

The View from Here

What Does the Bible Say About Predestination?

That's a very fitting question during this time of year. It's the Season of Advent when we're focusing on the end times and the coming of Jesus to judge as well as preparing to celebrate His coming the first time as a baby to save us. **Predestination** is a question that comes up a lot. Predestination is a word that refers to God choosing our eternal destiny *before* we were even born. The Bible teaches that God has chosen believers in Him to receive the gift of eternal life. He did this even *before the world was created*. Ephesians 1:3-5 says, "***Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus..... he chose us in him (that's Christ) before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and His will***" (NIV).

This is meant to be an encouraging teaching in the Bible, not a fatalistic one. God chose us to be His own. Our salvation is no accident, and that's the focus of the Bible's teaching on predestination. Because of God's grace, His pleasure, His good will, He chose His people. He called them by name before the world began. If you know Jesus Christ and trust in Him, you were predestined to be adopted as one of God's children through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. So what God is saying is, "You're mine!" and this is no accident or whimsical momentary thought.

However, there's a little wrinkle in what some Christians believe about that teaching. There is in some Christian churches a teaching called "***double predestination.***" It means that God chose some people to be saved and some people to be condemned. It's based on the assumption that if God predestines some to eternal life, but not all people receive this gift, then God must have predestined some people to hell. After all, God is Lord of all. But the Bible, think about it ... just doesn't teach it this way. The Bible clearly says that Jesus died for all (2 Cor. 5:15).

Let's compare this to the way parents deal with their children. When you affirm one child, that doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to put other children down; if you give a compliment to one child, it doesn't mean that you're going to condemn one of the others. In that sense, God can predestine His children to eternal life without necessarily consigning others to eternal condemnation. If one of your children has a great soccer game and you say to her, "You are an awesome goalie!" it doesn't mean you're calling another child of yours a terrible goalie. If you meet a friend and they have a nice shirt on, you could say, "You really look great." That doesn't mean that you are telling everyone else they look awful! You can give a compliment without condemnation. Your affirmation of someone does not mean that you are slighting everyone

else. Children in families need to learn that. Children in God's family also need to understand that.

When God says to His redeemed children, "You are mine!" it doesn't mean He's saying to others, "You're not!" His affirming and gracious love for us doesn't mean that He is leaving other people out. Christ died for all. The Father wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. Predestination is meant to be a message of comfort and assurance for God's people. It's not supposed to be about fear and doubt. In fact, the teaching of predestination in the Bible gives us a glimpse into the amazing love of God. The purpose is not to confuse you. It's not to make you terrified or even help you see God's inner workings.

Predestination is a teaching of comfort and delight for the followers of Christ. If you believe in Jesus, God says to every believer: "I want to be with you! I chose you!" He chooses us not because we're so good; it's not because our righteousness leads to eternal life, it's rather an act of undeserved love. Predestination should always be discussed or taught in reference to the self-sacrificial love of God in His Son, Jesus Alone. That's how the Bible teaches it. Romans 8 declares, ***"For those God foreknew he predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he called; those he called, he justified; those he justified, he also glorified."***

Words of comfort. That's the View from Here