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# Reason for a Book on Free Will

## What is Predestination and Why Are We Presenting Its Counter Argument?

Collins English Dictionary states:

*...predestination is “... b. the doctrine or belief, esp associated with Calvin, that the final salvation of some of humankind is foreordained from eternity by God”, and ... b. God predestines certain souls to salvation and, esp. in Calvinism, others to damnation” (Collins 2023)*

This essentially means that if you believe in predestination, you believe that even before creation God chose a select group for salvation and a select group for damnation. No matter the will of man, no matter his effort or deeds, he will neither be saved nor damned based upon them, but rather assigned a destiny by God, he will be forced to accept his fate. John Calvin stated it the following way in his work *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*:

*he [God] arranges all things by his sovereign counsel, in such a way that individuals are born, who are doomed from the womb to certain death, and are to glorify him by their destruction. (Calvin J 1536 Book 3. Chapter 23)*

The Westminster Confession of Faith states it this way:

***God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it can not be either increased or diminished. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His free grace and love alone, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace....The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice. (Westminster Divines, 2021)***

In this book we often refer to Calvinism.

***Calvinism is the Protestant theological system of John Calvin and his successors, which develops Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone into an emphasis on the grace of God and centres on the doctrine of predestination. (Google, Definition of Calvinism)***

Contrary to Calvinism the reason for this book is to show man is not Predestined but rather has the free will to respond to God and His message of salvation, using scripture, and the writings of the Earliest Church Fathers. To uncover that God does not have such a nature that forces damnation on people just because He chooses it. But rather God gives His good will to all people and saves those who accept His charity.

## **Personal Definition of Free Will**

What is my definition of free will? Free will is the ability to choose how we respond to what God reveals to us. It is the view that our choices are free from any predetermination by God and that human nature does not override our ability to respond to the gospel when the truth is shown to us; the will of the unregenerate man is intact. Each of us is born in a state of the unknown, we don't know how to be saved, and we don't know what God requires. We do have a conscience so are aware of what sin is (Romans 2:15). But we often kick against the conscience. Because of this, each of us has sinned. Because God loved the world He gave His Son to man (John 3:16) to save any who would respond to Him (1 Timothy 4:10, 1 John 2:2, 1 Timothy 2:3-6). Reducing their affection for sin (1 John 3:8), and giving them forgiveness

of it based upon His love for us, not our perfect deeds (1 John 4:10). But God requires that people leave behind sin, that they choose to walk in His ways. God offers salvation to those willing to accept His gift of salvation, and willing to walk under His direction. The person who walks in God's word will be saved (John 14:23-24, Romans 2: 5-11), and the person who suppresses the knowledge God gives, who continually pushes away His word (Romans 1:18) without repentance (Psalm 58:5, Job 36:12) will be damned.

## Disadvantages of Calvinism

Accepting anything less than the truth is always a dangerous game. Accepting Calvinism takes with it quite a few disadvantages. Among them are:

- a) People hurt by the doctrine, who end up discouraged, or hating God
- b) People who accept the doctrine, believe they cannot fall away because their destiny is fixed by God, it often creates a lack of Godly fear, resulting in the attitude "I can do as I please", it births lawlessness.



## People Hurt by the Doctrine

People can be negatively affected in their faith and emotions when they accept the doctrine of Calvinism, supposing wrongly that God forces damnation on people, not giving them any chance of repentance. Some have sat at tables weeping over the nature of God. I believe others are likely to suppress the thought through fear of God, but never have any rest of mind. It is a hurtful view, especially if your child or loved one is unsaved “Maybe God wants to damn them”.

## Predestination Births Lawlessness

Although it is not true for everyone, some people use Calvinism to justify their sinful lifestyles. This can happen through choice of will or carelessness through a lack of understanding of God’s Word. In the case of carelessness, a person may feel overconfident, they have said the Sinners Prayer so consider that “once saved, always saved”; He has fixed their destiny; so there is no need to fear falling into sin; they will be saved anyway; so why not relax a little? People with this view often believe that even as Christians they are still depraved sinners, although saved they feel they are still controlled by sin. Which is far from the truth of the word of God. Sin should be uncommon for the Christian:

***What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! (NKJV, Romans 6:1-2a)***

We have discussed some of the potential misconceptions that can arise from Calvinism, now we will move to the



argument for free will as found in scripture, and the Early Church. We will first visit the Early Church's views on free will, then move to explaining each of the proof texts for Calvinism in the light of the idea that man is given a genuine choice. Finishing with topics such as God and planning, His desire to save all who are willing, and some miscellaneous topics needing discussion.



## **Argument for Free Will in Man from the Early Church Fathers**

### **The First 150 Years of Knowledge**

When referencing the Early Church Fathers we only use approximately the first 150 years after Christ. This is because only those people would have had access to the teachings of the Church as it was at the time of the Apostles.

Anyone coming hundreds of years later, like Augustine was not acquainted with church tradition and would have had to rely upon only the written text of others to form doctrines.

The bad news for Predestination, and the good news for those who believe God desires salvation for all who will accept it, is the Early Church spoke against a form of Predestination that was in Graeco-Roman society called Fatalism. Fatalism determines that everyone born into the world, already has a predetermined fate, that cannot be altered by what we choose to do in life. Abby Leach defines it this way in *Fatalism of the Greeks*:

***That man is not master of his fate but that fate masters him. Do what he will he cannot escape his destiny. Fate is irresistible, unconquerable and its decrees are absolute (Leach, Abby)***

Predestination is similar in the fact that all people were known by God from the beginning, and He fixed their eternal destinies. They have no control over this choice, they are fated to be saved, or damned:

***God's purpose is settled and sure. There is nothing over which God does not have control. His decree is immutable (Letham, Robert)***

## **Justin Martyr [A.D. 110-165] States Man Has Free Will**

The Book *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* contains the writings of the Early Church and many passages supporting free will in man.

After presenting his credentials we will share an excerpt from Justin Martyr [A.D. 110-165] from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* translated by the Reverend Dods. It is said of Justin Martyr:

***The writings of Justin Martyr are among the most important that have come down to us from the second century. He was not the first that wrote an Apology in behalf of the Christians, but his Apologies are the earliest extant. (Rev. Dods 1867, Justin Martyr - Introduction)***

The excerpt from *Justin* (below) stresses that just because the scripture states that God knows things beforehand does not negate free will in man. He stresses that man could not be held guilty of sin if he did not choose it for himself. This is a great counter to Predestination, which as a doctrine states, that God is responsible for choosing the end state of man, and that man's will plays no part. Below follows Justin's discourse.

***But lest some suppose, from what has been said by us, that we say that whatever happens, happens by a fatal necessity, because it is foretold as known***

*beforehand, this too we explain. We have learned from the prophets, and we hold it to be true, that punishments, and chastisements, and good rewards, are rendered according to the merit of each man's actions. Since if it be not so, but all things happen by fate, neither is anything at all in our own power. For if it be fated that this man, e.g., be good, and this other evil, neither is the former meritorious nor the latter to be blamed. And again, unless the human race have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions, of whatever kind they be. But that it is by free choice they both walk uprightly and stumble, we thus demonstrate. We see the same man making a transition to opposite things. Now, if it had been fated that he were to be either good or bad, he could never have been capable of both the opposites, nor of so many transitions. But not even would some be good and others bad, since we thus make fate the cause of evil, and exhibit her as acting in opposition to herself; or that which has been already stated would seem to be true, that neither virtue nor vice is anything, but that things are only reckoned good or evil by opinion; which, as the true word shows, is the greatest impiety and wickedness. But this we assert is inevitable fate, that they who choose the good have worthy rewards, and they who choose the opposite have their merited awards. For not*

***like other things, as trees and quadrupeds, which cannot act by choice, did God make man: for neither would he be worthy of reward or praise did he not of himself choose the good, but were created for this end; nor, if he were evil, would he be worthy of punishment, not being evil of himself, but being able to be nothing else than what he was made (Rev. Dods 1867, Justin Martyr - First Apology - Ch 43)***

Justin Martyr clearly believes in free will in man. In his other writings, as we show in the excerpts that follow, we will see he also taught that those foreknown to be evil could repent if they were willing. That God did not make them evil. Predestination on the other hand makes God partially responsible for man's sin, by forcing some into blindness and never giving them sight. Although a person who believes in Predestination will say that God does not make people sin, they just act with in the nature God has given them.

***God's purpose is settled and sure. There is nothing over which God does not have control. His decree is immutable (Psa. 33:9–11, Isa. 14:14,27, 46:9–10, Dan. 4:34–5, Rom. 9:11–2, 19–21, Heb. 6.17–18). However, this does not mean that God is implicated in human sin and evils, which result from the fall. His effectual determinations respect the liberty of secondary causality, the actions of creatures in accordance with their particular natures. (Latham, Robert)***

Giving people a nature and not allowing them to change, empowers the sin, and makes God the author of their wickedness. So what does Justin say on the topic?

***... Furthermore, I have proved in what has preceded, that those who were foreknown to be unrighteous, whether men or angels, are not made wicked by God's fault, but each man by his own fault is what he will appear to be... (Rev. Dods 1867, Justin Martyr - Dialogue with Trypho, Ch 140)***

The second quote shows us he believed even those foreknown to be evil could repent if they so wished it.

***I said briefly by anticipation, that God, wishing men and angels to follow His will, resolved to create them free to do righteousness; possessing reason, that they may know by whom they are created, and through whom they, not existing formerly, do now exist; and with a law that they should be judged by Him, if they do anything contrary to right reason: and of ourselves we, men and angels, shall be convicted of having acted sinfully, unless we repent beforehand. But if the word of God foretells that some angels and men shall be certainly punished, it did so because it foreknew that they would be unchangeably [wicked], but not because God had created them so. So that if they repent, all who wish***

*for it can obtain mercy from God: and the Scripture foretells that they shall be blessed, saying, 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin;'*...  
(Rev. Dods 1867, Justin Martyr - Dialogue with Trypho, Ch 141)



## **Irenaeus [A.D. 120-202] Taught Free Will Not Predestination**

It is not just Justin who believed in free will, other writers at the time also spoke on the topic, they taught free will concerning man's salvation. One such writer Irenaeus [A.D. 120-202] speaks of free will in his writing *Against Heresies* one of the most important early Christian works:

*The work of Irenaeus Against Heresies is one of the most precious remains of early Christian antiquity. It is devoted, on the one hand, to an account and refutation of those multiform Gnostic heresies which prevailed in the latter half of the second century;*



*and, on the other hand, to an exposition and defence of the Catholic faith. (Rev. Rambaut W. H. 1867, Against Heresies - Introductory Note)*

Here is a paragraph from Irenaeus [A.D. 120-202] who wrote many passages on the free will of man, in the following he states man is a free agent regarding salvation, and God does not force or coerce a man into either a saved or damned state:

***1. This expression [of our Lord], “How often would I have gathered thy children together, and thou wouldest not,” (Mat 23:37) set forth the ancient law of human liberty, because God made man a free [agent] from the beginning, possessing his own power, even as he does his own soul, to obey the behests (ad utendum sententia) of God voluntarily, and not by compulsion of God. For there is no coercion with God, but a good will [towards us] is present with Him continually. And therefore does He give good counsel to all. And in man, as well as in angels, He has placed the power of choice (for angels are rational beings), so that those who had yielded obedience might justly possess what is good, given indeed by God, but preserved by themselves. On the other hand, they who have not obeyed shall, with justice, be not found in possession of the good, and shall receive condign punishment: for God did***



*kindly bestow on them what was good; but they themselves did not diligently keep it, nor deem it something precious, but poured contempt upon His super-eminent goodness. (Rev. Rambaut W. H. 1867, Against Heresies - Book 4 Ch 37)*

We can see from the writings of the Early Church presented here that the church at the time believed in free will in man. We will visit other writings of theirs as we progress through topics that need additional clarification, or extra-scriptural support.

## **Summary of First Century Beliefs**

I have read and summarized the beliefs of the First Century Church below. These are the people who knew the Apostles, or came a generation or so after them.

### **Irenaeus [A.D. 120-202]**

Taught that God gives enlightenment to all people, that the law is not hidden from them, that it is understood by all. That man has it in his own power to either accept or reject God, that God does not coerce or force salvation or damnation on any. Anyone willing to follow God can, for God has made man a free agent from the beginning. The cross restored communion with God for all. But man to his own hurt can reject God, but it is man who blinds himself not God. God has no responsibility for the apostasy of the damned.

As for foreknowledge nothing can come to pass that God

does not know. In the present time, God foreknows who will not believe [in that generation]. God has also predetermined the number of people He desires to be saved\*.

In a similar way to the following (but regarding corporate salvation):

***Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. (NKJV, Revelation 6:11)***

## **Justin Martyr [AD 110-165]**

Justin Martyr believed that those who imitate God's excellences will be saved, but those who resort to the lower nature damned. He believed that man was a free agent, having free will to choose how to live, free to choose his own salvation. He believed that God desires the repentance, not damnation of the sinner. Those who do the works of God shall be saved. He believed men are rational and contemplative, with the power of thought, with this mind can choose to do good or evil. He taught that men are not controlled by any kind of fatalism, but will be judged according to their own, self-chosen deeds. He stated if this were not so man could not be held responsible for actions either good, or evil. He said the blame for damnation is not with God. That even those known to be unrighteous could repent, had the opportunity to do so. He said both angels and men have been given free will, which makes them capable of vice or virtue. He saw repentance as essential for

salvation. He said the one who opposes God's salvation to man is the devil, it is not God opposing man.

Like Irenaeus he believed that God has ordained a number of people that He wishes to be saved.

### **St. Clement [A.D. 30-100]**

Saw right living, righteousness to be the gate through which salvation comes. That it saves all those who walk in it. Although he did say the blessing is received not by our works but by God's will. He said the innocent or righteous are God's elect. He said that God desires nothing but confession from everyone. God was said to have prepared his gifts for us before we were born. Also like Irenaeus and Justin Martyr he stated "[that] the number of God's elect might be saved".

### **Ignatius [A.D. 30-107]**

Started one of his epistles with:

[to the church ] predestinated before the beginning of time, that it should be always for an enduring and unchangeable glory, being united and elected through the true passion by the will of the Father

As for his beliefs regarding individual salvation. He stated there is hope of repentance in other men. That God desires repentance not the death of the wicked. That sinners set a naught God, those who receive the power of distinguishing but reject the knowledge given them shall be judged. That Jesus is the savior of all men. We gain life with observance

of God's precepts, everyone will be judged according to the choice they make. He states " I do not mean to say that there are two different human natures" and " he is a man of the devil, made such, not by nature, but by his own choice". That all of them that repent have salvation.

### **Polycarp [A.D. 65-(100 or 155)]**

Said "If we please Him in this present world, we shall receive also the future world, according as He has promised to us that He will raise us again from the dead, and that if we live worthily of Him, "we shall also reign together with Him," provided only we believe".

### **Mathetes [AD 130]**

Stated that God truly loves man, that he gives His knowledge to all, the privilege of looking to himself. Stating: "He rendered subject all the things that are in it [the world], to whom He gave reason and understanding, to whom alone He imparted the privilege of looking upwards to Himself"

### **Barabus [AD 100]**

Spoke of love, and righteousness being needful for salvation. Also stated "This means that the man perishes justly, who, having a knowledge of the way of righteousness, rushes off into the way of darkness".

### **Papias [A.D. 70-155.]**

Nothing to report.

This concludes the view of the writers from the First Century.

# Arguments in Favor of Predestination Juxtaposed Against Free Will

The following sections of the book take standard Calvinistic arguments that are used to support Predestination, and shows how they can equally be used, or explained in a free will setting.

## Only Those Who the Father Allows Can Be Saved?

The book of John makes the following statement which when taken in isolation appears to support Predestination. It seems to be saying only those permitted can be saved; only those drawn by God. This seems to support the Calvinistic idea that God “chooses” who to save and who to damn. It makes God the driving force behind salvation, that man plays no part.

***No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.  
(NKJV, John 6:44)***

But no scripture should be interpreted in isolation. A person who believes in Predestination will swear black and blue that God grants the Holy Spirit to only those chosen by Him before creation. They will say, that a person is enlightened by God alone, and that man plays no role in the act. But

if we look into the book of John in more detail we will see how a person receives the Holy Spirit. Let's look at John 14 which tells us how a person receives the Holy Spirit.

***“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever...Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me. (NKJV, John 14:15-24)***

This passage speaks of how God's manifestation occurs, and whom He draws. Although it is true that a person needs to receive the truth, that they are a sinner, and need saving by the work of Christ on the cross, that it alone can bring right standing with God. This passage shows that there is a choice that we make before God acts. Indeed God does not give the Holy Spirit to all people, not all will be saved. So in that sense, not all can come to the Father, the Father must choose or draw them. But how does the scripture say a person is drawn, receives manifestation, or is given sight? Judas asked that very question stating:

***Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us,***

***and not to the world?***

To which Jesus replied that manifestation comes to the one willing to obey Him (Jesus). The passage makes it clear that our act of obedience is the very thing that activates God willingness to give the Holy Spirit. It states:

***If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.***

This shows that sensibly the Father loves those who after seeing His grace, and His offer of forgiveness, seek to obey Him. It shows that although the majority part of obedience is believing in the gift of grace that God has given on the cross, it takes salvation one step further to be a step of repentance, daily walking in God's light. Upon seeing the gift of grace, one must be willing to go God's way, that alone results in life. It is not enough to just see the cross, and want it, being unwilling to give up on our sins, that is not salvation.

A passage that describes both repentance and a two-way choice is the following Bible passage from the book of Job. Although it could be referring to how God enlightens the eyes of a righteous man who has strayed into sin. It clearly shows that God opens our eyes and ears to instruction, and whether we obey or disobey determines our eternal destiny.

***And if they are bound in fetters, Held in the cords of affliction, Then He tells them their work and their***

***transgressions—That they have acted defiantly. He also opens their ear to instruction, And commands that they turn from iniquity. If they obey and serve Him, They shall spend their days in prosperity, And their years in pleasures. But if they do not obey, They shall perish by the sword, And they shall die without knowledge. (NKJV, Job 36:8-12)***

What is shown in the passage above is that after enlightenment, our salvation is caused by our choosing, not God's choosing. It is our obedience to God's will that leads to life, and it could go either way based upon our choice.

Just a note on why I say, "could be referring to how God enlightens the eyes of a righteous man who has strayed into sin" the passage before it speaks of a righteous man. Yet if we look just after the passage it says:

***But the hypocrites in heart store up wrath; They do not cry for help when He binds them. (Job 36:13)***

Which suggests the passage states the LORD also does the same thing for the hypocrite, or sinner. But even if the passage was talking exclusively of the righteous, according to Calvinism the righteous can not be damned, for they were preselected by God for salvation. So we see two pathways based on the person's choice:

Pathway 1)



***If they obey and serve Him, They shall spend their days in prosperity, And their years in pleasures.***

Pathway 2)

***But if they do not obey, They shall perish by the sword, And they shall die without knowledge.***

This verse is a direct counterargument to Calvinism, for the righteous can indeed be damned.

But back to the point we are making: As we saw, the same thing is shown in the Book of John. The process involves a choice by man:

- 1) God gives the enlightenment of His word to both those who will obey and those who will not. There is no partiality.
- 2) Then we have a choice, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word”;
- 3) and “My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him”.

So our choices lead to the Father’s love. The point I am making is that there is an action of obedience to God’s revelation “before” the Father’s love is poured out. Sure, God must first give the enlightenment of His word, that of the grace of the cross. But man must accept and receive it before being saved. It is not as Calvin suggested, purely a gift to the Elect, which God hides from those not chosen by

Him, rather, “There is no partiality with God” (NKJV, Romans 2:11) we will be judged by our response and deeds.

***who “WILL RENDER TO EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. (NKJV, Rom 2:6-11)***

There is truly no partiality, the sufficient message of salvation, God’s good will to all, is given to everyone, those who keep it and deem it a pearl of great price, and those who don’t. As Irenaeus [A.D. 120-202] states in *Against Heresies* a work known by historians as “one of the most precious remains of early Christian antiquity” (Rev. Rambaut W. H. 1867, *Against Heresies* - Introductory Note), he explains that God kindly bestows His gift on all, but the response of obedience or disobedience determines their eternal destiny:

***that those who had yielded obedience might justly possess what is good, given indeed by God, but preserved by themselves. On the other hand, they***

*who have not obeyed shall, with justice, be not found in possession of the good, and shall receive condign punishment: for God did kindly bestow on them what was good; but they themselves did not diligently keep it, nor deem it something precious, but poured contempt upon His super-eminent goodness. (Rev. Rambaut W. H. 1867, Against Heresies - Book 4 Ch 37)*

## **An attitude of repentance**

How is one saved? Although the cross is where salvation is found, and faith in it. I believe we must have an attitude of repentance to be saved. To clarify repentance is a change of direction, when exposed to God's grace we have a change of mind. We all need this change for we are all born in sin. None of us have earned through right deeds our salvation.

*What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO, NOT ONE; (NKJV, Romans 3:9-10)*

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (NKJV, Ephesians 2:8-9)*

But there is a principal that as God reveals His truth, the

direction we take in response to it determines our salvation. Although we may fail to respond at times, may not act in a Godly way, and God needs to remind us of the need to go His way.

***Behold, God works all these things, Twice, in fact, three times with a man, To bring back his soul from the Pit, That he may be enlightened with the light of life (NKJV, Job 33-29-30).***

There is still a general need for love for the brethren and obedience to God (1 John 3:7, 1John 3:14). We will discuss how this works. The Bible reveals, one will not even come to the cross if they have no desire for repentance if they have a nature disposed to loving evil, they hate the light. Jesus showed in John 3 the difference between a person whose deeds were evil and one who when seeing God's mercy was willing to change their direction. We were all sinners to some degree before coming to Christ, so this is not so much talking about a legalistic keeping of God's word to earn salvation, but a heart when seeing God's goodness has the desire to go God's way. Conversely, the one who desires their sins wishes to suppress the knowledge God gives so they can continue in sin. We see the person lacking repentance here:

***And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not***

***come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.  
(NKJV, John 3:19-20)***

And one who is trying to do right.

***But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” (NKJV, John 3:21)***

We are not saying a person must be righteous before coming to Christ. In the passage of the thief on the cross, a man who had lived his whole life in sin, we see it is an attitude of repentance (desiring to go God's way), not our past works, that leads to salvation. When he saw his sinfulness, it moved him to seek God's forgiveness.

***Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.” But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” (NKJV, Luke 23:39-43)***

In the above passage, one man only cared about himself, the other was remorseful saying “Do you not even fear God”,

it was this act of genuine remorse before God that resulted in life. We should not second guess is our repentance genuine, God is very gracious to the one who comes to Him, gracious and willing to forgive (Exodus 34:6, Psalms 103:8), and beside all this, it is Him who ultimately gives us power to follow His ways.

***then He adds, "THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE." (NKJV, Hebrews 10:17)***

***He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. (NKJV, Isaiah 40:29)***

So what is the distinction between the righteous, and sinner? We see from scripture God will not give the Holy Spirit to the one who has no desire to change, who does not even try, who goes on in lawless, for even with the Spirit he will not keep God's decree. He will not seek forgiveness for he will purposefully keep on sinning. So God only gives the Holy Spirit to the one willing to follow Him, the one willing to accept His gracious forgiveness, and walk in God's love and light.

***Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our***

***home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me. (NKJV, John 14:22-24)***

So what does God require of us? Although none of us will be perfectly sinless, and in our life we will often need forgiveness as we grow to know God better.

***Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. (NKJV, Matthew 18:21-22)***

After we receive salvation, one must maintain an attitude of continually walking God's way. Denying the flesh. Putting off our sins.

***For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (NKJV, Romans 8:13)***

Although it is true that none of us are saved by our perfect deeds, it is the cross that gives us oneness with God and we certainly should not set aside the grace of God and suddenly work our way to salvation (Galatians 2: 21). We should as we grow have fruits birthed by God's Spirit, that display a patience continuance in doing good. For God:

***...“WILL RENDER TO EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. (NKJV, Romans 2:6-11)***

If we choose rather to follow the flesh, giving no heed to God’s word, not even trying, the Christian if they bear weeds can fall away according to Hebrews 6.

***For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. (NKJV, Hebrews 6:7-8)***

So walking in obedience is very important. We should have an attitude of working out our salvation with fear and trembling (NKJV, Philippians 2:12), not taking license to sin (Romans 6: 1-2, Galatians 5:13). Having a heart quick to turn to God, even in our failings and weaknesses, a heart genuinely toward God. For although, “There is not a just man



on earth who does not sin” (NKJV, Ecclesiastes 7:20), and God will forgive us if we fall (1 John 1:9). We should remain with our face toward God, cleansing our hearts and hands (James 4:8) not being double minded, by doing this we will overcome.

A heart toward God is very important, one willing to acknowledge His goodness to us (Psalm 107). So why did Jesus tell His disciples to keep His commandments, He was showing them, as people already exposed to His word and grace, an attitude of repentance and obedience was needed for Salvation (Matthew 5:19). It was not that you do 10 good deeds to earn salvation, none of us can boast on deeds good enough to save, but rather maintaining an attitude of going God’s way, doing our best to walk in His light, results in revelation, for God gives light to those who seek it.

***“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— (NKJV, John 14:15)***

## **The Book of Life Supports Predestination?**

The last book of the Bible, Revelation, has some verses that appear to have a Calvinistic meaning, we will show however that this need not be. We quote one of the verses below then explain it in a free will setting. The following is a passage from the Book of Revelation in the Bible:

***The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. (NKJV, Revelation 17:8)***

It appears at first glance that these scriptures support predestination by saying the names of the damned were not in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world. This would suggest that those in the Book of Life were entered in by God “before” creation, thus supporting Calvinism.

However the actual meaning of the word apo, Strong’s number G575 (Strong 1890), the word “from” can have the connotation of referring to a period leading out from that place over time. As we see in the following two scriptures which use identical Greek grammar, and phrases to the scripture in the book of Revelation:

***That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; (NKJV, Luke 11:50)***

***For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.(NKJV, Heb 9:26)***

What this shows is that Revelation 17:8 need not mean the names were in the book at the beginning, but rather were entered in from the point of creation on, they were inscribed as time went by, or in the case of the damned (e.g. those who have rejected Christ) were not entered as time passed.

A technical explanation of this can be found in the Biblical Hermeneutics section of Stack Exchange <<https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/8244/to-what-does-the-time-clause-connect-in-revelation-138>> in the response of user2910 (user2910 2014)

## **Romans 9 Supports Predestination?**

Of all the passages that could support Predestination, Romans 9 comes the closest and is often used as a proof text for Calvinists. When read it appears to prop-up Predestination. Making statements like:

***For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOMEVER I WILL HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOMEVER I WILL HAVE COMPASSION." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. (NKJV, 9:15-16)***

and

***Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and***

***whom He wills He hardens. You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” (NKJV, 9:18-19)***

But I wish to show that the scriptures that seem to support Predestination we not originally read in the way a Calvinist will expound them. Then give a verse-for-verse explanation of Romans 9 in light of what we learn about the passage from scripture and the Earliest Church Fathers who wrote on it. The first passage I wish to explore is:

***(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, “THE OLDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER.” As it is written, “JACOB I HAVE LOVED, BUT ESAU I HAVE HATED.” (NKJV, Romans 9:11-13)***

This scripture seems to be saying God chose between Jacob and Esau, based upon His sovereign choice, not based upon their works, one was saved one was not.

However let's first go to Romans 9 which starts by saying:

***nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “IN ISAAC YOUR SEED SHALL BE CALLED.” That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the***

***children of the promise are counted as the seed.  
(NKJV, Romans 9:7-8)***

The scripture states that just because a person is a son of Abraham does not make them a child to whom came the promise. The passage about Jacob and Esau I believe is related to this statement. This shows that even though both were sons of Abraham, only Jacob was blessed, he was to continue the line to the “seed” Christ (NKJV. Galatians 3:16), Esau was not blessed in this way. To prove this, we will see that the passage started with the phrase “And not only this”, forcing us to look back over the previous statements; which we shall see was making the story of Jacob and Esau a supportive phrase of Romans 9:7-8. Secondly, we will show the story is a picture of how the Jews gave up the birthright to the Gentiles, as we shall see in the context of scripture, and the writings of the Early Church who wrote on this passage. So let’s start:

***That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; (NKJV, Romans 9:8a)***

Firstly the topic of the passage is being a son of Abraham does not make you of the line chosen by God, the Jews are not heirs of salvation, just because they are children of Abraham.

***but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: “AT THIS TIME I WILL COME AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A***

***SON.” (NKJV, Romans 9:8b-9)***

To prove the point that not the sons of Abraham, but those given the promise, become the bearers of salvation. The passage speaks of the rising of Issac, and the cutting off of Hagar's son Ishmael. Now note, this is not stating Ishmael was unsaved, he was just not of the line of promise. The passage about Jacob and Esau is very important, it should not be read in an isolated way. As it is connected to the thought that came before it. For it starts with “And not only this”, it is a supporting argument for the past statements, which was:

***That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God (NKJV, Romans 9:8a)***

Meaning the story of Jacob and Esau is there to support the idea that not sons of Abraham but those given the promise become heirs. We see the joining passage here:

***And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (NKJV, Romans 9:10)***

This is speaking of Jacob and Esau, in the same way Issac was speaking of the promise, and the fact Ishmael although a son of Abraham was not the vessel through which salvation would come.

Jacob was chosen by God's choice to continue the line of

Israel, he was given the promise, to be the line through which salvation would arise, through Christ. As the younger, or undeserving; having not worked for it, his life mirrored the fact salvation would be by grace, not works. The individual salvation of Jacob and Esau was not the issue at stake and not the point Paul was trying to make. It was a picture of how the promise is given, and it is the promise that counts. Not the birthright, not the status as a son of Abraham. God used the act as a prophetic picture of the future, that salvation would come to the Gentiles, “not by our works, but by God’s offer, or gift”. The action of God creating prophetic pictures using people’s lives was quite common in scripture, as we shall see.

The view that Jacob and Esau’s is a prophetic picture is supported by the Early Church. Who saw the story of Jacob and Esau as representing the fact that God would accept the Gentiles, the younger, undeserving, and no longer use the law or Israel as the only vehicle of salvation although they originally had the birthright.

We see the idea of God using prophetic pictures in the story of Jacob in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, in a book by Barabus [A.D. 100], and also one by Irenaeus [A.D. 120-202]. Where they discuss the passage in Romans and link it to the birthright representing the Jews giving over salvation to the Gentile. To more clearly see we will take a quick pull quote from Irenaeus and then show the full passages on Jacob from both these writers:

***[Jacob] received the rights of the first-born, when his brother looked on them with contempt; even as***

*also the younger nation received Him, Christ, the first-begotten, when the elder nation rejected Him, saying, "We have no king but Caesar." But in Christ every blessing [is summed up], and therefore the latter people has snatched away the blessings of the former from the Father, just as Jacob took away the blessing of this Esau. (Rev. Rambaut W. H. 1867, Against Heresies - Book 4 Ch 21)*

Now let's read Barabus, who uses the same, "younger" analogy regarding Jacob:

*But let us see if this people is the heir, or the former, and if the covenant belongs to us or to them. Hear ye now what the Scripture saith concerning the people. Isaac prayed for Rebecca his wife, because she was barren; and she conceived. Furthermore also, Rebecca went forth to inquire of the Lord; and the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples in thy belly; and the one people shall surpass the other, and the elder shall serve the younger." You ought to understand who was Isaac, who Rebecca, and concerning what persons He declared that this people should be greater than that. And in another prophecy Jacob speaks more clearly to his son Joseph, saying, "Behold, the Lord hath not deprived me of thy presence; bring thy sons to me, that I may bless them." And he brought*



***Manasseh and Ephraim, desiring that Manasseh should be blessed, because he was the elder. With this view Joseph led him to the right hand of his father Jacob. But Jacob saw in spirit the type of the people to arise afterwards. And what says [the Scripture]? And Jacob changed the direction of his bands, and laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, the second and younger, and blessed him. And Joseph said to Jacob, "Transfer thy right hand to the head of Manasseh, for he is my first-born son." And Jacob said, "I know it, my son, I know it; but the elder shall serve the younger: yet he also shall be blessed." Ye see on whom he laid [his hands], that this people should be first, and heir of the covenant. If then, still further, the same thing was intimated through Abraham, we reach the perfection of our knowledge. What, then, says He to Abraham? "Because thou hast believed, it is imputed to thee for righteousness: behold, I have made thee the father of those nations who believe in the Lord while in [a state of] uncircumcision." (Lipsiae, T. O. Weigel 1866, Barabus Epistle - Part 2 Ch 13)***

We see in the passage above that both the story of Jacob and that of Manasseh and Ephraim are said to be prophetic pictures depicting the way God would save, by grace, even the Gentile (the undeserving younger), them inheriting the promise. Other Early Church Fathers also wrote on this passage. The following quotes from Irenaeus show that he

saw it as having a strong symbolic nature. Like Barabus (Lipsiae, T. O. Weigel 1866, Barabus Epistle - Part 2 Ch 13) he also saw the story as a prophetic picture of Christ, and how salvation would arise. He stated:

***2. The history of Isaac, too, is not without a symbolical character. For in the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle declares: "Moreover, when Rebecca had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac," she received answer from the Word, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, it was said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people are in thy body; and the one people shall overcome the other, and the elder shall serve the younger." From which it is evident, that not only [were there] prophecies of the patriarchs, but also that the children brought forth by Rebecca were a prediction of the two nations; and that the one should be indeed the greater, but the other the less; that the one also should be under bondage, but the other free; but [that both should be] of one and the same father. Our God, one and the same, is also their God, who knows hidden things, who knoweth all things before they can come to pass; and for this reason has He said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."***

***3. If any one, again, will look into Jacob's actions, he shall find them not destitute of meaning, but full of import with regard to the dispensations. Thus, in the first place, at his birth, since he laid hold on his brother's heel, he was called Jacob, that is, the supplanter — one who holds, but is not held; binding the feet, but not being bound; striving and conquering; grasping in his hand his adversary's heel, that is, victory. For to this end was the Lord born, the type of whose birth he set forth beforehand, of whom also John says in the Apocalypse: "He went forth conquering, that He should conquer." In the next place, [Jacob] received the rights of the first-born, when his brother looked on them with contempt; even as also the younger nation received Him, Christ, the first-begotten, when the elder nation rejected Him, saying, "We have no king but Caesar." But in Christ every blessing [is summed up], and therefore the latter people has snatched away the blessings of the former from the Father, just as Jacob took away the blessing of this Esau. (Rev. Rambaut W. H. 1867, Against Heresies - Book 4 Ch 21)***

So what can we say to all of this? The story of Jacob and Esau was put in Romans to show that the Gentiles are now joint heirs with the Jews. As the Jew was given the promise through history now the Gentile receives it. This argument is further strengthened by Paul's conclusion to the chapter

which states:

***What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. (KJV, Romans 9:19)***

So we see what Paul was trying to say in the chapter was the Gentiles not pursuing the righteousness of the law, have now obtained it, through faith.

Just a note of clarification when saying the Jew gave up the birthright to the Gentiles I am not saying the Jew is no longer saved or can not be saved, neither were the historical writers. It was a prophetic picture used by the Earliest Church Fathers, and I believe Paul, to show that the younger, undeserving, Jacob, received the promise. Showing that God's promise came to the undeserving Gentiles by faith. For we know that the Jew will always have a place in God's heart, and plan:

***And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. (NKJV, Genesis 17:7)***

Now we will look at another verse in Romans 9 that needs explanation before we walk verse by verse through the

whole chapter. A person who believes in Predestination will say this verse states God makes some people vessels of wrath, and some of honor by His sovereign choice alone.

***Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? (NKJV, Romans 9:21-24)***

But if we look at the verse carefully and link it to other scripture, and the Early Churches view we see it states:

***[God] endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath***

We are going to discuss from scripture how the long-suffering of God, fits with the idea that He tried time and time again to save the vessel of wrath, but in the end gave up trying and gave the person over to blindness, to a sorry plan. This idea is supported by both scripture and the Early Church. The following scripture in Romans describes how blindness occurs in the sinner or vessel of wrath.

***because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened Professing to be wise, they became fools, ... And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; (NKJV, Romans 1:21-28)***

The scripture clearly shows God does not “just blind people”, but their persistent rejection of God leads to spiritual blindness.

Irenaeus [A.D. 120-202] in Against Heresies talks of blindness coming only from a person’s self-rejection of the word of God.

***4. ... but for the despisers and mockers who avoid and turn themselves away from this light, and who do, as it were, blind themselves, He has prepared darkness suitable to persons who oppose the light, and He has inflicted an appropriate punishment upon those who try to avoid being subject to Him. Submission to God is eternal rest, so that they who shun the light have a place worthy of their flight; and those who fly from eternal rest, have a habitation in accordance with their fleeing. Now, since all good things are with God, they who by their own determination fly from God, do defraud themselves***

*of all good things; and having been [thus] defrauded of all good things with respect to God, they shall consequently fall under the just judgment of God. (Rev. Rambaut W. H. 1867, Against Heresies - Book 4 Ch 39 -End)*

He further shows that Pharaoh was not hardened by God firstly, but rather that Pharaoh had previously “set God at naught” and then God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. He states that those who want the light will be given revelation.

*Refutation of the Arguments of the Marcionites, Who Attempted to Show That God Was the Author of Sin, Because He Blinded Pharaoh and His Servants.*

*1. “But,” say they, “God hardened the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants.” ... For one and the same God [that blesses others] inflicts blindness upon those who do not believe, but who set Him at naught; ... but to those who believe in Him and follow Him, He grants a fuller and greater illumination of mind. In accordance with this word, therefore, does the apostle say, in ... the Corinthians: “In whom the this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine [unto them].” And again, in that to the Romans: “And as they did not think fit to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up*

*to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient.” Speaking of antichrist, too, he says clearly in the Second to the Thessalonians: “And for this cause God shall send them the working of error, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but consented to iniquity.”*

*2. ...[God knowing those who will not believe] has given them over to unbelief, and turned away His face from men of this stamp, leaving them in the darkness which they have themselves chosen for themselves, ...He did also at that time give over to their unbelief, Pharaoh, who never would have believed, along with those who were with him? As the Word spake to Moses from the bush: “And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, unless by a mighty hand.” And for the reason that the Lord spake in parables, and brought blindness upon Israel, that seeing they might not see, since He knew the [spirit of] unbelief in them, for the same reason did He harden Pharaoh’s heart; ... (Rev. Rambaut W. H. 1867, Against Heresies - Book 4 Ch 29)*





So now returning to the 9th book of Romans, we will walk through the whole passage. We will parse the scriptures and quotes previously provided through the passage to give meaning to the chapter. All quotes from Romans below come from the New King James Version of the Bible (NKJV, Romans 9: 1-33)

***I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving***

*of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.*

Paul starts by stating that the Jews were initially given the covenant, they were the vehicle through which salvation had come.

*But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "IN ISAAC YOUR SEED SHALL BE CALLED." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.*

Then he goes on to say not every child of Abraham, was counted as a child of God. Even though Abraham had a child with Hagar, that child did not become the line through which salvation would come. But in Issac, the child of promise salvation came.

*For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."*

But the fact is that not every child of Isaac was a child of God either. Jacob became the line leading to salvation, not Esau.

***And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, “THE OLDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER.” As it is written, “JACOB I HAVE LOVED, BUT ESAU I HAVE HATED.”***

God showed in the lives of Jacob and Esau, as he had done in the lives of Manasseh and Ephraim (Lipsiae, T. O. Weigel 1866, Barabus Epistle - Part 2 Ch 13) that the younger, undeserving, would receive the birthright from the older. The younger represents the Gentiles and the older represents the Jews. Both of these lives Jacob, and Ephraim were a prophetic picture of how salvation through Christ would ultimately come, by faith, not by works. That the Gentiles would receive what was originally the Jews alone. This was depicted in the lives of Jacob and Esau, who “having done any good or evil” Jacob was chosen, which represented the fact salvation would come by faith alone, to even the Gentile, not by man’s deeds.

***What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!***

Paul says there was no unrighteousness in God’s choice of Jacob, for God can do what He desires to bring salvation.

***For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON***

***WHOMEVER I WILL HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOMEVER I WILL HAVE COMPASSION.” So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.***

God brings His mercy in the way He wills, it is not according to the will of the people, who as children of Abraham may have desired to call themselves saved by that fact. Some even pursue the Law in the process, working hard to establish their own righteousness. But it is God’s purposes alone that stand, His choice of who and how to save.

***For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I HAVE RAISED YOU UP, THAT I MAY SHOW MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MAY BE DECLARED IN ALL THE EARTH.” Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.***

But God does not just have a salvation plan for His people, pouring out His mercy, He can also negatively use people to bring about His glory and show His power, these people He hardens or blinds. As Pharaoh was, people who are used for a negative purpose like him, first put God at naught, through their own will they reject God (NKJV, Romans 1:21-28; Rev. Rambaut W. H. 1867, Against Heresies - Book 4 Ch 39 -End, Rev; Rambaut W. H. 1867, Against Heresies - Book 4 Ch 29), so God in His anger hardens their hearts with blindness (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12), lest the truth of the gospel would shine on them (NKJV, 2 Corinthians 4:4), some He even raised to prominent positions to display His wrath

(NKJV, Romans 9:22).

***You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?***

These people given a negative plan for their lives, like Pharaoh, may well say “Why” and “How can you find fault in my actions, if you planned for me to remain blind, and gave me a sorry plan?” But to this, God would reply I can do what I want with my things.

***What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?***

God uses the vessels of wrath, those who have previously set God at naught, those prepared now for ultimate destruction, will be given a prelude plan, that displays God’s power and displeasure against sin. These vessels like all men were extended much long-suffering, but like

Judas the betrayer, who loved money more than God, were eventually given the title “Devil” by Him (NKJV, John 6: 70), because they did not wish to retain God in their knowledge (NKJV, Romans 1:21-28), they were given over to darkness forever. Yet, there are vessels of mercy, whom God planned beforehand to give great glory, these are both of the Jew and Gentile.

***As He says also in Hosea: “I WILL CALL THEM MY PEOPLE, WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, AND HER BELOVED, WHO WAS NOT BELOVED.” “AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, ‘YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,’ THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.”***

Gentiles are now also sons of God.

***Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: “THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BE AS THE SAND OF THE SEA, THE REMNANT WILL BE SAVED. FOR HE WILL FINISH THE WORK AND CUT IT SHORT IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, BECAUSE THE LORD WILL MAKE A SHORT WORK UPON THE EARTH.” And as Isaiah said before: “UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOTH HAD LEFT US A SEED, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WE WOULD HAVE BEEN MADE LIKE GOMORRAH.”***

The Jews as a nation did not prove any more worthy of salvation than any other people. Often corrected by God for their idolatry and sins. Yet God left them a remnant, to keep His covenant with the Fathers.

***What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: “BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STUMBLING STONE AND ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND WHOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME.”***

Paul shows what this whole chapter is about, summing it up by stating “What shall we say then?” He showed that the Gentiles are now sons of God, they were given the promise. So now whether Gentile or Jew, it is not by the Law that salvation now comes, but by faith. We are to put faith in the stumbling block, Jesus, and whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame, but have everlasting life.

## **We are Totally Depraved?**

What is total depravity? Wikipedia summarizes it this way:

***Total depravity (also called radical corruption or pervasive depravity) is a Protestant theological doctrine derived from the concept of original sin. It teaches that, as a consequence of the Fall, every person born into the world is enslaved to the service of sin as a result of their fallen nature and, apart from the efficacious (irresistible) or prevenient (enabling) grace of God, is completely unable to choose by themselves to follow God, refrain from evil, or accept the gift of salvation as it is offered (Wikipedia 2024).***

It is the idea that because of sin, man is no longer able to love or respond to God. In Calvinism, they are incapable of responding to the gospel. God must choose to enlighten the one who is to be saved. It is said that He chooses not to enlighten some. The second statement is contrary to the idea that God gives His knowledge to all (1 Timothy 4:10, 1 John 2:2, 1 Timothy 2:3-6). Romans 1:21 also says:

***because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened (NKJV, Romans 1:21).***

The above scripture says that all men receive a knowledge of God. But the sinner chooses to push aside that knowledge.

The idea that we are so depraved that we can not even have



a will capable of following God, is shown to be incorrect by Paul's discourse in Romans 7. This shows us although a person struggles to keep the Law, they can still delight in God's law. What this reveals is that although a person may struggle with sin, inwardly they can delight in God's law and desire to follow it. This love of the Law even in the person "sold under sin" enables them to respond to the gospel. Because God responds to our will, not our righteousness. See the quote from Romans 7:

***For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. (NKJV 7:14-22)***

## OSAS and Lawlessness

Now let's move to the issue of preservation of salvation. The acronym OSAS stands for Once Saved Always Saved. It is the logical conclusion of accepting Predestination. If God fixes destinies, if I am saved now, then I will always remain saved. The thinking that I will be saved no matter what can lead to (although not always) the thought that it does not matter if I sin, which in turn can lead to lawlessness, even a falling away from Christ.

To counter the thought of OSAS we will show from scripture that people can lose their salvation after receiving it.

***For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.  
(NKJV, Hebrews 6:4-6)***

The first passage shows us clearly, that people who were "once enlightened" - given sight by God, "have tasted the heavenly gift" and have even "become partakers of the Holy Spirit", can fall away from God, and if they die in sin, will be crucifying Christ again.

***For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the***

*world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A DOG RETURNS TO HIS OWN VOMIT," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." (NKJV, 2 Peter 2:20-22)*

Peter also shows this same fact, that people who have escaped the pollution of the world can again be entangled in them and lost.

*For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb 10:26-29)*

Hebrews states that there is a worse punishment for those who fell away knowing Christ. So from the scriptures, we can see that OSAS is not logical.

## Those God Foreknew?

The next scripture we are going to be investigating is a key passage used by Calvinists to support the idea of Predestination. It revolves around God's foreknowledge, which just means to "Know something beforehand". It says:

***For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (NKJV, Romans 8:29-30)***

Predestination uses the previous scripture to mean, that God knew of the people He would create (before creation), and predestined a group of them for salvation. The others are predestined (before creation) for damnation. Giving the damned to blindness, and no matter their effort will never be saved.

However, if we look at the word "foreknew" and how it was used by the early church, we will see that the meaning given by Calvinism is not the meaning the church ascribed to it. Justin Martyr [A.D. 110-165] states regarding the term

foreknown:

***... Furthermore, I have proved in what has preceded, that those who were foreknown to be unrighteous, whether men or angels, are not made wicked by God's fault, but each man by his own fault is what he will appear to be... (Rev. Dods 1867, Justin Martyr - Dialogue with Trypho, Ch 140)***

***...But if the word of God foretells that some angels and men shall be certainly punished, it did so because it foreknew that they would be unchangeably [wicked], but not because God had created them so. So that if they repent, all who wish for it can obtain mercy from God: and the Scripture foretells that they shall be blessed, saying, 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin;'... (Rev. Dods 1867, Justin Martyr - Dialogue with Trypho, Ch 141)***

We see in Justin's writings that He states specifically that God is not responsible for man's sins, and that He did not create people with a lack of ability to repent. That even those God knew would be wicked could still repent if they desired it, God never forced them to be evil.

He shows that foreknowledge does not equate to God's choosing to save or damn people before creation began. Rather foreknowledge is a thing where God knows

beforehand that some people will turn out in a certain way.

I would like to suggest that the scripture could be better understood by giving it the following meaning:

***Those who God knew [would end up saved] He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son***

As I show in the sections which follow God does not have perfect knowledge of the future, or man's choices. Although some would disagree, even those believing in free will. I would like to suggest that the above scripture would be better understood to mean a knowing that some people will be saved, not knowing exactly which ones. After talking about one more Calvinistic proof text we will return to the idea of what God does, or does not know about the future.

## **Chosen in Him Before the Foundation of the World?**

Calvinism states we were chosen before the creation for salvation, or damnation. The following scripture talks about being chosen before the foundation of the world, and on a surface level could be used to support Calvinistic beliefs. Let's go to the scripture:

***just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself,***

***according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. (NKJV, Ephesians 1:4-6)***

A cursory glance at the scripture seems to suggest that the saved were “chosen” by God, before creation for salvation, which would support Calvinism.

But in light of the evidence for free will, I would suggest, it should not mean they were picked at that time, in the sense of like sheep and goats (NKJV, Matthew 25:32). We know the Bible speaks of Christ’s sacrifice being foreordained before the foundation of the world:

***knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (NKJV, 1Peter 1:18-20)***

In that sense, the way mankind was to be saved was “chosen” before creation. So I suggest, Ephesians 1:4 could mean, “God chose those who were willing to believe (us), before creation, in Christ, according to the plan He had foreordained through Christ, these were predestined, by the plan of God to receive life”. Essentially, God planned whom He would save, not who He would save. In a similar way to the fore-ordination of the cross. God planned the vehicle of

salvation.

To further strengthen the case for free will and show that we were not chosen before creation for salvation or damnation in the Calvinistic sense. I present the following scripture from Matthew:

***“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (NKJV, Matthew 23:37)***

It shows that God was willing to save everyone (1 Timothy 4:10, 1 John 2:2, 1 Timothy 2:3-6), even the sinner. But it was the sinner who was unwilling to be saved, not God who was unwilling to save them. This shows that God did not choose people for salvation before creation. Because if He did it would mean He was unwilling to extend salvation to all, and would go against His desire as expressed in Matthew 23:37.

## **What Does God Plan and What Does He Not**

### **God Does Not Perfectly Know the Future**

First, we have to see that God does not have a fixed plan for



every action of man. If you go to Genesis you see God was shocked at how bad man had become, and it grieved Him, He actually wished He did not create man. If everything was set to a fixed plan, or God foreknew this fact, then this would not have surprised God at all, in-fact He would not have created man.

***Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." (NKJV, Genesis 6:5-7)***

Many theologians object to this idea because it puts God's omniscience at risk, so they say maybe God did not mean it the way He said it. But the scripture is plain in its meaning. But as with any doctrine or idea we could be wrong, and miss points related to God's infinite knowledge. But due to the scriptures clear meaning, I will present how I believe God could work in a world where there were unknowns due to man's choices. So what is it to be omniscient:

***If you describe someone as omniscient, you mean they know or seem to know everything. ...a benevolent and omniscient deity. (Collins 2024)***

The Omniscience of God as a doctrine is based on scriptures like:

***Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,' (NKJV, Isaiah 46:10)***

But God can know what is ahead, even if He does not know or control every little thing man will do, He can plan the future (even from times past), by putting restraints on what we can do in our lives. This can still work within the framework of free will, as we shall see in the next sections.

So what verses do people who believe in Predestination quote, to suggest God's plan is fixed? One follows:

***For I am the LORD, I do not change; (NKJV, Malachi 3:6 )***

They will say that it states God never changes His plans. But that is not true according to scripture there are many places where God changed His mind, some shown below. The above scripture states God's character does not change, it is not referring to His planning.

***if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it. (NKJV, Jeremiah***

**18:10)**

***Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it. (NKJV, Jonah 3:10)***

***So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people. (NKJV, Exodus 32:14)***

***And Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. (NKJV, 1 Samuel 13:13) ... And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel. (NKJV, 1 Samuel 15:35)***

We will quote some more proof text used by Calvinism, before returning to our topic. There is also the following scripture, that a person will say means God does not change His plans:

***God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He***

*not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? (NKJV, Numbers 23:19)*

But again this has nothing to do with God's planning or foreknowledge, it is rather stating when God gives a promise He will keep it. He is not a liar. So now let's look at how God's planning may play out.

## God and Knowing All Outcomes

The degree to which God fixes events is unknown, but some events in our lives are fixed. God does have boundaries to our personal stories. Some of these limits span the whole of creation, from start to end, while others are localized to an individual's life.

It may seem hard to imagine the world having free choice and God being able to know the future, but I am a computer programmer by trade and have studied Artificial Intelligence, there is one branch of knowledge that can predict all possible outcomes in a simulation or game, the computer can essentially know within a system of free choices, all possible outcomes. God is a lot faster and smarter than a simple computer. The only way however that the computer can "know" the end from the beginning, is to set constraints on choices, making stories, or outcomes that are restricted, which simplifies computation. For God to know every event that could potentially happen He would need to put constraints on man's stories. And we see this is what God appears to have done:

***And He 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; (NKJV, Act 17:26-27)***

What is the point of God restricting choices? A part of it is to give people an equal chance at salvation, by planning stories that are similar, or common to man. Because of this plan, people will not have wildly deviating, chaotic stories, that can not be equally judged. As the Bible says:

***No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (NKJV, 1 Corinthians 10:13)***

Some will say, that God has never given equal chances to people in the world. What of all those who have never heard about Jesus, did God give them an equal chance? Paul stated when speaking of sharing the gospel:

***But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "THEIR SOUND HAS GONE OUT TO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD."***

*(NKJV, Romans 10:18)*

This tells us that to the very ends of the world, people have heard. So how did they hear? Definitely through preaching. But what of those to whom the gospel has not been directly preached? I would like to suggest that as God did many times in scripture, to warn, or help people, He would send dreams and visions. It is not unreasonable to assume He would reach the unreachable using such methods. We see God reaching people with visitations in the book *Dreams and Visions: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World* (Doyle, Tom; Webster, Greg). In the book we see God does send dreams and visions to those who are for the most part unreachable, or hard to reach. Although in the book the Bible was said to be still important in the salvation process, it is not unreasonable to suggest an American Indian, or Aztec who does not have the Bible, could receive enough revelation directly from God to be saved. God is just. To get a feel for the content of the book we quote Jason Elam, Israel Director who says of the book:

***Tom Doyle brings us amazing insight with his new book *Dreams and Visions*. Through his many years of serving on the front lines in the Middle East and North Africa, he has compiled these recent and genuine accounts of how the one true God is getting his message of love to a people that have been captives for centuries by a suffocating religious system. Jesus is reaching out to Muslims and they are responding. You will be moved and inspired by the exciting stories of the many 'Jesus visits' in***

***Dreams and Visions! (Doyle, Tom; Webster, Greg)***

The point we have to recognize from a book like Dreams and Visions is that God can speak to the everyday person using dreams and visions, these dreams are very powerful and impact people strongly. It is unreasonable to suggest that if the need arose God would fold His hands and say “I am not talking with you”. If someone had no Bible or church, and no way to access one; I am sure God would not in His love give partial information that could not save, thus condemning a person to hell because He could not be bothered giving a clear vision. As I said God is just, He would give equal opportunity.

So why does the scripture say God has given a plan?

***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; (NKJV, Act 17:27)***

God wants us all to find Jesus, He has set up a plan for us to find Him. Yes, God has set end game moments, He has predetermined points of history that will never change, that are predestined, like the cross, and His return at the time of the end. But there are inconsequential choices that occur in between.

**When was God’s plan devised?**

So when does scripture hint that His plans were laid out? I would suggest that the plan God made for mankind was worked out before creation came to be.

***Known to God from eternity are all His works. (NKJV, Act 15:18 )***

This would suggest, before God created man He placed boundaries on where they would live, and how their days would play out. But as we see latter God did not plan out the evil that man would do, just made provision that if an evil act occurred it could be turned around for good.

## **The Two-way Plan for Man, Destiny and Our Choices**

To explore God's plan, and how it flexes with our obedience or lack of it, we will go to King David. In the Psalms he wrote:

***Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book all my days were recorded, even those which were purposed before they had come into being. How dear are your thoughts to me, O God! how great is the number of them! If I made up their number, it would be more than the grains of sand; when I am awake, I am still with you. (NKJV, Psalms 139:16-18)***

So we see that David says God had a plan written down for him in a book before he was formed in his mother's womb. Which is not an uncommon thought. We also see Jeremiah:

***Before you were formed in the body of your mother I had knowledge of you, and before your birth I***



*made you holy; I have given you the work of being a prophet to the nations. (NKJV, Jeremiah 1:5)*

So we see that God is assigning works for people to do before they are born. I believe that God has a plan for each of us, a good plan. But what I want to show is that although God has a purpose for each of us, that purpose can, and does change depending on what we and others do. Free will guides our end destination.

King David for example sinned by killing a man and taking the man's wife to be his own. What did God say of this?

*Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more! Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from*

***your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.’ (2 Samuel 12:7-12)***

So what are we looking for in this scripture? Three things:

- 1) God said “I would have given you much more” If David did not sin his pathway would have been blessed even more.
- 2) God said “Because you wouldn’t obey me” A curse came into his life.
- 3) God says “Behold, I will raise evil against thee out of thine own house,” God changed David’s story.

So God changed David’s plan for His life. Bringing a corrective one. It is true that God assigns us a destiny “before we were born”, a Godly task to do, if we obey, we will live, if we disobey we will have a curse. Our story will change. Our life is not set to one story but is bound to our actions.

***if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it. (Jeremiah 18:10)***

Even Jeremiah had moments where he could have lost his calling. When complaining to God, the LORD replied to Jeremiah:

***Therefore thus says the LORD: "If you return, Then I will bring you back; You shall stand before Me; If you take out the precious from the vile, You shall be as My mouth. Let them return to you, But you must not return to them. (NKJV, Jeremiah 15:19)***

God stated "if" you return to me you shall be my mouth piece. There are many ifs in our lives, if we do well God will bless, if we don't then a curse can come. This is even seen in the life of Cain the first person to be given a curse by God for the murder of his brother. But before this death occurred God said to Cain:

***If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it. (NKJV, Genesis 4:7)***

God plainly told Cain, he has power to be accepted by God if he did well. The initial rejection by God was the thing Cain was angry about (Genesis 4:5), his brother's offering was accepted by God due to it being the best of his brother's flock, the scripture suggests Cain had begrudgingly offered a lesser gift. This shows firstly that even people like Cain could have been blessed by God, even saved eternally, if they listened to God's warning. But unfortunately Cain rather desired revenge on his brother, ignoring God, thus resulting in God's severe displeasure.

## God Cannot be Tempted by Evil So Does Not Drive It

Now let's look at temptation, and how God is in no way desiring man's sins, nor planning them. For we know that God does not tempt any man to sin.

***Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. (NKJV, James 1:13)***

So God is not causing or responsible for the evil actions of man. This means God did not plan out the evil deeds of man. But I do believe He tries to turn around many bad situations caused by the free will of man for good, as the Bible says of the Christian:

***And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (NKJV, Romans 8:28)***

That for every evil purpose man proposes, or carries out, God is working in the background moving people toward a good purpose, even though an evil act occurred. If the planning of God extends to our day-to-day activities, it is making the statement, that God knows a negative act could occur, given free will, but He has a positive plan to work things out for good in the end.

This fact shows us that God does not have a fixed plan,

that is written like a typical linear book. If man is responsible for sin, then there is an element of free will choice, be it an evil choice, that man makes that deviates God's plans. To further prove this we see there are certain things that "Never entered God's mind", that he never desired to happen.

*(they have also built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or speak, nor did it come into My mind) (NKJV, Jeremiah 19:5)*

## Judas Given a Negative Purpose

God can raise people for a good or bad purpose. Judas was given a sad purpose, the betrayal of Jesus. A person who believes in Predestination will say Judas was always destined to betray Jesus, that he was always even from his birth a Devil. But I believe even as the scripture says, that God would have given Judas knowledge of His ways, but Judas had kicked against it, and eventually became blind, as is the fate of every sinner:

*because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened Professing to be wise, they became fools, ... And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; (NKJV,*

***Romans 1:21-28)***

***What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, (NKJV, Romans 9:22)***

I believe Judas had beforehand, in his earlier life disqualified himself from eternal life by rejecting what God had shown, fleeing from God's long-suffering, essentially God had endured his behavior, but once he was no longer save-able, he became a devil in God's eyes, a lover of sin, a reprobate, then he was assigned the purpose of the betrayal of Jesus. This is why Jesus said of Judas at the time of working with him:

***Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (NKJV, John 6: 70)***

So why was Judas, a devil, why was he chosen to betray Jesus? He was a thief.

***This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. (NKJV, John 12:6)***

Judas had a lifestyle of stealing. Now we see that other thieves have been redeemed so I am not saying a thief can't be saved, we see one of the robbers on the cross was

forgiven and made it to heaven. What I am saying is our lifestyle determines our outcome.

## All Means All

The Bible is clear in many places that God desires all to be saved, which denies Calvinism power. Below I quote some of the scriptures that show that all means both Jew and Gentile, all people of the world.

***For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. (NKJV, 1 Timothy 4:10)***

***And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (NKJV, 1John 2:2)***

The fact is Jesus's ransom was given for all men, for there is not one that God does not love. For God is love.

***For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all,***

***to be testified in due time, (NKJV, 1Timothy 2:3-6)***

However, Predestination tries hard to say “all does not mean all”, for they believe only a select few will be chosen by God for salvation, the rest are forced into damnation, the damned never loved by God, never given a chance. But scripture clearly states all men were loved by God, but many were unwilling to come to Him for salvation. Jesus stated while looking over Jerusalem:

***“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! (NKJV, Mathew 23:37)***

God also shows that He takes no pleasure in the death of the sinner.

***Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’ (NKJV, Ezekiel 33:11)***





## Predestination's Unreasonableness

There are some scriptures in the Bible that are hard to understand, Peter wrote that a lot of Paul's writings although true, were hard to understand.

*and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the*

***rest of the Scriptures. (NKJV, 2 Peter 3:15-16)***

Satan loves to take the truth and twist it to make it hard for people to come to the truth. It only takes a small lie, or twisting of the truth to turn people off.

***A little leaven leavens the whole lump. (NKJV, Galatians 5:9)***

The Bible tells us that it is the “goodness of God that leads you to repentance”, so it is no surprise that one of Satan’s goals is to attack the goodness of God.

Predestination is a topic that is often taken so far that it attacks the nature of God. The Bible says that “God is love”, this love is expressed in God’s desire to draw, as many as are willing to Himself:

***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. (NKJV, John 3:16)***

***The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (NKJV, 2 Peter 3:9)***

The Bible tells us that God loved the world and gave His Son so that whoever believes in Him will be saved and that God is slow to anger, not willing that any people perish.

Predestination takes some hard-to-understand scriptures and makes a harsh view of God which attacks the above scriptures. Predestination assumes that people “cannot choose to do good”, that they “cannot respond to salvation”, and the only way God can save a person is to choose them for salvation, and fix their destiny. Essentially God only chooses a select few, who they call the Elect for salvation. The rest cannot respond and are damned. This is all a part of God’s will, He fixes destinies before time began, and it is His plan, a plan that cannot be altered. If you look at this with logical eyes, you can see that it makes God look unjust.

## Summing it Up

Predestination can be an emotionally harmful doctrine, that in some cases leads to personal lawlessness. It is a doctrine that is not supported by the Early Church, the people best acquainted with the Apostle’s teachings. We saw that the Early Church supported the idea of free will in man. Regarding the arguments in favor of Calvinism, scripture and the teachings of the Early Church have an answer for them. Due to the logical unreasonableness of Calvinism, which if untrue blights the character of God, and removes personal accountability for sin, if you believe in Predestination I ask you to reconsider your views.

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