

Slide 2 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom 8:29-30)

This is one of the most pondered topics of Christian thought. Predestination and free will.

We think in terms of free will **versus** predestination and this is attributed to “western thought” but this is not so. These concepts have been debated likely since religions were established. We’ll talk about a doctrine that was held in first century Jewish thought in a bit that is quite similar to the modern Christian view of predestination. The modern view stems from John Calvin, perhaps the most famous of the leaders during the Reformation. Let’s take a brief look at his concept of predestination and theology in general.

Slide 3

Total Depravity (also known as Total Inability and Original Sin)

Unconditional Election

Limited Atonement (also known as Particular Atonement)

Irresistible Grace

Perseverance of the Saints (also known as Once Saved Always Saved)

This theology was crafted as a pendulum swing as far from Catholicism as possible. Catholicism is heavily works-based faith even though it actually isn’t at its core. But it’s really had to tell that it isn’t. But keep in mind that as worksy as Catholicism is, it still has infant baptism which really is a Calvinist idea – that someone could be saved apart from consciously accepting Yeshua as the Messiah. Catholicism has penances, holy days of obligation, indulgences, purgatory where the living can pray the dead into heaven, and a whole host of works that people can do to move themselves into and out of favor with God. As the reformers left, they came up with some pretty odd ideas that turned into doctrines that today most of Protestantism accepts as true and even think they are original to Christian thought.

The Catholic church had gone way too far for far too long. They were very corrupt and had many, many abuses. When your faith is works based, then you quickly come to the conclusion that every wrong has an offset right and you can pretty much get away with anything. So the reformation came and, with it, Calvinism. Calvinism’s Tulip boils down to people really being chosen randomly with no ability to affect their salvation or relationship with YHVH whatsoever. These two competing ideas that we are robots with no free will on one hand and that we can save ourselves through works on the other are at odds with scripture and with life in general. If we look back on our lives,

we can see cycles of obedience and faith and understand that we mature in life and in the faith once delivered to the saints. Ultimately, though, we end up with two competing ideas that actually are very old, existential questions.

Slide 4 "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham." (Luk 3:8)

Long before there was a John Calvin, the Jews had the doctrine of salvation just based on who you are. I don't think it was the eternal salvation that we believe today, but it was based solely on identity through genealogy. And John the Baptist came to make straight the paths of YHVH. John's mission was to come as the Elijah and we don't have a lot about his ministry. But he had words for those who held to the "elect" and "once Jewish always saved" doctrines. He told them that their pedigree, their predestined identity, was not sufficient for salvation. That they should not consider their lineage the source of their salvation but something else:

Slide 5 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"(Luk 3:10)

Do. They knew the answer. They had to DO something. They all had to DO something. They knew instinctively they had a way to affect the outcome. So now we have a clear path showing that salvation is works based, right? Well, not so fast:

Slide 6 For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them. (Psa 139:13-16)

This is a psalm of David, he is acknowledging that YHVH has no beginning nor end, and that all of David's days were ordained ahead of time. David says all the days if his life were recorded in the book of life before there was one. Can that mean that YHVH predestined David to sin? Did YHVH know those were going to happen?

Slide 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. They heard the sound of YHVH Elohim walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of YHVH God among the trees of the garden. Then YHVH Elohim called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you

eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then YHVH Elohim said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Gen 3:7-13)

But wait, this passage shows that YHVH didn't know Adam and Eve were going to sin, right? He even asks them where they are because they hid from Him! But we know this can't be true because He knows everything. And there's another thing to consider:

Slide 8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints. (Rev 13:8-10)

Now we read this to be that the plan of salvation was laid out at the foundation of the world. Well, if Adam and Eve had the opportunity to not fall, then why was that plan made before they existed? Clearly YHVH knew that the world was going to need saving. And if we read on, there is a bunch about destiny here as well. The theme continues:

Slide 9 "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come. (Rev 17:8)

As shocking as it may be, there are going to be people, and they may already exist, who's names are not in the book of life and won't ever be.

Slide 10

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev 20:15)

"But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!" YHVH said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. (Exo 32:32-33)

The book of life was completed, written, long ago. The goal is to not get blotted out. But there are some who won't even be entered. Understand that it's a work to get blotted out!

Are you thoroughly confused yet? Well, I hope so. Because that was the point. To show that the Bible says both predestination and free will exist. And they are not mutually exclusive. That's the message today. Both things are true and they are not necessarily opposites.

I'm going to try to explain something that's inexplicable. Both pre-destination and free will exist and work together. I've been asking some existential and un-answerable questions lately, namely "why us and why not others"? This is the place to start the explanation. The answer is that we simply do not know. Perhaps one day we will now, but today it's not knowable. It's a rhetorical question.

Nature versus Nurture. My test at CTU showing how I matched my occupation and character to a T. Was this natural or a result of my life? Reference ASVAB. Then the class this week.

Seeing the kids come up and have very similar traits. All three of them have natural leadership presences. They have the natural ability to get the job done when nobody else is doing it. That's how my life has been as well. Now, is this because they were born that way or raised by someone that way?

Bottom line is that YHVH has predestined everything AND we have free will. He has to know everything but we have the ability to make choices and He wants us to do so. He wants us to choose to repent and DO good things. But at the same time, He guides us through interactions and events that were laid out eons ago. The older we get, the easier it is to see His work in our lives. But when those events were playing out, we were in control and made our choices. Some people simply aren't going to make it. Others were destined to make it, but through sinning and repenting. This puzzle of a life and a world today will probably make sense to us at some point in the future. But if not, does it really matter? No, what really matters is having your name inscribed in the book of life. And I pray we all do!