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How is it that people come to be in Christ? It is not through some predetermined unconditional election. Paul explains that we come to be in Christ through faith and obedience. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal. 3:26-28). This is what Jesus commanded to be preached to every creature. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that disbelieves shall be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). Salvation is conditional based upon our willingness to obey the commands of Jesus. Are you among those whom God has predetermined to save?

For example, a coach may decide before hand that "All those who will be on the team will: 1) Have a certain grade point average. 2) Be able to dribble and shoot the ball with both hands. 3) Be present at every practice and show second effort, etc." Thus, the coach has predetermined who will be chosen for the team, though he never mentioned anyone specifically by name. In the same way God has predetermined who the chosen are. He chose that the saved would be those who, by their obedience, would choose to be "in Christ" (see, Eph. 1:4-7).

The Scriptures teach that God, with His eternal wisdom and foreknowledge, has predestined (i.e. predetermined or foreordained) certain things about the salvation of man. But what has He predestined? Some teach that God's predetermination concerning man's salvation is unconditional and individually selective. That is, God, before He created the world, unconditionally predetermined specifically the individuals whom He would save and those who would be lost. However, the Scriptures teach that God's predestination as to who will be saved is conditional upon each individual's choice to be in His Son Jesus Christ.

There are some grave problems with the teaching that states God has unconditionally predestined certain individuals to be saved and others to be lost. First, if God elected to save one individual and not save another without condition, this would make God a respecter of persons. However, this is what the Scriptures plainly state that God is not. "There is no partiality with God" (Rom. 2:11; also see 1Pet. 1:17).

Second, such teaching denies that God desires the salvation of all men. Yet, Jesus Himself declared, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16). How could Jesus die for "whosoever" if God, before the foundation of the world, had already determined who would be saved and who would be lost? The apostle Peter states, "God is not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance" (2Pet. 3:9). Paul too says, God "desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth" (1Tim. 2:4). God desires the salvation of all men not just a select few.

A third thing that shows such a concept of God's pre-

destination to be false is that it makes the preaching of the gospel in vain.

God desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. Thus, Jesus commanded that the gospel be carried into "all the world" and proclaimed to "every creature" (Mk. 16:15). But why preach to all men if it has been predetermined who will be saved and who will be lost? In fact, why bother to preach at all? If an individual is one whom God has predetermined to be lost, all the preaching in the world couldn't change his condition. On the other hand, if an individual is one whom God has elected to save unconditionally, why preach to him? Would not God save him anyway? Christ commanded the gospel to be preached to all because salvation is conditional upon each individual's acceptance or rejection of that gospel.

Finally, this doctrine eliminates man's responsibility. It teaches that one's salvation has nothing to do with his willingness to obey but is all predetermined by God. Yet, Jesus spoke of those whom He wanted to come to Him, but they would not (Lk. 13:34). Coming to Jesus involves willingness on our part, to believe and obey (cf. Mk. 16:16). Our salvation involves responsibilities and conditions that must be met by us.

God's predetermination was not to unconditionally save select individuals and for others to be lost, but rather a predetermination to save the collective or the group of those who would meet certain conditions that He would set forth in the gospel of Christ. A basketball coach may predetermine who is going to be on the team before the first cut is ever made. That doesn't mean that he names the specific individuals that will

