

Is It Possible for a Person to be Saved but Not Predestined?

GOT QUESTIONS

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No, it is impossible for someone to be saved without being elected by God to salvation. Many people, the first time they encounter the [doctrine of election](#), are upset by what seems to them to be a horribly unfair arrangement. Unfortunately, that is where many people end the discussion. A proper biblical view of election, however, leads to the conclusion that God's choice in [predestination](#) is an incredibly loving act.

We are all sinners, and, left to ourselves, we would never choose God. Our initial response to God is to rebel against His love and sovereignty. We do not seek Him ([Romans 3:11](#)). We do not want Him to tell us what to do. If we are ever to turn from our sin in repentance and [faith](#), He *must* initiate the process. Jesus told the crowds who were grumbling at His teaching, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them" ([John 6:44](#)). In other words, no one can be saved unless they are [elect](#).

It is also true that, in order to be saved, a person must make the choice to believe. Most believers can point to a time in which they considered the claims of Christ and surrendered to Him. We chose to surrender in faith; if we had not chosen to do so, we could not be saved. However, examining Scripture and looking back on the process of our salvation, we recognize God's hand at work all along the way — we see the conviction of the Holy Spirit; we see how God was changing our unregenerate hearts to enable us to believe; we see the series of events that God orchestrated so that we could hear the gospel.

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We have a relationship with God because God chose to pursue a relationship with us and win us over. Some object that God does this with everyone. But, if that were the case, then the reason some people believe and others don't is that some were more genuine, spiritually attuned, or morally sensitive. That would mean that some measure of innate human goodness enables some people to believe. If people contribute of their own goodness to salvation, we have a logical problem. More importantly, we have a biblical problem.

Scripture teaches that God has chosen to save some people, and He chose them based on His own purposes, not some innate goodness on the part of the people being saved. Nor was His choice based on His [advance knowledge](#) of what decisions they would make. Paul describes God as the One who “chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves” ([Ephesians 1:4–6](#)).

In [Ephesians 1:11–14](#), Paul explains how God's choice and our faith work together: “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.” The whole plan is for God's glory and for the good of those whom He has chosen to save. Contrary to much popular teaching, the plan of salvation is not about us; it is about God.

The doctrine of election is clearly taught in Scripture. The Bible even speaks of those who *belong* to God who have not yet *believed* in Him. God has chosen them, and they belong to Him, even though they have yet to come to faith. To the unbelieving religious leaders, Jesus says, “You do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me” ([John 10:26](#)). Notice the cause and effect in His statement. He does not say, “You are not my sheep because you do not believe”; rather, He says, “You do not believe because you are not my sheep.” In verse 16, Jesus speaks of other sheep who will believe once they hear His voice. Those who are predestined to be saved will be saved.

In Corinth, there were only a handful of believers, and Paul was facing persecution, but Jesus appeared to him in a vision and said, “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city” ([Acts 18:9–10](#)). Corinth was not full of believers at the time, but

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it was full of [the elect](#)—people whom God had chosen and who would come to faith when they heard the message.

Some might ask, why bother sharing the gospel if God has already chosen to save some? The answer is that He commands us to share the gospel. We evangelize to bring God glory and because the preaching of the [gospel](#) is the way He has chosen to save the elect. Writing from a Roman prison and awaiting execution, Paul explains to Timothy why he is willing to endure hardship for the gospel: “Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory” ([2 Timothy 2:10](#)).

Some may charge that God’s plan is simply unfair—some are chosen to be saved while others are passed over and have no chance. This objection often assumes a faulty picture of salvation, one in which people are lining up to be saved, pleading with God to save them, but He says, “No, I have not chosen you. Your name’s not on the list, so I reject you.” But that’s not what happens. The reality is that everyone is given a choice to obey God, and everyone, great and small, chooses to sin. Scripture reveals that, in His grace, God has chosen to save some *in spite of* their rebellion. He works in their hearts and wins them over. The others God simply allows to continue in the ways they have freely chosen and desire to continue in. Those who reject Christ do so freely. Those who receive Christ also do so freely, but only because God has worked in their hearts to win them over so that they now want to receive Him. God is perfectly free; He is obligated to save no one, and the fact that He saves some shows that He is loving.

No one is saved without the election and predestination of God. If there were no election and predestination, the entire human race would be eternally lost. The only reason a rebellious sinner ever comes to faith in Christ is that God has chosen to win him over instead of allowing him to continue down the path to destruction. God is in charge. “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” ([Revelation 7:10](#)).

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