

## A Biblical Perspective of Predestination and Free Will

By Dr. David A. DeWitt

- *Did God predetermine everything that happens, the big things, or just some of those things?*
- *Do we have a real unhindered free will to choose or is our choice manipulated by God?*
- *Can predestination and free will choice both be possible, logically?*

### 100% Predestination and 100% Free Will

This brochure will be making the point that both predestination and free will are 100% true. God predetermined, in His eternal plan, every single event that ever happens. However, we humans also have complete unhindered free will to make choices. If God is not sovereign over everything, then He is not God. And if we cannot make real choices, we are not human.

Here are the definitions we will be using:

**Predestination** is predetermining destiny.

**Free Will** is the ability to make choices.

### Predestination

In 2 Kings 19:25 God says, *Have you not heard? Long ago I did it; from ancient times I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass.*

Isaiah 14:24 reads, *The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand."*

Revelation 17:17 explains the action of the godless forces preceding Christ's Second Coming by saying, *For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose until the words of God should be fulfilled.*

There is no such thing as an accident. Everything is part of God's purpose, and all His purposes are carried out.

If we neglect the concept of God's complete sovereign plan, we must ignore many verses in the Bible. Here is a sample list. It is included here just to show the magnitude of this concept in the Bible.

Exodus 14:17; Numbers 23:19; Deuteronomy 29:2-4; 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:25; Job 12:13-25; 14:5; 42:2; Psalm 33:6-12; 47:4-8; 69:5; 75:6-7; 104:14, 28; 135:6; Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 4:3-5; 10:5-23; 14:24; 40:12-31; 44:18; 46:9-10; 55:11; Jeremiah 15:2; Daniel 2:21; 4:17; Naham 1:2-8; Habakkuk 1:5; Matthew 10:29-30; Luke 22:22; John 6:44; 12:40; Acts 2:23-39; 13:48; 15:18; 16:14; Romans 8:29; 9:20-21; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Ephesians 1:4-11; 3:11; Philippians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 2:8; and Revelation 17:17.

### Did God Plan for Me to Stub My Toe?

Jesus said, *Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows* (Matthew 10:29-31). In the same way that God is sovereign over sparrows and the hairs of your head, He is sovereign over everything. Ephesians 1:11 tells us that God *works all things after the counsel of His will* [emphasis mine].

Suppose a housewife on the way out the door to get groceries stubs her toe while getting her children ready. She sits down for a few seconds to rub it a bit until at least some of the pain goes away. Insignificant? Perhaps. But perhaps not.

What if that few seconds' hesitation causes her to be just enough behind her original schedule so that a moving van going down the street will have passed, which otherwise would have hit her broadside, killing one of her children? Can we reasonably conclude that God controls the well-being of children but not the stubbing of toes or the movement of traffic?

## Our Salvation Is Predestined

Paul wrote, *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world* (Ephesians 1:4).

*... also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will* (Ephesians 1:11).

*and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified* (Romans 8:30).

## Free Will

If there is anything clear from the pages of Scripture, it is that man is responsible for his decisions.

Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden because they were held responsible for their sinful choice (Genesis 3).

We read: *Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did* (Genesis 6:22). In other words, he chose to obey God.

*Choose life*, God told Israel, *in order that you may live* (Deuteronomy 30:19). Their life depended on their choice.

The old prophet Samuel told the disobedient King Saul, *The Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever*, but he also told him that God was not going to do that, because *you [Saul] have not kept what the Lord commanded you* (1 Samuel 13:13-14).

Paul's writings are full of commands we are free to choose to obey or not, like, *let the word of Christ richly dwell within you wives, be subject to your husbands; husbands, love your wives; devote yourselves to prayer conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders* (Colossians 3:16, 18, 19; 4:2, 5).

He also wrote, *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad* (2 Corinthians 5:10). Since we are responsible for our choices, we must conclude that we have a real unhindered free will.

If we neglect the concept of man's complete free-will choice, we must cross out verses on every page of our Bible. Every time a person makes a decision in the Bible, it was that person's real choice. Paul said, *whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward* (23-25, see also 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:10).

## Salvation Is Our Choice

- *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life* (John 3:16).
- *Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved* (Acts 2:21).
- *For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved* (Romans 10:13).
- *let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost* (Revelation 22:17).

## Prayer Is Our Choice

God commands us to *pray without ceasing* (1 Thessalonians 5:17). He says, *the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much* (James 5:16). He also tells us to pray persistently (Luke 11:1, 5-10), thankfully (Colossians 4:2-4), and many other ways which require responsible choices (see John 15:7; 1 Peter 3:7, 12; and 1 John 5:14).

After Moses prayed, in Exodus 32, we read, *So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people* (verse 14).

## **Both Can Be True Logically**

Logic says a thing and its opposite cannot both be true (A and -A). The Bible says God predestined everything, and it never says He did not (A and -A). The Bible says people have free will, and it never says they do not (B and -B). Predestination is what God does (A). Free will is what man does (B). So there is no contradiction here. Putting these two together is simply an area where we do not have enough knowledge (*see* Deuteronomy 29:29).

## **Questions and Answers**

**Q:** *Did God predestine everything that happens, the big things, or just some of those things?*

**A:** Yes. To say small things are not part of God's predetermined plan allows for the possibility of accidents which can affect big things. Then chance would be in control rather than God.

**Q:** *Do we have a real unhindered free will to choose or is our choice manipulated by God?*

**A:** Every command of the Bible, every moral decision we are to make and every human evaluation requires real choice.

**Q:** *Can predestination and free will choice both be possible, logically?*

**A:** We do not have enough information to know how both are true, but nearly every page of the Bible teaches both concepts. To deny one or the other causes logical problems.