



Do humans really have free will?

Are humans predestined, or do they have free will?

'Predestination' is a word often used to signify God's foreordaining of all events of world history — past, present, and future. This usage is quite appropriate. In Scripture and historic Protestant theology, 'predestination' refers specifically to God's decision, made in eternity before the world existed, regarding the final destinies of individual persons . . . it is usual in Protestant theology to define predestination as including both God's decision to save some from sin (election) and the corresponding decision not to save others (reprobation)”—The Reformation Study Bible, page 1345

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him”—John 6:44

God definitely chooses who will serve him. (**John 15:16; Acts 15:14; Romans 8:33; Romans 11:5; 1 Corinthians 1:27-28; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 17:14**) But, is human will is also at work? Are some people predestined to receive salvation, and others predestined to get eternal damnation? Does God allow each person to make, or decide, their own decisions or choices? Do people really have free will? Bible examples and principles, such as the following, make the answers to these questions clear:

God warned Adam of the dire consequences of eating from a certain tree. (**Genesis 2:16-17**)

“If you do what is right, will you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right,

sin is crouching at your door.” (Genesis 4:7 NIV) God warned Cain. His language indicates that Cain had a choice, or free will.

“I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life.” (Deuteronomy 30:19 NIV) God made clear there is a very serious choice to make, and he urged, but did not force, the right choice..

“Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to destruction is wide and spacious, and many take it; but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14 NJB, emphasis added) Notice how the NLT renders the key phrase: “broad, and its gate is wide, for *the many who choose that way.*” Jesus clearly articulates the choice that people have, and that many, unfortunately, make the wrong choice. Jesus urges the imperative: “*Enter by the narrow gate.*”

“Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God, or I speak on my own.” (John 7:17 NIV) Doing God’s will, or not doing it, is a choice. Anyone, and everyone, has a very serious choice to make.

“Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.” (James 4:4 NIV) Being an enemy of God is also a choice each person has.

So, although God chooses who will serve him, human will is also at work. God allows each person to make their own choices. People have the free will to make choices in life, which can either be contrary to God’s will, or in harmony with His purpose.

However, belief in predestination, meaning that long ago God decided which humans will get eternal life, and which ones will get eternal damnation, is also quite popular. Due to this belief, or dogma, the Greek words “*proginosko*” and “*proginzo*” are translated as “**predestined**” in many Bible translations at **Romans 8:29,30; Ephesians 1:5,11 (NIV; NKJV)**. However, these scriptures are more accurately translated as follows:

“Because whom He foreknew, He also foreordained conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be firstborn among many brothers; and whom He foreordained, these He also called; whom He called, these He also declared righteous; and whom He declared righteous, these He also glorified”—Romans 8:29,30 LSV

“For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. and having given them right standing, he gave them his glory”—Romans 8:29,30 NLT

“Having foreordained us to the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will”—Ephesians 1:5 LSV

“God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. this is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure”—Ephesians 1:5 NLT

“In whom also we obtained an inheritance, being foreordained according to the purpose of Him who is the working all things according to the counsel of His will”—Ephesians 1:11 LSV

“Because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance and he makes everything work out according to his plan”—Ephesians 1:11 NLT

While God foretold that he would have people who would serve him, he did not decide in advance exactly who those individuals would be, because he allows each person to choose to do his will, or not do his will. This means that humans are not predestined, and that they do have free will.

