



**Question:** Is the doctrine of predestination Biblical? If so, how does it coexist with man's free-will and not violate the character of God?

The doctrine of predestination is that God predestinates some to eternal salvation and others to eternal damnation. See Romans 9:22-23; Romans 8:29-30.

#### **Basic Calvinism:**

1. **Total Depravity:** every person is enslaved by sin and unable to choose God.
2. **Unconditional Election:** God has chosen from eternity those He will save. This choice is based solely in His mercy rather than any foreseen merit or faith in those chosen.
3. **Limited Atonement:** the death of Christ paid the price only for the sins of the elect.
4. **Irresistible Grace:** those whom God has determined to save will inevitably come to saving faith.
5. **Perseverance of the Saints:** all those who have been chosen by God (the “elect”) will continue in faith.

#### **Basic Arminianism:**

1. The salvation or ultimate condemnation of a person is the result of the God-given faith or unbelief of that person.
2. The divinely provided atonement is sufficient for all persons but is applied only to those who trust in Christ.
3. No person can save himself or herself. Without the help of the Holy Spirit, no one can respond to God’s will that all be saved.
4. God’s grace, applied by the Holy Spirit, is the sole source of good and of human salvation, yet this grace may be resisted.
5. God’s grace in the life of the believer enables resistance of sin and Christ will keep them from falling. Whether one who has experienced this grace can ultimately forsake God “must be more particularly determined.”

The question reduces to this: Does God elect people because they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or does God elect people in order that they will believe in Christ?

According to Arminianism, election is that act of God whereby he foreordains to eternal life those whom he foresees will respond in faith to the gospel. According to Calvinism, election is that act of God whereby he foreordains to eternal life those who, because of sin, cannot respond in faith to the gospel.

The primary argument against Calvinism has to do with the character of God. How can God predestine someone to hell, never allowing them the benefit of conviction and repentance? See 2 Peter 3:9.

The primary argument against Arminianism has to do with the Sovereignty of God and man's inability to bring about his own salvation. See Romans 9:16-18. God's Sovereignty is still satisfied in Arminianism by the role the Holy Spirit plays in salvation. See John 16:7-9.

It was man's exercise of free will that brought sin into the world. It is also the exercise of man's free will to respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, repent of his sins that lead to death, and receive the salvation God provided all men through His Son. God "forcing" His salvation or damnation upon me seems contrary to His allowance of man's free will to determine his final destiny.

If all of humanity's final destination is predetermined and will be effectual because of the Sovereignty of God, why preach the Gospel to the lost? See Romans 10:9-15. Why seem to offer a gift that cannot be accepted? It is difficult to see as "good" a supposedly loving God who elects some and passes over, or even deliberately damns, others. Such a view damages the biblical presentation of God as loving, kind, and just.

Could predestined, elect, chosen instead imply that God foreknew you would choose to follow him? See Romans 8:28-30.

**Question:** How can I tell I have the Spirit of God in me? I have given my life to God but I don't know if he has accepted me.

See Ephesians 1:13–14. Upon salvation, the Holy Spirit takes up His residence in your life. You are saved through believing in Christ and confessing Him as Lord (Romans 10). Jesus said the same thing to Nicodemus. See John 3:16-18. See also Acts 15:8-9.

Those who are saved and filled with the Holy Spirit, will also be led by the Spirit. You should sense a difference in your life concerning your feelings about sin and your desire to know God better. See John 16:13-15. Paul reminds us that the Spirit himself will testify within us that we are God's children (Romans 8:14-16).

**Question:** I want to be water baptized. What does it mean for my past? I have a troubled past. Does it make me a new person in God's eyes? What can I expect?

Water baptism doesn't save a person. Water baptism is a symbolic act demonstrating what Christ has done in your life. Salvation is necessary before water baptism.

When we are saved, our past is no longer held against us (Romans 4:7-8; Hebrews 8:12). When you ask God for forgiveness through Christ Jesus you are forgiven of all sin. You are also made a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

So only God's salvation made possible through Christ can forgive your sins (past, present, and future — no matter how troubling) and make you a new person in God's eyes. Water baptism is just the outward expression of the work of salvation that took place inside you.