

# What Must I Do To Be Saved?

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## ABBREVIATIONS

(List of Abbreviations used within this publication)

KJV - King James Version.	NJB-New Jerusalem Bible
NKJV - New King James Version.	KNOX-by Monsignor Knox
RSV - Revised Standard Version.	TLB-The Living Bible.
NRSV - New Revised Standard Version.	GNB-Good News Bible
NEB - New English Bible.	CEV-Contemporary English Version.
NIV - New International Version.	DOUAY-Catholic Truth Society

**Please Note: Unless stated otherwise, all quotes are taken from the NIV.**

## WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED? Acts 16:30

This question must without doubt be the most important question ever asked by anyone. It was asked of Paul and Silas by the Philippi Jailor after a violent earthquake had shaken the prison in which he was looking after his prisoners. The doors of the prison were opened and the prisoner's chains were loosed so that they were free to escape. The jailor woke up and thinking the prisoners had escaped he was about to kill himself, knowing he would be executed for lack of duty.

At this point Paul called to him to do himself no harm, assuring him that none of the prisoners were gone. The jailor then called for lights and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas asking the above question, "What must I do to be saved"?

What did the jailor mean when he asked the above question? Did he just want to be saved from the consequences of letting the prisoners escape? The answer is no, because Paul had assured him they had not escaped. It is evident he had been frightened by the earthquake and had become conscious of his lost condition. His guilt and sin overwhelmed him so that he cried out in desperation for mercy. He had known about Paul and Silas, The reason for their imprisonment and their joyful attitude to their affliction and had been impressed by their example. Paul's answer to his question shows that it was not for temporal salvation that the jailor was lacking. It was nothing less than to be eternally saved.

Before we examine Paul's answer to the above question it would be fitting to consider what he could have said, rather than what he did say. He could have said - like so many church men to day - "get baptized". The jailor did get baptized later after he was saved but this is not what he was requested to do. If water baptism was necessary to salvation, the repentant thief on the cross would not have been saved, and millions like him who had a deathbed-repentance. (See also **Appendix 1 – BAPTISM AND SALVATION**)

Paul could have said "turn over a new leaf and live a good life". This would have been good advice and it certainly is what the jailor did, but it is not what Paul said and it would not have saved him. It is a perfect life rather than a good life which God requires because one sin is enough to keep us out of heaven. Paul could have said "repent" but it is obvious from the attitude of the jailor that he had already repented. Paul could have said "join the Christian church" but the church can only show us how to be saved, it is nowhere given the authority to save us. The church can also hinder us from being saved by recommending any of the above solutions as a substitute for the real thing.

Paul's answer to the jailor was brief, straight, and to the point, "believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved". (Acts 16:31) This is something simple that anyone can do, in any place and in all circumstances. If it was something more complicated than this, there would be some who could not do it because of some circumstances. For example if we were in an aeroplane that was about to crash, we could not be baptised, we could not join a branch of the Christian church and we would not have time to live a good life.

It is obvious from Paul's answer that there was something the jailor was required to do in order to be saved. This contradicts the teaching of some great men like Augustine, Calvin, Beza and others who maintain that God saves some regardless of what they do or not do. He was not required to do good works of any kind such as keeping the commandments, getting baptized or joining a church but he was required to believe on the only person who could save him, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

## WHAT MUST I DO? 2

Paul did not say that by believing in Jesus the jailor could save himself. Only Jesus could do the saving, but by believing in Him he was giving Him permission to save him. Jesus will not save anyone against their will. The Bible makes it clear that man was endowed with a will to choose his destiny but he is powerless to put it into effect. The ability to believe is a gift of God but we have the ability to use this gift if we want to. If our belief alone saved us we could be saved by believing in Abraham, Moses, Mary, Mohammed or anyone else of our choosing, but we know this is not the case.

The act of believing is very similar to having faith, confidence, hope or trust in a person. If we have any of the above in a dentist or doctor we will go to them and allow them to do what is necessary and we will do whatever they tell us to solve our problem. Likewise with our sin problems, we will go to Jesus in prayer and submit to Him if we want to be delivered from the guilt, power, and consequences of sin - which is said to be eternal death. (Romans 6:23)

It is not enough to have an objective belief in Jesus, to believe that He was born, lived and died just as the Bible says He did. The devil and many of his followers, some of which are good Bible scholars believe all of this, but it will not save them. We can only believe in him as Lord and Saviour if He is our Lord and Saviour and this involves becoming obedient to His will or making Him Lord of our life and our only hope of salvation.

How does Jesus save a sinner like the Jailor in response to their believing in him? He cancels all their sin. He credits His perfect righteousness to their account. He writes their name in the book of life and gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen them for the trials of life. In the future He will resurrect them from the dead (if they are not still alive) and take them to His home in heaven for the 1000 years - (otherwise known as the millennium). After this He will take them back to the new earth to live with him for all eternity. He does all this by virtue of His death on the cross when He substituted His life for our death, giving Him the legal right to save us from eternal death.

Having experienced God's salvation as a free gift without any works on our part, the question then arises as to whether we need good works to enter heaven? It is obvious that the thief on the cross did not have any good works to offer but for those of us who live a normal life the case is different. The Bible makes it clear that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) Therefore the person who is saved by faith alone will produce good works, not in order to be saved but because he is saved. So while we are not saved by works, neither will we be saved without them. But the Scripture says we are "... *justified by faith without the deeds of the law*". [Romans 3:28 KJV] This looks like a contradiction but can be explained in the following way...

There are three aspects of salvation namely: Justification, Sanctification and Glorification. The first, "Justification", refers to what takes place when we acknowledge our helpless condition and believe in Jesus as our Saviour as the jailor did. We are then declared perfect even though we are still sinners. Our works previous to this are said to be like filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6 KJV)

"Sanctification" is a progressive continual experience which lasts all our life and though it is God who sanctifies us, this will not take place unless we are in submission to Him.

"Glorification" takes place when Jesus comes the second time and takes us to heaven. We will then be delivered from the presence and possibility of sin for evermore.

### WHAT MUST I DO? 3

The enclosed chart “THREE ASPECTS OF SALVATION” (Appendix 2) explains in detail the contrasts between Justification, Sanctification and Glorification and makes it clear that we become children of God through faith alone but that good works must then follow. These good works are not the cause of our salvation but they are the result of it. The person who makes a profession of believing in Jesus but does not show evidence of a change of life has either never been saved or has rejected the one who saved him. This raises the question of whether a person can be saved and lost again and will be addressed later.

Going back to our story we find that the jailor lost no time in showing evidence that he had become a new person. Verse 33 of Acts 16 states <sup>“33</sup> *At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized.*” Verse 34 then says <sup>“34</sup> *The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.*”

We find no evidence of the jailor’s profession of faith but his works show that he had become a new person. He began right where he was by mending the wounds he probably had inflicted some hours earlier. He was then baptised with his whole family and proceeded to provide food for his former captives. This is the way a sinner will behave when they become a child of God. The result of it all was he *“was filled with joy”*. Becoming a believer is not a dull and boring experience but a joyful one, contrary to what many preachers would have us believe.

There are other instances in the Scriptures where someone asked how to be saved albeit they were in different circumstances. In Matthew 19:16 a rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked *“Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”* Jesus answered him according to his question by telling him he must obey the Ten Commandments and quoted five of them as a sample.

This looks like a different answer to what Paul told the jailor but it is still true if we are going to have eternal life by doing something good, we must obey the Ten Commandments and do so all the time. If we could obey the Ten Commandments all the time we would not need to repent and we would have no need of a saviour. It is because we cannot do this that Jesus came to earth, kept the Ten Commandments perfectly and credits his perfect life to our account. (Romans 5:10)

The ruler replied *“All these I have kept”* and asked, *“what do I still lack?”* [Matthew 19:20 NIV©1984] This young ruler, unlike the jailor, had no sense of his hopeless condition or his need of a saviour as is shown by his answer and that is why Jesus answered him as He did. Jesus proceeded to show him what was involved in keeping the Ten Commandments by telling him to sell everything he had and give to the poor. On hearing this, the rich man turned away sad because he had great possessions.

Jesus could have given this young man the same answer as Paul gave to the jailor, to a similar question, but he had not come to the place where he recognised his need as the jailor did.

When Jesus did point out his need and promised him riches in heaven and the privilege of following him [v21] he simply walked away. Later on Jesus pointed out to his disciples when asked, *“Who then can be saved?”* [v25] that *“with man this is impossible”* [v26]

When it comes to inheriting eternal life, there is no substitute for being willing to **“Forsaking All I Take Him”** [FAITH ]. There is no doubt that we could be saved by obedience if we could render perfect obedience all the time, but this we cannot do.

## WHAT MUST I DO? 4

There is another instance in Acts 2:37 where a multitude of pilgriming Jews asked the apostles "...what shall we do?" These Jews were in Jerusalem from all parts of the Roman Empire for the feast of Pentecost. The Scripture does not include the words "to be saved" or "to have eternal life" because this was not their need. They were God fearing Jews, walking in the light they had, fulfilling the Old Testament ritual so there is no reason to suppose they were not part of the family of God.

Peter had been preaching to them in his own language but many of them, who had come from other countries, heard him in their native language tell how Jesus was the long looked for Messiah who they had crucified. On seeing this wonder of the gift of tongues and hearing this message "they were cut to the heart" or "pricked in their heart" which is another way of saying their conscience spoke to them and prompted them to ask the above question. Peter replied "*Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ...*". [v38]

It is noticeable here that Peter did not say "believe" as Paul said to the Jailor. The reason for this is they had already believed after hearing the sermon on the crucified Christ and it would be impossible for them to be baptised in the name of Christ if they did not believe in Him. Their big need was to repent of their part in crucifying the Messiah. When Peter asked them to be baptised he did not want them to do this in order to be saved, but because the Messiah had come and he wanted them to show their faith in Him who had replaced all the sacrifices of the old covenant.

Would it have been possible for the jailor after having this experience to lose it again and fail to enter heaven? The same question applies to the millions of others who through the centuries have made a profession of faith in Christ and experienced the same joy and shown the same change of heart as the jailor did. Do we have the will to reject Christ as we had the will to accept Him in the first place? Or perhaps, did we have the choice to accept Him or was it predestined for us and the jailor to do so? We have no more information about the jailor from this time onward so we can only look to what the Scriptures have to say on this matter elsewhere.

We have already concluded that the person who does not live a godly life, will not enter heaven whatever the profession they have made, or experience they have had. (1 Corinthians 6:9, Hebrews 12:14) Every time we sin deliberately without repenting of it we are serving Satan and rejecting the Lordship of Christ. There is a big difference between wilful sin and besetting sin. [See the enclosed article on SIN. (Appendix 3)]

All Christians are guilty of the latter, but those who under pressure take part in the former and do not repent of it will be lost. "<sup>12</sup> *Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,* <sup>13</sup> *but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.*" [Matthew 24:12-13] See also verses 45-51.

The Scriptures make it clear that sin will have to be repented of and forsaken if it is to be forgiven. (1 John 1:7-9, 2:1-5, Proverbs 28:13) There are dozens of instances in the Scriptures where we are admonished to "*keep my commandments*" [John 14:15 KJV] "*make your calling and election sure*" [2 Peter 1:10 KJV] "*be faithful, even to the point of death*", [Revelation 2:10 NIV] "*hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown*" [Revelation 3:11 NIV] etc. These statements would be unnecessary and misleading if it was not possible to fall away and be lost. [See the enclosed ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED ? (Appendix 4)]

## WHAT MUST I DO? 5

There are undoubtedly many statements in Scripture which would give the impression that the saved person cannot be lost, such as the following: “<sup>28</sup> *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.*” [John 10:28 NIV] The previous verse tells who this applies to: “<sup>27</sup> *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*” As long as Jesus’ sheep hear His voice and follow Him, they cannot be lost and cannot be plucked from His hand. This promise does not apply to those who refuse to hear His voice and turn away from following Him.

Another statement reads: “<sup>19</sup> *They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.*” [1 John 2:19 NIV] This refers to antichrists [v18] who at one time had posed as part of the church and infiltrated it and does not apply to everyone in the church.

Undoubtedly there are some who falsely gave the impression of being believers in Jesus Christ but there are many more who were genuine believers who fell away when the cost became more than they were willing to pay.

There are many who take the view that we do not have the will to reject Christ after we accept Him and therefore we did not have the will to accept Him in the first place. They say we were predestined, elected or chosen to salvation by the will of God without any regard to our faith, love, works or anything else. Amongst those who advocated this view were Augustine, Calvin, Whitefield and Spurgeon, and some of those who rejected it were; Arminius, the Wesley brothers, Brigadier Booth and DL Moody.

Beza, who succeeded Calvin, took this view to its logical conclusion and said that since we do not have a will of our own, then it was God’s will for Adam and Eve to partake of the forbidden fruit. This would mean that God is the author of sin, rather than Satan. The big problem with unconditional predestination is that if God chooses some to be saved, regardless of their will, then He also chooses the remainder to be lost, giving them no opportunity to be saved, [See the enclosed article on PREDESTINATION A STUDY (Appendix 5)]

### A SUMMARY

Perhaps all of this can best be summarised by a statement we find in Romans 10:13 “*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*” [NIV]. The only qualification to be applied to this is that the call be sincere. Obviously a person would not call if they did not believe on Him as Lord and to believe on Him as Lord implied a person was ready to recognise Him as Lord, which in turn meant they were ready to obey Him. Jesus said, “<sup>46</sup> *Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?*” [Luke 6:46 NIV] We do not have to obey before we call but we must be willing to obey after we call.

James said “*faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*” [James 2:17 NIV] This recognition of Christ as Lord is not a once-off event but is something we must maintain to our dying breath or to the coming of the Lord. The result of this will be to be met by Jesus with the welcome: “*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!*” [Matthew 25:21-23 NIV]

For additional material relevant to this matter please also see Appendices 6, 7 & 8.

## Appendix 1 – BAPTISM AND SALVATION

Do we become a child of God by the rite of baptism or by faith?

- Example 1. The thief on the cross. What did he do to be told- “*you will be with me in paradise.*” [Luke 23:43 NIV]  
 [A] He acknowledged his sin: “*We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve.*” [v41a]  
 [B] He confessed that Jesus was perfect: “*This man has done nothing wrong.*” [v 41b]  
 [C] He asked for mercy. “*Remember me when you come into your kingdom.*” [v 42]  
 He was not baptized but was told: “*You will be with me in Paradise.*”
- Example 2. John 3:15-16, 18, 36, John 5:24. Acts 16:31. Romans3:21-22, 26, 28, 30. Romans 4:3, 5, 9-11, 13, 16, 24. Romans 5:1. Galatians 2:16. 3:11. Ephesians 2:8.  
 Each of these 23 verses says we are saved by faith, justified by faith or receive righteousness by faith without anything added. Simply by faith alone, no baptism.
- Example 3. The tax collector in the temple. [Luke 18:9-14]  
 What did he do to be justified? (Accounted righteous)[v14].  
 [A] He acknowledged he was a sinner. [v13].  
 [B] He asked God for mercy. [v13]  
 He was not baptized before he was justified.
- Example 4. Hitler and Stalin: Both of these were baptized [sprinkled] as infants but they did not become Christians as a result.
- Example 5 Babies who were aborted or died before they were baptized. These did not sin but they could not be saved if baptism was necessary.
- Example 6. Quakers.: These were believers and good living people who were not baptized but they would have to be lost if baptism was necessary.
- Question How do we become children of God? [Believers]  
 Answer By believing or having faith or trusting in Christ and his Word. [The Bible]
- Question Why then should we be baptized?  
 Answer Because Jesus, Peter, Philip and Paul said we should. [Matthew 28:19. Acts 2:38, 8:38, 16:33.]
- Question Why did they say we should be baptized?  
 Answer To confess or demonstrate our faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.
- Question What did Jesus mean when He said, “*You must be born of water*”? [John 3:5]  
 Answer Did He mean we must be baptized before we can be saved?  
 Answer No. To be born of water is the first or natural birth as is stated in John 3:6
- Question What did Paul mean when he said, “*We were baptized into His death*” [Romans 6:3-4.]  
 Answer Baptism is a symbol or outward sign of partaking in Jesus death and resurrection.

**Appendix 2 – THREE ASPECTS OF SALVATION.**

PAST JUSTIFICATION	PRESENT SANCTIFICATION	FUTURE GLORIFICATION
We have been saved.	We are being saved.	We shall be saved.
<i>“For in this hope we were saved.”</i> [Romans 8:24 NIV]	<i>“And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”</i> [Acts 2:47 NIV]	<i>“How much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath.”</i> [Romans 5:9 NIV]
<i>“He saved us not because of righteous things we had done.”</i> [Titus 3:5 NIV]	<i>“To us who are being saved it is the power of God.”</i> [1 Corinthians 1:18 NIV]	<i>“Then look up and lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh.”</i> [Luke 21:28 KJV]

**Apparently contradictory statements in Scripture.**

Romans 3:28 <i>“A man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.”</i> [NIV]	Hebrews 12:14b <i>“Without holiness no one will see the Lord”</i> [NIV]
Galatians 2:16 <i>“A person is not justified by the works of the law.”</i> [NIV]	1 Corinthians 6:9 <i>“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God.”</i> [NIV ©1984]
Galatians 3:10 <i>“All who rely on observing the law are under a curse.”</i> [NIV ©1984]	1 Corinthians 7:19 <i>“Keeping God’s commands is what counts.”</i> [NIV]

Question Does the Bible contradict itself or can these statements be harmonized?  
 Answer One set refers to justification and the other to sanctification.

They are clearly distinct but not separate; like the two lines of a railway track.

Both are necessary to eternal salvation for those who do not have a deathbed conversion like the thief on the cross.

**Appendix 2 (Continued) – THREE ASPECTS OF SALVATION**

**“JUSTIFICATION”**

A work of the Son  
 A work for us  
 A finished work  
 A perfect work  
 By faith alone  
 An imputed righteousness  
 The root of salvation  
 To be declared righteous  
 Our standing or status  
 Our position  
 On our outside  
 Represented by the blood  
 Represented by “in Him”  
 [165 times in NT]  
 The same as righteousness.  
 in Romans.  
 Linked with faith 13 times  
 in Romans.  
 Never linked with the Holy Spirit.

**“SANCTIFICATION”**

A work of the Spirit  
 A work in us  
 An incomplete work  
 An incomplete work  
 Works are necessary  
 An imparted righteousness  
 The fruit of salvation  
 To be made righteous  
 Our state  
 Our condition  
 On our inside  
 Represented by the water  
 Represented by “in us”  
 [5 times in NT]  
 Not the same as righteousness  
 in Romans.  
 Never linked with faith  
 in Romans.  
 Is linked with the Holy Spirit

**As can be seen from the above these statements are complementary but not contradictory.**



## Appendix 4 - ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED?

### A list of Scripture statements showing that a saved person can be lost.

[1 Samuel 10:9-10]. Saul was born again. *“As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart,...The Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying”*.

[1 Samuel 28:15-16] Saul abandoned by the Lord. *“I am in great distress, Saul said....God has departed from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams”*.

[Ezekiel 33:12] The righteous who fall into sin will die in their sin. *“The righteousness of the righteous man will not save him when he disobeys....The righteous man if he sins will not be allowed to live because of his former righteousness”*. (See also verses 13 and 18)

[Matthew 13:4-7] [Mark 4:3, 5-7] The sower and the thorny and stony ground. *“Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants”*.

[Matthew 24:13. Mark 13:13] Our loyalty must remain to the end of our life. *“But he who stands firm to the end will be saved”*. See Revelation 2:10c.

[John 17:12.] Judas, one of the 12 apostles was lost. *“None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction”*.

[1 Corinthians 9:27] Paul thought it possible to be lost. *“I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize”*.

[1 Timothy 4:1] The faith can be abandoned. *“In later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons”*.

[Hebrews 2:3] We (Christians) will not escape if we neglect our salvation. *“How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?”*

[Hebrews 3:14] Our confidence or faith must last till the end. *“We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first”*,

[Hebrews 6:4-6] It is possible to fall away. *“Those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away”*.

[Hebrews 10:26-30] Jesus sacrifice does not cover deliberate sin. *“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left”*.

### **Once saved always saved? [Continued]**

[Revelation 2:7b, 26. 3:5. 3:12]. There is a need to overcome. *“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God”.*

[Revelation 2:10c] We must be faithful till death. *“Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life”.*

[Revelation 2:25. 3:11] We must hold on to what we have. *“Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown”.*

[Revelation 3:3] We [Christians] must obey, repent and wake up if we backslide. *“Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up I will come like a thief”.*

## Appendix 5 – PREDESTINATION – A STUDY.

Romans 8:29-30 “<sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

These verses are used more than any other by scholars and teachers who believe that God predestines some to eternal life without any preconditions. This has been debated much within the Christian church since the time of Augustine in the fourth and fifth century. It lay dormant for over a thousand years when it was revived by Calvin in the 1500’s. Since then it has been an issue of division amongst those who are committed Christians who fear God and look to the Bible as their sole guide and authority. A study of this text and others related to it will hopefully explain the doctrine of predestination.

**“For those God foreknew”.** The first question that arises here is who are the “those” who God foreknew? If we look back to the previous verses we find the Scripture is referring to the saints, the called and those who love God. If we look forward to the following three verses Paul is referring to “us” and “the elect.” We can be sure then that “those” who Paul is referring to are not the lost and does not apply to everyone but to God’s people who will eventually be in heaven. This does **NOT** mean that God did not also know the future of the wicked who would reject Him but only that He **DID** know the future of the called, justified and glorified.

The second question is what did God know about these people who would be conformed to the image of His Son? The simple answer is He knew everything. God knew their lost condition, their need, their circumstances, their response to the gospel if they heard it and consequently their eternal destiny. God knew all this before He predestined anyone to life or death.

There are many other statements in Scripture to show that God knows every detail of the future. “I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.” [Isaiah 46:10] “*But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come...the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen*”. [Daniel 2:28a-29b] Every prophecy in the Bible is a prediction of what will happen in the future, whether God ordains it or not.

**“He also predestined”.** We cannot accept the Bible without acknowledging that God predestines some people to eternal life. In Ephesians 1:5 we read, “*Having predestined us to adoption as sons.*” And in verse 11 “*In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined.*” This predestination takes place because of God’s foreknowledge; not the other way round. Those who teach unconditional predestination maintain that God first decides a person’s destiny and then foretells what is going to happen, which is the opposite to above. God predestines us to salvation because we believe in him.

The Bible makes it very clear that God has given every person the choice of whether they are saved or lost, with the possible exception of those who are infants or are mentally retarded. Adam and Eve in the garden were told “*you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die*”. [Genesis 2:17] They disobeyed with

dire consequences but it was their choice that ruined the world, they did not have to disobey. After making the golden calf in the desert the Israelites were told by Moses, “*whoever is for the Lord, come to me*”. [Exodus 32:26b] Those who came to him lived and the other 3000 were killed. At the end of his life Moses said “*I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction*”. [Deuteronomy. 30:15] Joshua gave this choice to his people, “*Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve*”. [Joshua 24:15] Isaiah speaking for God said, “*Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth*”. And again “*Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters*” [Isaiah 45:22, 55:1] Jesus said “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened*”. And again, “*how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing*”. [Matthew 11:28. 23:37b] Almost at the end of the Bible Jesus said, “*The Spirit and the bride say ‘Come’! And let him who hears say, ‘Come’! Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes let him take the free gift of the water of life*” [Revelation 22:17] Every time a command or an invitation is given in the Bible (and there are hundreds of them) there is a choice given to accept or reject it and take the consequences.  
[See also Matthew 18:14. 2 Peter 3:9]

It is equally clear [or perhaps more so] that Jesus gave His life for all, for the purpose of saving all; not just for a special elect. In 2 Corinthians 5:14 and 15 we read, “*We are convinced that one died for all*”, “*And he died for all*”. In 1 Timothy 2:6 we read. “*Who gave himself as a ransom for all men*”. “*In case an exception might be made for the wicked we read, ‘He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world’*”. [1 John 2:2] There is no room in these statements for the idea of a limited atonement as proclaimed by the Synod of Dort (1618).

If therefore we are forced to the conclusion that the Bible teaches predestination and also teaches free will, does this mean that the Bible contradicts itself? Christians down through the centuries have always opted for one or the other with each side accusing the other of not being true to the Bible. The solution to the problem is so simple that it has been overlooked by many of the great theologians of the past and it is this.

[1] God knew before the creation of the world, who would be loyal to him at the end of their life.

[2] He predestined or ordained or decreed that these loyal people would have eternal life. [3] He did this without in any way over ruling their choice in the matter.

The problem with predestination to the exclusion of free will is to say, “my future is determined so I can do nothing about it” and the problem with free will to the exclusion of predestination is to say “it all depends on me”. If we combine the two we can say “God will save me but only with my co-operation”.

Predestination to eternal life, without any conditions, would be a good and pleasing doctrine if it was the destiny of everyone. However the Bible makes it clear that sin has to be eliminated by some means or other since it strikes at the authority of God. God is holy and all powerful so He cannot allow sin to remain forever in the world He has created. Those who are not prepared to be separated from their sin will have to perish with their sin so there cannot be any such thing as universal salvation.

Likewise, unconditional predestination would be acceptable to the saved if it was applicable only to the saved, and this is precisely why it is the saved who have always promoted this doctrine. However, if God decides the eternal destiny of each individual before they are born and if He predestines some to eternal life, then He must also predestine the remainder to

eternal death. If God predestined the great majority of the earth's inhabitants to eternal death, without giving them the opportunity to escape it, He would be dealing very unfairly and harshly with His subjects, but if he predestined them to eternal torment in hell as many claim, He would be a worse tyrant than any tyrant the world has produced. The good news is that God knew from the beginning who would accept Him as Lord and Saviour if given the opportunity and these He predestined to eternal life.

**“To be conformed to the likeness of his Son”** This is what God plans his predestined children to be conformed to. There will be a change in their life when they make Jesus their Lord and Saviour but they will only be fully identical to Him in eternity when all traces of sin has been removed.

**“that he might be the firstborn among many brothers”** The term firstborn simply means the most important. All the Old Testament men and women of God were born into the human family before Jesus was. In eternity we will all have the privilege of being brothers of Jesus and children of God. *“Yet to all who received him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”*. [John 1:12] God will then not only have one son but many.

**“And those he predestined he also called”** This statement shows that we cannot decide to come to Christ on our own; we must first be called. We cannot come to a party without an invitation. This invitation however is given to all and we have no right to say it is only given to the predestined as the Scripture says *“many are called but few are chosen”*. [Matthew 22:14 KJV] Jesus made it clear that all Jerusalem were invited to come to Him [Matthew 23:37. Luke 13:34] and it was not his fault that they turned down the invitation. The rich young ruler was another who was called but was not chosen. [Matthew 10:21]

This Scripture goes part of the way in answering the question of how those in heathen countries, past and present, can hear the message of salvation. We have established that God knows everyone from the beginning and predestines those he knew would accept the gospel. Therefore God will bring these same people by some means into contact with the gospel however imperfectly presented it may be. We must remember that it is only necessary to call on the name of the Lord to be saved [Romans 10:13] and even if they have an imperfect knowledge of who the Lord is. Paul told the people of Athens that they were ignorantly worshipping God when they worshipped an UNKNOWN God. [Acts 17:23]

Scripture gives us many examples of how some people from heathen countries were brought into contact with the knowledge of God. The most spectacular were the people of Ninevah, every one of which were converted by the preaching of Jonah. God knew their hearts and sent them the message. Other examples were the two Pharaohs of Egypt, [Genesis 41, Exodus.7] king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, [Daniel 2, 3, 4.] King Darius of Medo-Persia, [Daniel 6.] the Ethiopian eunuch, [Acts 8] and Felix, Festus and Agrippa [Acts 24, 25, 26.] If God could bring these heathen unbelievers in contact with the knowledge of God, He can do it with all others, especially if He knows if they would believe in Him if given the opportunity. None will be lost because of someone's failure to spread the message.

**“Those he called, he also justified”**. - This is not referring to all the called, but to those called who were foreknown and predestined. The word justified is best explained simply *justified never sinned*. God not only forgives our past but also counts us as having never sinned because Jesus has taken full responsibility for it. The word justified is a legal term meaning

acquitted or not guilty which is pronounced when a judge declares a defendant to be cleared of the charges against him. To be justified is not the same as to be sanctified, for the former is a work which Jesus does *for* us and the latter is a work which the Holy Spirit does *in* us. They are two different experiences which happen at the same time but are distinct and separate like the two rails of a railway track.

Our part in our justification is simply to answer the call. It is God that justifies us and not ourselves. It is like accepting a gift. There is no merit in accepting a gift and a gift is of no use to us unless we accept it and use it. If someone gave one of us a cheque for a gift it would be of no use to us unless we cashed it and doing this would not make us deserving of it. Justification would still be a free gift received by grace through faith. [Ephesians 2:8]

**“Those he justified he also glorified.”** - This creates a problem because the time to be glorified has not yet come. This is to take place when Jesus comes in glory to take his people to reign with him in heaven. [John 14:3. Matthew 24:30, 31.] However, the Scriptures usually speak of the future in the past tense because the future is so certain in the mind of God that is as sure as if it had already taken place. We read that Jesus *was* slain from the foundation of the world. [Revelation. 13:8c] Isaiah says “*He was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities*” seven hundred years before it happened. [Isaiah 53:5] Likewise Paul in Romans 8 speaks of certain people who were predestined, called, justified and glorified; the great majority of which had not yet been born.

This glorification of the saints is best described in the book of Revelation... “*Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.* <sup>4</sup> *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.* <sup>5</sup> *He who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new!*” [Revelation 21:3-5.]

“<sup>3</sup> *No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.* <sup>4</sup> *They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.* <sup>5</sup> *There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*” [Revelation 22:3-5.]

Paul felt unable to describe to describe the glory of the world to come so he simply wrote, “*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.*” [1 Corinthians 2:9]

## Appendix 6 - A history of predestination arguments (for and against).

Pelagius. Early 400's.

*"Advance in the moral and spiritual life depends on free choices of the will, confronted by possibilities of either right or wrong."* [AGAINST]

Augustine. 354-430.

*"God's mercy is such that he has chosen a fairly substantial minority of souls for salvation, by a decree of predestination which is antecedent to all differences of merit."*

*"God's grace is irresistible."*

*"Final perseverance, a test of predestination."* [FOR]

Gottschalk. 800's

*"Some are predestined to blessedness and others to eternal fire."* A double predestination. [FOR]

Luther 1500's

*"All things whatever arise from, and depend on, the divine appointment; whereby it was foreordained who should receive the word of life, and who should disbelieve it; who should be delivered from their sins, and who should be hardened in them; and who should be justified and who should be condemned."*

A double predestination.

[FOR]

Philip Melancthon. 1500's

Christians cannot rely on salvation, purely through predestination. [Formula of Concord in 1577] They must act justly. [AGAINST]

Calvin. 1500's

*"We assert that by an eternal and immutable counsel, God hath once for all determined both whom he would admit to salvation and whom he would admit to destruction."* [FOR]

Bolsec. [A physician] 1500's

Said that the above conspired to make God a tyrant. [AGAINST]

Beza 1519-1605

Developed the doctrine of supralapsarium. [God had predestined the fall] [FOR]

Arminius. 1600's.

*"Unconditional predestination makes God the author of sin."*

He led the "remonstrance" which opposed Beza and which led to the Synod of Dort 1618. at which TULIP,- the 5 points of Calvinism was developed.

T total depravity.

U unconditional election.

L limited atonement.

I irresistible grace

P perseverance of the saints. [AGAINST]

1700's

George Whitefield Calvinist. [FOR]

John and Charles Wesley. Arminian. [AGAINST]

1800s

GH Spurgeon. ---Calvinist. [FOR]  
DL Moody-----Arminian. [AGAINST]  
The Evangelicals---Arminian. [AGAINST]  
Salvation Army-----Arminian. [AGAINST]  
Seventh-Day-Adventists---Arminian. [AGAINST]

1900's

Free Presbyterians---Calvinists. [FOR]  
Reformed churches.—Calvinists. [FOR]  
Church of the Nazarene.-Arminian. [AGAINST]

## Appendix 7 - Statements used to support unconditional predestination

(NIV)

*“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”* [Romans. 8:29]

He predestined those who He knew would accept Him.

The Lord said to Moses, *“when you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.”* [Exodus 4:21]

Pharaoh had already rejected God so He was to punish him for ill treating His people.

The Lord had made the Egyptians favourably disposed towards the people, and they gave what they asked for, so they plundered the Egyptians. [Exodus 12:36]

This has nothing to do with the eternal salvation of the Egyptians or Israelites.

He turned their heart [the Egyptians] to hate his people, to deal craftily with His servants. [In Egypt] [Psalm 105:25 NASB]

This was to give them a desire to get out of Egypt.[See Exodus14:12] Nothing to do with salvation.

*“The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.”* [Proverbs 21:1]

God has the ability to influence kings to do things but does not use that influence to accept or reject Him.

The Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.[Daniel 4:25]

This is predestination to service rather than predestination to salvation.

*“When a trumpet sounds in a city do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?”* [Amos 3:6]

Certainly if a disaster occurs the Lord permits it. In some cases the Lord does it such as the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah.

*“Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus,....They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.”* [Acts 4:27-28.]

He predestined this because He knew they would do it of their own free will.

*“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 of a husband’s will, but born of God.”* [John 1:12-13]

They were born of God’s will because they received Him.

*“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.”* [John 5:21]

He is pleased to give life to those who believe in Him.

**Appendix 7 continued - Statements used to support unconditional predestination.**

*“For this reason they could not believe, because as Isaiah said elsewhere: “He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn - and I would heal them.” [John 12:39-40] (See also Isaiah. 6:10) God hardened their heart and did not allow them to believe because they rejected Him.*

*“When the gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.” [Acts 13:48]  
God had appointed them to eternal life because He knew they would accept Him.*

*“What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-- prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory--even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?” [Romans 9:22-24]*

God prepared some for destruction because they rejected Him and prepared others for glory because they accepted Him.

*“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will-.” [Ephesians 1:4-5]*

We were chosen or predestined because He knew we would accept Him.

*“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.” [Ephesians 1:11]*

We were chosen because we wanted to be chosen.

*“But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.” [2 Thessalonians. 2:13]*

They were chosen from the beginning because God knew they would accept Him.

## APPENDIX 8 - QUESTIONS ON PREDESTINATION

- [1] Did God decide before the creation of the world who was to be saved?
- [2] Was this decision based on the person's response such as repentance, faith obedience or other?
- [3] Is it necessary for each individual to repent; believe and be born again in order to be saved?
- [4] Did Jesus die for everyone or just for the finally saved?
- [5] Does each person have any choice in regard to whether they are saved or lost?
- [6] If not who is to blame if they are lost?
- [7] Is God a God of love if He allows the vast majority to be lost without intervening?
- [8] Why would the Bible say "God so loved the world" if He only loved part of the world?
- [9] Why would the Bible say "whosoever will may come" if whosoever did not mean everyone?
- [10] Why would Jesus say "you would not come to me that you might have life" if his hearers did not have the invitation or the opportunity to come?
- [11] Why would Jesus say "How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings" if that statement was not true?
- [12] Is God a God of justice if He condemns a person to hell without giving them an opportunity to escape it?
- [13] Could the various Bible statements on predestination refer to predestination to service rather than predestination to salvation?
- [14] Could it be that God predestined the world to salvation or damnation because He knew in advance how they would respond to the gospel?

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