

Predestined in Christ

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Yeshua:

The Apostle Paul said, *"In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11, NKJV).*ⁱ From Paul's words, we see that we have an incredible destiny in Christ. Let us discover what it looks like.

In the world, destiny is linked to an inescapable fate that cannot be avoided no matter how hard we try. The Greeks developed a form of drama based on human suffering, called Tragedy (from the Greek word: *τραγωδία, tragōidia*).ⁱⁱ Shakespeare was a master at writing in this form. But is this view Biblical? Is there no hope of redemption if the gods have already cast their dyes?

We read, *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).* God has a *will* and a *desire* for all humanity, and His will is that none would perish. Yet, Paul also said, *"For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (2 Corinthians 2:15).*

The implication here is that while God's will is to save humanity, He also allows us to reject His salvation. In other words, we have *free will* or the *freedom* to choose. The Lord declared to Israel, *"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you [a choice between] life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).*

God provided Adam and Eve the ability to disobey Him and eat of the forbidden fruit, and He has given us the same—to decide our destiny as one of two paths, one that leads to eternal life and the other to destruction. Yeshua warned, *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).*

Without the freedom to choose, there can be no moral accountability. And since we are created in the image of God, He has made us accountable for our decisions. Hence His righteous judgments.ⁱⁱⁱ But this freedom can also generate uncertainty with some Christians. Are we able to lose our salvation?

Before we can answer this question, we need to understand God's will regarding humanity further. We read, *"For who has resisted His will? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" (Romans 9:19, 22-24).*

And in the Old Testament, we read, *"The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies" (Psalm 58:3). "By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You" (Psalm 71:6).*

These verses imply that God has created some human vessels for glory and some destruction, even from their conception. Injecting Greek philosophy into this train of thought brings us back to *Tragedy*—and inescapable fate that cannot be avoided no matter what we do. What kind of merciless God would create humanity in His image and then orchestrate their destruction without the freedom to repent and be saved?

Not the God of the Bible. He is a merciful God who is not willing that any should perish. But then, why does it say He created some human vessels for glory and others for destruction? The only possible conclusion is that God already *foreknew* who would receive Him or reject His salvation.

Because God is separate from His creation, and because He created time, He is not bound by it. God is the alpha and omega.^{iv} God is the knower, the known, and the knowledge.^v There is nothing God does not comprehend and nothing He needs to learn. In other words, God already knows the end from the beginning, and He foreknew the eternal choice and fate of every human being, even before our conception.

We read, *"For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13).* And regarding Israel, we read, *"God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel" (Romans 11:2).*

Now that we understand that accepting God's gift of salvation requires us to make a choice, are we rightful in boasting about our decision? Not precisely, lest we erroneously think that we were somehow able to believe in God, while others could not.

Paul said, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).* We are not saved by faith alone. We are saved by God's grace through faith. Because without faith, it is impossible to believe in Him. As it is written, *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).*

Faith and grace are required for our salvation, and both are a gift from God, as it says, *"Through the grace given to [you]... not to think of [yourself] more highly than [you] ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).*

The Bible says that we were dead in our trespasses, and if dead, then also deaf, and blind.^{vi} We could not see or hear God, much less find Him. Therefore, the Lord has given each person just enough faith to believe and receive His grace. And since our faith is not self-contrived, we boast in nothing of ourselves, but Christ alone; as Paul said, *"God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14).*

There is nothing we can add to God's work of salvation. Yet, somewhere there remains for us an individual choice to either humble ourselves before an all-powerful God or harden our hearts against Him. Humility is the key, and the universal question that God has presented to every person is this:

Is there a creator before Whom I can annul myself and beg for Him to deliver me from my inevitable fate of sin and death?

Yes, there is, and this person is Jesus Christ. He is the one through which all things were made, and without Him, nothing created can exist.^{vii} He holds the keys to life and death in His hand. And He chose to give His life as a ransom for ours.^{viii} As we read, *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).*

And like Paul, we cry out: *"[Oh] wretched and sinful man that I am! Lord, will You deliver me from this body of death?"^{ix}* In response, Yeshua reaches down to us, and with His loving and outstretched arm, rescues us from this kingdom of darkness.^x Receiving God's salvation is that simple and freely given to all, *"For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).*

From our place of desperation, knowing that we are deserving of death, we have now encountered grace. Grace is God's unmerited and unconditional love towards us who are undeserving of it. As we read, *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).*

This is true love, that, *"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).* Love suffers long and is kind; love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails.^{xi}

Therefore, receiving this great love, can we now lose our salvation? We cannot, and certainly not for any sinful behavior on our part. Our salvation is secure in Christ as He has already paid for every sin—past, present, and future.

However, we can choose to walk away from the Lord. But in our wandering, I am not convinced that even this can separate us from Christ. As we read, *"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height*

nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

I have met people who expressed anger or frustration towards God because of difficulty in their life, but I have only encountered one or two who were once saved, born again of the Spirit, and for whatever reason, chose to reject God. But have these individuals relinquished their salvation?

I pray not, but there is a danger for them; as we read, *"Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:18).* And we read, *"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6).*

So, the Lord already knows who will receive Him and who will reject His salvation. And for those who receive Him, we read, *"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30).*

The intriguing part of this scripture says that God *foreknew* us, meaning He knew us before we knew Him. And those He foreknew, He also predestined. Yeshua said, *"Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you'" (Matthew 25:11-12).*

Therefore, we understand that salvation is the process of God revealing Himself to those He *foreknew* would receive Christ so that we now also would receive and *know* our Heavenly Father. As we read, *"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).* *"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).*

Yeshua is the revelation of God to His creation; as it is written, *"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him... He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:7 & 9).*

Those who know Christ also know their Heavenly Father and have been invited into God's family and His Kingdom; as Yeshua said, *"For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother" (Mark 3:35).* And Paul said, *"Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:5).*

God knows all His creation, but we cannot know Him unless He reveals Himself first. And unless He reveals Himself, we cannot know Him or enter His presence or His Kingdom. Once again, this affirms God's sovereign act of salvation, that He does not reveal Himself to everyone—only to those He *foreknew*.

Simon Peter answered Jesus, saying, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* And Jesus said to him, *"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 16:16-17).

Those He foreknew, He also predestined. We are predestined to what? To be conformed to the image of Christ.

Jesus Christ is both King and High Priest of Israel and all the nations. Therefore, we also are being transformed into kings and priests; as it is written, *"To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen"* (Revelation 1:5-6).

This theological perspective was reinvested into the church after the reformation. This being that in Christ, we are predestined to become a "priesthood of all believers." In this regard, the Aaronic priesthood of Israel was a type, a shadow of the greater priesthood to come—that of Melchizedek, who was both King and Priest of Salem—Jerusalem.

As the Lord promised Israel, *"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"* (Exodus 19:6). And not just a priesthood, but a "royal priesthood;" as it is written, *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"* (1 Peter 2:9).

This promise now having been extended to the Gentiles who are in Christ; as we read, *"That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel"* (Ephesians 3:6).

Moreover, those whom God predestined, He also called—called to what? We are called to serve God and man. Yeshua said, *"Whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"* (Matthew 25:27-28).

Yeshua instructed, *"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet"* (John 13:14). And Paul said, *"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself"* (Philippians 2:3).

And those He called, He also justified. We read, *"For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified"* (Romans 2:13). And what is this law? Paul continues, *"For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts"* (Romans 2:14-15).

In other words, we are justified by our actions, which are a reflection from and by the transforming and indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds. The Lord promised Israel, declaring, *"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after*

those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

Day by day, we are being renewed by the spirit of our minds.^{xii} This is our ongoing sanctification. As we read, *"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one" (Hebrews 2:11).* And Peter said, *"[The] elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit" (1 Peter 1:2).*

Our sanctification leads to the fruit of the Spirit; the capstone is love and the fruit of our love for good works.^{xiii} Those who do not love do not know God, for He is love.^{xiv} Yeshua said, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).*

Our good works were predestined by the Lord, as we read, *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).* And our good works are orchestrated by Him; as we read, *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way" (Psalm 37:23).*

Lastly, those He justified, He also glorified. And what does this glory look like? Yeshua told His disciples that He was glorified in His suffering, which was His death on the cross. He did not receive the glory through His powerful teachings, wisdom, prayers, or even His miracles. No, even before heaven and earth were created, Yeshua was glorified in His suffering. It is written, *"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).*

Yeshua then prayed, *"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one" (John 17:22).* God foreknew and predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son. As Christ is the firstborn over all creation, we also in Christ are the firstborn among many brethren.^{xv}

Yes, we are being transformed into the image of Christ. And like him, we also will be glorified in our suffering, and our flesh will become a living sacrifice unto the Lord as we surrender and give everything to follow Him. As we read, *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:16-17).*

What a destiny we have in Christ—to know and to be known by God, predestined to be transformed into the perfect image of His Son. We are a royal priesthood of all believers, called by the Lord to serve both men and God and justified in our good works that glorify our Heavenly Father. And to be glorified in Christ as we share in His suffering.

Therefore, let us rejoice, for, *"In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were*

sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:12-14).

Amen!

ⁱ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Bible (NKJV) unless otherwise noted, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.

ⁱⁱ Vocabulary.com. Wikipedia.

ⁱⁱⁱ Revelation 16:7.

^{iv} Revelation 1:8.

^v Maimonides.

^{vi} Ephesians 2:1, 5. Colossians 2:13.

^{vii} John 1:3.

^{viii} Revelation 1:18.

^{ix} Romans 7:24.

^x Colossians 1:13.

^{xi} 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

^{xii} Ephesians 4:23.

^{xiii} Galatians 5:22-23. Ephesians 5:9.

^{xiv} 1 John 4:8.

^{xv} Colossians 1:15, 18. Hebrews 1:6, 12:23. Revelation 1:5.