

# Q&A: The Issue of Predestination

By Jeremy Lucas

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## **Question: What in your studies have you discovered about the word predestined?**

Often times, we look our Almighty God and develop conditions by which we then understand Him. For instance, we might look at God and say that He does this, but He doesn't do that. Or that He can have a hand in this part of our lives, but not in that one. More specifically, we'll even say, "God helps me to stay away from evil, but He would never bring evil upon me." There are a great number of conditions we place upon God before we even look at the Scriptures. We then, without intending to, look at the Scriptures through a lens of our already set value system for His Deity.

But let's take a look at the previous example in light of the Word. We say to ourselves, "God, through His Spirit, helps me to stay away from evil, but He would NEVER bring evil upon me." Is this true based on Scripture or is it true based on our preconceived notion that it HAS to be true? What happens when we read:

"But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." I Samuel 16:14

or...

"Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold." Job 42:11

In the passage of I Samuel, there's not much to do with it except read it for what it says. For not only is it mentioned in that verse, but equally two other times in verses 15 and 16 of the same chapter. So an "evil spirit from the Lord troubled Saul?" Yes it did. So what does that mean? Well, before we figure out what it means, the first thing we have to admit is that we saw it. Admitting that it's THERE is the first step to figuring out what exactly it means. The same is true of Job's recollection in chapter 42. But let's steer clear of the "does God bring evil upon men" issue for the moment. The only point that was being established was how quickly we look at the Word and base our understanding from previous expectations that we have... either for God, the gospel, or for salvation itself.

With the matter of predestination, some of the same troubling issues and questions come forward and a list of them could fill pages upon pages. Here are just a couple...

"If God predestines us to salvation, then that means He predestines some to hell... I just can't accept that. God loves the world and that doesn't make sense logically."

"If God predestines us to salvation, then what's the point of believing in the first place? I mean, if he already knows who is going to believe, then I really don't have a choice, so it doesn't matter."

Both of these arguments come from defensiveness and while they may have some grounding in Biblical logic, they are more fiercely rooted within someone's individual emotion. My wife and I still very much disagree on this topic.

Let me begin by utilizing the previous point about how one often comes to the Scripture with an already made up mind regarding God. If, let's say, you come to the Word with a mind that says, "predestination is a joke" (which does indeed happen), the first mistake you'd be making is the unintentional denial that the term is used six times in the New Testament. So whether one agrees with it or not, that's separate from the fact that it DOES exist. I'm sure you'd both agree with this. For our only disagreement (potentially) is in how we might define it.

Let's first pull up the six times that the term, Proorizo, is used.

"For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined (proorizo) before to be done." Acts 4:28

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

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

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained (proorizo) before the world unto our glory:" I Corinthians 2:7

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated (proorizo) us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Ephesians 1:4-6

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated (proorizo) according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:" Ephesians 1:11

Beginning with the first one:

"For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined (proorizo) before to be done." Acts 4:28

Is there a single thing that God cannot do if He wills to do it? Consider the following:

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Romans 12:2

God's will is perfect... flawless... without err... without mistakes. Essentially, the will of God is not a guessing game, nor is it something that can change. When God "wills" something, it is what it is at that point. The following brings out an interesting question...

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:" II Corinthians 1:1

Could Paul (Saul at the time) have turned God down? Could Paul have taken a different road for each of his journeys than the road that was already paved before him through Christ? What exactly is it within Paul's life that could have been different by the will of God?

I believe nothing at all. Paul did exactly as he was positioned to do by the grace of God. His circumstances were HORRIBLE and each time he did what he did, he was beaten, jailed, or beaten up again. So why stay? Because he had "learned" to be content in all things. Why be content? Because he knew his place and his role. He knew what God had set before him. Point blank... what would WE be preaching and teaching RIGHT NOW if it weren't for the Apostle Paul? And when we admit that we wouldn't have anything at all to preach without Paul, are we then admitting that Paul himself was such a great guy and we owe him so much? Not at all. By saying that we needed Paul, we're then saying that it was God who worked THROUGH Paul to do His divine will. Paul was simply a vessel.

Let's look at the second use of the term...

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

The trickiest thing about this isn't the content. It's what the content makes people feel like. For in the moment that one believes they no longer have their complete freedom of will, they become defensive. Why is that? Personally, I think it's our fear of letting go. Perhaps even our fear of admitting that our choices aren't worth the piece of mud in the big picture. There isn't a positive choice we've made toward Christ that wasn't first instigated by Christ Himself. Why? Because we aren't NATURALLY good, pure people. Thus, it is not within our capacity to have good judgment or make godly decisions apart from God. Besides... what would we really truly NEED God for if we could make good choices of our own will?

But having said that, Romans 8:29 states that those He "foreknew," these He also "did predestinate." The word "proorizo" carries the meaning: to decree or determine beforehand. When something is decreed, what exactly is happening? Well, by definition, a decree could be one of three things...

1. A formal order.
2. Judicial decision.
3. Judicial order.

If there is a judicial order on a man's life, say, to have the man executed for reasons the judge deems appropriate, does the prisoner have the option to get out of the judicial order? Not at all. Of course, the order can be appealed and many years of legal battles can rise up in defense, but logically speaking, an order is an order. I've never seen a convicted felon who is sent to prison saying to the judge, "Well, you know what? I'm not really feeling like I'm crazy about the whole jail thing. I think I'm gonna do

something else with my time." Those types of things don't happen. When a judicial decision is made, then it's made. Such is a decree and such is the term proorizo which takes us back to the word "predestined."

Specifically, Romans 8:29 states what about the predestined? "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." These are individuals. How do we know? Because the content speaks to the individual calls and callings that each "individual" receives as a result of having been foreknown and predestined.

It follows suit with, for instance, a series of candidates who apply for a job. Imagine that you've been training your assistant to take over for you when you retire. As your corporation gets larger and larger over the years, it becomes ethically moral to not simply "hire" your assistant immediately upon your retirement. Instead, you must interview a number of candidates to show that you are not solely inclusive. However, you are the ONLY one who makes this decision. All you have to do is show that you have interviewed three other people (thus making it four candidates to choose from as a replacement). As each interview comes and each resume is scanned, you discover that each is equally as qualified as the one you previously chose (meaning that they have no greater or weaker issues). Once the interviews are complete, you are still the one person who makes the decision and logically, you go with the one you already knew beforehand. The others were no worse or better than the one you chose, but your decision (proorizo) was not based on whom was better or worse... it was based on whom you previously knew.

The same is true with how not a single human being lines up with the expectations or holiness of God. So there isn't a single person that God looks at and says, 'Well, Joe Bob deserves my grace over Mary Sue.' That's not the mindset of God because we are all EQUALLY in need of His grace. So what is His "decision" or "decree" based upon? Well, that's where the previous phrase comes into effect.

"For whom he did foreknow,"

This is where it starts. Did He know everyone? Perhaps in a certain sense. But not in terms of the Body of Christ. For we, as His Body, were the context of the foreknown. He knew US, not the entire world. Those whom He "foreknew" are those that He ultimately chose, decided on, and decreed to be adopted as His sons.

One of the TOUGHEST things for many believers to conceive of is the fact that they were chosen. It's as though they look at God and only want to claim that THEY chose Him. Kind of like cutting through all the mud and saying out loud, "God, you're great and everything, but my love for you has NOTHING at all to do with choosing me... you don't have that power. Instead, I chose YOU." Basically, we have a tendency to tell God how He can or cannot address us, determine about us, or will upon us. For in our minds, we do whatever we want and He just has to sit back. Somehow, regardless of our limited mindsets that say this, I would be inclined to believe that God will still do as He wills within each life.

"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" Romans 9:19

Good question.

Let's move on to the third installment of the Greek term...

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

There are a series of things listed here, each having to do with what GOD is doing... and nothing at all to do with what WE are doing. The list is broken down as follows...

1. Those He foreknew (before the foundations of the world were formed)...
2. Those He predestined
3. Those He called
4. Those He justified
5. Those He glorified

All five things are within GOD's frame of mind regarding those He has known. None of these things took place because we put ourselves in the middle of them and decided that we wanted to be included. Each thing happened by the will of God whose will is perfect. Knowingly, we often reply to #2 (predestined) as the one which makes us defensive. Why? Because when we look at it in the series, it's the only one that seems to take away our choice or free will. Imagine if we looked at each of the other four that way...

1. Those He foreknew (NO! God didn't foreknow me! I foreknew myself!)
3. Those He called (NO! God didn't call me! I called myself!)
4. Those He justified (NO! God didn't justify me! I justified myself!)
5. Those He glorified (NO! God didn't glorify me! I glorified myself!)

Do you see how these things don't make much sense. How then can we look at the second one and make a point of defensiveness as though it's the ONE thing that God did PARTIALLY, when He did each of the remaining five points Himself?

Fourth installment of Proorizo:

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained (proorizo) before the world unto our glory:" I Corinthians 2:7

The hidden mystery of the wisdom of God was also predestined. Only, in this passage, we see the word used to say "ordained." Is there any part of us that would quickly say that God's predestined mystery of wisdom was not FULLY true prior to it being revealed? Did God's wisdom only become true when the mystery was uncovered? Certainly we'd admit that it was not KNOWN to ourselves or the principalities and authorities in heaven, but it was indeed still TRUE. God's wisdom has never changed. Hence, it is easy for Paul to use the term "proorizo" because it denotes that NEVER changing character of God who

simply is what He is... wise. That which was ordained (or predestined) as the hidden mystery of the wisdom of God always was... it just wasn't revealed until the appropriate time.

Such is true with those who are predestined to adoption as sons. Which leads us to the fifth installment of proorizo.

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated (proorizo) us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Ephesians 1:4-6

There was a reason that I clumped three verses together here. Why? Because before we even TOUCH verse 5 and the issue of predestination, there has to be an awareness and admittance of verse 4. Let's look at it.

"According as He hath chosen us in Him."

Why is so hard sometimes for us to conceive that God chose us? Is there a reason why we feel slighted for having been chosen? All through Scripture we see this theme evident. God's choice and God's choosing has ALWAYS been clear...

"For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." Deuteronomy 7:6

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." Psalm 33:12

"I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." John 13:18

"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:" 2 Thessalonians 2:13

The list goes on and on. Not once do we find a time when the choice of God is overruled or overridden by the choice of man to go against His first choice. Let's take, for instance, the story of Jonah.

"Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." Jonah 1:1-2

Right off the bat, we know nothing at all about Jonah except that he is the son of Amittai. Without hesitation or opportunity for us to get an idea of WHO Jonah really is, God gives him a commandment. It is then that we get a pretty good idea about the nature of Jonah's own choices. Why? Because we see what he does at the commandment and will of God.

"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD." Jonah 1:3

First of all, did God ask Jonah nicely? Let's consider that God literally woke Jonah up out of bed with an immediate order with "Arise." The will and demand of God was there. No questioning and no debating. Jonah's response? He fled.

Now you'd think, based on our often bias assumptions that if Jonah wanted to flee, then he was more than welcome to do so, correct? Why? Because in our limited frame of reference, we'd like to think that Jonah had a choice in the matter. God gave an order... Jonah fled... but God didn't simply let him run away.

"But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken." Jonah 1:4

Honestly, it doesn't really seem like God is playing around. He wakes Jonah up... gives him an order... the man runs away... and God gets angry.

"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." Jonah 1:17

The interesting thing to note here is that God "prepared" a great fish for this point in time. It was as though He already had in mind the path of fleeing that Jonah would take upon being given an order to do what he didn't want to do. The actions of Jonah's having "fled" were not something that caught the Lord off guard. Not remotely. He was already prepared.

"And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." Jonah 2:10

Notice that the fish didn't spit Jonah up on its own. The Lord put Jonah inside the fish, having prepared the fish to swallow him, and for those three days, God simply waited for Jonah to gather up some sort of an apology for running away. There really doesn't seem to be any two ways about it. Not as though the Lord said, "Well, shoot... what am I gonna do now that Jonah didn't follow through with what I commanded him to do? I guess I've got to go to plan B." Of course not. When God commands His will to someone directly, it will not go ignored.

"And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Jonah 3:1-2

If any of us had actually been through an ordeal like what Jonah JUST went through, is there a one of us who would then try to run away again? I can't think of a single person who would. Neither did Jonah.

"So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey." Jonah 3:3

Exactly. The first time, he tried to run. The second time, he knew that running wasn't an option. The story of Jonah is summed up in the following...

"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Romans 9:16

You can give of your own will, you can run as far as you want... but what matters moreso is the will of God.

"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Romans 9:18

"For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Romans 9:15

So returning to the passage of Ephesians 1:4-6, what we run into is firstly, an admittance that God did indeed CHOOSE us. Could it be said that God did NOT choose us individually and that He simply chose us collectively? Not really. Because God didn't just fill hypothetical spots for the Body. This would imply that we were never really known. We would only have been theoretical in the mind of God, for His knowledge of us personally would have been limited until we, allegedly, made a choice to see Him. At which point, what we'd then be saying is that upon our choice to see Him, He then comes to know us fully. That's simply illogical.

Then there's the 6th use of proorizo.

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated (proorizo) according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:" Ephesians 1:11

Two things to consider here.

1. Predestination is now used in relationship to an inheritance. In other words, property... location... future. If you were to be on your mother's will as a receiver of her entire property (house, bank account, etc), would you PERSONALLY be on the will or would there be some theoretical name placed on the will until it actually became you? Logically, you would be named on the will... before the will ever went into effect. Your inheritance under your mother's will would not be hypothetical, theoretical, or possible... you simply would BE the one inheriting (eventually) what you were ordained (decreed, predestined) to have in the first place.

2. Consider the last statement in this verse. Conveniently, it's the best point to be made after this lengthy analysis.

"Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"

Is this to mean that in actuality, God works all things according to the will of man's own choices, beliefs, or decisions? Of course not. We'd be reading much more into it if it we concluded that. For indeed, it says very simply that He works all things after the counsel of His OWN will. All things. Not some things. All things.



If you've gotten this far in your reading, I can only thank you for taking the time to consider the things that I've opted to challenge you with on this matter. It's a lengthy read, but hopefully it has either been insightful or challenging to your current line of thought.

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**Question: Even if God foreknew and chose each of us, in our limited, time-constrained understanding - wouldn't we still have the perspective that individuals still choose to believe?**

Absolutely. Which is why a belief in predestination along the lines that I've described isn't a reason to stand still or stop living life. To know that your life has a path foreknown by God... for me... it's comforting. It means that there aren't steps I'm going to take that He has not already made provision for.

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**Question: Would knowing that in God's unlimited, unconstrained-by-time perspective he foreknew and chose change our approach to sharing the gospel with the unsaved?**

Absolutely not. For we are just as the angels to some degree in that we do not have all the pieces of God's mind. We can now begin to fathom and comprehend the way in which He works, He plans, and He saves, but we cannot know every facet of His choices. Do we know every piece of the future even after we've studied Revelation to our heart's desire? Surely not. We don't KNOW the future, so we must LIVE in the present.

God's foreknowledge and choosing of man's salvation is not a cause to consider one's self a robot. For how do any of us come to know of Christ in the first place? We come to know Christ, obviously, because of the call He gives, but is there not usually a person who comes into our lives at a specific point in time when we are primed and ready to hear the truth? Are these people or points in time happening by chance? Not remotely. God places people where they need to be when they need to be there for the cause of His will.

Consider Acts 9:10-12

"And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight." Acts 9:10-12

Our Apostle Paul began his journey because of two reasons.

1. God knocked him upside the head (for lack of a better phrase ) with a bright light. Saul immediately knew WHO it was that got his attention, but didn't thoroughly know where to go from there because it was his first experience.

So the first piece of Paul's journey involved God making the first move.

2. God strategically put someone INTO Saul's life who did not immediately have it as his intention to be in Saul's service. It's not as though Ananias was jumping for joy at the thought of helping this man who had been doing so many drastic things to the church. So why did He go at all? Because God used Ananias to carry out the furtherance of His will toward Saul.

Each of us are on a path that the Lord has set for us and each step leads us into the path of someone else (another potential Body member) who ALSO is on a path that the Lord has set before them. Such is evangelism. Ananias was not necessarily an evangelist or a teacher, but he became somewhat of one simply by "going" to someone who he might not otherwise have gone to without the Lord's upper hand of persuasion. God's persuasive tactics are sometimes blatant and clear... yet sometimes they are subtle and indirect. But no matter which format He persuades us to be in a particular place at a particular time, He still gets us where He needs us to be.

Consider that there is never a point in your life when God says, "Wait, I didn't see that one coming! What the am I gonna do now?! They took a different path from the one I already knew they'd take!" Of course, that would be illogical and disregarding to the Almighty if we concluded such. Our God knows all and is far above all things that we see on our limited level.

So does a knowledge of HIS knowledge and choosing change our path of evangelism, teaching, or preaching? Not at all. Why? Because even if one is struggling to accept or comprehend the concept of His foreknowledge and choosing, did He not already know that this individual would go through a period of processing? God knows each and every thing that you are processing, studying, and coming to know because He only allows you to see, process, experience, study, or come to know what He believes you are ready and prepared to see at whatever point in time that you see it.

"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:" Philippians 1:6

He doesn't just begin a work in us. He finishes a work in us. But the beginning and end of that working is the course of our lives through which we will only see what He allows us to see. Otherwise, if we saw everything by our own efforts, what need would we have of Him at all?

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**Question: Are you stating that God is actively manipulating circumstances in the world today, during this dispensation, in order to ensure that we are doing His will?**

You know the strange thing is that "manipulation" gets a really bad connotation in our current thinking. When we think of it, we think of someone doing something selfishly and arrogantly to better their cause. But when you think of the Body, salvation, the gospel, the Scripture, and all of truth... whose show is it really? Is it ours? Or is it His?

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated (proorizo) according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:" Ephesians 1:11

The question becomes... whose will is God working all things according to? His or ours?

So is He manipulating circumstances? If, by that, you mean, "Is God skillfully persuading circumstances to His advantage?" Then, yes. Does He do it in all things? I'd like to say no, but then I'd be removing the phrase from Ephesians 1:11.

The strange thing is, though, while many seem to find "destiny" (in the mind and will of God) to be restraining or confining, I find it to be securing. It's as though I have no confidence that I'll make the wrong turn that He has not already seen or made provisions for.