

PREDESTINATION, SALVATION, AND SECURITY

This is a big subject that I think is usually made more difficult than it should be. I believe the bible is God's word to all of us—not just the intellectual elite. I am just going to share with you my line of thinking based on scripture in relation to this subject.

It's really hard for me to understand why people choose to make God less than He is, and I believe most of the arguments I have heard regarding this subject do just that. The key thing to remember is to take the whole counsel of God—not just part of it—and remember that God does not contradict Himself. Those who indicate that man has no choice are limiting God's power to accomplish His purposes without using preprogrammed creatures. Those who say you can lose your salvation are limiting God's power and ability to finish the work that He has begun in the life of the believer.

God is sovereign; His Word is clear on that point. His plan and purposes will be accomplished.

Isaiah 14:24 "The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand...."

Isaiah 55:11 "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

In His sovereignty, God decided to create man with the freedom to make his own choices. My God is so big that in spite of the choices men would make throughout history, God has accomplished and continues to accomplish His purposes. He doesn't need the crutch of a programmed robotic creation that cannot think and choose to accomplish His purposes. He is so omnipotent and so omniscient, that He could implement His whole plan before the foundation of the world, incorporating the choices that men would make—we're talking billions of people and thousands of years.

God is not willing that any person should perish. These verses alone show that God hasn't sovereignly chosen some people for eternal life and others for eternal damnation. Consider the following verses.

Ezekiel 18:32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

2Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

From these verses we see that man has a will, the ability to make choices, to decide whether or not he is going to follow God in faith and obedience or not.

They also state that God is not willing that any should perish. God desires ALL to come to repentance.

And God does not lie!

Deuteronomy 32:3–4 “...ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”

Psalms 33:4 “For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.”

Isaiah 25:1 “O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.”

Titus 1:2 “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began....”

The question will surely surface, “Well, what about God hardening Pharaoh’s heart?” When we read that God hardens someone’s heart, we can understand that He is giving them over to their own desires to accomplish His purposes. That principle is stated by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 1:21-25 “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”

Building on the scriptural foundation that has been established, we can move on to the flashpoint word—“predestination.” I am going to pull from my study of Romans at this point.

Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

“to them that love God” – As I looked at the Greek, this love is an act of the will as a matter of principle, duty, and propriety. It is a response to truly knowing and embracing all the truth about God and His provision for us.

“to them who are the called” – The Greek for the word *called* speaks of an invitation and an appointment. The scripture doesn’t contradict itself. The Lord makes it clear in scripture that He is not willing that any should perish.

John tells us that ALL will be taught of God

*John 6:45 "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be **all** taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."*

The desire of the teacher is that his students learn. And Paul started this book to the Romans saying that man was without excuse.

Romans 1:20 "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse...."

All that said to say this. Salvation isn't just for some people; Christ died for all; but only those who accept the invitation, who *learn* the lesson, will be appointed to salvation. Sadly, those who reject that invitation will be eternally damned.

"according to His purpose" – A wonderful truth. We are His for a purpose. Life has meaning. The experiences God allows to touch us have a reason—not just any reason, a special purpose in the plans of God. What a privilege!

Romans 8:29 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

The Greek for the word *foreknow* states "to know beforehand." *Predestinate* is to "limit in advance, determine before." Because He is God, He knew everything that ever would happen before He ever created one thing. (That truth alone poses many questions that I can't begin to discuss.) The fact is that He knew in advance every person's response to Him—whether it would be in faith and obedience or rejection and disobedience. Those who fell into the category of faith and obedience were *predestined* to be likened to His Son Jesus. *Conformed* means to be "jointly formed, similar." I think this is talking about being redeemed in a glorified body and restored in fellowship as was intended from the creation. Jesus' obedience to His Father and resurrection from the dead made Him the "firstborn among many brethren." Although the scripture states that there will be few in comparison to the potential who will find salvation (Matthew 7:14), this verse assures us that from the human perspective, the Lord will have many brethren—people who choose salvation.

Matthew 7:14 "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Romans 8:30 "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

This verse uses a different Greek word for *called* than is used in verse 28; this word simply means "to call forth, to bid." It makes me think of the Lord as He called each of His 12 disciples. Those who have been predestined are *called*, singled out for service because of their acceptance of His invitation, and are *justified*; they are declared innocent and righteous, which means that they are no longer under condemnation.

How does one accept God's invitation? Through faith, through belief in Jesus as the Son of God and acceptance of His sacrifice for your sin on the cross.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Romans 10:9 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Is there more than one way to get saved? No! Jesus declared that He was the only way.

John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Why would one choose to come to God in faith? Because he recognizes his need; he recognizes that he is a sinner in need of salvation. Why do we go to a doctor? Because we know we are sick. Once you recognize that you are a sinner and you understand that only Jesus can deliver you from that sin, all you have to do is repent and believe.

The scripture goes on to tell us that salvation is a gift of God.

Ephesians 2:8–9 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Because of the context, I believe that salvation is the gift being referenced since it is being compared to something one could work for or earn on your own. But— Even if you put the emphasis on the faith that saves being a gift from God, the truth doesn't change. A gift has to be accepted before it becomes your possession. A gift is freely given and cannot be earned. The foundational truths already stated prohibit this gift only being available to some and not all.

Salvation is a gift; and the scripture tells us that God doesn't take back His gifts. He doesn't change His mind.

Romans 11:29 "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

Everything regarding our salvation is accomplished by God. We cannot take credit for any part of that provision.

Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ...."

God is the one responsible for the work of salvation in our lives as believers. Once we accept His gift, He will continue the work that He has started until our future is secured by the return of Jesus Christ as King. We can have confidence and trust in this fact. What Jesus has started will be finished (from the Greek for perform).

Hebrews 7:25 "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The above verse tells us that those who come to God through faith in Jesus are saved to the uttermost—thoroughly, wholly, taking us to the point of completion. How is that possible? Because Jesus as our high priest is always making intercession for us. We know from other scripture that any prayer made according to God's will, will be answered—and we know that Jesus intercedes (prays) for us according to the will of the Father. Not only the Savior, but the Spirit is interceding for us according to the will of the Father as well.

Romans 8:26-27 "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

The writer to the Hebrews affirms this truth.

Hebrews 12:2 "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Jesus is the Author (originator, creator) and Finisher (completer) of our faith. He is now seated in a position of authority at the throne of God. If He is the one who accomplishes it, then it must be considered done. Consider the following verses from Jude.

Jude 1:24-25 "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

The Greek for *keep* states to "guard, preserve." Jude is obviously giving praise to God our Savior (Jesus). He is comforting the believers with the assurance that their **God is able** to keep them from falling (into continual sin) and present them faultless (unblemished, without blame) before the throne (of God the Father). Interestingly, the Greek for (*from*) *falling* states "without sin." That tells me that God will keep us clean and righteous in spite of the times that we fail Him. Forgiveness is ours for the asking.

1John 1:7-9 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

And finally, a statement of support from the Old Testament.

Ecclesiastes 3:14 "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him."

As an exclamation point, the believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit until he takes possession of his eternal inheritance.

Ephesians 1:13-14 "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

Believers are sealed (stamped for security or preservation) with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit dwelling in us is the earnest (the pledge or security for the rest that is to come) of our inheritance (eternal life).

Ephesians 4:30 "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

We get our thinking messed up because there are people that **claim** to be saved and even participate as part of the family for a while, but then they walk away—sometimes even declaring they no longer believe there is a God. John makes it very clear, that those who are part of God's family will remain a part of the family.

1John 2:19 "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

Those who "leave" are revealing themselves as unbelievers. They may have made a profession and gone through the motions, but they never really had a true change of heart. They were going through the motions—like Judas.

How does the scripture say a believer can be identified? This is crucial to the question of security in my mind because there are so many who are claiming Him falsely.

The believer loves Jesus and keeps His sayings (teachings, commands). He tries to be obedient.

John 14:23-24 "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me."

The true believer will bear fruit; fruit is born as a result of obeying the Word of God and following the leadership of the Holy Spirit. In fact, God is at work in the life of every believer to make him more fruitful.

John 15:1-2 & 6 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit...If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

The question begs, "What kind of fruit?"

Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

Ephesians 5:9 "(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)"

When the child of God is disobedient, he can expect to experience God's chastening.

Hebrews 12:6-8 "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

A person with true faith will show it in his life by striving to be obedient to God in accordance with His word from a heart of love. The purpose of these works is not to earn salvation; these are works that give evidence to one's salvation.

James 2:17 & 26 "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

John very clearly supports the truth shared by James—those who truly know Jesus, true believers, will try to obey Him.

1John 2:3-5 "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."

A true child of God will not practice sin. A true child of God will practice righteousness. This is talking about the way you live, not about isolated sins. The Christian is subject to sin as long as we are in this unglorified body, a physical body corrupted by the sin nature. Paul addresses this very issue in the book of Romans.

Romans 7:22-25 "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

Are there those that claim to be doing the work of God whom God will reject?
Sad to say, but yes.

Matthew 7:15-23 "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Jesus is identifying true believers as those who are doing the will of His Father in heaven. Satan has the ability to work through people as a counterfeit and a deceiver—even as an angel of light. These counterfeits will be rejected by the Savior since they are not doing the works of the Father in heaven, but the works of their father, Satan.

2Corinthians 11:13-15 "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

The challenge—Examine yourselves. Are you producing the fruits of the Spirit? Are you showing your love for the Savior through obedience to His Word? Are you doing works as part of a ritual or in an attempt to earn your salvation? Are your works done to promote self or to honor God? Are you comfortable in your sin? Do you ever experience God's chastening?

2Corinthians 13:5 "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."