

Letter to the Ephesians



Predestination in Ephesians

Ephesians repeatedly uses the word “predestination,” particularly in its opening chapter, where Paul speaks about God’s eternal plan for salvation. The letter presents predestination as God's sovereign choice, rooted in His love and purpose, rather than human effort or merit. Without going into the details of why, the different Christian traditions do not mean the same thing when they speak of “predestination.” Here is a simplified understanding of the various implications of “predestination.”

- **Calvinist Perspective:** unconditional election, meaning God chooses some for salvation apart from any human action. Some are born saved; others are born unsaved - and nothing changes that. Associated with view some principal theological views are:
 - God unconditionally chooses some people for salvation (the "elect").
 - Total depravity: Humans are incapable of choosing God on their own.
 - Irresistible grace: When God calls someone, they cannot reject His grace.
 - Perseverance of the saints: Those who are truly elect will never fall away
- **Arminian Perspective:** argue that predestination is corporate, meaning God predestined the Church (not individuals) and people freely choose to be part of it. Some key ideas are:
 - God desires all people to be saved, but individuals must choose to accept His grace.
 - God’s foreknowledge: He knows who will believe, but He does not force salvation.
 - Grace is resistible: Unlike Calvinism, people can reject God’s call.
 - Possibility of falling away: Salvation is not necessarily permanent.
- **“Evangelical” Perspective:** there is no one single view because of the independent churches and loose affiliations. In short, it is largely Arminian in perspective with two significant differences:

- God desires all people to be saved, but individuals must choose to accept His grace. Salvation is a personal acceptance without corporate elements.
- Grace is irresistible, but “one saved, always saved.” Salvation is permanent
- **Catholic & Orthodox View:** Emphasizes that predestination does not negate free will, and God’s foreknowledge does not override human choice. God wills all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), but human cooperation with grace is necessary. You’ll notice that some key concepts are strongly connected to the Arminian view:
 - God predestines all to salvation and does not actively condemn anyone..
 - Human free will cooperates with grace—God’s grace enables a person to respond, but they can still reject it. (Grace is resistible and one can fall away from God)
 - Foreknowledge vs. predestination: God knows in advance who will choose Him, but He does not force their decision.
 - In the Orthodox view there is an emphasis on divinization (*theosis*): The goal of salvation is union with God.

With that in mind, let's explore some key passages on “predestination” in the Letter to the Ephesians.

Chosen Before the Foundation of the World (Eph. 1:4-5) *"He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will."*

- God’s initiative: Believers were chosen before creation, meaning salvation is part of God’s eternal plan.
- Predestination in love: This choosing is based on God’s love and will, not human deeds.
- Adoption as children: The goal is not just salvation but being made part of God’s family.

Predestination According to God’s Plan (Eph. 1:11) *"In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will."*

- God's sovereignty: He "works all things" according to His divine plan.
- Inheritance: Predestination includes receiving the promises of salvation and eternal life.

Salvation by Grace (Eph. 2:8-10) *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."*

- While this passage does not explicitly use "predestination", it aligns with the idea that salvation is purely God’s gift, reinforcing that human effort plays no role in being chosen.