

Predestination (Why Are Many Called, but Few Chosen?)

The Bible teaches that God wants all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth ([1 Timothy 2:3-4](#); [2 Peter 3:9](#)). By God's grace, the gift of salvation is offered to all people ([John 3:16-17](#); [Romans 5:18](#)). This gift of salvation is offered by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone ([Galatians 2:16](#); [Ephesians 2:8-9](#)).

But the Bible also teaches that all people are by nature spiritually blind, dead, and at enmity with God; and that they cannot come to faith in Christ by their own personal power or decision ([John 1:10-13](#); [Romans 3:10-11](#); [1 Corinthians 2:14](#); [Ephesians 2:1](#)). But God in His mercy has predestined that some people would be called by His Word and brought to faith in Christ (i.e. "born again") by the work of the Holy Spirit ([Deuteronomy 7:6-8](#); [1 Kings 19:18](#); [Mark 13:20](#); [John 15:16-19](#); [Romans 8:29-30](#); [Ephesians 1:3-14](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:13-14](#)). Thus a Christian's conversion to faith in Christ is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit ([Ezekiel 36:26-27](#); [1 Corinthians 12:3](#)).

Note that the Bible does not teach that God has predestined anyone to unbelief and hell (i.e. "double predestination"). When people reject God and His salvation, they are choosing to do so based on their own wisdom and understanding ([Jeremiah 15:6](#); [Matthew 23:37](#)). So, in principle, people do possess the "free will" to choose to accept or reject God, but they do not possess the ability to accept God. In their natural state, they will always reject God. In a sense, this is similar to people's condition with respect to holiness. In principle, people have the "free will" to choose to live a holy life, but they do not have the ability to do so. At some point, they will always (and often) choose to commit acts of sin.

Note also that the people that have been chosen and brought to faith in God retain their innate natural ability to fall away from faith and reject God ([1 Samuel 15](#); [Luke 8:10-15](#); [Luke 22:3](#)). In many places in the Bible, God exhorts His chosen people to make the choice to continue to follow and serve Him ([Joshua 24:14-15](#); [Proverbs 1-2](#); [2 John 8-9](#); [Revelation 3:20](#)).

All of this leads to the question: If God wants all to be saved, and has called many to salvation, why has He predestined and chosen few for salvation ([Matthew 22:14](#))? One answer is given in [1 Corinthians 1:20-31](#). In His wisdom, "God has chosen the weak things of this world, and the despised things, and the things that are nothing, to do away with the things that are, so that no one may boast before God."

Because of our sinful human natures, we always consider ourselves more important and more significant than we actually are. Our natures are such that if God chose all people of the earth to form a worldwide Christian fellowship, we would quickly become

proud of our significance as a global movement, which would cause us to become corrupt as a church, and we would fall away from God's truth. It would be inevitable. As humans, we are able to remain faithful to God only through the power of His Spirit, and only when we realize that our faith does not rest on human wisdom or power, but on God's power. As chosen faithful Christians, "we speak wisdom among those who are mature, but it is not a wisdom of this world or the rulers of this world, who are reduced to nothing. Instead, we speak God's wisdom." ([1 Corinthians 2:6-7](#))

The corruptibility of human nature has displayed itself several times in world history. In the beginning, God did choose all of the people of the earth, i.e. the descendants of Adam and Eve, as His own. But in the space of a single generation, most of mankind chose to reject God and fall away ([Genesis 4; 6:1-8](#)). The same thing happened with the descendants of Noah ([Genesis 9-11](#)).

Later, when God chose the children of Israel as His people, they were a group of slaves that meant nothing to the rest of the world, and that depended totally on God's providence for their survival ([Exodus 6-16](#)). While they were dependent on God, the children of Israel remained mostly faithful to Him (albeit with some setbacks – [Exodus 32](#)). But when Israel became a great nation and significant in the eyes of the world, they became largely unfaithful ([1 Kings 19:18](#)), to the point where God used the nation of Assyria to destroy Israel's northern kingdom ([2 Kings 17:21-24](#)).

In order to preserve the line to the Savior, God did preserve a remnant of the southern kingdom of Judah, which eventually went into exile in Babylon ([2 Kings 25](#)). It was while they were exiles in Babylon, and insignificant to the rest of the world, that some of the remnant repented and returned to faith in God ([Daniel 1-6](#)). It was because of this return to faith that God graciously reestablished the nation in their original homeland ([Ezra 1,2,7,8,9; Nehemiah 2,11,12](#)).

But even the descendants of this remnant proved to be unfaithful to God's will when most of them rejected the Son of God Himself during His incarnation on the earth ([Matthew 13:53-58; Mark 8:31; Luke 13:31-35; John 1:10-11](#)).

The few who did believe and follow Jesus became the Christians of the early New Testament church. In the early days, they were considered insignificant by their powerful Judean and Roman rulers (including the Corinthian Christians to whom Paul was writing in the passages above from 1 Corinthians). During the time that they were considered nothing in the eyes of the world, these early Christians "continued to hold firmly to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship." ([Acts 2:42](#)) The faithfulness of these early Christians to God's Word is the reason why we are blessed with so many accurate early manuscripts of the New Testament books. Indeed, there are many more [early manuscripts](#) of the New Testament than all other ancient manuscripts taken together.

Unfortunately, when the Christian Church became established as the state religion of Rome, its importance and prestige quickly corrupted it, and false teachings began to dominate. This ultimately led to the Dark Ages, and to the worldwide establishment of false teachings in the Roman Church.

In order to re-establish His true Church, God chose a single, insignificant German monk, Martin Luther, to proclaim the truth of God's Word. During the time that Luther and his followers were considered small and insignificant in the eyes of the world, they remained faithful to God. However, when the Lutheran Church became recognized as the state church in European countries such as Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, it too became corrupted and unfaithful to the truth. Today, in the entire country of Germany, there are only about 1000 souls that publicly confess the Bible in its truth and purity ([ELFC-Germany](#)).

Currently worldwide there are about 400,000 people that publicly confess the Bible in its truth and purity ([CELC](#)). This is a small and insignificant number, even within the world's Christian community. Thus it appears the human condition has not changed over time. A group of people in a church are able to remain faithful to God only when they clearly understand their insignificance in the world, and their total reliance and dependence on God's power.

What does this mean for our prayers to God that He grow and expand His church on earth? What we understand is that the true church can grow only when we improve our confession and defense of the truth of God's Word. If we expand our numbers by compromising the principles of God's Word to the will of man, then we will only see the numbers of faithful Christians decline, as more and more people fall away from the truth. We ask God in His mercy to prevent this from happening. At the same time, we understand that God maintains and preserves His true church on earth by predestinating and choosing "the things that are nothing, to do away with the things that are, so that no one may boast before God." Praise be to God!