

Predestination

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Many people want to know if God has already predestined (predetermined) who is going to heaven and who isn't, or if we have any choice in the matter. Second Timothy 2:4 says that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." The Lord wants everyone to know Him, and will save anyone who calls out to Jesus to be saved.

God's choosing and our free will are both biblical and in harmony. Romans 8:28-30 tells us God knows ahead of time who will call out to Him to be saved. Notice the 5 underlined words in this passage:

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 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 8:29-30)

This verse is a picture from eternity past to eternity future. We are currently sitting in the present, looking at our situation. God sees things from an eternal perspective and sees all time at once. The progression is from foreknew to predestined to called to justified to gloried.

Eternity Past	Present (Now)	Eternity Future (Heaven)
Foreknew --- Predestined	Called --- Justified	Glorified

Just because God knows everything ahead of time doesn't mean he foreknows everyone. The word *know* can mean different things. "Know" can mean "to have knowledge of" (Gen. 3:7), or it can mean "to know intimately" (Gen. 4:1,KJV). That's why Jesus, who knows all things, will say to many people, "I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23). He had knowledge of them, but He didn't know them intimately. Just like Jesus can have knowledge of someone without "knowing" him, He can have foreknowledge of someone without "foreknowing" him.

God knows everything before it happens, which is foreknowledge. That means He knows ahead of time who will call on Him (of their own free will) to be saved and who won't. Because He has foreknowledge of those who call out to be saved, He foreknows those same people. His foreknowledge is based upon our choices right now.

Even though God does the choosing, we are given the opportunity to ask Him to choose us. It's like the army general who asked his soldiers, "Whoever would like to volunteer to go on a dangerous mission with me, please step forward." One third of the soldiers stepped forward of their own free will, separating themselves from the other soldiers. The general then went up to each soldier who stepped forward and said, "I choose you and you and you...." He chose everyone who freely volunteered, but he didn't choose anyone who didn't volunteer. He gave them their free will, but he did the choosing. In the same way, God allows us to have a free will, but He chooses everyone who wants to love Him.

But doesn't the fact that He knows ahead of time what we will decide mean it is now impossible to have a free will? Doesn't it also mean He has already predestined whomever He wishes? No, because His predestination is based upon His foreknowledge of what we choose to do. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined...." First Peter 1:1 & 2 says, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens...who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...."

Think about it this way. You record a basketball game on your DVR because you are busy while the game is being played. That night you rewind the tape and watch the game exactly as it was played. Did the basketball players have a free will in playing the game? Yes. But the results are already fixed on the DVR. You watch the game not knowing the outcome, but you know the results are already determined on the recording. You are watching the players exercise their free will even though the outcome is already decided. Foreknowledge is just like that DVR, except instead of watching everything after the game is over, God sees the results before the game is played.

God does not predestine us to heaven or hell, but He predestines us "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29).