God were borne along by the Holy Spirit, yet their moral responsibility was not disturbed, nor their "freedom" reduced.
- God enlightened their minds, enkindled their hearts, revealed to them His truth, and so controlled them as they communicated His mind and will to men that they contributed no error to the process.
- If God had not controlled the writers of His Word in the way He did, would error have come into the writings, and if so, how?
- The answer is yes, without God's control, the writer's residual sin would have produced at least some error. God, in holding their sin in check and preventing error, did not reduce their "freedom."
- To the contrary, He was bringing them real freedom, freedom from sin as they worked on recording His Word.

14. **NT comments on and examples of God's communication with people include:**

- (1.) **John 14:25:** *"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*
- (2.) Acts 9:3-20 – The risen Christ confronted Saul and spoke to Ananias in a vision.
- (3.) Acts 10: 24-33 - An angel told Cornelius, a Roman centurion, to send for Peter.
- (4.) In a vision, Jesus came to John on the Island of Patmos revealing future things.

- These relatively lengthy but incomplete preparatory thoughts, prepare a way to examine how Predestination might be explained for both regenerate and unregenerate people.
- People get ideas from all kinds of sources. Some seem to spring into our minds, as we say, “from out of nowhere.” From Scripture, we know that God interacts with the minds of His human creatures and brings before their minds, ideas and information.
- He sends dreams (Abimelech, Joseph, Paul...), delusions (Rm1; 2Thess 2:11), angels as messengers (Abraham, Mary, ...), the coming of the Word of the Lord to prophets, visions (Isaiah, Paul, ...), the inspiration to write Scripture ...
- In regeneration, God institutes such dramatic changes in the way people think & act that it is referred to as being born again (Jn3).
- The Holy Spirit indwells each regenerated person and continues to work within, transforming that person into a moral likeness of Christ.
- Thinking about these things, how can the possibility of predestination be denied?
- These lengthy but still incomplete preparatory thoughts prepare us to examine how Predestination might be explained for both regenerate and unregenerate people.
- Keep in mind, the human faculty we call the “will,” is regulated by the intellect and the emotions. The will is not an independent decision-making agent. The “human will” is conditioned by inclinations and desires of the intellect and affections.

15. **A Tentative Explanation of Predestination:** Predestination is God’s foreordination of all things pertaining to His moral creatures. Scripture plainly indicates that predestination does not eliminate accountability.

- How might God’s predestination work for both regenerate and unregenerate people without making them like robots, having no freedom in what they do, and hence no accountability for what they do?
- From Scripture’s descriptions of God interacting with people and the work of the Holy Spirit (plus personal experience), predestination may work through God’s interactions with our minds to produce freely-accepted desires and inclinations.
- The desires and inclinations that direct our decisions into God’s foreordained path will be compatible and pleasing to our nature.
- This concept works if Edwards’ explanation of making choices is correct.
- If Edwards is wrong and “libertarian free-will,” as an independent neutral mental faculty making choices autonomously, free from prior prejudice, inclination, or disposition is correct, then our potential explanation will not work.

16. **Summary:** *Predestination may work through divine interactions with a person’s mind. A person’s nature causes their mind to process data in certain specific ways and to develop inclinations and desires that are compatible with their inherent nature. God brings before their minds information and ideas which they process according to their own nature. The result is God’s predestined choice, but the person, without compulsion, makes their own*

*choices. There are no forced choices. In this way people's choices are predestined by God in such manner that there is no interference with their natural decision-making process and accountability is retained for their willful actions.*

- In addition to willful actions, there are actions that are not willful, i.e., actions that are not voluntary conscious actions. We call such actions involuntary.
- Comparing a “wink” with a “blink” provides a good example. A blink is an involuntary action that lubricates the eye. A wink is a voluntary action with an intended consequence. To a casual observer, they may appear identical.
- Predestination has to do with the voluntary actions of moral creatures. A blink and other involuntary actions are a different subcategory of “foreordination of all things.”
- People are free agents – free to follow their own nature – but they cannot make decisions free of the constraints imposed by their nature.
- Memory is a powerful influence on decision making. Trained responses can bypass the decision-making process. Saying it another way, decisions of “how to respond” to certain situations are made in advance.