

Predestination *and* Free Will!

The Church Father Augustine wrote:

“Whoever claims that grace cancels free will does not understand that he does not cement the will but lets it be drift without resistance.”¹

Alister McGrath comments aptly on this:

“According to Augustine, if justice is to be done to the richness and complexity of the biblical statements on this subject, one must at the same time hold to the absolute sovereignty of God and to truly human freedom and responsibility. To simplify the problem by denying God’s sovereignty or human freedom would amount to a serious questioning of the Christian understanding of the way in which God justifies man.”²

Wilhelm-Albert Hauck has shown that the doctrine of predestination for John Calvin does not limit or reduce ethos, i.e. responsible action according to God’s standards, but rather justifies it.³ He summarizes Calvin’s position:

“The correctly understood doctrine of predestination, on which the certainty of election and salvation of the faithful is based, can never destroy a genuine ethos. Instead, it works by its orientation towards God’s holy will, which with knowledge also gives power for fulfillment, establishing ethos, preserving ethos, and accomplishing ethos. By the way, this is also demonstrated by a look into the history of Calvinism, which is supported by moral seriousness and the highest ethical activism ...”⁴

Henry Meeter has also pointed out that Calvin and the Calvinists not only emphasize predestination more strongly than others. They also emphasize human responsibility more than others.⁵ Thus, they have been equally accused of overemphasizing predestination and therefore being fatalists as well as overemphasizing responsibility and therefore being legalistic!

Bible Texts in which Predestination and Responsibility are mentioned together⁶

The fact that knowing that God directs all things does not diminish man’s responsibility, and conversely that man’s complete responsibility does not place God’s sovereignty into question,⁷ is shown in particular by such Bible texts in which both sides are simultaneously found, indeed where from one side a conclusion is drawn about the other side.

We thank God in prayer for food as well as thanking the one who cooked it. Each time a new person is born, that individual is newly created by God and yet at the same time is born through two individuals through the process of biological procreation. Such Biblical examples demonstrating how God’s

sovereign action and human activity and participation belong together and are not mutually exclusive could be multiplied at one's discretion.

Texts on Predestination in Relation to Salvation, in which Predestination by God and human Responsibility are mentioned together:

- Philippians 2:12–13: "... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good counsel." (Christians put forth efforts, yet only because they know that God brings about everything.)
- 1 Peter 2:7–8: "Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.' They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for." (They are personally responsible for being disobedient, and yet they have been destined for this by God.)
- John 1:12–13: "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (One must receive God personally, and yet this is not done by human power but by God.)
- John 6:37: "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." (One must come to Jesus, but he who comes is given by the Father.)
- John 6:29: "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (This is the answer to the question in 6:28 as to which works of God are to be done.) (One personally believes and yet this faith is the work of God.)
- 1 Corinthians 15:10 (Paul about himself): "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect." (Everything is by the grace of God and yet Paul can at the same time point to the fact that grace is not for nothing. Similarly:)
- 2 Corinthians 6:1: "As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain."⁸
- Galatians 4:8–9: "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God – or rather are known by God ..."

Who hardened the Egyptian pharaoh?

1. God hardened Pharaoh and the Egyptians: Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1+20+27; 11:10; 14:4+8 and Exodus 14:17 (relating to the people)
2. Without specifying the originator: Exodus 7:13+14+22; 8:15+28; 9:7+35
3. Pharaoh hardens his heart: Exodus 8:11; 9:34 (comp. 1 Samuel 6:6; Proverbs 28:14) "The hardening is thus both, divine deed and at the same time the subject's own deed, as then both expressions change ... In the first place, the hardening is the effect of divine wrath." (Oehler)

The word "hardening" appears in the New Testament as hardening by God in Matthew 13:15; John 12:40; Acts 28:27; Romans 9:18; 11:7; 2 Corinthians 3:14, as a self-inflicted hardening of an individual or as a warning against it in Mark 3:5; Acts 19:9; Romans 2:5; Hebrews 3:8+13+15; 4:7.

[Quote: Gustav Friedrich Oehler. *Theology of the Old Testament*. J. F. Steinkopf: Stuttgart, 1891 3rd edition, p. 258. See also Karl Ludwig Schmidt. "Die Verstockung des Menschen durch Gott" (translation of the title: "The hardening of man by God"), *Theologische Zeitschrift 1* (1945) 1: 1–17. Regarding the

final sentence: All texts examined here were those where Luther's translation used the German word "verstocken" (comp. *ibid.*, p. 5), which is equivalent to harden. In Greek and Hebrew different terms stand for this (comp. *ibid.*, p. 9–15).

Texts in which the Responsibility of an Individual in general and the Predestination of Events by God are mentioned together:

- Luke 22:21–22: (about Judas:): "But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him." (Judas's fate is the fulfillment of prophecy and is decided. Nevertheless, he is fully responsible.) Similarly, but more generally formulated, one reads:
- Matthew 18:7: Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!
- Isaiah 50:11: "But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand ..." (They run into the fire due to their own fault and yet this comes from God.)
- Deuteronomy 29:28: The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law. (God's hidden action can never be used as an excuse for not obeying His revealed commandments.)
- James 4,13–17: We should not boast about our plans. Rather, we should say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that" (James 4:15), and then do our work. (Everything should be subject to the proviso that God ultimately determines everything and yet business should be conducted.)
- Nehemiah 2:20: "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding ..." (Knowledge that God gives success does not lead to lazily waiting but to active collaboration.)
- 1Petr 3,17: „Denn es ist besser, wenn der Wille Got-tes es will, für Gutestun zu leiden als für Böses-tun.“ (Das Leiden geschieht nach Gottes Willen und dennoch sind wir dafür verantwortlich, ob wir wegen böser Dinge oder wegen guter Dinge leiden.)
- 1 Peter 3:17: "It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." (Suffering occurs according to God's will. Nevertheless, we are responsible when it comes to whether we suffer because of evil things or good things.)
- Proverbs 21:31: "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord."

People ask God to bring Them to Repentance:

- Jeremiah 31:18–19: "Restore me, and I will return, because you are the Lord my God. After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast."
- Lamentations 5:21: "Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may return ..."

Knowledge of Predestination for Salvation leads to Evangelization and Efforts as regards the Chosen:⁹

- 2 Timothy 2:10: "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." (Paul must therefore still expend efforts with respect to the elect!; similarly):
- Acts 18:9–10: God has "many people in this city," which is stated when most are still unbelieving.

Precisely because God has a people consisting of the elect, Paul should speak and not remain silent (18:9).

- Philippians 2:12–13: “... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” [or: counsel]. (Christians put forth efforts, yet only because they know that God brings about everything. Knowledge about predestination does not make them passive but active, not apathetic but fervent)

See also Nehemiah 2:20: “The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding ...” (for comment see the box before last).

1. Aurelius Augustinus. Schriften gegen die Semipelagianer. Reihe: Sankt Augustinus, der Lehrer der Gnade: Deutsche Gesamtausgabe seiner antipelagianischen Schriften Bd. 7 (translation of the Title: Writings against the Semipelagians. Series: Sankt Augustinus, The Teacher of Grace: German Complete Edition of His Antipelagian Writings Vol. 7.), Augustinus-Verlag: Würzburg, 1987 2nd Edition, p. 31. Comp. also Aurelius Augustin. Vom Gottesstaat. Bd. 1 (translation of the Title: From the God State. Vol. 1, dtv: Munich, 1985 2nd Edition, pp. 240–244+361–363. ↩)
2. Alister E. McGrath. Der Weg der christlichen Theologie (Translation of the title: The Way of Christian Theology), C. H. Beck: München, 1997, p. 436. ↩
3. Wilhelm-Albert Hauck. Die Erwählten: Prädestination und Heilsgewißheit nach Calvin (Translation of the title: The Elect: Predestination and Certainty of Salvation according to Calvin) C. Bertelsmann: Gütersloh, 1950, pp. 94–106. The Calvinist R. B. Kuiper. God Centred Evangelism. Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 1978 (reprinted 1966), esp., p. 36ff. also assumes that the doctrine of election leads to evangelism. ↩
4. Wilhelm-Albert Hauck. Die Erwählten, op. cit., p. 106. Comp. Heinz Otten. Calvins theologische Anschauung von der Prädestination. Forschungen zur Geschichte und Lehre des Protestantismus 9/1 (translation of the title: Calvin's Theological View of Predestination. Research on the History and Doctrine of Protestantism 9/1. Chr. Kaiser: München, 1938. ↩)
5. H. Henry Meeter. The Basic Ideas of Calvinism. edited by Paul A. Marshall. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids (MI), 1990 6th Edition, (1939 1st Edition), p. 41. ↩
6. Comp. especially James I. Packer. Prädestination und Verantwortung. Neue Studienreihe 5 (original English version: Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God) Brockhaus: Wuppertal, 1964 and on the Old Testament D. A. Carson. Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility. John Knox: Atlanta (GA, USA), 1981; Marshal, Morgan & Scott: London, 1981, pp. 9–40. ↩
7. Charles Haddon Spurgeon strongly emphasized in his autobiography that predestination and responsibility must be equally emphasized: “Plädoyer für den Calvinismus” (translation of the title: “A Plea for Calvinism” (title of chapter 12), pp. 95–103 in: Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Alles zur Ehre Gottes: Autobiographie (All for the Glory of God: An Autobiography). Oncken Verlag, Wuppertal, 1984, here pp. 102–103; comp. the excellent clarification on Spurgeon in Ian Murray. Spurgeon – wie ihn keiner kennt. (English version:

- The Forgotten Spurgeon) Reformatorischer Verlag H. C. Beese: Hamburg, 1992. ↩
8. On the last three texts comp. *ibid.*, Augustine. Semipelagian, pp. 265+95–99. ↩
9. Comp. also esp. James I. Packer. *Prädestination und Verantwortung*. op. cit. (from the Reformed view of double predestination) and Siegfried Kettling. *Typisch evangelisch: Grundbegriffe des Glaubens*(translation of the title:Typically Protestant: Basic Foundations of Faith). TVG. Brunnen: Gießen, 1993 2ndEdition, pp. 83–147 (from the neo-Lutheran perspective of simple predestination). ↩