

MISCONCEPTIONS AND OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE of PREDESTINATION

<p>Objection to Predestination: God must give everyone an equal opportunity to be saved, or else He isn't being "fair."</p>	<p>FALSE. If God chooses to show mercy and grace to some, while passing over others and leaving them in their sin, that is not <i>unfair</i>. (Example: If you buy dinner for one homeless man and don't buy dinner for the other homeless man across the street, that is not <i>unfair</i>. You are simply acting freely and graciously as you choose.) Romans 9:13-15, 22-24. <u>Notice especially Paul's answer to the objection, "God's not being fair" in 9:14, 19-20: "But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?"</u></p> <p><i>By the way, the fact that in Romans 9, Paul answers the exact questions about / objections to the doctrine of predestination that we most naturally ask, is strong evidence that we are reading him correctly in his teaching on the subject.</i></p>
<p>Objection to Predestination: If predestination is true, there's no need to preach the gospel, to send missionaries, etc.</p>	<p>False. God who predestines to eternal life has also appointed faith toward Christ and repentance toward sin as the means of conversion; and He has appointed the preaching of the gospel as the means of working that saving faith in the hearts of those whom He is saving. In Romans 8:28-30 Paul demonstrates <i>that all those who are predestined are then called and justified</i>. Then in 10:5-15 he works out that this cannot happen without them hearing the good news preached. That's <i>why</i> we plant churches, send missionaries, etc.</p>
<p>Objection to Predestination: If predestination is true, Christians will not be passionate about evangelism. (A similar objection to the one above.)</p>	<p>False. It is the knowledge that <i>God does choose to save the elect through the preaching of the gospel that fuels gospel preaching</i> and gives confidence to gospel preaching. None have ever been more passionate about evangelism and missions than the Protestant Reformers and the New England Puritans, who were also the most staunch Calvinists (holding firmly to the doctrine of predestination). (Romans 10:14-15) It is God-glorifying to know that God chooses to use His people to extend His salvation to others. At the same time, the doctrine of predestination frees me from the misconception as an evangelist that "it's all on me" to convince someone to get saved. I scatter the seed widely and leave the results with God.</p>

<p>Misconception about Predestination: God chooses everybody, and then everyone has the responsibility to choose God in return.</p>	<p>False. This is easily disproven. If God chose everybody, then everybody would be saved (Romans 8:28-30). The scriptures do not teach Universalism.</p>
<p>Misconception about Predestination: The doctrine of predestination contradicts the free offer of the gospel.</p>	<p>False. Jesus was very comfortable with offering the gospel freely while declaring the doctrine of predestination at the same time. For example, in John 6:35 we hear Jesus proclaiming the <i>free offer of the gospel</i>. This is followed immediately by 6:37-39, in which Jesus says that all <i>those whom the Father gives to Jesus will come to Jesus</i> (predestination); which is followed by 6:40, another statement of the free offer of the gospel. Similarly, in Matthew 11:27, Jesus makes a statement regarding election, followed by the free offer of the gospel in 28-30.</p>
<p>Misconception about Predestination: Those who are ultimately lost (condemned) are condemned because God didn't elect them.</p>	<p>False. Those who are ultimately condemned are condemned <i>because they are guilty sinners</i>. God has the right to condemn sinners. (The misconception finds fault with God; however, all fault and guilt lie with the sinner.)</p>
<p>Misconception about Predestination: In our fallen condition, mankind has the ability to "choose God."</p>	<p>False. <i>This is the heart of the issue.</i> The Arminian position incorrectly ascribes to Mankind in our fallen state the same moral ability that Adam had <i>before</i> the Fall. However, the scriptures make clear from Genesis 2 onward that in our fallen condition, mankind is spiritually <i>dead</i> to God—not merely weakened, or spiritually sick, but DEAD (Genesis 2:17, Ephesians 2:1, Colossians 2:13), and must be made spiritually ALIVE by an act of God the Holy Spirit (regeneration, Ephesians 2:4-5, Colossians 2:13) <i>even to be able to repent of sin and believe in Christ.</i> <u>Adam, our Federal Head, made the choice – the wrong one – for us all already, bringing us into an estate of spiritual death.</u> As Americans we are very individualistic; the idea that someone else has acted on our behalf with negative consequences grates on our sense of individualism. But we truly died in Adam's disobedience. This is why Jesus says to Nicodemus "you must be born again" in John 4. Without God's regenerating Holy Spirit bringing a dead soul to spiritual life, that dead soul will simply continue to be dead to God and to make choices consistent with their true nature (death), ending in eternal separation</p>

	from God. This is also the point Jesus is making to the Jews in John 6:43-44, 6:65.
Misconception: The doctrine of predestination says that Mankind doesn't have a free will.	False. Mankind has a free will; that is, Man is free to do exactly what he desires to do with regard to good and evil. <i>But that is precisely the problem.</i> Without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, Man will always continue doing what Man wants to do, rejecting God (following the example of Adam and living out the sin nature we inherited from Adam).
Misconception: If predestination is true, we can expect catastrophic confusion on Judgment Day because people who thought they were saved will turn out to be lost, while others who appeared to be lost will ironically turn out to be saved.	False. This misconception misses the crucial purpose for predestination, namely, that God predestines some <i>that they might become like Jesus</i> ("conformed to the likeness of His Son," Romans 8:29; Compare Ephesians 1:4). The concern being expressed in this misconception is actually about <i>assurance of salvation</i> – Have I done what I needed to do to be saved? The doctrine of predestination would answer the question with a different question, <i>Is there a growing body of evidence in your life that you are in fact saved?</i> ¹ (That is, Can you see that you are actually becoming more and more conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ?) Do you love Jesus more today than you did 5 years ago? Are the promises of scripture sweeter than ever? Do you love the people of God more sincerely? Is holy communion more precious today than it was a year ago? Does the Word of God bring you joy? Are you forgiving others more readily and genuinely? Are you more passionate about the gospel than you were a year ago? Are you becoming more like Jesus Christ? <i>Are you alive to the things of God?</i>

For consideration: the Christian faith is a revealed religion; we know what we know about God because He has revealed himself to us in His Word (Deuteronomy 29:29). As a revealed religion from our infinitely holy and wise and glorious God who is above all, we can and should expect *many things to be revealed which are counterintuitive to the way we --with our limited and sin-stained knowledge--would think.* If you only believe things about God that are what you would come up with on your own, you don't believe God, you believe yourself. A very good diagnostic question of spiritual health is, *What are*

¹ Imagine I go to the doctor and express concern that I cannot remember for sure if I was born in the fall of 1969. He or she wouldn't go to look up birth records to determine the legitimacy of my life. Instead, the doctor would check my pulse and perhaps pinch me!!

some things I believe which I would NEVER believe except they are taught in God's Word? For the healthy Christian, this should be a sizeable and growing list! The doctrine of predestination is a good example of something that is on my list. *Nobody would come up with this doctrine on their own!* This doctrine is derived from paying careful attention to specific teachings in God's Word.

For study – 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10. The Apostle Paul had preached the gospel / done evangelism among the Thessalonians. In these verses, he is reflecting upon the evidence that these Thessalonians Christians are in fact among the elect: “We know, brothers loved by God, *that He has chosen you...*”

What are some of the evidences that Paul sees in the Thessalonian believers that verify they are chosen by God, i.e., that they are predestined to life?

For study – In my estimation, one of the most important questions to settle is when regeneration (new birth) takes place in the believer's experience. The Reformed understanding of Scripture is that regeneration occurs before conversion (the exercise of faith and repentance). Here are 2 articles that deal with this question for deeper study.

[Reformation Theology Ordo Salutis](#)

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