

Predestination, Election, and Free Will

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

*When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord;
and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48)*

How we can have free will, and still be elected or predestined by God for salvation is one of the most challenging Biblical truths that there is to understand. The Calvinists lean to the election side of this truth, while the Arminians lean to the free will side. An excellent and thorough book on this subject is "God's Will and Man's Will" by Arnold Fruchtenbaum. One way to think of it that can help us understand it is to think in terms of business acquisitions.

Imagine you have been hired by a company to implement their long range business plan. And on that plan, there is a list of businesses you are to acquire for the company. So you go to each of the businesses and work out acquisition deals. One company may sell immediately. Another may want to make a few changes to the deal structure before they are willing to sell. Yet another may negotiate with you for years before selling. And still others may not want to sell at all, and may take ten or twenty years of haggling and negotiating before they sell. But if you are good at your job, you are eventually going to acquire every company on that list. Did the companies have a choice? Did they have free will? You bet they did, and they exercised their free will in different ways. But because they were on the list, you continued to pursue them until one by one you acquired them all.

God operates in a similar fashion. It is as though He has a list that was created "before the foundation of the earth" (Ephesians 1:4). And on that list is the name of every person who is predestined to be born again by belief in Jesus Christ. One by one God acquires us. Some of us are born again when we are very young. Some in High School, some in College. Others may wait longer; some even wait until their death bed. And there is everything in between. Some take a lot of convincing, while others just have to hear the gospel once and they are born again. We can think of ourselves as God's acquisitions, in His grand business plan for eternal life, and He has tasked the Holy Spirit with implementing the plan and completing all of the acquisitions. We are on His list and have been acquired by Him, if we are born again. He bought us with the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, and He owns us now.

Has God made you an acquisition offer? Perhaps you have been in negotiations with God, but you haven't given Him the keys to your life yet? What are you waiting for? God called Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach, and Jonah actually went in the opposite direction, away from Nineveh. But God's plan included Jonah going to Nineveh, so God appointed a fish to help Jonah change his mind and go to Nineveh. Jonah eventually chose to preach in Nineveh, just as God's plan intended. What is God asking you to do? Where does He want you to go? Who does He want you to reach out to? Or maybe you are not born again yet, and God is calling you to salvation, right now. It's like I tell my four sons - eventually, we are all going to go to Nineveh, whether we like it or not. The choice we have is in regards to how we get there. We can choose to go by boat, or we can choose to go by fish, but we are going to go to Nineveh. The choice is ours to make. I recommend the boat.