

Predestination: Ephesians 2:8-9

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Intro:

When studying Ephesians 2:8-9 the question about predestination does arise. What is it, is it biblical, and why does it exist? Let's start with the bible verse that does trigger it this time:

Ephesians 2:8-9

For it is **by grace** you have been saved, **through faith**—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast.

Normally I would say: before you read that one verse, read the whole chapter. But let me help you a little before we do so. (We will do that, as we should, every time, well get to that, no worries)

What does save us? Only faith? No.

Our believing in Jesus is not only what saves us, yes, we do need to believe what He did, but there is also another thing in that verse....**Grace**. It's the gift of God. It's the combination that's saves us. Grace + Faith in Jesus Christ.

If we would say that we can be saved only by our faith, that will mean we can determine our faith by an "act" of ourselves, and that would be a "work". And **works can not save us**.

Are there more bible verses like Ephesians 2:8,9

With difficult verses like this, its always good to look at other verses in the bible. Whenever possible, we must allow the Bible to explain itself. This principle of Bible interpretation is both logical and God-honoring. In this case the bible explains the bible very clearly and there is no way around this. These are some bible verses that state the very same:

Romans 9:16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

Romans 11:6 And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Galatians 2:21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

The combination, grace + faith

So, its not only by faith, but its **faith + grace, through Jesus Christ**. And then we come to the next thing... not everybody is saved... not all people go to heaven, lots and lots go to hell. That does mean, that God does not give His grace to everyone. God makes a choice who He gives His grace...

THE predestination question.

And once again, we have a look in the bible about this principle. Once again, there are way more verses that this, but here are some that do talk about it:

Ephesians 1:5 He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

Romans 8:28-30 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Galatians 1:15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace,

Those verses, among others, are clear that we need God grace, because He predestined us to be His even before we were born. Without grace, we are nothing and are not saved.

So that God chooses us, is very clear. The question remains... why?

Is predestination just?

And this is the toughest one to answer. Because if God chooses us... that also does mean, that He does not choose others. He knows, before they were born, that they would go to hell. Yeah, that's a tough one! Why does He do that?

Many people have a strong hostility to the doctrine of predestination. However, predestination is a biblical doctrine. The key is understanding what predestination means, biblically. The most common objection to the doctrine of predestination is that it is unfair. Why would God choose certain individuals and not others? We must remember that no one deserves to be saved. We have all sinned (Romans 3:23) and are all worthy of eternal punishment (Romans 6:23).

As a result, God would be perfectly just in allowing all of us to spend eternity in hell. However, God chooses to save some of us. He is not being unfair to those who are not chosen, because they are receiving what they deserve. God's choosing to be gracious to some is not unfair to the others. No one deserves anything from God; therefore, no one can object if he does not receive anything from God.

God predestines who will be saved, and we must choose Christ in order to be saved. Both facts are equally true. Romans 11:33 proclaims, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!"

Why does God do this?

And that is an answer we can not answer with a bible verse. There are no bible verses why God created the earth, why He created the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden, why He does choose one person and not the other one, etc etc etc. We can guess why He did that (very often people try to explain it with: God did not want us to be robots) but biblically there is no answer, and the "robot" theory is not(!) found anywhere, and it would all be guessing. And that's not what we must do, and I don't want to go there and put words in Gods mouth that He did not say. We must not guess why God does or does not. So, what should we do with tough questions like this?

We don't have the answer

Let's get back to the bible, God word, and let's have a look at some verses:

1 Corinthians 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

Romans 11:33-34 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Simply said: We do not have the answer, because we are not God and do not understand everything what He thinks. So, what do we do, if we don't understand Him?

Trust Him

Proverbs 3:5-6 "**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.** In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

And yes, that's often (and not only in this case) a thing that we as humans struggle with. And God knows that we do, that's why He said that in His bible. Over and over again....

Curious?

And yes, maybe I'm as curious as you and me why God does things like that. Get this:

John 13:7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, **but you will understand hereafter.**"

There will come a time, where we will all understand why God does this. God is a God of Righteousness, justice, steadfast love and faithfulness. Trust Him. Even when we do not understand.

Psalm 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you."

So what about verses like John 3:16?

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

And yes, there are verses like John 3:16 where you could say: my faith saves me and that's enough.

And that's where faith comes in the equation. Its God's grace... + your faith, through Jesus Christ. It's the combination. If you don't believe what Jesus did for you, you can not come into heaven. Full stop. Both are needed.

How do I know if God has predestined me?

Let me ask you a simple question: why do you have that question anyway? Why are you curious about it? Who do you think gave you that question in your hart? Who is letting you think about it anyway? Why are you reading this piece of paper at all?

Because, lets be honest, lots and lots of people don't even think about it. They just don't care, they don't mind, its not there at all. But you do?! So somewhere, that question, that eagerness... is coming from somewhere... and that's God, who is calling you. He makes you eager, He is calling you: please, listen to Me, I am here, where are you!?

Please, do listen to His gracious call for you: believe in what Jesus did for you.

Am I really saved?

But maybe you say: I do believe in Jesus, but I still have doubts about this predestination thing. Am I really saved now? Is there proof that God gave me His grace?

The bible is clear about how to answer the question if you are saved indeed by grace and faith. Have a good look at yourself. So you recognize yourself in this:

Are you a good tree?

Matthew 7: 15-20 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. **By their fruit you will recognize them.** Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears

bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Do you follow His commands?

1 John 2:3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we **keep his commandments**.

Are you growing in faith and knowledge of God?

1 Peter 2:2-3 Like newborn babies, **crave pure spiritual milk**, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Are you growing in Christ-like love?

1 John 4:7 Dear friends, let **us love one another**, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Are you persevering through persecution?

2 Thessalonians 1:4-5 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. **All this is evidence** that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

If so, no worries!

Conclusion:

This is a topic that does split churches and I think it should not. The most important lesson is: if we do not understand the "why": do we trust God? If we do trust God, we can, in confidence in that faith, let it go. It's His to answer. If we still struggle with it, to the point that we divide complete churches on this topic, we should once again, ask the same question to ourselves: do we really trust Him?

Psalm 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you."

And now that we have been through all of those verses, you got some explanation, I would like to invite you to read the complete first part of Ephesians 2.

Ephesians 2: 1-10

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Bottom line: trust a graceful God. Even when we don't understand.

