

The Doctrine of Predestination¹

Topics

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Preface: The word which is translated *predestine* is found 6 times in the New Testament.

1. Greek: The word is *proorizō* (προορίζω) [pronounced *proh-ohr-IHD-zoh*], which means 1) to predetermine, decide beforehand; 2) in the NT of God decreeing from eternity; 3) to foreordain, appoint beforehand. Thayer definitions. Strong's #4309. Although *proorizō* is built upon two Greek words, its noun cognate does not occur in the New Testament.
 - a. *Proorizō* is built upon two Greek words: *pro* (πρό) [pronounced *proh*], which means *before, prior; in front of; figuratively for superior*. In compounds it retains the significations: *above, ago, before, or ever*. Strong's #4253.
 - b. The second word is *horizō* (ὀρίζω) [pronounced *hohr-IHD-zoh*], which means 1) to define; 1a) to mark out the boundaries or limits (of any place or thing); 1b1) that which has been determined, acc. to appointment, decree; 1b2) to ordain, determine, appoint. Thayer definitions. Strong's #3724.
2. Occurrences: Acts 4:28 Rom. 8:29–30 Eph. 1:5, 11 and one nontechnical use in 1Cor. 2:7.
3. It is amazing that huge, ponderous books have been written about this small Greek word which occurs but 6 times in the New Testament. The meaning and application of this word separates large groups of believers and confuses many in their spiritual life. On the one hand, there are the hyper calvinists, who believe that all believers were predestined to salvation—that believers do not have free will to choose and they will persevere to the end. Believers in this group will often do their best to *behave properly* as evidence of their salvation. The Armenians, on the other end of the spectrum, do not believe in predestination, but believe that they can even lose their salvation through their behavior, so they will *behave properly* so that they will not lose this gift of God. The result of both theologies is the same—there is a subtle dependence upon works for their salvation.
4. Salvation is wholly and totally the work of God. It is immutable, irrevocable and eternal. As with everything God does, it bears the stamp of His essence. As has been noted in a previous study—with hundreds of verses—**salvation** is free and apprehended by faith in Christ. It is never lost, and, as the doctrine of **Eternal Security** can attest to (for which there are at least 15 substantiating verses). Salvation is based entirely upon one act of faith and upon nothing by way of works.
5. We must, therefore, due to a preponderance of verse, make certain that the concept of predestination falls within the framework of salvation. When a doctrine rests upon a few verses and another doctrine rests firmly on over 10x that many verses, the former should be made to conform to the latter (if we are able to make the smaller number of verses to conform reasonably to the larger number).
6. When we examine these 6 occurrences in the Bible, we must bear in mind *who* is predestined and *what* are they predestined for; and *when* does this predestined thing come to pass.
 - a. Rom. 8:28 [addressed to Roman believers]: **And we know that [God causes] all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called [elected to privilege] according to a pre-determined plan, for [we know that] whom He foreknew, [those] He also predestined conformed to the image of His Son;...** So the predestined are those who were foreknown; and predestination has to do

¹ Dude!

with being conformed to the real image of Jesus Christ. As a believer, we will have a body just like His and we will lack the sin nature, so, in these ways, we will be conformed to His image. Those who are predestined were *first foreknown*. Since God knows the beginning from the end, He knows who will believe and who will not. ...that He [Christ] might be the firstborn among many brothers. This is a reference to the resurrected royal family. Jesus Christ is resurrected first as the firstfruits and we are the next to be resurrected.

- b. Rom. 8:30: He predestined [foreordained] these [whom] He also called [elected to privilege] and whom He called, He justified, and whom He justified, these He also glorified. Although this all occurred in an instant of time, it is broken down into logical steps for us. When God knew we would respond, His plan put us in line to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Knowing this (in advance), He then called us in time; we then believed and were justified at the moment that we believed in Him. When we die—and, for some, while we are yet alive—God glorifies us (Job would be an example of someone who was glorified during his life). This is a simple, logical progression that any reasonable student of theology can understand. Those whom God knew about in eternity past, those same ones He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. Those He predestined [to be conformed to the image of His Son], He called in time. Those whom He called in time, He also justified. Those He justified would then be glorified. Paul has described us in the mind of God from eternity past, to when we are called in time (that is, someone tells us the gospel of Jesus Christ and we believe), and what happens after that. The predestination has to do with God making us conform to the image of His Son—that is, because God knew that we would believe in Jesus Christ, He then made preparation for us and what would happen to us during time and eternity. God decrees all of this in eternity past, and it all comes to pass for us at our second birth, during our life, and at our death.
- c. Acts 4:28: ...to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestines to occur... This indicates that God's plan will be fulfilled as He has foreordained; that is, predestination is a step which goes beyond foreknowledge. Let's look at the entire context of this verse: Peter and John had been told not to speak about Jesus Christ publically, and they said, *sorry, we are going to continue to evangelize*; they were given some more warnings and then they were let go. Acts 4:23–30: *When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said [in other words, this is a prayer which follows], "Sovereign Lord, Who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, Who through the mouth of our father David, Your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed' [Psalm 2:1–2]—for truly in this city [Jerusalem] there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place [God knew all of the players in advance; He knew all of the decisions that these people would make, and He incorporated this into His plan, which was that Jesus would go to the cross and die for our sins]. And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to Your servants to continue to speak Your Word with all boldness, while You stretch out Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."* Based upon God's foreknowledge of the decisions which thousands of people would make, God predestined Jesus Christ to go to the cross and to die for our sins. That is *Who* is predestined in this verse and *what* He was predestined for. This predestination took into account the thoughts and actions of Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Romans and the Jews.
- d. Eph. 1:4b: ...He [God] chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world... That is, we were a part of God's plan *before* God's plan went into action. God did not improvise after history began. Jesus Christ is elected and we share this election by being *in Him*. By the way, these tiny Greek words, *in Christ* are two of the most important words in theology. ...[with the purpose] that we should be holy and blameless before Him. Experiential sanctification is ultimate sanctification. Being holy is being set apart to God. When we are saved, we are set apart to Him. Ideally speaking, our lives then reflect having been set apart to Him (experiential sanctification). This does not occur automatically nor does it occur for all believers. We continue to have volition and the ability to express our volition. Ultimate

sanctification occurs at death, when we receive a resurrection body without an old sin nature, so that we have a body just like His.

- e. Eph. 1:5: **In love, He predestined us to [the Roman custom of] adoption as sons through [by reason of] Jesus Christ.** We are chosen to be in the royal family; we are adopted as sons, as per the Roman custom of adoption. Sometimes, a person may have money, a business or political power, and he wants to pass this along to his sons. However, he looks around and he has raised a bunch of self-serving, hedonistic ruffians, none of whom is qualified to continue in his stead. At best, these sons would just piss away all of the family fortune on wine, women and song. So the patriarch then finds a young man who has character and he *adopts* this boy. The boy might be a teenager or he might be a very young man, and he takes this boy under his wing, and prepares him to take over the bulk of the family fortune or the political seat which the father occupies. **...to Himself, according to the gracious intention of His will [or, purpose].** We can be any age at salvation. I was 21, I believe, when I was saved. God, knowing that I would believe in Jesus Christ, predestined me to be adopted as a son by reason of Jesus Christ (I can guarantee you that I had no personal merit whatsoever when it came to my standing before God). I was adopted as a son through Jesus Christ to God, according to God's plan, which is a plan of grace.
 - f. Then, further on down in Ephesians, we get to Eph. 1:11: **...and we have obtained an inheritance [or, destiny], having been predestined...** As has been discussed, predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. **...according to His purpose, Who works all things according to the counsel of His will [or, purpose, plan].**
7. The concept of predestination falls very neatly into the overall plan of God. God knows every choice that we will make and under every circumstance that we will make this or that choice. He knows in advance who will believe in Jesus Christ. His foreknowledge of such things is like a mother who knows her 5-year-old son. Every parent knows at a very early age that their son or daughter has free will. We may know this child's predilections, but their free will is all theirs. We know that when we tell this 5-year-old son, "*Do not touch the burner on the stove*" that, 3 minutes later, we will find him moving a stool over next to the stove so that he can pull himself up to stove level and touch that burner. Our foreknowledge of what he will do does not mean that we have control over this child's free will. We just simply know our own child and what he will do, and often, we account for that when it comes to guiding him in life. A clever parent may tell his son, "Now, Johnny, listen to me carefully; I do not want you to do..." And, as we expect, 3 minutes later, he is doing exactly what we told him not to do, and he hurts himself, and while we comfort him, we remind him, "Now, I told you not to do that. I am your father [or mother] and you need to listen to me and obey me when I tell you not to do something." And children like me, after we burn our hands for the umpteenth time (or whatever), we finally catch on. Just like a mother knows her own son and what he will do, God knows us perfectly and how we will respond to His calling. Since He knows how we will respond, he predestines us to be conformed to His Son and He predestines us to function according to His purpose and His plan. Predestination is not a difficult topic; we just have to read what the Bible actually says on this subject, in context, and apply a little common sense.