

Does God Elect Everyone?

Isa 25:1 things *planned* long ago

The five-point Calvinist believes in: original sin, God's election, particular redemption, effectual calling and perseverance of the saints. Christians admit that the doctrine of election is a tough pill to swallow. They come up with analogies to help the pill go down easier while they teach the doctrine with reluctance. God is: living, personal, relational, good and loving^[1]. But they teach that God predestining people to go to heaven or hell and it must be right-- because God said so. But did God say this?

It is true that all God says and does is good and right. But does scripture support the doctrine of predestination as understood by Calvinists?

The word “predestination” comes the Greek προορίζω **prōōrizō**, *prō-or-id'-zo*; meaning to *limit in advance*, i.e. (fig.) *predetermine*:— determine before, ordain, predestinate.^[2]



It occurs five times in the Bible in the New Testament:

Acts 4:28	hand and your plan had predestined to take place.
Rom 8:29	predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son
Rom 8:30	predestined • he also called, and those whom he called
Eph 1:5	he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ
Eph 1:11	we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined

As fallen creatures we can no doubt err or misunderstand what the Bible teaches, taking words like “predestination” and pour meaning into them that God never intended.

Scripture tells us that that law is written on our hearts (2 Cor 3:2) and that we intuitively know right from wrong (Ro 2:15). But the prophet Jeremiah also said that the heart is deceitful about all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it (Jer 17:9)?

One person can know it—the person of the Holy Spirit. He searches the heart, tests our minds, and gives to every man according to his ways according to the fruit of our doings (Jer 17:10). But if our ways are off a bit, our hearts most may malfunction. Scripture must be our guide. We can pray like the psalmist:

Search me, O God, and know my heart;

Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if there is any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps 139:23, NKJV)

The Bible refers to the scriptures as the word of truth (Jn 17:17). The Holy Spirit indwells the saved with the spirit of truth (Jn 16:13). Jesus referred to himself as “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). We must rely on the Holy Spirit to take the things of God and make them real to us^[3]. The greater our love is for the truth, the more we glean from the word of God.

We can pray for understanding. If we walk humbly before God (Mic 6:8), he may share his treasures of wisdom. Man has a will and God has a will. Although men would like to know everything, they cannot demand such a request from God. We cannot demand wisdom from God anymore than we can demand healing as some teach today. We are obligated to obey God but he is not obligated to obey us (Job 38:4). God’s ways are higher than our ways but not lower (Isa 55:8). In humility, we can ask for greater understanding.

Why does the Holy Spirit *not* speak to the hearts of all Christians like a Calvinist? Why would our pesky hearts, like Paul’s cry out for the lost among us when it would seem that they are not “elect” of God (Ro 9:3)? The Calvinist would say that some people just will not be called. They were not “predestined” to be one of God’s elect.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say that a man is predestined for heaven. Scripture says rather that man is predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus (Ro 8:29).

The Bible says that God is *not willing* that any should perish (2 Pet 3:9). Jesus said: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; *and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*”(emphasis added) [John 6:36–37, NKJV].

Since we know the will of God (2 Pet 3:9) and that he promises not to reject anyone who might come to him (Jn 6:36-37), why do some Christians teach that some people cannot come to God? Our great commission is to proclaim the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ not to *some* but to *all* the world (Mk 16:15).

Jesus gave a parable of a wedding feast. In the parable, the king commanded his servants: “[G]o into the highways, and *as many as you find, invite* to the wedding.’¹⁰ So those servants went out into the highways and *gathered together all* whom they found, *both bad and good*. And the wedding hall was filled with guests (emphasis added).”^[4]

We know that some reject God’s invitation to the feast (a picture of joy and life), but scripture makes it clear that everyone *is* invited.

Matthew chapter 8 reveals Jesus’ compassion and power to heal. A man who was a leper came to Jesus. He asked, “Lord, *if you are willing*, you can make me clean (emphasis added).” Jesus answered, “*I am willing*; be cleansed (emphasis added).” (Lv 14:4, Mt

8:1-4). The man knew that Jesus could heal him and Jesus was willing. A transaction of wills occurred. Why would the living Lord today no longer be willing to heal a man wishing to come to him today⁵¹?

Matthew chapter 15 verses 24-28 reveal Jesus' concern for others beside the house of Israel. A woman from Canaan came to Jesus pleading for mercy for her daughter who was severely demon-possessed.

Jesus answered her: "*I was not sent* except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (emphasis added)." (v. 24).

The woman was persistent. She worshiped saying, "Lord, help me!" (v. 25).

He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs (v. 26)."

She said, "Yes, Lord, yet *even the little dogs* eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table (emphasis added)." (v. 27).

Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great *is* your faith! *Let it be to you as you desire* (emphasis added)." And her daughter was healed from that very hour (v. 28).

Our Lord was sent to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel not gentiles at this point in history. Yet, Jesus had a will and the freedom to heal the gentile woman's daughter. He did. Jesus marveled at the faith of the woman. He did not find such faith in Israel (Lk 7:9).

Will Jesus marvel at the faith of his church today? Do we believe that he can still reach out to a person who is not "elect"? God is merciful. He does not change (Mal 3:6). Why would he exclude others from his gift mercy today? God's mercies are new each day. "A new day will dawn on us from above because our God is loving and merciful (Lk 1:78, GWT)."

The Bible says "[God] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, *so that they should seek the Lord*, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though *He is not far from each one of us*; (emphasis added) Ac 17:26-27, NKJV)." Why would God bother to place men in appropriate times and places if he never planned on saving them?

Jesus said: "I lay down My life for the sheep. *And other sheep I have* which are not of this fold; *them also I must bring*, and *they will hear My voice* (Jn 10:15-16, NKJV)." We should share the message of God's grace with *all* the sheep. God forbid the sheep should fall off a cliff because we believed they simply could not hear the shepherd's voice.

Some Christians say the writings of Esau in scripture proves that God has predestined some to go to hell. They say that God cursed Esau in his mother's womb. "As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated (Ro 9:13, NKJV).'"

J. Vernon McGee said:

This is a quotation from the last book in the Old Testament (see Mal. 1:2–3). This statement was not made until the two boys had lived their lives and two nations had come from them, which was about two thousand years later, and much history had been made.^[6]

It would seem that Esau *was* given a choice to accept or reject God throughout the course of his life; though regrettably, he never did humble himself before God.

It is true that Esau's brother Jacob was chosen from the womb *for a purpose*. But salvation was not at issue in the womb. Nation-building was. God chose Jacob to build a nation (Ro 9:10-13, NKJV). Jacob was the heir of God's promise to Abraham. But choosing Jacob for a mission did not of necessity condemn his brother, Esau to hell. Esau chose hell on his own.

Salvation does not occur in the womb anymore than infant baptism secures a person a spot in heaven. The apostle Paul described "children of promise" as those who are born of the spirit (Gal 4:28-29). We are promised heaven if we are born-again (Jn 3:7).

Both Jacob and Esau were born sinners. Each needed to strive to become one of God's own. Jacob's later adopted name, Israel, means "struggle"^[7].

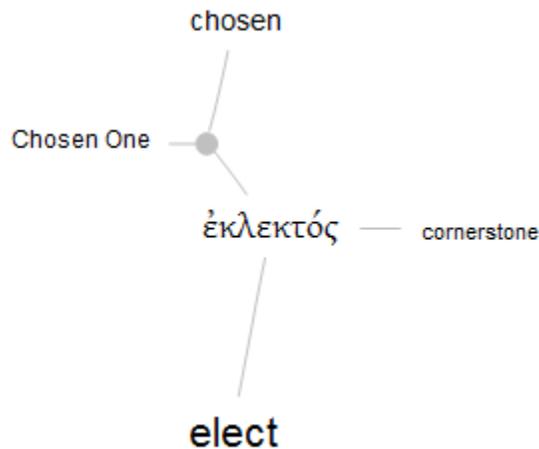
Scripture teaches that God's election is of his calling and not of our works (Ro 9:11). Every person is given the choice to accept or reject Jesus Christ (Col 2:6). The apostle Paul said that people are without an excuse before God due to the fact that they had the testimony of creation and conscience (Ro 1:20). They are without excuse *because* they had a choice.

The apostle Paul wrote:

Christ paid the price to free us from the curse that God's laws bring by becoming cursed instead of us. Scripture says, "Everyone who is hung on a tree is cursed." [Christ paid the price] so that the blessing promised to Abraham would come to *all the people of the world* through Jesus Christ and we would receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Ga 3:13-14, GWT).

Pride was the fall of Esau. So as Christians seek to define words like "elect", if they must err, it should be on the side of humility rather than pride. The word "elect" comes from the Greek ἐκλεκτός meaning "chosen". The Enhanced Strong's Lexicon defines ἐκλεκτός as: "to obtain salvation through Christ." The *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate*

Dictionary^[8] defines “elect” as “chosen for office or position but not yet installed as in [the president-elect]; or chosen for marriage at some future time as in [the bride-elect].”



J. Vernon McGee described God’s elect like mud turtles in a pond^[9]. Mud turtles know only about mud and moving around in the mud. They don’t know anything about flying. But one day someone offers to teach them how to fly. Most turtles have no interest in learning how to fly so most choose to remain in the mud. But some turtles accept the invitation to learn to fly. Mud turtles can become something new.

Other Christians describe God’s elect like a married couple. When a man chooses a woman to marry he does not *not* choose all other women. The man chooses one special woman and like the Cinderella story, the two ride off into the sunset. He can’t be blamed for not choosing all of the other gals in town.

The Bible says that God has been grieved in the past that he ever made man (Gn 6:6).

Still, man is God’s crowning jewel of creation. Man is made in the image and likeness of his creator (Gn 1:27). It is God’s will for each man gain a crown of life (Re 2:10). God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Ro 5:8, NKJV). We can life forever with God because of Jesus’ sacrifice and his victory over death, our final enemy.

The Bible teaches that man is clay in the hands of God. Although clay has no rights, if man will submit to his maker, it is possible that he can become something new (Isa 45:9). God loves his creation and he encourages man to reason with him (Isa 1:18). If the creature would only cooperate with the creator, there is hope.

God also gave us a will. He wishes to live with people who strive to know and love him. He does not want to live with predestined potsherds of the earth (Isa 45:9).

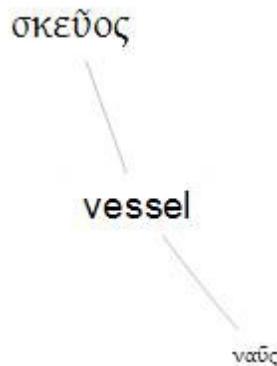
If our love for God was predetermined, how real could it be? If we never had a choice *not* choose God, how would we ever know that our love was real? Love must be genuine. God tested Abraham and he tests us as well (Gn 2:22, Ro 5:3)? Jesus died on the cross to identify with us and we die to ourselves to identify with him. Life is real, love is real and our choices are real.

The Bible teaches that God made man—good and bad for himself (Pr 16:4). If man chooses to live without God in this life, he will get what he wanted. But even when a man goes to hell God is still glorified because he has demonstrated his justice. All that God does is good and right. God’s wrath and power will be known (Ro 9:22), but for now while we can draw a breathe we can receive God’s grace (Ro 15:7).

God does not plan for his own rejection. God has revealed his plan and will for man and all man must do is respond. “You *must* be born again.” (Jn 3:7, NKJV). The Calvinist need not worry that this is a work. It is a response. God gets all the glory. He continues all day long to stretch out his hands to a disobedient and contrary people (Ro 10:20). We gentiles are not too different than the Jews throughout history (Ga 3:28).

God will not always strive with man, nor will he keep his anger forever (Ps 103:9). For now, he endures with longsuffering vessels of wrath prepared for destruction (Ro 9:22). The wheat and the tares grow together (Mt 13:30). The sheep and goats live side by side. (Mt 25:33). The vessels prepared for destruction live in an age of grace. They *must* be born again (Jn 3:3).

The word “vessel” comes from the Greek σκεῦος^[10] [*skeuos* /**skyoo**-os/], which is a noun meaning “of uncertain affinity”:



Israel was used to the concept of vessels for various purposes. Some vessels were common while others were special and set aside for worship. Timothy used the concept of common and not-so-common vessels as a picture of our future bodies which will be fitted for heaven or hell:

²⁰ [I]n a great house there are not only ^zvessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. ²¹ Therefore *if anyone cleanses himself* from the latter, *he will be a vessel for honor*, ⁸sanctified and useful for the Master, ^aprepared for every good work (2 Tim 2:20). ^[11]

God is preparing a people for his glory (Ro 9:22). The people known to him in his mind are blind but will see and are prisoners but will be set free by the light of the gospel (Isa

42:6). All people are called from the womb to be servants for God (Isa 49:5), to become sanctified (Jer 1:5) by God's grace through faith (Gal 1:6).

Certainly we should be grateful to have been chosen by God. Some will no doubt ask themselves "Why me?" But we'd better take heed not to respond like the Pharisee in the parable of the tax collector toward other supposed non-elects. In the parable given by Jesus the Pharisee prayed: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men (Lk 18:11, NKJV)."

God shows no partiality (Ac 10:34). "[I]n every nation *whoever* fears Him and works righteousness *is accepted* by Him (Ac 10:35). "[T]hey should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though *He is not far from each one of us* (Ac 17:27). John the Baptist declared: "Behold! The Lamb of God who *takes away* the sin *of the world!* (Jn 1:29, NKJV). "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever believes* in Him *should not perish but have everlasting life.* (Jn 3:16, NKJV)." "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For *everyone who asks receives*, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened (Mt 7:7, NKJV)."

Israel's rejection of their savior brought his grace to the gentiles (Ro 11:19). But it was always in God's mind to save not just Israel but the entire world. "For God has committed them [Israel] all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Ro 11:32-33)!"

We will not convince unbelievers of the depths of God's mercy and grace with answers to questions about predestination or God's elect with "because God said so". God did not say so. It is not a good enough answer when we are speaking about matters of eternal life and death.

We lighten our burden for the lost when we believe that kingdom work for Jesus Christ is left solely up to God's choice. Man has a choice too. If Jesus was willing to die on a cross for us we should be willing to pick up our cross and bear it (Mt 16: 24).

Jesus is the *Good Shepherd*. He is 100% good and he goes after 100% of the sheep. The Calvinist has an elitist mentality.

How loved will people feel if they believe the Calvinist who tells them that some men are created for destruction. The very notion betrays their sense conscience. The Calvinists asks him to overlook an apparent flaw in God's goodness and commitment to justice for all of his creation.

If man is like a mud turtle as J. Vernon McGee suggests, then the invitation has gone out to the whole pond and "[t]he called' heard God's call. That is important." McGee wrote^[12].

Does a bride really love a mate that she never chose? If she had not affirmed her love for her prince, how can the two ride off into the sunset?

God forces the Calvinist into heaven. The prophet Jeremiah said that the human heart is desperately wicked. For the Calvinist, the heart is not wicked enough. Man cannot resist God--But men *do* resist God and rebel against him every day. The church is pictured as a bride because choice is involved.

The bride does have a choice. She keeps her wedding garment white because she loves her bridegroom and wants to be beautiful for him.

Our attitude toward the lost is important. How effective will our message be when we do not believe that we are witnessing to one of God's elect? Scripture says that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (Jas 5:16, NKJV)." But our zeal will be less than enthusiastic if we believe that we are speaking to one of God's undesirables. Who does the Christian serve when he says that some men cannot come to the Lord? He has no right to call God's outstretched hand clinched.

How are we to do the "greater things" that Jesus spoke of (Jn 14:12) when we do not believe that we really can make a difference with some? We should not pick just the low hanging fruit from the tree. Men do have the opportunity to choose Christ as long as they can draw a breathe. No one is beyond hope. Each new day is an opportunity to share Christ. The Holy Spirit continues to woo the hearts of people.

Loving God means getting to know and understand him (Phil 3:10, Ac 17:11). We should not be to silence our consciences to the apparent injustice and inconsistency of his character. We would grieve the Holy Spirit to do so (Eph 4:30).

Additional thought must be given to predestination and man's will. Scripture commands believers to agree (1 Cor 1:10). In 2 Timothy we read that man *can* be "complete [and], thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Ti 3:17, NKJV)."

Bad doctrine must be rooted out of Christianity^[13]. When scripture reveals that God predestined a people to be conformed to the image of his Son (Ro 8:29), in is a revelation of God's plan (determined will) to save a people (those will come) to be conformed to the image of his Son—God has a *plan* to call out *a people*. J. Vernon McGee said, "Prophecy is the mold into which history is filled." Christ is our "mold" reaching from east to west without man-made limitations. The Lord is good to *all*; he has compassion on *all* he has made (emphasis mine, Ps 145:9). God still runs this universe no matter what the Calvinist says.

We must continue to share the gospel in a dying world and pray for God's mercy. God has repented of evil that he had planned in the past (Jon 3:10). His heart can be moved. He is not a stone cold idol^[14]. God is still free to choose whom he will have mercy on (Ro 9:15). He continually moves in our lives if we will respond to him (Gn 1:2). The wind still blows wherever it pleases (Jn 3:8).

The word of God will never contradict the character of God. Though Cinderella stories are entertaining, they appeal to the flesh. Our Savior rode in on a donkey not a chariot. He still seeks sinners who are not always lovely. Jesus said: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.” We can never do enough or be beautiful enough for the Lord to desire us. God wishes to be merciful to the humble. Jesus said: “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” (Mt 9:12, 13).

J. Vernon McGee said, “If you’ve come to the place where you have said, ‘I can’t live the Christian life.’ Halleluiah. You’ve got it!”

^[1] Bob Enyart, Battle Royal X, theologyonline.com.

i.e. i.e. = that is

fig. fig. = figurative, figuratively

^[2] Strong, James: *The New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1996, S. H8674

^[3] McGee, J. Vernon. *Thru the Bible*.

^e Matt. 13:38, 47, 48; [Acts 28:28]

^[4] *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Mt 22:9-10

^[5] Healing is a picture of salvation, see Lv 14:4.

^[6] McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:712

^[7] In Gen. 32:28 Jacob is given the name ‘Israel’ after a struggle with a divine being on the bank of the Jabbok (the name yisra’el

being understood there to mean ‘he strives [*yisra*] with God [’el]’ [cf. Hos. 12:4]), and there is another account of Jacob’s renaming in Gen. 35:10. The ancestor of the Israelites, therefore, was known by two names, a fact that suggests to many scholars that two patriarchs lie behind the figure of Jacob-Israel. *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*.

^[8] Eleventh ed. Springfield, Mass. : Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003

^[9] McGee, J. Vernon (John Vernon), 1904–1988. *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*.

Based on the Thru the Bible radio program.

^[10] **4632 σκεῦος** [*skeuos /skyoo- os/*] n n. Of uncertain affinity; TDNT 7:358; TDNTA 1038; GK 5007; 23 occurrences; AV translates as “vessel” 19 times, “goods” twice, “stuff” once, and “sail” once. **1** a vessel. **2** an implement. **2A** in the plural. **2A1** household utensils, domestic gear. **2A2** the tackle and armament of vessels, used specifically of sails and ropes. **3** metaph. **3A** a man of quality, a chosen instrument. **3B** in a bad sense, an assistant in accomplishing an evil deed. *Additional Information*: “Vessel” was a common Greek metaphor for “body” since Greeks thought of souls living temporarily in bodies.

Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. electronic ed. Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996

^r Rom. 9:21

^s set apart

^a 2 Cor. 9:8; [Eph. 2:10]; 2 Tim. 3:17

^[11] *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 2 Ti 2:20-21

^[12] McGee, J. Vernon (John Vernon), 1904–1988. *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*.

Based on the Thru the Bible radio program.

^[13] E.g. Greek paganism influence on Calvinism

^[14] Enyart, Bob. Battle Royale X: Open Theism: Does God Know Your Entire Future? <http://www.theologyonline.com/forums/showthread.php?t=21877>.