

# Why Predestination in Calvinism Falls Short: A Case for Free Will and Relationship with God

Calvinism's doctrine of predestination, a cornerstone of Reformed theology, asserts that God has already determined who will be saved and who will be damned, irrespective of human choice or action. This view, rooted in the teachings of John Calvin, emphasizes God's sovereignty to the extent that human free will is rendered inconsequential in matters of salvation. While this perspective seeks to uphold God's omnipotence, it raises significant theological, philosophical, and practical concerns that challenge its coherence and alignment with the broader biblical narrative. This article argues that predestination, as articulated in Calvinism, is flawed because it undermines human free will, diminishes the relational nature of God's love, and conflicts with the biblical call to choose faith. Instead, a model where humans freely choose to submit to Jesus, are filled with the Holy Spirit, and are united with Christ better reflects the heart of the gospel.

Calvinism's doctrine of predestination is encapsulated in the acronym TULIP, particularly in the points of Unconditional Election and Irresistible Grace. Unconditional Election holds that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals for salvation without regard to their merits or decisions. Irresistible Grace suggests that those elected by God will inevitably come to faith, as God's grace cannot be resisted. These doctrines stem from a high view of God's sovereignty, where every event, including salvation, is divinely ordained.

While this framework aims to glorify God's ultimate authority, it introduces tensions that conflict with scripture, human experience, and the nature of a loving God. Below, we explore why predestination, as understood in Calvinism, is problematic and propose a biblically grounded alternative centered on free will and relational faith.

One of the most significant issues with Calvinist predestination is its effective nullification of human free will. If God has already determined who will be saved, human choices—whether to repent, believe, or follow Jesus—become irrelevant. This creates a deterministic worldview where individuals are mere pawns in a divine script, unable to genuinely choose or reject God.

The Bible, however, consistently affirms human agency. Joshua 24:15 calls the Israelites to "choose this day whom you will serve," implying a real decision with eternal consequences. In John 3:16, salvation is offered to "whoever believes," suggesting that belief is a voluntary act, not a predetermined outcome. Revelation 3:20 further illustrates this, with Jesus standing at the door and knocking, waiting for individuals to open their hearts—an image of choice, not coercion.

Free will is not an obstacle to God's sovereignty but a gift that makes genuine

relationship possible. If humans are predetermined to accept or reject God, their love for Him lacks authenticity, resembling programmed obedience rather than a heartfelt response. The view that humans freely choose to submit to Jesus aligns with the biblical portrayal of faith as an active, personal decision.

At its core, Christianity is about a relationship between God and humanity. Love, the defining attribute of God (1 John 4:8), requires freedom to be meaningful. A God who predestines some to salvation and others to damnation without regard for their choices seems to contradict the relational, invitational nature of divine love. If God's grace is irresistible and salvation is predetermined, the call to "come to me, all you who are weary" (Matthew 11:28) loses its universal appeal, as only the pre-chosen can respond.

In contrast, a theology where individuals freely choose to come to Jesus reflects a God who desires authentic relationship. When a person responds to the gospel, submitting to Christ, the Father sends the Holy Spirit to indwell them (John 14:26, Acts 2:38). This act of divine empowerment does not override free will but enables believers to live in communion with God, fulfilling their choice to follow Him. The process—choosing Jesus, receiving the Spirit, and being united with Christ—preserves both God's initiative and human responsibility, creating a dynamic partnership rather than a unilateral decree.

The Bible repeatedly presents salvation as an invitation extended to all. Acts 17:30 states that God "commands all people everywhere to repent," and 2 Peter 3:9 declares that God is "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." These verses imply that salvation is available to all who respond, not just a preselected few. Calvinist predestination, however, limits salvation to the elect, rendering God's universal call disingenuous, as those not chosen have no real opportunity to respond.

This creates a theological tension: if God desires all to be saved but only enables some to respond, His will appears divided or His love selective. A more coherent view is that God's grace is universally offered, and humans, through free will, can accept or reject it. When individuals choose to submit to Jesus, the Father responds by giving them the Holy Spirit, sealing their union with Christ (Ephesians 1:13). This process honors both God's universal offer of salvation and the individual's role in accepting it.

Calvinist predestination also raises practical concerns for Christian living, particularly in the area of evangelism. If God has already chosen who will be saved, the urgency of sharing the gospel diminishes. Why preach to those who are either already elect or irrevocably damned? Yet, Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) commands believers to make disciples of all nations, implying that the gospel is for everyone and that human response matters.

A theology of free will energizes evangelism. Believers share the gospel knowing that anyone can respond, and those who choose Jesus will receive the Holy Spirit, becoming part of God's family. This aligns with the biblical narrative of God working through human agency to spread His kingdom, as seen in the ministries of the apostles and early church.

The alternative to predestination is a theology that upholds both God's sovereignty and human free will. Humans have the capacity to choose or reject Him. When individuals freely submit to Jesus, recognizing their need for salvation, the Father responds by filling them with the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17). This act of divine grace empowers believers to live in relationship with Christ, who presents them to the Father as His own (John 17:6-9).

This model preserves God's sovereignty—He initiates salvation through Christ and empowers it through the Spirit—while affirming human responsibility. It reflects the biblical narrative of a God who invites, woos, and transforms those who choose Him, rather than compelling a select few. It also upholds the universal scope of the gospel, the relational nature of faith, and the urgency of sharing God's love with the world.

Calvinist predestination, while seeking to honor God's sovereignty, ultimately falters by undermining human free will, diminishing the relational nature of God's love, and conflicting with the universal call to repentance. A theology where humans freely choose to submit to Jesus, are filled with the Holy Spirit, and are united with Christ offers a more biblically consistent and relationally authentic framework. This view celebrates God's grace as an invitation to all, empowers human agency, and fuels the mission to share the gospel with a world in need. Far from limiting God's power, free will magnifies His love, as He delights in those who freely choose to walk with Him.