

LESSON 33

# PREDESTINATION

Compiled by Darrell Crow based upon personal studies, notes and prayer.

THIS LESSON CURRENTLY UNDERGOING REVISIONS

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January 1, 2020

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*Be Saved*

*Eternal Security*

*God's Holiness*

*God's Immensity (Omnipresence) (Everywhere always)*

*God Is Immutable (Always unchanging)*

*God Is Incarnate (God becomes man)*

*God Is Incomprehensible (Cannot comprehend God)*

*God Is Independent*

*God Is Infinite (Without any limits)*

*God is Sovereign (all authority)*

*God's Omnipotence (all powerful)*

*God Is Omniscient (All knowledge)*

*God's Foreknowledge*

*God 's Goodness*

*God's Love*

*God's Compassion And Mercy*

*Eternity*

*The Will of God*

*Righteousness*

*Justification*

*Glorification*

*Sanctification*

*Regeneration*

*God's Election of Angels*

*God's Election of Man*

*Called of God*

*Predestination*

# **INTRODUCTION TO PREDESTINATION**

# INTRODUCTION TO PREDESTINATION

*Romans 8:28-30 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. [29] For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; [30] and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*

The Bible says that the believer is foreknown, and predestinated by God. The big question is this... Predestinated for what?

**First School of Thought** Christians (Saved) were predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ and to be adopted as sons of God. Salvation is a free gift from God that man does not merit nor can earn. It is by Faith that we are saved and it is by Faith we are to live.

**Second School of Thought** God has, before the foundation of the world arbitrarily, according to His will, predestined what he wanted to do with each man, woman and child. For he did not create them all in the same condition, but foreordains to everlasting life and others to eternal damnation. That is how Protestant Reformer John Calvin defined the doctrine in the book, Institutes of the Christian Religion. This concept is based on the idea that God is omniscient and that his creatures action call his purposes into question or oblige Him to make choices. This doctrine was first proposed by St. Augustine of Hippo in the 4th century and became an essential dogma of Catholicism, Calvinism and many reformed believers.

Somehow, this simple word, Predestination, has become a complicated and greatly misunderstood term and doctrine.

In my studies, I have found that nowhere in the Bible is the word predestination used to indicate that God has, before the foundation of the world, arbitrarily determined which persons will be judged to hell and which persons will become adopted sons of God to spend eternity in heaven with Him. God's will was to enjoy a holy relationship with each individual. This is reflected in Peter 2:9 where we read that God is not willing that any individual should perish. God ardently desires for all men to repent and be reconciled to Himself. As we have seen in our past discussions, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and thereby sin entered the world. Mankind's nature was altered from being holy to being an enemy of God and subsequently serving self rather than God. Therefore, sin required that our Holy God sentence **all of mankind** to eternity separated from God.

**Sadly, man can do nothing to restore or reconcile himself to God.** Fortunately, **God could reconcile man back to Himself,** and as we see in Genesis 3, promised a redeemer, a Messiah, who would restore man's 'lost' position before God. But God set a high standard for salvation. One must believe in God and His work on the cross, confess their sins and accept Jesus' crucifixion as the substitute for their sins. This is the central theme of the Bible, God's reconciliation of mankind to Himself through Jesus Christ.

If it were true that God did decide and did plan that individuals would have no choice whatsoever of choosing to "accept Christ" or go to heaven or hell, prior to creation than there would be no hope for mankind, as man would be unable by faith to be justified.

The scriptures state that "God is love" and that He is a "lover of justice." God has always urged His people: Hate what is bad and love what is good."

- *Amos 5:15 Hate evil, love good, And establish justice in the gate! Perhaps the LORD God of hosts May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.*
- *Psalms 37:28 For the LORD loves justice And does not forsake His godly ones; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off.*

- *1 John 4:6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

On numerous occasions God encouraged His loyal ones to **choose** a virtuous course. For example, when Jehovah concluded a covenant with the ancient nation of Israel, He said to them through Moses, *“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants.”* (Deuteronomy 30:19) Did God establish ahead of time the choice that each of those individuals would make? Evidently not.

Joshua, a leader of God’s people in early Israel, exhorted his countrymen, *If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”* (Joshua 24:15) Did God establish ahead of time the choice that each of those individuals would make? Evidently not.

Similarly, God’s prophet Jeremiah said: *“They will not give you over. Please obey the LORD in what I am saying to you, that it may go well with you and you may live.”* (Jeremiah 38:20) Did God establish ahead of time the choice that each of those individuals would make? Evidently not.

Would a just, righteous, holy, loving God encourage people to do right in the hope of receiving a reward if God knew that He had predestined them to fail? Of course not. Such encouragement would be hypocritical and tantamount to God lying to His people. And this we know through the Scriptures and through our discussions in this book that not only would God not do this, He is incapable of doing this.

- If choice is removed, than man cannot accept God’s invitation for salvation. Its already predetermined.
- If choice is removed, than man cannot repent of sin, since God would have orchestrated man’s sin nature and thereby claiming that God is the author of sin. Scripture says man is to repent and confess his sins and sin nature. Christ paid the penalty for our sins,
- If choice is removed than one, by definition, cannot be a believer. To have belief in or be a believer means to have confidence in the truth, the existence, or the reliability of something, without absolute proof that one is right in doing so. Only if one believes in something can one act purposefully such as in believing and being reconciled to God, such as the thief on the cross next to Jesus. One’s reconciliation would thus be predetermined. Were man predestined to heaven or hell, this act would invalidate man’s ability to repent, believe and live by faith thus rendering God’s statement, *“The just shall live by faith.”* a mockery.
- If choice is removed, there is no capacity to love. We are all commanded to love God, ourselves, our neighbors, even our enemies. *And He said to him, “ ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ [38] This is the great and foremost commandment. [39] The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. (Matthew 22:37-39)*

The command itself does not mean we have no choice but to love, rather we must choose to love. A commandment is a request for someone to alter their behavior to conform to the prescribed request. Too often, we think of love as an almost passive state of being, as opposed to a conscious choice we make. When we make a conscious choice to love someone, than we must constantly make additional choices in our actions, speech, morals, submission, leadership, values and participation to name a few, that enhances our state of being in love. Were our love predetermined, God would not have to command us to love Him since robots cannot alter their programming. There is no fellowship or relationship with anyone predetermined to love the creator. It must be a choice of the creature to love the creator. Through free will, the creature will be able to recognize, appreciate and respond to the creator with love and flourish the relationship.

- If choice is removed, than commandments would be useless. A commandment is an order that is given by someone of authority who has the right to expect their commandment is obeyed by those under that authority. Non-conformance to a commandment results in disciplinary action by the commander to the failing entity responsible for carrying out a commandment. The responsibility for carrying out the commandment belongs to those who are under the authority. There is a positive reaction when the commandment is carried out correctly and discipline when there is failure in complying with the command. The subject has the freedom to choose to obey or not. Notice how God reveals this in Scripture. (*Joshua 24:15 ... choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: ..... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*)
- If choice is removed, than we could have totally dispensed with our discussions on the position of the Believer before God, judgement, and eternal security. Our position before God would have been determined by God's choice prior to the foundation of the world, and not by faith. All scripture stating that man is justified by faith and reconciled to Him, would be rendered false. It could even be argued that the Great White Throne Judgment would be a total farce were choice removed. Judgment is for wrong decisions, wrong choices and wrong actions in life by one who values their own desires above or in lieu of the will of God. This is the root cause of sin and disobedience.
  - (*Romans 3:28*) For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.
  - (*Romans 3:30*) since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.
  - (*Romans 5:1*) Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
  - (*Galatians 2:16*) nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.
  - (*Galatians 3:8*) The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."
  - (*Galatians 3:11*) Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHT-EOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."
  - (*Galatians 3:24*) Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.
  - (*James 2:24*) You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.
- If choice were removed by God making all the decisions on who is elected to hell or heaven, prior to mankind's existence, than all we need do is wait until the Book of Life is opened to see if we won the lottery.
- The Great Commission would be rendered meaningless as salvation would no longer be a gift, just a pre-ordained decision.
- The result of God's sacrifice on the cross would have no meaning nor would man be required to believe in or have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fortunately, God did not predetermined who goes to hell. We are not robots. Man will be judged and sent to hell by God only if they reject (fail to choose) Christ's redeeming work. God has made it clear that to not decide to 'accept' Christ's redeeming work is equivalent to knowingly rejecting Christ. Rejecting Christ is the default position for mankind. One must make a choice to believe in God and to live in faith to be reconciled to God.

# **God's Aseity And Predestination**

# God's Aseity And Predestination

In a much earlier discussion we learned that God's Aseity is an incommunicable attribute. God cannot impart His eternality to a creature, because anything created, anything that has a beginning in time is, by definition, not eternal. We can be given eternal life going forward, but we cannot receive it retroactively. We are not external creatures. Only God Almighty, creator of all things is eternal.

All saints have received the gift of life from God Almighty, the Supreme Being. God has predetermined that we shall all have life, and to further demonstrate His love for us, He sustains and preserves us in His creation. He asks in return that we believe in Him by faith and accept the salvation offered through His son, Jesus Christ, abstain from sin, love Him, worship Him, obey Him and His laws, and willingly and joyfully commit ourselves in service and good works to God Almighty, creator of all things.

Man is predestined to life, and all believers are predestined to eternal life with God Almighty. Those who reject God, are predestined to eternal damnation. The choice is up to each life.

- *Joshua 24:14-15* "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
- *John 3:16-17* "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."
- *Deuteronomy 30:19-20* I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, 20 by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."
- *1 Kings 18:21* And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not answer him a word.
- *Matthew 6:24* "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."
- *Hebrews 11:1* Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
- *2 Thessalonians 2:13* But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.
- *Galatians 6:7* Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.
- *Romans 12:2* And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
- *Acts 17:30* Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,
- *Psalms 40:4* How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.
- *Revelation 22:17* The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.
- *Hebrews 11:6* And 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 seek Him.
- *Galatians 3:2* This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

# **Our Lost Position Before God**

# Our Lost Position Before God

The Bible says in the beginning God created Adam and Eve and the world they lived in. When man was first created, he was perfect, with a close relationship with God. He lived in a perfect paradise that was characterized as a garden. Man had perfect communion with each other, with God Almighty and their world. Life was perfect and good and man's future was to live in paradise commune with God eternally. Man was given full reign of Paradise but with some rules (commandments). The one rule we're aware of is "do not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge." Adam and Eve chose to ignore God's law, disobeyed God and ate of the fruit. Sin entered into mankind and we subsequently 'lost' our relationship with God Almighty and we "lost" our position before God, and we "lost" our Godly nature (which was now converted to a sinful nature in open rebellion against God) and we "lost" our eternal future in heaven with God. The sad, sad ending to this story is that man, even if he so ardently desired, can do nothing to regain his position before God. Our 4th discussion in this study fully defines this "lost" position before God.

God Almighty took the initiative to reconcile man back to his former position.

Man could not.

*Genesis 3:15* tells us *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.* Thus God labels Satan an enemy to mankind right from the very first sin. And God promised a savior who will defeat this enemy. Since Adam and Eve abandoned God and followed Satan, this doomed man's natural position before God as an enemy.

Thus the central theme of the Bible is Jesus Christ and the offer of redemption of mankind to God. It is the proof of who Jesus Christ is and his redemptive works for all of mankind. It is the Gospel, the proof of His person as God revealed in the flesh, of His sacrificial death, and His resurrection from the dead. All Old Testament scripture leads to this, all New Testament scripture proceeds from this. (*1 Corinthians 15:1-4* "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, [2] by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. [3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, [4] and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures")

Augustine proposed, and Catholics, Calvinists and reformed believers have endorsed a doctrine that states God before the foundation of the world selected who would be saved (and therefore who would be lost) and man had no choice but to conform to the will of God.

But scripture paints an entirely different picture. All of mankind was instantly condemned when Adam and Eve sinned by God because of his (man's) lost position before God, not because God had foreordained them to damnation. There is no choice in God's judgement of sin, therefore all men are "lost" before God. To state that God determined before time which of his creatures shall be saved and which shall be lost by God is illogical and inconsistent with Scripture. The decision has already been made and all of mankind is guilty and "lost" before God. Redemption is only through faith in Jesus Christ, not a preordained edict.

God announces in *Genesis 3:15* that He took the initiative to reconcile man to Himself by sending a savior. That savior is revealed to be God's son, Jesus Christ. As we learn in *1 Corinthians 15:1-4*, salvation comes to those who believe and accept Christ's redemptive act on the cross for their sins. Jesus Himself says in *John 3:16* that His will is for all to be saved. "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." "Whoever believes" is further defined in *2 Peter 3:9* *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.* Whoever believes can be anyone since "God's will is that no one would perish but that everyone comes to repentance and therefore is reconciled to God". This is a gracious God. To state otherwise is to contradict the word of God and the will of God.

# **Being In Christ**

# Being In Christ

Galatians 3:26-28 *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. [27] For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. [28] There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Paul is speaking to the Christians in Galatia, reminding them of their new identity since they placed their faith in Jesus Christ. To be "baptized into Christ" means that they were identified with Christ, having left their old sinful lives and fully embracing the new life in Christ.

- *Mark 8:34 And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*
- *Luke 9:23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*

When we respond to the Holy Spirit's drawing, He "baptizes" us into the family of God. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, *"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."*

Several places in Scripture refer to the believer's being "in Christ"

- *"1 Peter 5:14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ."*
- *"Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:"*
- *"Romans 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*
- *"Colossians 3:3 says, For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."*

God is perfect justice. He cannot simply overlook or excuse sin; that would not be just. Sin has to be judged and the sentence upon the sinner executed. All the wrath God holds toward evil was poured out on His own Son. When Jesus took our place on the cross, He suffered the punishment all of mankind's sins deserves. His last words before He died were, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). What was finished? Not merely His earthly life. As He proved three days later, that was not finished.

- *Matthew 28:7 Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."*
- *Mark 16:6 And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him.*
- *1 Corinthians 15:6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;*

What Jesus finished on the cross was God's plan to redeem His fallen world. When Jesus said, *"It is finished,"* He was stating that He had successfully paid in full for every act of rebellion, past, present, and future. There is no need for anyone to die in their sins. There is no need for anyone to be outside of Christ.

To be "in Christ" means we have accepted His sacrifice as payment for our own sin. We thus by faith are believers.

Our life has consisted of every sinful thought, attitude or action we have ever committed. No amount of self-cleansing can make us pure enough to warrant forgiveness and a relationship with a holy God (*Romans 3:10-12 as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; [11] THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; [12] ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."*).

The Bible says that in our natural sinful state we are enemies of God (*Romans 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*).

When we accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, He switches "accounts" with us. He exchanges our list of sins for Jesus' perfect "account" that is totally pleasing to God. God sees Jesus and not us.

- *2 Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

A Divine Exchange takes place at the foot of the cross: our old sin nature for His perfect nature

- *2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

To enter the presence of a holy God, we must be hidden in the righteousness of Christ. To be "in Christ" means that God no longer sees our imperfections; He sees the righteousness of His own Son.

- *Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

Only "in Christ" is our sin debt cancelled, our relationship with God restored, and our eternity secured.

- *Hebrews 8:12 "FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE."*
- *John 3:16-18 "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. 17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*
- *John 20:31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*

Thus being in Christ is the result of accepting God's universal call to salvation not a predetermined act. We are called believers because we accept, we choose to hold as truth the gospel of Jesus Christ.

# **The Thief On The Cross**

# The Thief On The Cross

The repentant thief on the Cross next to Jesus when He was crucified is a story that in many ways is one of the most touching stories in the Bible. A dying penitent thief accepts Christ as Lord and Savior and is assured by Jesus on the day of their crucifixion, that the thief will enjoy paradise with Jesus.

The story of the thief on the cross is found in the following Bible verses:

- *Matthew 27:38-44* At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. [39] And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads [40] and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." [41] In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, [42] "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. [43] HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" [44] The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words
- *Luke 23:33-43* When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. [34] But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. [35] And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." [36] The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, [37] and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" [38] Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." [39] One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" [40] But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? [41] And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." [42] And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" [43] And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."
- *Mark 15:27-32* 27 They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. [28] [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors." ] [29] Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, [30] save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" [31] In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. [32] Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

One of the thieves, after joining with the other thief in mocking the Lord, recognized that Jesus was the Son of God and decided to ask for mercy and pardon. He offers up the simple prayer, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." Jesus accepted his repentance and his belief and gives him the promise that the thief on the cross will be with him in paradise.

Is Jesus promising that the repentant criminal would be with Him that Friday in paradise? It would appear so on the surface, but let's take a deeper look.

Its all about the comma.

Jesus said "“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”"

Does the comma rightfully belong in front of, or after the word *today*?

The meaning of the verse as shown before the word *today* is that the thief will be in paradise with Jesus on that Friday of their crucifixion.

The meaning of the verse with the comma after the word today is that Jesus is making a promise today (Friday) that Jesus will take the repentant thief to paradise.

This is very critical to understand. Let's review John 20:17, "*Jesus said to her, 'Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'*" We can see that Jesus could not have been with the thief in heaven that Friday if He had still not ascended to the Father on Sunday. If the comma is inserted before the word today, Jesus would then be promising that the thief would be with Him that very day in paradise; thus making Jesus a liar and contradicting John 20:17.

It makes a big difference where the comma is placed. Not long ago, my wife sent him me a text message asking if she could buy a very expensive item. I sent her this reply, "No, price too high." Unfortunately I mistyped. When she received the text, "No price too high," she happily went and bought her heart's desire. Correct punctuation is critical. If the punctuation is off by even one word it can mean something entirely different.

The Scriptures are clear that Christ had not ascended to the Father on Sunday morning. Therefore, He could not have been with the thief in paradise on Friday. This means that the Bible translators incorrectly placed the comma before the word today instead of after it.

Both Matthew and Mark tell us that in the beginning of the crucifixion after their hands and feet had been nailed to their respective crosses, that both thieves ridiculed the Lord.

I cannot imagine the audacity of these two thieves. Obviously in much pain, they found time to focus their attention on ridiculing the third member of this group, Jesus. Don't forget, Barabbas was originally scheduled to die on the cross, but he was freed from that cross when Jesus took his place.

During the six hours that all three were hanging on the cross, especially the last three hours, one thief saw that something unusual was taking place. J. Vernon McGee says in Volume 4 in his discussion of Luke 23:33-43, "He (the repentant thief) recognized this One dying on the cross was not dying for Himself but for another. Although he knew Barabbas should be on that cross, he also seemed to realize He was dying for him [the thief]. He (the thief) recognized that this was a transaction between God and the Man on the cross, and the Man on the cross was God. Then he (the thief) turned to Jesus in faith."

McGee also adds, "This man was a bad thief, not a good one, but because of his faith in the Son of God, he became a saved thief. This man had faith to believe that the Lord Jesus was coming into a kingdom, and it would come after His death. Obviously this thief had come a long way theologically while hanging on that cross.

Jesus made the promise that day that this thief would be in paradise with Him. These two thieves had been arrested for the same crime, tried for the same crime, condemned for the same crime, and were dying for the same crime. What was the difference between the two? There wasn't any, both were thieves. The difference lies in the fact that one thief believed in Jesus Christ and one did not.

As a Christian, what would you tell this thief? What would you say that would assure him he would spend eternity with God?

Would you tell the thief that he must run errands of mercy or use his hands for deeds of kindness and to do good works? Would this have helped the thief? What could he "do" that would possibly help him earn salvation. His hands and feet were securely nailed to his cross until they came down in death.

So works cannot save this thief or anyone else.

What church would you ask the thief dying on the cross to join? When you're at death's door, no church to join.

So church membership cannot save this thief or anyone else.

What ceremony would you ask the thief to go through?

So baptism, Holy communion (the Lord's supper) or extreme unction could not save this thief or anyone else.

Instead Jesus told the thief that he would be with Jesus in paradise because of his faith. Jesus gave the thief His word.

Faith means to have confidence in God, a statement, a promise, or another person of the truth of something, its existence, or the reliability of that something, even without absolute proof that one is right in so believing.

The story of the crucified thief illustrates that only by faith can anyone be with Jesus in paradise. Faith must be exercised by the potential believer for reconciliation and justification. God has provided all of the evidence for faith, all of the persuasive arguments as foundation for faith in Him, and He has predestined everyone to live so they could exercise their faith to believe in Him for eternal life.

Since God did not choose who would be saved and who would be damned, this thief's entered eternal life when he exercised Faith in Jesus. This is the basis of all salvation, corporately and individually.

God has predestined man with the freedom to choose to believe in God and to live by faith. It is the exercise of that choice that allows man to accept and receive God's free gift of eternal salvation.

*2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

# **Calvinism and Arminianism Compared**

# Calvinism and Arminianism Compared

The question of predestination has disturbed many throughout history. It was at the heart of the controversy that brought about the Protestant Reformation. And prior to the Reformation, within the Catholic Church, this topic was heatedly debated for centuries dating back to its initial introduction by Bishop Augustine of Hippo. And the debate continues to this day igniting even further passionate discussions.

As strange as it may seem, I am grateful to God Almighty for this centuries old debate as it has been the catalyst for my research, studies and defining my understanding of Scripture. I have drawn closer to God during this adventure and it has greatly enhanced my daily walk, my faith, and a deeper understanding of Scripture. I more than realize that although this topic has been debated by the world's most devout, intelligent theologians since 400 AD, that there is little hope I shall shed worldwide new light on predestination. However, I have come to peace with what I do believe Scripture teaches.

Let's go back in time ....

Since the 4th century the Catholic Bishop Saint Augustine of Hippo, Aurelius Augustinus, (354-430 AD) has been considered by the Roman Catholic Church to be the most significant Christian thinker since Paul the Apostle. Augustine is credited with laying the foundation and articulating the doctrine of predestination for the Church.

Over 5,000,000 words of Augustine's writings have survived. His chief works are *Confessions*, which he completed at the age of 45, is a 13 volume set which summarizes false teachings of different Christian sects and Pagan cults, as well as Augustine's thinking and interpretation on various scriptural topics or doctrines. *The City of God* written some 15 years later is a rewrite of Scripture from Genesis to the final judgement. Today this 22-volume set would be considered, in my opinion, a commentary. Augustine wrote a book of sermons and at least an additional 7-9 books. At his death he was working on a massive collection of refutes of newer sects and pagan institutions' false doctrines. It is unknown how many books all together Augustine has penned. Nevertheless he was wildly read and respected throughout the Roman Catholic church empire.

The Catholic Church adopted Augustine's writings on predestination and the *Dictionnaire de theologie catholique* states predestination to be "the divine intention to bring certain ones, who are designated by name to everlasting life." The Church further states that it is generally thought that the "certain ones", "designated by name", are the individuals referred to by the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:28-30, "*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. [29] For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; [30] and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*"

This interpretation by the Catholic Church has lead to the long debate on "***Does God arbitrarily choose whom He specifically wants to save (and by default whom He condemns to eternal damnation), or do men have free will and a part to play in obtaining God's reconciliation and resulting eternal life?***"

Augustine's writing were not only fully endorsed by the Church, but also adopted as a fundamental doctrine for many protestant sects during the Reformation. According to Augustine, the righteous have, from eternity past, been predestined by God to receive eternal blessings. On the other hand, the unrighteous, although not predestined by God in the strict sense of the word, are to receive the merited punishment for their sins, condemnation. Augustine's explanation left no space for free will, thus opening the centuries old controversy.

The lively debate on free will versus Catholic predestination continued throughout the Middle Ages culminating into an explosion that help spawn the Reformation. Martin Luther evidentially saw predestination as a free choice on God's part without His foreseeing the future merits or good works of the chosen ones. John Calvin came to a more radical conclusion with his concept of double predestination. Some people are predestined to eternal salvation, and others to eternal condemnation. Calvin considered God's choice to be incomprehensible.

The issue of predestination and the closely related question of “grace”, a word used by believers to designate the act by which God saves men, declares them righteous and reconciles those believers unto Himself. This hotly contested debate took on such proportions that history notes that in 1611 the Church banned any further publications on the subject without the consent of the authorized Catholic Holy See oversight organization. During the Reformation, the protestant Reformed churches continued the debate and several Protestant organizations, most notably, The Remonstrates, followers of Jacobus Arminius, believed that man has a role to play in salvation through the exercise of Faith in God and the works of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The basis of the Remonstrates’ interpretation of this doctrine is that grace is not earned but comes through faith and faith through the hearing of Christ. Romans 8:17 says *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”* One comes to faith only through hearing the gospel, and the specific message that must be heard is the word of Christ, that is, the good news about Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen Savior.

Thus the part man plays in salvation is “HEARING THE WORD OF GOD” and “BELIEVING THE WORDS OF CHRIST.”

The Arminianism, i.e. the Remonstrates, conclude that Scripture clearly teaches salvation is a gift from God Almighty and not by works or merits. They further argue that man, without merit and without works, does in fact take part in salvation through the exercise of faith. Without faith, as Paul so eloquently writes, it is impossible to please God, to be saved, reconciled and justified by God.

This is tantamount to being given a gift. No one can receive a gift, that is partake or benefit from that gift unless they accept that gift. That acceptance process is the intent of Romans 8:17 and better illustrated by the thief who hung on the cross next to Jesus as recorded in the Gospels.

Were someone to hand me a \$100.00 bill right now, I could not receive or benefit from that \$100.00 until I “accepted” it from the giver by taking that \$100.00 bill from their hand and placing it into my hand. Then it become my free gift by which I had no entitlement nor did I earn that gift. I only received that gift as a result of the grace of the giver. And were everyone in the world, this instant, offered a \$100.00 bill by Santa Claus, nobody would own that gift or benefit from that gift until such time as they took the \$100 bill from Santa’s hand and placing it into their own hand. This is the basis of God’s gift giving. It is the difference between Augustine/Calvinism theology and Arminianism.

Let’s move forward to today’s debate.

As we’ve stated, there are two primary schools of thought on predestination:

First, Calvinism is named after the teachings of theologian John Calvin (1509-1564) and Arminianism after the teachings of theologian Jacobus (James) Arminius (1559-1609). Both state they have based their beliefs on the Bible, but ended up with opposite interpretations on several doctrines, not just the cornerstone doctrine of predestination. Calvin borrowed heavily on the fourth century Catholic theologian, Augustine, as we have discussed. Calvinism is essentially re-written Catholicism.

In Calvinism, Predestination and Calvin’s definition of various doctrines seem closely tied to each other. John Calvin was of the mind that God is sovereign over all that happens. Since God is sovereign only His will is what defines all of man’s thoughts, events, actions and outcomes. God predetermines (pre-ordains) who He will call to salvation and brings it to pass since what God wills cannot be changed by humans. This implies that God does not universally call all men to repentance and reconciliation and is willing for some to perish.

This is essentially stating that man lives by fate and that fate arranges everything, without recourse, for every outcome. Everything is written. Everything is predetermined without exception. Fate is God’s will.

I am not in support of this statement. For example, God is not willing that any should perish, but all to come to ever lasting life. Yet there are many who have, are, or will reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Another example is that God’s will is for mankind to be obedient to all His laws, but all of mankind has defied God’s

will in this area. Whereas God's will is for total obedience, the truth is that we all have fallen short of the glory of God and sinned. Our propensity is to sin even though this is outside of God's perfect, sovereign will. God clearly says in Scripture that **all men** are born into sin and choose to live outside of God's will (Romans 3:10).

The Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is that God, before the earth and humans were created, preordained that specific individuals would be saved and the rest by exclusion would be condemned eternally. For those who are "lucky" enough to be called by God, God calls them effectually; that is He completes what He ordained by His sovereign direction of that believer's life. They can not help but be saved since He effects what He wills. In reality this means the elect have no choice and are pre-programmed to exercise saving faith.

- Jeremiah states that God knew us even before we were born in chapter one, verse 4-5: "*The word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart, I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."*"
- Isaiah 43:7 also presents evidence that God knew us before hand and had plans for us, "*everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*"
- Job 23:14 declares, "*He carries out his decree against me, and many such plans he still has in store."*"
- I Corinthians 2:7 says "*...we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began."*"

There will be believers in each of these groups who agree and disagree with certain points of their own system of belief. Not all Calvinists hold to every point of the Calvinist system, nor does every Arminian uphold every point of the Arminian system.

## **Fate: *Stockholm & Andrea Doria***

# Fate: *Stockholm & Andrea Doria*

In the preceding section we mentioned the fate may play in determining one's eternal destination. A large number of people are inclined to think that life and death are governed by fate. They hear about strange events in other's lives, how someone died or incredibly survived when another outcome seemed assured. They wonder ... Why did it happen that way? Was it written? Are the days of man numbered?

The English word 'fate' is derived from the Italian *fato* or (later) which is derived from the Latin *fatum* 'that which has been spoken', from *fari* 'speak'. Fate is often invoked when adverse actions or death occurs. However the more common definition of Fate are the existence of forces outside of one's control that make things happen and is generally regarded as determined by a supernatural power. Fate, destiny, and doom are used interchangeably.

One example of fate which we can use to examine or to pinpoint 'fate' occurred not far from my home in New England. On July 25, 1956, the Swedish passenger liner, *Stockholm* rammed into the side of the Italian liner, *Andrea Doria* just off of Nantucket Island on a frigid cold, icy night. There were strong gale force winds and 43 foot swells. A most miserable nights for passengers who were intending to disembark in a few hours at Pier 97 in Manhattan.

The *Andrea Doria* was the pride of Italy, a 29 ton ocean liner that carried 1,134 passengers on this ill-fated voyage and 500 crew members. Built in 1951, the *Andrea Doria* was considered the largest, the fastest, and supposedly, the safest Italian ship in existence.

The *Stockholm*, a 16 ton passenger ship capable of carrying 512 passengers plus crew, was built in 1948 and was one of the smallest passenger ships operated by the Swedish America Line (SAL). The *Stockholm* has a long history of being 'the ship of death' since it collided with the *Andrea Doria* in New England and years later was attacked by 29 Pirate boats in the Gulf of Aden while sailing to Australia. The *Stockholm* has changed its name at least 9 times throughout its life which still continues.

The bow of the *Stockholm* crushed into *Andrea Doria*'s Cabin No. 52, swept in underneath a 14-year old girl's bed and flung her up and onto the bow of the *Stockholm* behind a steel shield. When backing out, the *Stockholm* carried Linda Morgan unharmed and safely sheltered from flying debris. However Linda's eight-year-old sister, her mother, 46 other passengers, and 5 crew members died in that accident.

The *Andrea Doria* sank to the bottom eleven hours later, but the *Stockholm* stayed afloat. Neighboring ships quickly responded to the SOS sent out by both the *Andrea Doria* and the *Stockholm* which averted a disaster of epic proportions similar to the Titanic. The captain of the *Stockholm* said Linda Morgan was saved through a "miracle."

Did all these 53 people die because the "number of their days" were up? Was little Linda spared because fate had more days in store for her?

If fate really governs everybody's life, it means that fate had to arrange all the weather conditions and for the two liners to cross each other's course at precisely the same moment and collide precisely the way they did to take the lives of precisely those persons whose "days were up."

If all action, events, cause and effect are the result of fate, than consequentially, every fatal accident or disease or cause of death must be prearranged and unavoidable for those whose "days are up." No remedies or precautions whatsoever matters. The 17th century British playwright and poet James Shirley would then have been right when he wrote during the 1630s: "There is no armour against fate."

## DEATH THE LEVELLER

By James Shirley

The glories of our blood and state  
Are shadows, not substantial things;  
There is no armour against Fate;  
Death lays his icy hand on kings:  
Sceptre and Crown Must tumble down,  
And in the dust be equal made  
With the poor crookèd scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,  
And plant fresh laurels where they kill:  
But their strong nerves at last must yield;  
They tame but one another still:  
Early or late  
They stoop to fate,  
And must give up their murmuring breath  
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow,  
Then boast no more your mighty deeds!  
Upon Death's purple altar now  
See where the victor-victim bleeds.  
Your heads must come  
To the cold tomb:  
Only the actions of the just  
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.

Wouldn't this make fate the most inexorable dictator of all? Would not such a fatalistic view serve to dishearten its believers and deprive them of their initiative in life. The ultimate, sole purpose of fate is death. Fate defines and puts into actions all things precisely as required to bring about the death of all humanity.

It is clear that if this "Dictator Fate" really exists, he must be terribly grim and unjust. He blindly measures out everybody's number of days without regard to or the slightest consideration for a person's desire to live or his efforts to care for his own life. Fate demands everyone's complete capitulation.

Another thought worth considering. Fate strips mankind from any responsibility of any cause that effects or could result in death, (if indeed fate exists and its sole goal is the death of all humanity). So why worry about your actions because fate has already written your days. Why quit smoking? Why not enjoy drugs, sex, alcohol and Rock & Roll? Why bother with seeing doctors or having operations or trying to cure illnesses, or have your teeth fixed or improve one's self? If your days are already numbered and the cause of death prearranged and you could do nothing? Why did the nation of Nineveh bother to repent and become obedient to God?

Isn't it interesting that man is focused on living and believes they have the freedom and free will to enhance life whereas fate focuses on predetermined death.

Some people believe in divine predestination. They think that by God foreknowing all things it is the cause resulting in those things inevitably coming to pass. Therefore, they reason all things are predestined since God foreknows all things which cannot fail to take place.

Essentially those who endorse the existence of fate, and those who believe in divine predestination lead to the same consequence.

Others disagree with these two concepts believing knowledge allows one the freedom to decide whether or not to take action and what constitutes appropriate action. God himself disagreed with both the 'fate' and the 'divine predestination' position.

- *Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*
- *Jonah 3:1-10 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, [2] "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." [3] So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk. [4] Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." [5] Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. [6] When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. [7] He issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. [8] But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. [9] Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish." [10] When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.*

God's will was firm when He had Jonah pronounce judgement that in 40-days Nineveh would be destroyed due to its great sins and rebellion against God. However, Nineveh's leaders accepted God's fate and chose to repent and God subsequently chose not to carry out the destruction of Nineveh.

The Bible explains, in a very realistic way, what is behind many of the mysterious things that now and then happen to people. The Bible shows that two main factors are involved, "time" and "unforeseen occurrence"

- *Ecclesiastes 9:11 I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all.*

Apply this to what happened to Linda Morgan that night aboard the Andrea Doria and you will understand why this outcome occurred for Linda.

God extends to everybody a free choice. Through Moses, God admonished the people of Israel.

- *Deuteronomy 30:19 **I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants,***
- *Deuteronomy 30:19 By loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for **this is your life and the length of your days,** that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."*

In these two statements God makes it abundantly clear that man has a choice for eternal life and death. And God is desperately urging man to choose life. Furthermore, in the second statement God says man's days are dependent upon his life choices. In one 96 word statement, God debunks fate and divine predestination.

In Luke 13:22-23 we read of one individual that asks Jesus how many persons would be saved. *And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem. [23] And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?"* In contrast to either fate or divine predestination, which may lead to indifference, Jesus told his audience: *(Luke 13:24) "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.* In other words, the door

to salvation is open; God pre-condemns no one. Matthew 6:33 records Jesus saying “*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*” Jesus is exalting us to hear the Gospel, to accept Christ as Lord and savior. And by the very faith that brought about our salvation, we are to live. Fate and Divine Predestination does not exist. Each of us must make a choice for life or death. Choosing not to make a choice is to accept our default position as an unrepentant sinner condemned eternally.

In Acts 2:21, Peter outlines in a sermon the perquisites for salvation, ‘*AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.*’ The prerequisite is to believe in the true God, to call upon the name of the true God, Jehovah and worship him. We will then be permanently reconciled to God.

In the Bible’s final book we read how God through His Holy Spirit extends the offer of salvation to everybody. *Revelation 22:17, The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.* God’s invitation, his offer of eternal life demands that man by faith choose God. Man cannot earn salvation, but he can receive the gift of salvation through the exercise of faith, “...Life without cost...”

God is not an inexorable dictator who governs your life through divine pre-destination or fate. He is a merciful, righteous and loving God who gives each of us an honest opportunity, a free choice, and woos us and encourages us to choose life that we might enjoy eternity with Him.

God would not ever do this if He knew you were already predestined to a certain way of living and dying. Nor does fate govern your life. Neither does divine predestination. Your future is your choice. Christ has paid the penalty for all of mankind’s sins and extends an invitation to everyone who has or is living to accept His free gift. The final outcome of your salvation depends upon your choice.

**Does God change His Mind?**

# Does God change His mind?

Malachi 3:6 declares, “*For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.*” Similarly, James 1:17 tells us, “*Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.*” Numbers 23:19 is clear: “*God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?*”

Based on these verses, no, God does not change. God is unchanging and unchangeable. He is also all-wise. So He cannot “change His mind” in the sense of realizing a mistake, backtracking, and trying a new tack. But is this position consistent with divine predestination?

How then do we explain verses that seem to say that God *does* change His mind? Verses such as Genesis 6:6, “*The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.*” Also, Exodus 32:14 proclaims, “*So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.*” These verses speak of the Lord “repenting” or “relenting” or “changing His mind of something and seems to contradict the doctrine of God’s immutability.

Another passage that is often used to show that God changes His mind is the story of Jonah. Through His prophet, God had told Nineveh He would destroy the city in forty days

- *Jonah 3:4-9 Then Jonah began to go through the city one day’s walk; and he cried out and said, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” [5] Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. [6] When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. [7] He issued a proclamation and it said, “In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. [8] But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. [9] Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.”.*

However, Nineveh repented of their sin (verses 5–9). In response to the Assyrians’ repentance, God relented: “*When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.*” (verse 10).

There are two important considerations involving the passages that say God changed His mind.

First, we can say statements such as “the LORD was grieved that He had made man on the earth” (Genesis 6:6) are examples of anthropopathic (or anthropopatheia). Anthropopathic is a figure of speech in which the feelings or thought processes of finite humanity are ascribed to the infinite God. It’s a way to help us understand God’s work from a human perspective. In Genesis 6:6 specifically, we understand God’s sorrow over man’s sin. God obviously did not reverse His decision to create man. The fact that we are alive today is proof that God did not “change His mind” about the creation.

Second, we must make a distinction between *conditional* declarations of God and *unconditional* determinations of God. In other words, when God said, “I will destroy Nineveh in forty days,” He was speaking *conditionally* upon the Assyrians’ response. We know this because the Assyrians repented and God did not, in fact, mete out the judgment. God did not change His mind; rather, His message to Nineveh was a warning meant to provoke repentance, and His warning was successful.

God also has certain principles by which he metes out justice and holiness. These principles are based upon God’s will and His Mercy.

- *Jeremiah 18:8-10 if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. 9 Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; 10 if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.*
- *Jeremiah 26:3-13 Perhaps they will listen and everyone will turn from his evil way, that I may repent of the calamity which I am planning to do to them because of the evil of their deeds.' [4] And you will say to them, 'Thus says the LORD, "If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My law which I have set before you, [5] to listen to the words of My servants the prophets, whom I have been sending to you again and again, but you have not listened; [6] then I will make this house like Shiloh, and this city I will make a curse to all the nations of the earth." [7] The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. [8] When Jeremiah finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him, saying, "You must die! [9] Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD saying, 'This house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate, without inhabitant'?" And all the people gathered about Jeremiah in the house of the LORD. [10] When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of the LORD and sat in the entrance of the New Gate of the LORD'S house. 11 Then the priests and the prophets spoke to the officials and to all the people, saying, "A death sentence for this man! For he has prophesied against this city as you have heard in your hearing." [12] Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and to all the people, saying, "The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that you have heard. [13] Now therefore amend your ways and your deeds and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will change His mind about the misfortune which He has pronounced against you.*

In these two verses God reveals the principles of his judgements and declarations concerning those who repent. This is how a just and righteous God conditionally warns people and nations. Their response to His warnings determines their outcome. Sinners who repent will be spared. There would be no need for warnings or expectations of changed behavior within Divine Predestination. But God is clear. Those who decide to abandon God's ways also determine their own outcome. This is in stark contradiction to divine predestination which states man has no choice in its final outcome; salvation or damnation. Calvin's Unconditional Election doctrine states God chose the elect (those who will be saved) solely based on His free grace, not anything in them. He has a special love for the elect. God left the rest to be damned for their sins. Yet God's principles show a far different side and God expects if not demands that man exercise his faith by making a choice for God. This further contradicts Calvin's Irresistible Grace doctrine which states that salvation is irresistible for those whom God has divinely predestined. Their claim is that the Holy Spirit is invincible and intervenes in man's heart. He sovereignly gives the new birth, faith, repentance and the earnest of our salvation (The Holy Spirit) to the elect.

Another example of an unconditional declaration of God is the Lord's promise to David, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16). There is no qualification expressed or implied in this declaration. No matter what David did or did not do, the word of the Lord would come to pass.

- *Exodus 32:12 Why should Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people. [13] Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" [14] So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.*
- *Numbers 23:19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"*

- *1 Samuel 15:29 Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind.*
- *Isaiah 31:2 Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster And does not retract His words, But will arise against the house of evildoers And against the help of the workers of iniquity.*
- *Jonah 4:2 He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.*
- *Jonah 3:9-10 Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish." [10] When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.*
- *Amos 7:3-6 The LORD changed His mind about this. "It shall not be," said the LORD. 4 Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, the Lord GOD was calling to contend with them by fire, and it consumed the great deep and began to consume the farm land. 5 Then I said, "Lord GOD, please stop! How can Jacob stand, for he is small?"6 The LORD changed His mind about this. "This too shall not be," said the Lord GOD.*
- *Jeremiah 42:10 'If you will indeed stay in this land, then I will build you up and not tear you down, and I will plant you and not uproot you; for I will relent concerning the calamity that I have inflicted on you.*
- *2 Samuel 24:16 When the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the calamity and said to the angel who destroyed the people, "It is enough! Now relax your hand!" And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.*
- *Ezekiel 7:22 I will also turn My face from them, and they will profane My secret place; then robbers will enter and profane it.*
- *2 Corinthians 1:19 For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us--by me and Silvanus and Timothy--was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.*

God tells us of the cautionary nature of some of His conditional declarations and the fact that He will act in accordance with our choices:

- *At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; [8] **if** that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. [9] Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; [10] **if** it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it. [11] So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds."' (Jeremiah 18:7-11)*

Note the conditional word *if*:

- **If** that nation (or individual) who has been warned, repents ..... then God will relent.

Conversely, God may tell a nation they will be blessed, but **if** it does evil in ... then God will reconsider the the blessing He had intended.

The bottom line is that God is entirely consistent. In His holiness, God was going to judge Nineveh. However, Nineveh repented and changed its ways. As a result, God, in His holiness, had mercy on Nineveh and spared them. This “change of mind” is entirely consistent with His character. His holiness did not waver one iota.

The fact that God changes His treatment of man in response to their choices has nothing to do with His character. In fact, because God does not change, He *must* treat the righteous differently from the unrighteous. If someone repents, God consistently forgives; if someone refuses to repent, God consistently judges. He is unchanging in His nature, His plan, and His being. He cannot one day be pleased with the contrite and the next day be angry with the contrite. That would show Him to be mutable and untrustworthy. For God to tell Nineveh, “I’m going to judge you,” and then (after they repent) refuse to judge them may *look* like God changed His mind. In reality, God was simply staying true to His character. He loves mercy and forgives the penitent.

At one time we were all enemies of God due to our sin.

- *Romans 8:7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,*

God warned us of the results of sin **in order to cause us to repent.**

- *Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

When we repented and trusted Christ for salvation, God “changed His mind” about us, and now we are no longer enemies but His beloved children

- *John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.*

It would be contrary to God’s character to not punish us ***if*** we continued in sin, so it would be contrary to His character to punish us ***if*** we repent. Does our change of heart mean that God changes? No, if anything, our salvation points to the fact that God does not change, because had He not saved us for the sake of Christ, He would have acted contrary to His character.

God makes conditional and non– conditional declarations. Conditional declarations sets forth alternative actions God will deploy dependent upon man’s responsive decisions and actions. The most notable such statement being... *that **if** you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; [10] for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)*

God’s principles unequivocally establish that **man must respond** to God’s offer of eternal life to receive eternal life.

## **Predestination Verses**

# Predestination Verses

In this section of our discussion we shall review those top verses that discuss election and predestination to gain a more complete understanding of God's intent in this doctrine.

This is the order in which the verses shall be discussed: Below the listings the verses are quoted and the third section provides the analysis.

*Acts 2:23*

*Acts 4:28*

*Acts 13:48*

*Acts 17:26*

*Colossians 3:12*

*1 Corinthians 2:7*

*Ephesians 1:3-14*

*Ephesians 2:8-10*

*Galatians 1:15*

*Jeremiah 1:5*

*John 3:16*

*John 6:37*

*John 6:44*

*John 15:16*

*John 15:19*

*1 John 2:2*

*Luke 18:7*

*Mark 13:20*

*Matthew 22:14*

*Matthew 24:22*

*Matthew 24:31*

*1 Peter 1:2*

*1 Peter 1:20*

*2 Peter 3:9 ESV*

*Proverbs 16:4*

*Revelation 13:8*

*Romans 8:33*

*Romans 8:28-30*

*Romans 8:30*

*Romans 9:15*

*2 Thessalonians 2:13*

*1 Thessalonians 1:4*

*2 Timothy 1:9*

*Titus 1:1*

- *Acts 2:23*
  - *this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*
- *Acts 4:28*
  - *to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.*
- *Acts 13:48*
  - *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 17:26*
  - *and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,*
- *Colossians 3:12*
  - *So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;*
- *1 Corinthians 2:7*
  - *but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory;*
- ***Ephesians 1:3***
  - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

Ephesians 1 contains verses that are some of the most difficult in Scripture to grasp. They are repulsive to the natural man, and the average believer finds them difficult to accept at face value. Although the statements are clear, the truth they contain is hard to receive.

“Just as” (V4) is a connective which modifies the preceding statement in verse three regarding the spiritual blessings which you and I are given are in accordance with God’s divine will. All is done in perfect unison with God’s purpose. This world and this universe *will* operate according to the plan and purpose of Almighty God. “just as” looks back to the three blessings of verse 3.

- *“in every spiritual blessing,”*
- *“in the heavenly places,”*
- *“in Christ.”*

The point is: Open your gift and see what God has done for you. Move out in faith, claim and live today as God has intended. He’s made you His son and blessed you with all spiritual blessings. We need to live like the adopted son of God, confidently, proudly, respectfully and holy in the world today.

Now all this was according to His plan.

- God the Father planned the church,
- God the Son paid for the church, and
- God the Holy Spirit protects the church.

The source of all our blessings is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He reminds us and forces us to realize that salvation is altogether of God and not at all of ourselves.

You and I are not the originators of, nor the promoters of nor can we achieve our salvation. God did it all.

- **Ephesians 1:4**

- *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love*

*“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,”* God planned everyone’s salvation in eternity before you and I were even in this world. The Lord Jesus Christ is the One who came down in time, and paid the price for our salvation upon the cross when the fullness of time had come. God the Holy Spirit is the One who convicts us today. He brings us to the place of faith in Christ and to a saving knowledge of the grace of God that is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

J. Vernon McGee tells the story of a “boy in Memphis, Tennessee, who wanted to join a conservative, fundamental church, and the deacons were examining him. They asked him, “How did you get saved?” He answered, “I did my part, and God did His part.” The deacons thought they had him, so they asked him what was his part and what was God’s part. He said, “My part was the sinning. I ran from God as fast as these rebellious legs would take me and my sinful heart would lead me. I ran from Him. But you know, He done took out after me ’til He done run me down.” God is the One who did the saving. Our part was the sinning.

The late Dr. Harry A. Ironside told this story. “A little boy was asked, “Have you found Jesus?” To which the boy replied, “Sir, I didn’t know He was lost. But I was lost and He found me.” We don’t find Jesus. God finds us. Then we’ve been found!

Remember the parable of the lost sheep? God went out after that one lost sheep until He found it. God looks actively for every single sinner that has ever lived.

*Luke 15:3-7 So He told them this parable, saying, “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? [5] When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. [6] And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ [7] I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*

God chose believers in Christ before the foundation of the world. That means that you and I didn’t choose God. He did not choose us because we were good or because we would do some good. We were chosen because we were no good. We were lost. Its as simple as that. We were chosen because we are sinners. God chooses the lost, the sinners so they could receive eternal life through faith and could do some good.

It is God who has chosen us—we have not chosen Him. The Lord Jesus said to His own in the Upper Room, *“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”* (John 15:16).

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan commented, “That puts the responsibility on Him. If God did the choosing, then God’s responsible.”

In other examples provided by Jesus he likens sinners to sick people. They need help. They cannot heal themselves. Jesus is the great physician who can heal every sinner. Since Adam and Eve, sin has been the sickness, the epidemic that is destroying man. Their only hope is in the great physician who can heal any and every one.

- *Mark 2:17 And hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*
- *Matthew 9:12 But when Jesus heard this, He said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.*
- *Luke 5:31 And Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.*

God’s purpose in doing this was “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” God saves us and sanctifies us that we might be holy. Paul addresses God’s intent in Romans 6:1-2 “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”

Grace is not a license to sin. If anyone carries the reasoning, “Oh, I’m saved and now no longer under the law, I can do whatever I want and I will still be saved.” This is faulty, faulty, faulty thinking. Grace is an enabler to holy living. If one continues living in sin, after supposedly becoming saved, then it is only because that person is still lost. A sinner who has been saved will show a change in their way of thinking and living.

Not only did God elect us in order that we should be holy but that we should also be “without blame.” The believer in Christ is seen before God as without blame. God has chosen each sinner in order that He might make them holy and in order that they are without blame. If there is no evidence of change, then you are not one of the elect and you need a rerun at Calvary.

God wants all of us to live lives which are not marked or spotted with sin. He has made every provision to absolve everyone from all blame. *“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; [2] and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”* (1 John 2:1–2).

By the way, this answers once and for all the question of the Calvinistic/Augustine limited atonement, that is, that Christ died only for the elect. This verse in 1 John makes it clear that Jesus died for everyone in the whole entire world, who has ever lived, is living and will ever live in the future. I don't care who you are, there is a legitimate offer that has been sent out to you from God, and that offer is that Jesus Christ has died for you.

Jesus gave us a choice of living life by going through either a big gate or a little gate:

*Matthew 7:14 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. [14] For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."*

D. L. Moody says the small gate has a sign over it that says "Whosoeverwills" and the large gate has a sign over it that says "whosoeverwon't"

Will or won't what?

Simple.

Jesus answers that question himself.

I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. (John 10:9)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me (John14:6)

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. (John 6:37)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. (John 10:10)

If you open the small gate to go to the Father through Jesus than you've made the choice to be a whosoeverwill.

If you decide instead to open the large gate rather than go to the Father through Jesus than you've rejected Christ and are a whosoeverwon't.

But, you must make the choice. Whosoever will may come—that includes everyone. It is a legitimate invitation. "The whosoeverwills are the elect and the whosoeverwon'ts are the nonelect." It is up to you. The Lord has extended the invitation. Whosoever will may come. Don't try to say that man has no choice, or the choice was made in eternity past, or you don't know what fate has planned for you. You have a choice right now. *"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)*

“Chosen us in him.” Again and again the Word of God emphasizes God’s sovereign choice. Paul states, *“But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. [14] It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (2 Thessaalonians 2:13–14).

Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:2, *“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.”* The interesting thing is that election and sanctification seem to go together and they are both in the Lord Jesus Christ. If God has saved you, He hasn’t saved you because you are good but because you are no good.

*“What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! [15] For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.” [16] So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.”* (Rom. 9:14–16).

One of the best illustration of God’s mercy is in Acts 27. Paul was in a ship and there was a terrific storm so that the ship was listing and about ready to go down. They had already cast some of the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. Then Paul went to the captain and said, *“Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. [23] For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, [24] saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.’* (Acts 27:22–24).

Now that was God’s foreknowledge. That is election. God had elected that nobody on that ship would be lost. Just a little later, Paul found a group of the sailors about to let down a lifeboat into the sea. They intended to go overboard, hoping to get to land in that way. Then Paul said to the captain, *“... Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, “Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved.”* (Acts 27:31).

Now God knows who the elect are. We don’t.

Someone came to Spurgeon one time and said, “Mr Spurgeon, if I believed as you do, I would not preach like you do. You say you believe that there are the elect, and yet you preach as if everybody can be saved.”

Spurgeon’s answer was, “They can all be saved. If God had put a yellow streak up and down the backs of the elect, I’d go up and down the streets lifting up shirt tails to find out who had the yellow streak up and down his back. Then I’d give that person the gospel.

But God didn't do that. He told me to preach the gospel to every creature and **that whosoever will may come.**" That is our marching order, and as far as I am concerned, until God gives me the roll call of the elect, I am going to preach the **"whosoever will"** gospel. That is the gospel we are to preach today.

Someone else put it like this. On the door to heaven, from our side, it says, **"Whosoever will may enter.** I am the door: by Me if any man...." Any man—that means you. You can come in and find pasture and find life. When you get on the other side of the door someday in heaven, you're going to look back, and on that door you will find written, **"Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world."** I haven't seen that side of the door yet; therefore, I give God (since He is God) the right to plan His church.

A friend of mine down in Rhode Island once showed me the blueprint of a home he was building. He had planned it and had it all marked out in the blueprint. They had only laid the foundation, but he showed me where everything was going to be. Later on when I went to that home to visit them, it was just like he planned. He didn't have supernatural knowledge, but as far as I know, no one has questioned whether they had the right to plan and build the house as he desired. He did have the right, and He did it according to his plan.

God has planned His church. After all, this is His universe, and the church is His church. What is His plan? "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

Now the words in love are not connected with verse four, but actually with verse five. "In love,"

- ***Ephesians 1:5***

- *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will*

There's that word *predestination*. Not truly understanding this word causes great concern. We need to *know* that we've been chosen in Him in order to stand for God today. It will make a world of difference in your life.

God planned the church in eternity. He's telling us how He did it. God has done three things for us, however, in planning the church. First of all, we've seen that He chose us—and that's a pretty hard pill for us to swallow. Secondly, the Father predestinated us to the place of sonship. Thirdly, the Father made us accepted in the Beloved.

I cannot repeat often enough that election is God's choosing us in Christ. I emphasize again that men are not lost because they have not been elected. Election occurs when the choice is not to stay in sin, but when one repents and by faith accepts Christ. The non-elect are lost because they are sinners that have chosen to stay in their sins. The free will of man is never violated because of the election of God. The lost man makes his own choice.

Augustine expressed it like this: "If there be not free will grace in God, how can He save the world? And *if there be not free will in man, how can the world by God be judged?*" Paul agrees "*What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid*" (Rom. 9:14).

Now in verse five we come to the next thing God did for us. “In love having predestinated us.” Some are going to say that they never knew you could get predestination and love together even in the same county, let alone in the same verse. But here they are. God’s love is involved in this word which has been frightful to a great many people. The word *predestination* comes from the Greek *proorisos*, and it literally means “to define, to mark out, to set apart.” It means “to horizon.” If you go outside and look around (especially if you’re in flat country), you only can see to the horizon. You’re “horizoned”; you’re put in that area. When it refers to God, predestination has to do with God’s purpose with those He chooses.

Predestination is never used in reference to unsaved people. God has never predestinated anybody to be lost. If you are lost, it is because you have rejected God’s remedy. It is like a dying man to whom the doctor offers curing medicine. “If you take this, it’ll heal you.” The man looks at the doctor in amazement and says, “I don’t believe you.” Now the man dies and the doctor’s report says he died of a certain disease, and that’s accurate. But may I say to you, there was a remedy, and he actually died because he didn’t take the remedy. God has provided a remedy. Let me repeat, God has never predestined anybody to be lost. That’s where your free will comes in, and you have to determine for yourself what your choice will be.

Predestination refers only to those who are saved. What it actually means is that when God starts out with one hundred sheep, He is going to come through with one hundred sheep. *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. [29] For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;”* (Rom. 8:28–29).

Dr. R. A. Torrey used to say that this is a wonderful pillow for a tired heart. Those who are called according to His purpose are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. We’re talking now about saved people. Romans goes on to explain how this is done. *“and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”* (Rom. 8:30).

The Lord Jesus told a parable about a man who had one hundred sheep, and one little sheep got lost. You know, most of us get lost even after we have been saved. That doesn’t mean we lose our salvation, but we surely get out of fellowship with Him. Some people can get lost so far that they actually fear they have lost their salvation. But the little lost sheep is still a sheep even though he is way out yonder and lost. “All we like sheep have gone astray ...” (Isa. 53:6). That’s our propensity; that’s our tendency; that’s the direction we go. We don’t go toward God, but we go away from Him. So what does the Shepherd do? He goes out to look for that one lost sheep! I’m confident that the man who raised

sheep in Texas wouldn't get up and go out into a cold, blustery, stormy night to get one little sheep. I think he would say, "Let him go." Thank God, we have a Shepherd who never says that! He says, "I started out with one hundred sheep and I'm going to come through with that one hundred sheep."

- **Ephesians 1:6-14**
  - *to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.*
- **Ephesians 2:8-10**
  - *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*
- **Galatians 1:15**
  - *But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased*
- **Jeremiah 1:5**
  - *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”*
- **John 3:16**
  - *“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 6:37**
  - *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.*
- **John 6:44**
  - *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*

- *John 15:16*
  - *You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.*
- *John 15:19*
  - *If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.*
- *Luke 18:7*
  - *now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?*
- *Mark 13:20*
  - *Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days.*
- *Matthew 22:14*
  - *For many are called, but few are chosen.”*
- *Matthew 24:22*
  - *Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.*
- *Matthew 24:31*
  - *And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.*
- *1 Peter 1:2*
  - *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.*
- *1 Peter 1:20*
  - *For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you*
- *2 Peter 3:9*
  - *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*
- *Proverbs 16:4*
  - *The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil.*
- *Revelation 13:8*
  - *All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.*
- ***Romans 8:28-30***
  - *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose [29]For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”*

In Romans prior to vs 28-30, Paul spends the first 27 verses addressing the entire body of Christians explaining how those in Christ have been delivered from bondage with victory in Christ and the spiritual blessings that accompany Christian. In verse 28-30, Paul begins his statement on predestination addressing this same body of believers.

- *“For those whom He foreknew....” (Romans 8:29)* God foreknows everyone and everything. Paul is underscoring spiritual blessings that will be given believers. This passage is directed solely to the corporate body of believers. To correctly understand these passages, it is essential that we understand that eternal life in the Kingdom of God is the proper destiny of every

member of the human race! This does not mean that every individual will arrive at the destiny God has set before the human race. Rather, it means that God's purpose for humankind was established before the foundation of the world was laid, and that all who cooperate with Him will reach their proper destination. Hence, He "chose us [all who, through exercise of their divinely bestowed free will, accept His universal offer] in Him before the foundation of the world," and "predestined us [the whole race, potentially] to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ." Predestination, then, pertains to the purpose God had in mind when He decided to make creatures bearing His own image and likeness. It concerns the destination God established for the human race before He created humans.

The term predestination means "to mark out beforehand," and refers to the plan and goal of salvation itself, not to specific individuals. It should be understood in the corporate sense, rather than in the sense that each individual was predestined to either eternal life or eternal condemnation.

In Romans 8:28-30, the Greek term translated whom is plural and therefore refers to a corporate body rather than individual persons. The passage tells us that God knew beforehand that there would be a body of believers, but does not say that He limited the membership of that body to a specific number. It further tells us that the destiny God had in mind for all who would cooperate with His will was "to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He [the Son] might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Finally, Romans 8:28-30 provides an overview of the entire process, from beginning to end: Members of the race bearing God's image are called through the preaching of the gospel, and those who respond to the gospel in repentance and faith are justified and, at the consummation of the age, glorified. It is not Paul's intention to address the question of how God will deal with those who die without having heard the true gospel.

- *Romans 8:33*
  - *Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;*
- *Romans 9:15*
  - *For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."*
- *1 Thessalonians 1:4*
  - *knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;*
- *2 Thessalonians 2:13*
  - *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.*

- *2 Timothy 1:9*
  - *who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,*
- *Titus 1:1*
  - *Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,*



Now, suppose the day comes when He is counting His sheep up in heaven, way out there somewhere in the future. He starts out, “One, two, three, four, five ... ninety–six, ninety–seven, ninety–eight, ninety–nine, ninety–nine, ninety–nine—what in the world happened to Vernon McGee? Well, We’ve just lost one, so We’ll let it go at that. A lot of folk didn’t think Vernon McGee was going to make it anyway.” Thank God, He will not do it that way. If I am not there when He counts in His sheep, He is going to go out and look for me, and He is going to bring me in. That is what predestination means. I *love* that word. It is God’s guarantee. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27–28). Always remember that if sheep are saved, it is not because they are smart little sheep. They are stupid little fellows. If they are safe, it is because they have a wonderful Shepherd. That is the glorious truth.

We are predestinated “unto the adoption of the children by Jesus Christ to himself.” Adoption means that we are brought into the place of full–grown sons. We have dealt with that in the Epistle to the Galatians. It implies two very important things. Adoption into sonship means regeneration. We have been regenerated by the Spirit of God. The child of God has been born again “... not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23). He is born again into a new relationship. That is what the Lord Jesus meant when He told Nicodemus that he must be born again. Adoption also means a place of position and privilege. When we are saved, we are born into the family of God as a babe in Christ; but, in addition, we are given the position of an adult son. We are in a position where we can understand the Word of the Father because He has given us the Holy Spirit as our Teacher.

When my little grandson was almost two years old, he talked constantly, but I could understand only a few words that he said. Yet I could pretty well tell what he wanted and needed. He was just a little, bitty fellow and he couldn’t understand why I didn’t know what he was saying. He didn’t always understand me either, by the way. The wonderful thing is that I have a Heavenly Father today—and I’ve been a babe a long time—and He’s told me that He’s put me in a position where I can understand Him. How wonderful it’s going to be as my grandson grows up and we can really understand one another. God, however, communicates to us now. Paul tells us how: “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Cor. 2:12). All of this is done in Christ Jesus. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).



Acts 2:23 ESV This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Matthew 22:14 ESV For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Galatians 1:15 ESV But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace,

Colossians 3:12 ESV Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,

Titus 1:1 ESV Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness,

Jeremiah 1:5 ESV “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Romans 8:33 ESV Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

John 3:16 ESV “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

1 Corinthians 2:7 ESV But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

Romans 8:30 ESV And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Luke 18:7 ESV And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?

John 15:19 ESV If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Ephesians 2:10 ESV For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Matthew 24:31 ESV And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 ESV But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

1 Thessalonians 1:4 ESV For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,

John 6:37 ESV All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

Mark 13:20 ESV And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.

Romans 9:15 ESV For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

Acts 17:26 ESV And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

Matthew 24:22 ESV And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

1 John 2:2 ESV He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Acts 4:28 ESV To do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

Exodus 33:19 ESV And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

Romans 9:11 ESV Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—

2 Peter 1:10 ESV Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

Ephesians 1:1-23 ESV Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ...

Romans 1:6 ESV Including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

John 17:2 ESV Since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

Ephesians 1:9-11 ESV Making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

Romans 11:1-36 ESV I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ...

Romans 9:13 ESV As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

John 17:6 ESV "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

Mark 4:10-12 ESV And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that "they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven."

Genesis 21:12 ESV But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

John 13:18 ESV I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'

Mark 13:22 ESV For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.

Romans 11:5 ESV So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

James 1:18 ESV Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Acts 2:39 ESV For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

John 6:39 ESV And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

Romans 9:7-33 ESV And not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.” And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— ...

Joshua 11:20 ESV For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the Lord commanded Moses.

John 17:9 ESV I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.

Luke 22:22 ESV For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!”

Romans 9:15-16 ESV For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

Acts 4:27-28 ESV For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

John 6:45 ESV It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—

Ephesians 1:3-4 ESV Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

Luke 8:10 ESV He said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’”

Matthew 25:34 ESV Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Romans 11:2 ESV God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?

Exodus 9:16 ESV But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

Matthew 20:23 ESV He said to them, “You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”

Acts 22:14 ESV And he said, ‘The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth;

John 12:32 ESV And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

Malachi 1:3 ESV But Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert.”

Luke 10:20 ESV Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Isaiah 46:10 ESV Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’

Psalms 65:4 ESV Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!

Jude 1:4 ESV For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:11 ESV This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Romans 8:28 ESV And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Luke 4:25-27 ESV But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

Isaiah 44:1 “But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen!

John 21:23 ESV So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?”

John 3:17 ESV For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Proverbs 16:9 ESV The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.

2 Timothy 2:10 ESV Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Romans 8:1-39 ESV There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

...

Romans 11:7 ESV What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,

Malachi 1:2 ESV “I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?” “Is not Esau Jacob's brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob

Haggai 2:23 ESV On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts.”

Titus 1:2 ESV In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began

1 Timothy 5:21 ESV In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

Ezekiel 37:1-28 ESV The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, you know.” Then he said to me, “Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ...

Romans 9:22 ESV What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

Zechariah 14:1-21 ESV Behold, a day is coming for the Lord, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. ...

Psalms 33:12 ESV Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 ESV For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

1 Corinthians 1:24-26 ESV But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

Job 23:14 ESV For he will complete what he appoints for me, and many such things are in his mind.

# Salvation Requirements

- Christ has paid the full penalty for all of man's sin. But man still has an obligation to respond to God's offer of salvation through belief in Him.
  - *John 3:14-17 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; [15] so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. [16] "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. [17] For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.*
- To become a Christian, one is required to believe in his heart that Jesus Christ is Lord and that God has raised Him from the dead. The prospective Christian must also confess Jesus Christ as Lord.
  - *Romans 10:8-11 But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"--that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, [9] that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; [10] for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. [11] For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."*
- This verse makes it crystal clear that faith is not works. Although man must exercise faith, salvation is still the gift of God. I could hand you a \$100 bill, but it would not be yours until you accepted it. The same with God's universal call of salvation. We are not saved until we accept God's free gift of salvation through faith. Faith is believing in our hearts that Jesus Christ is Lord and that God has raised Him from the dead, and orally confessing Jesus Christ as Lord
  - *Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;*
- The only way to become a Christian is through Jesus Christ. Anyone desiring to become a Christian must believe in his heart that Jesus Christ is Lord and that God has raised Him from the dead. The prospective Christian must also verbally confess Jesus Christ as Lord.
  - *John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

Bottom line: Man must make a choice to believe in Jesus Christ. That choice is not decided by any other than individuals. You exercise your freewill in order to become a Christian. God has predestined that Christians shall be conformed to the image of His Son, and adopted as a son of God. Therefore the true meaning of predestination is that we shall be like Jesus.

- *Romans 8:28-30: And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose <sup>[29]</sup>For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; <sup>30</sup>and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."*

# Call To Salvation

To all men, God has issued a general call to salvation, as Jesus said in the conclusion of the parable of the marriage feast, “*For many are called, but few are chosen. (Matthew 22:14)*” God has invited all men to the blessings of salvation through Jesus Christ.

- *2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*
- *1 Timothy 2:3-6 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, [4] who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. [5] For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, [6] who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.*

This general call is an expression of divine grace and is sincerely offered to all of mankind. It is God’s will that all men be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. This verse alone negates the entire concept of Calvinism.

The extension of the offer alone does not save nor does it always lead to salvation. Man must respond to this call. Paul wrote, for “*WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.*” (*Romans 10:13*). Salvation requires man’s freewill choice to accept Jesus’ work on the cross, His resurrection and His Lordship. However; not every man answers God’s general call by calling upon Him. Many are called, but few are chosen. The chosen are those who are the results of God’s call. They are the called ones according to God’s eternal purpose. It is God’s direct will that those called receive ALL THAT IS INVOLVED IN GOD’S GIFT OF SALVATION. (*and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. Romans 8:30*) Those called have already (according to God’s sovereign decree) been foreknown and predestinated. Their justification and glorification are just as certain as their calling.

The saved are those who have responded by faith to both God’s eternal and effectual call.

The unsaved rejects God’s call. Even if all they do is ignore God’s call it is a rejection. Because of the greatness of God’s effectual call, Paul exhorted the Christians of his day and of ours to walk worthy of the vocation or calling to which we are called (*Ephesians 4:1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,* ). The believer can have confidence that God will complete the purpose of His divine call because of His faithfulness — the faithfulness of His character and His faithfulness to His Word (*1 Thessalonians 5:24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.*)

Why issue a call for salvation if an answer is already pre-ordained. The answer is not by predestination, as Calvin claims. The answer is from the free will of the called individual.

# **The OT Burnt Offering**

# The OT Burnt Offering

As previously discussed, the nation Israel is the ‘chosen’ or ‘elect’ people of God. Although the nation of Israel was elected by God, not all Jews are/were saved. In Leviticus 1 we find a fuller explanation of election and its relationship to salvation.

- *Then the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, [2] “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When [if] any man of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of animals from the herd or the flock. [3] If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it [of his own voluntary will (KJV & NKJV)], a male without defect; he shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. [4] He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf. [5] He shall slay the young bull before the LORD; and Aaron’s sons the priests shall offer up the blood and sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the doorway of the tent of meeting. [6] He shall then skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces. [7] The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. [8] Then Aaron’s sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head and the suet over the wood which is on the fire that is on the altar. [9] Its entrails, however, and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer up in smoke all of it on the altar for a burnt offering, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD. (Leviticus 1:1-9)*

The Burnt Offering is the first of five offerings that God instituted as a fundamental tenet of the Jewish faith. The Burnt Offering was the most prominent and of the highest priority in the worship of God. In this ceremony, an innocent lamb (animal) is killed and its death substituted for the worshipper’s own sins.

In the Garden of Eden God covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve with the skins of animals. Until they sinned, death was not in existence in all that God created. Those animals were the first sacrifice as well as the first life to die on this planet. The skins covered their nakedness before God and the animals’ lives covered Adam and Eve’s sins before God.

- *Genesis 3:21-24: The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. [22] Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”-- [23] therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. [24] So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.*
- *Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.’*

The burnt offering is a picture of what God sees in Jesus Christ in life as well as death. The burnt offering shows the person of Christ, of His profound love for us, and His total commitment for the salvation of mankind. Since God is a holy and just God, all sinners must be punished by death and eternal separation from God Almighty. The only means of surviving the death and eternal separation was through substitution. That which was the substitute must be perfect in all ways, not having once sinned (otherwise, the punishment the substitute received would be reckoned to their own account and not to all of mankind). Jesus is our substitute because He was the perfect man. The burnt offering is the offering that is mentioned up to the time of Leviticus and it was the only offering that was made by those who wanted an approach to God. The burnt offering (sacrifice) is called olah in the Hebrew. It means “that which ascends.” The sacrifice was wholly consumed on the altar; nothing remained but the ashes. This reveals that the burnt offering is what God sees in Christ.

In the first 9 verses of Leviticus we see that the substitute must be perfect and without blemish. The sinner must bring the substitute to God, lay his hand on the substitutes' head in a symbolic gesture signifying the transfer of one's sins to Jesus and then slaying the substitute and dividing the offering according to God's instructions and handing the substitute to the priests who would then complete the burnt offering process. The individual offering the sacrifice is acknowledging that they themselves can do nothing to earn reconciliation before God, but rather their sins have caused the shedding of blood of an innocent animal on their behalf. In this process the sinner offering the sacrifice publicly acknowledges that their sins put the animal to death.

In like manner today, the sinner must come to realize their inability to live a perfect life, or atone for their sins. All who sin are under judgment and the punishment for sin is eternal damnation. The only recourse open is for someone who has lived the perfect life without spot or blemish to be the substitute for our sins. In this fashion, sin would still be judged and the penalty of eternal damnation carried out. By accepting the perfect Jesus as our substitute, our sins are transferred or imputed to Jesus. He bore our punishment of eternal death and separation from God Almighty once and for all sin, for all sinners, for all time. Conversely, Jesus' perfect life without spot or blemish is imputed to us and this is what God Almighty sees when He sees us. He sees Jesus' perfection and not our imperfections. Instead of laying our hand onto the head of the lamb to 'accept' the lamb as payment for our sins, we 'accept Jesus' by publicly confessing that we have sinned, and 'accepting Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. As a result of God's forgiveness we resolve to no longer sin and now allow Jesus to become the Lord of our life and be our God. Therefore Jesus became sin for us. We must always remember that it was our sins that killed Jesus. And it is through God's grace and power that we live as God commands us.

Jesus gave Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for our redemption, for our salvation. Therefore the truest meaning of election is seen within the Burnt Offering worship service, or the substitution ceremony.

In verse 1, we read that God called (elected) to Moses from out of the tabernacle (tent of meeting) for reconciliation.. *"And the Lord called ..."* God's call is for those who will hear His voice. This is very important to understand. God is and has been calling all men and women to be reconciled to Him. The church is a called-out body of believers, and the saints are the elect because of their response to the call.

Called doesn't mean those who only hear; it means those who have heard **and** responded.

Notice the statement in verse 2, *"When any man of you brings an offering to the LORD ..."* Some translations use the word 'If' in lieu of 'When' such as the King James version. "When" or "If" means "whosoever will may come to bring an offering to the Lord." This is the exercise of man's free will.

Now quickly look at verse 3, *"He shall offer it of his own voluntary will."*

Jesus, in the Gospels also reaffirms the need for a sinner to accept God's call to reconciliation when He also said, *"If any man thirst, let him come..."* What we have here is an all-inclusive invitation extended to the entire human family to come to God. No one is excluded from the call. Man by his own free will has the choice to respond positively to God's offer. The only persons excluded from election are those who decline and exclude themselves from the call.

In Isaiah 55:1 we see the same call, *"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; .... Anyone can come to Christ if they choose to come. There must be a need and a desire.*

Man will die without water. Therefore thirst is our body's way of saying to us. "You need water now or you will perish." Thirst, untreated, inevitably leads to death. Man will die both physically and spiritually if sin is left untreated. Man is in a lost position as a direct result of man's sins. While water satisfies and quenches thirst and man lives, Jesus' offer of salvation satisfies and quenches the eternal judgment required for all sin and eliminates man's lost position before God. Just as a man must desire and accept water to live, so must a man desire and accept Jesus to live with God throughout all eternity.

In Leviticus 1, we see that man must accept God's offer of salvation through faith (belief) and the burnt offering ceremony substitutes the lamb for ourselves that we may be reconciled to God. This reconciliation is not the result of God predetermining which of us shall respond positively or negatively. The call to salvation is to all mankind, and those who through their own free will that have responded positively to God's call are the elect of God.

**The Lives of Cain And Abel Center Upon Whom We  
Shall Choose: God Or Self?**

# The Lives of Cain And Abel Center Upon Whom We Shall Choose: God Or Self?

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were deceived by Satan to disobey God and follow their own desires. They willingly **chose** self over God, after having been informed of the consequences so any such action. This introduced sin into mankind's experience and throughout all of man's history, **man has had to make a choice between reconciliation with God or living for oneself**. Sin entered into the world through the free will choice of Adam and Eve.

A second illustration of this free will choice to sin is found in the study of their first two sons, Cain and Abel. Man did not slowly become more sinful over centuries, rather became shockingly absorbed in the totality of sin beginning with the children of the first parents. In this story we see the eternal struggle between good and evil each of us face.

To fully understand the story of Cain and Abel we need to step back to Genesis Chapter 3 and review how the relationship changed between God and man in the aftermath of sin's entrance.

In Genesis 3:20 we read that Eve was the mother of all (*Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.*). This does not mean that Cain and Abel were born in the Garden of Eden, but rather they were born after the fall of Adam and Eve.

Thus sin has already entered the world and man is now spiritually 'dead' to God when the two boys were born. They each were born with a sin nature, or if you will the tendency to sin rather than serve God.

Prior to their extraction from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had covered themselves with fig leaves. But God rejected their fig leaves and made them clothing of skins.

In order to have the skins of animals, the animals had to be slain. This is the origin of sacrifice or substituting an innocent to incur the penalty and wrath sentenced upon the guilty. Thus God initiated the plan of salvation from the onset which meant that a sacrifice was necessary so that innocent blood could atone for (or cover over) sin. As it says in *Leviticus 11:17 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.*

Thus Adam and Eve had repented of their sins, and God had substituted an animal to atone for their disobedience. Evident of their repentance of their sin, and their faith in God, Adam and Eve first covered themselves with fig-leaves so that they could be presentable to God by the covering of their sin (nakedness). Thus Adam and Eve were justified before God and reconciled to Him through their faith in Him. It is this faith that justifies and reconciles to God anyone who believes. But God rejected the fig-leaves and substituted the animal skins as the proper covering [innocent blood] for reconciliation to God as noted in Leviticus 11:17 above.

As Adam and Eve left the garden, they looked back not only upon their choice of self over God's will, but the judgment handed down upon them for sinning, their repentance, their forgiveness from God, the immediate spiritual penalty of death for sin, and the atonement for sin through the bloody sacrifice. When they looked back as they exited the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve saw exactly what God had Moses put on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies: two cherubim looking down upon the blood that was there — and that was the way to God.

Initially and temporarily, animals without spot or blemish were substituted for man to pay the price that judgment demanded until the perfect, once for all sacrifice was made by Jesus Christ our Lord on behalf of all man, of all time, for all times. Until Christ, the faithful had to continuously offer sacrifices for their sin. Christ was sacrificed once and ended all other forms of sacrifices God set forth in Leviticus.

The branding mark of God's forgiveness was the clothing of skins that covered Adam and Eve.

The fig leaves were unacceptable to God for four primary reasons:

- Man must have adequate covering to approach God. We cannot come to God on the basis of our good works. The life of the flesh is in the blood, and the penalty for sin is 'death' so blood is required to make atonement. We must come to God just as we are, a sinner.
- Fig leaves are not flesh and have no blood which can be shed for atonement, therefore they are unacceptable homemade covering for approaching God. God does not take man's efforts, good or bad, as covering for his sins.
- God must provide the covering for man. Man's effort as symbolized by the fig leaves was man efforts to approach God.
- The covering is obtained only through the death of the Lord Jesus. The sacrifices outlined by God were only temporarily until Jesus made the perfect sacrifice for all mankind, once and permanently on Calvary. Thus no man comes to the Father, except through Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Man must have a substitute between himself and God's wrath. This is important than and today for man to consider. The hardest thing in the world is for man to take his rightful position before God.

God's wrath and judgment of sin, Adam and Eve's failure to obey God, God's substitution of an innocent, perfect animal as the sacrifice for the atonement of sin and man being reconciled to God through the sacrifice all occurred in the Garden of Eden and sets the stage for the entrance of Cain and Abel.

We've seen how Adam and Eve handled the choice to serve God, or to serve self. Now we shall examine how the second generation of man handled the same choice; God or Self. As we read our Bibles, Joshua 24:15 notes the eternal question placed before every man, "*If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*"

Whom shall you serve? God or self? This question cannot be answered by man if the answer has already been predestined by God prior to creation according to His own will. In fact this question as stated is contradictory, because God has revealed that (1) He is not willing that anyone should perish. (*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9*). (2) And He has stated it is man's choice to accept God and serve Him. Therefore, man has a decision to make. He can accept God's provision for salvation, or he can choose to serve his own interests instead.

Enter Cain and Abel.

- *Genesis 4:1-16 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD." [2] Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. [3] So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. [4] Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; [5] but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. [6] Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? [7] If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."*

*[8] Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. [9] Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" [10] He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. [11] Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. [12] When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." [13] Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! [14] Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." [15] So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him. [16] Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*

# The Great Commission

Calvinistic thinking taken to the extreme suggests that evangelism may not be necessary since it is entirely a work of God in which humans do not participate. If election is indeed unconditional and grace irresistible, then missional efforts may seem irrelevant. This belief fails to reflect the life and activity of the Early Church as well as Christ's commands to go to the ends of the earth preaching the gospel and making disciples. If God has already preordained those who are going to heaven, then why evangelize, why seek to be saved, or even try to follow God's path?

If the saved are predestined to be saved and the lost are lost and no one can be "saved" unless predestinated and the Holy Spirit performs a direct operation, why evangelize?

Traditional Calvinists proclaim, "Because God told us so!" But if God has already elected those who will be going to heaven, no amount of influence from Christians or even the Holy Spirit will change who is elected or not. God has already decided. Evangelism may be the means of how God invites the elect, who have no choice in their response are saved but our conscience decision to or not to evangelize will not affect their response.

The interesting counter-argument would be when Calvinists say to non-Calvinists, "But why bother evangelizing. God already knows if a particular person will ever accept the message or not." However, foreknowledge does not imply predestination, and God transcends time.

If salvation is totally dependent upon God, why would God command evangelism?

Why would you waste your time evangelizing if all is predetermined.

# The Sonship of God.

We therefore contend that Predestination is indeed a term used to point out the guaranteed future destiny of the child of God. God has determined that every believer will one day come into the full position of sonship. Adoption means, “to be put into the position of a son.” This will take place at the second coming of Christ.

- Paul said, “<sup>23</sup> *And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. (Romans 8:23).*

God is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to Him. The Bible says ...

- *(John 3:14-17) As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; [15] so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. 16 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. [17] For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.*

The Christian is known as a son of God. He becomes a son through adoption. The Greek word for adoption means to “to place into the position of sonship.” Do not think of this in the natural, human order of adoption wherein a child, a genetic outsider, can become a legal member of another family. A person receives the nature of God and eternal life at the moment of saving faith, and thereby becomes a child of God. At that same instant of salvation, God puts His child into the position of sonship. God regards the child as an adult son, with all of the privileges and responsibilities pertaining to maturity. This means that a person does not have to five, ten, or twenty-one years before he can enjoy his spiritual privileges or discharge his spiritual responsibilities. The young Christian has the same claim on the blessings of God as an older Christian, and he has the same responsibility to obey God’s word.

- *Romans 8:14-15 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”*

Adoption is based upon redemption. It permits a believer to receive by inheritance all that our rich heavenly Father has willed to us.

- *Galatians 4:5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons*
- *Galatians 4:7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir [a] through God*
- *Romans 8:17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*
- *Romans 8:23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body*
- *Ephesians 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,*

We are fellow heirs with Christ because of our identification with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. The fullness of our adoption will take place at the redemption of our bodies.

**Adoption is one of the two goals of God's predestination for us.** The sonship of the believer is as secure as the eternal purposes of God. Predestination means that we shall be like Jesus and a member of God's family.

- **Goal 1: Adoption as God's son.** Adoption means, "to be put into the position of a son. This will take place at the coming of Christ. Paul said, "*And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. (Romans 8:23).*"
- **Goal 2: Conformed to the image of Jesus.** When our mortal, corruptible bodies are changed into immortal, incorruptible bodies, then we will be fully conformed to the image of Christ. John wrote, "*Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. (1 John 3:2)*"

Man was not the only one to gain when he believed. God gained as well. **The Christian is called His inheritance.** Paul prayed that the Ephesians might know "*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,*" [Ephesians 1:18] **God gained those He saved.** If somehow we could lose our salvation, God would have the greater loss. He would have lost part of His inheritance, and Satan would chuckle and gloat over his seizure of what belonged to God throughout eternity for the second time (the first in the Garden of Eden). Let me say this quickly, if God could 'lose' us, than it would mean that something or someone is stronger, more powerful than God. Since this is an impossibility we can rest confidently in God's hand. Jesus has assured us that no one can snatch us out of God's hand. God will never surrender what belongs to Him by right of creation or redemption.

- *John 10:28-29 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. [29] My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*

I will remind the reader of our discussions on eternity and knowledge.

1. God exists in eternity and experiences time which He created. God had no beginning, no past, no future, and will never cease to exist. Therefore God experiences everything now, constantly.
2. God has complete, eternal knowledge. God has all knowledge and experiences all knowledge now, constantly.

Therefore God does not have to look into the future to see what will happen, He already knows. This is why God foreknows all who have/will accept Him as Lord and Savior. Those whom He 'foreknew', He predestinated (chose) to be sons of God and conformed to the image of Christ.

For the believer, predestination is such an incredible, amazing gift that it is often hard to grasp with our finite, human minds around.

# Freewill In Salvation

How does freewill fit into the framework of God's sovereignty and God's predetermination to save us? Review what God planned for you before creation:

- God had planned you even before you were born or before you were in our mother's womb (Jer. 1:4).
- He planned things for you in the future before the earth or time existed (I Cor. 2:7).
- He had made plans for your life to give you His grace before you were born (Gal 1:15).
- He chose you and called you to redemption to be saved and be made holy (Eph 1:4).
- He chose you before your birth to bless you and save you through Christ (Eph. 1:3-4).
- He planned your adoption prior to your birth (Eph. 1:5).
- And according to His good pleasure, revealed the secrets things of God to you (Eph.1:9).
- You were predestined to become conformed to the image of Christ and as a son of God.

If we have freewill, how can God be sovereign over our life?

If God has planned your salvation and planned to save you, predetermined your destiny, and chose you before creation, how can you still have freewill?

I am a father and grandfather. When my wife and I counseled before marriage, we planned to have children. We predetermined to have a certain number of children. We planned before their birth to start college funds. We planned on living in a small town so they could experience life as we chose for them. Knowing boys and girls preferences, we knew in advance with what they would like to play. Knowing this we predetermined to buy toys that girls and boys would want to play with; dolls, tea sets, toy trucks, and so on.

Our children had freewill to choose which toys to play with and which to reject. It was our good pleasure to do this. We did all of this before they were even conceived. This was all done well in advance but we knew what they would like for the most part.

Freewill and God's sovereignty are not opposed to each other but run parallel with one other.

Imagine that you are a slave on a ship.

- You are chained to the deck below.
- It is determined that you row for the captain of this ship.
- You have no choice but to be chained to this ship.
- This is like God's sovereignty.
- But even here you have free will.
- You are free to row or not to row. If you do not row you choose to receive beatings by the quartermaster, but if you row, you choose not to be beaten.
- You might even chose to break free of the ship by escaping your chains, but God's sovereignty is not diminished.

God's sovereignty does not diminish man's freewill. Man is still required to make a choice whether to follow Christ and believe in Him for salvation. God never twists anyone's arm into heaven. God is all knowing of the past, present, and future. He alone knows what we will do. (See the discussion on Eternity)

If a man loses his freewill then his actions are not the result of his personal choices and we could possibly argue is not a person, which would man from having a relationship with God. Free will is required in the basic definition of being a person and establishing a relationship with another person.

God knew that I would be saved and come to a saving faith in Christ. You have freewill to either reject Him or to accept this saving grace. Either way, He knew it, He planned it, He purposed it, He desired it, and He predestined even the very document that you are now reading.

# God's Election

*The Concept.* Divine election means that God has a purpose that is determined long before it is brought to pass. It implies that God is infinitely capable of planning and then bringing about what He has planned, and Scripture speaks of Him as doing this. Prophecy in its predictive mode is to be understood accordingly. God plans and makes His plans known, as He chooses, to His servants the prophets. God's purpose is one of love and grace, above all because in love He chose what should come to pass in his plan to save and to restore sinful humanity through Christ. Colossians 1:26 speaks of this purpose which implies that all that is in God's good purpose for us, individually or as part of the corporate people of God, is by God's initiative and thus is a work of grace, something that we could never instigate or deserve.

- *Deuteronomy 7:6-8* For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. [7] “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, [8] but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
- *Deuteronomy 9:4-6* “Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, ‘Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,’ but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you. [5] It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. [6] “Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people.
- *Isaiah 14:24-27* The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, “Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, [25] to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulder. [26] This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. [27] For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?
- *Isaiah 22:11* And you made a reservoir between the two walls For the waters of the old pool. But you did not depend on Him who made it, Nor did you take into consideration Him who planned it long ago.
- *Isaiah 37:26* “Have you not heard? Long ago I did it, From ancient times I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass, That you should turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps.
- *Isaiah 41:8-9* “But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend, [9] You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts And said to you, ‘You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you.
- *Isaiah 44:7-8* ‘Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, From the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming And the events that are going to take place. [8] ‘Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.’”
- *Isaiah 46:8-10* 8 “Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. [9] “Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, [10] Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;
- *Amos 3:7* Surely the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets.
- *Ephesians 1:5* He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,
- *Colossians 1:26* that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,
- *2 Timothy 1:9* who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but

Passages I've seen from the Bible that establishes man has a free will and God holds him accountable.

- *Deuteronomy 30:15-18* “See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; [16] in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. [17] But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, [18] I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it.
- *Joshua 24:15* If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”
- *Luke 6:46* “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”
- *John 3:16* “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 15:6-7* If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. [7] If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.
- *Acts 6:10* But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.
- *Acts 7:51-55* ““You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. [52] Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; [53] you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.” [54] Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. [55] But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;
- *Revelation 22:17* The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.
- *Luke 9:5* And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” (As a Calvinist, this would make the Testimony against God
- *Matthew 11:28* “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. How can man be held accountable to God for his actions in judgment without freewill, without the ability to choose right or wrong?
- *2 Corinthians 5:10* For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Is it fair to send someone to hell for sins he was forced to commit having no freewill? It contradicts the parable of talents where man is held accountable for his actions.
- *Matthew 25:19* “Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

*God's Predestining Purpose.* From the call of Abraham his descendants, in particular the progeny of Jacob/Israel, are predestined to fulfill the purpose that God has for them. They are to be seen in the world as His people, holy and obedient to Him, living to His praise, a priestly nation bringing the knowledge of God to other nations. The New Testament bears witness also to this purpose and foreknowledge of God concerning Israel.

It is also made clear in the Old Testament in a number of ways that the purpose of God embraces all nations. He has foreordained it when a nation is used to chasten Israel and then when a Gentile ruler sets them free. Yet irrespective of Israel, God has a plan determined for the whole world as His hand is stretched out over all nations. God "determined the times set" for the different nations "and the exact places where they should live". In relation to the nations the word of the Lord in *Isaiah 46:10* is, "*Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';*

- *Genesis 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."*
- *Exodus 19:5-6 Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."*
- *Deuteronomy 7:6 For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*
- *Psalms 33:11-12 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation. 12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.*
- *Psalms 105:5-10 Remember His wonders which He has done, His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth, [6] O seed of Abraham, His servant, O sons of Jacob, His chosen ones! [7] He is the LORD our God; His judgments are in all the earth. [8] He has remembered His covenant forever, The word which He commanded to a thousand generations, [9] The covenant which He made with Abraham, And His oath to Isaac. [10] Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, To Israel as an everlasting covenant,*
- *Isaiah 14:27 For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"*
- *Isaiah 10:5-6 Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hands is My indignation, 6 I send it against a godless nation And commission it against the people of My fury To capture booty and to seize plunder, And to trample them down like mud in the streets.*
- *Isaiah 43:21 "The people whom I formed for Myself Will declare My praise.*
- *Isaiah 44:28 "It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'"*
- *Romans 11:2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?*
- *Acts 17:26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,*

Predetermined also, and thus mentioned variously in the prophets, is the purpose of God to be fulfilled in a Messiah of the house of David. It is also planned and foreordained that through Israel the knowledge of God should go out to the nations that they might be drawn to the worship of the Lord, a purpose to which the New Testament in turn bears witness. In the New Testament it is stressed repeatedly that the divine plan to be fulfilled in Christ was predestined. Paul speaks of the purpose in Him as "God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began". "*God's eternal purpose*" it is called in Ephesians 3:11. Although there was a human responsibility for the death of Jesus, all that happened was by "God's set purpose and foreknowledge". So also was the resurrection of Jesus, and furthermore He is "appointed as judge of the living and the dead".

- *Isaiah 9:6-7 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.*
- *Isaiah 11:1-9 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.3 And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist.6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them.7 Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox.8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.*
- *Jeremiah 23:5-6 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.6 "In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.'*
- *Ezekiel 34:23-24 "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.*
- *Ezekiel 37:24-28 "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. 25 They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. [26] I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. [27] My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. [28] And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever. ""*
- *Acts 2:23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*
- *Acts 2:31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.*
- *Acts 10:42 And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.*
- *1 Corinthians 2:7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory;*
- *Ephesians 3:11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,*
- *Galatians 3:8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."*
- *Colossians 1:27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

The people of God in the New Testament, like Israel in the Old Testament, have a destiny to fulfill. They are appointed to have an inheritance, to receive God's kingdom, to have "the hope of glory", which is "eternal life". This appointed destiny for God's people can also be spoken of as their being chosen to be born anew, to gain salvation, and to be adopted as children of God through Christ. In terms similar to those applied to Israel, the people of God in the New Testament are chosen to be holy, to be obedient, to live to God's praise, and, going beyond anything in the Old Testament, "predestined to be conformed to the likeness" of God's Son. In practical terms *Ephesians 2:10* says that "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*"

- *Matthew 25:34* "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'
- *Luke 12:32* Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.
- *Colossians 1:27* to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
- *Acts 13:48* 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.
- *James 1:18* In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.
- *2 Thessalonians 2:13* But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.
- *Ephesians 1:5* He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,
- *Ephesians 1:6* to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.
- *Ephesians 1:11* also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,
- *Ephesians 1:12* to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.
- *Ephesians 1:14* who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.
- *2 Timothy 1:9* who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,
- *1 Peter 1:2* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.
- *Romans 8:29* For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

Both Old and New Testaments also speak of individuals being predestined (chosen/called) to fulfill a divine purpose. *Jeremiah 1:5* "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." The servant of God in *Isaiah 49:5* is conscious of being "And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant." In *Genesis 25:23* (The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger.") a statement is made concerning the destinies of Jacob and Esau before they were born. In the New Testament Paul speaks of himself as set apart from birth to know God's Son and to make him known (*Galatians 1:15-16* But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased [16] to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,).

# Irresistible Grace

The doctrine of "irresistible grace" is the 4th of the 5 major points of Calvinism which are known by the acronym: T.U.L.I.P. Calvinism teaches that God's grace for salvation cannot be resisted. By His sovereign power God has fore-ordained who should be saved, and those individuals must accept the Lord without choice.

Steele and Thomas in their book on the The Five Points of Calvinism defines Irresistible grace as ....

*"Although the general outward call of the Gospel can be, and often is, rejected, the special inward call of the Spirit never fails to result in the conversion of those to whom it is made. This special call is not made to all sinners but is issued to the elect only! The Spirit is in no way dependent upon their help or cooperation for success in His work of bringing them to Christ. It is for this reason that Calvinists speak of the Spirit's call and of God's grace in saving sinners as being 'efficacious,' 'invincible,' or 'irresistible.' For the grace which the Holy Spirit extends to the elect cannot be thwarted or refused, it never fails to bring them to true faith in Christ." (David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, The Five Points of Calvinism, Defined, Defended, Documented: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1975, p.49)*

I believe this doctrine inconsistent with the Word of God which says it can be resisted

- *Lamentations 3:35-36: To deprive a man of justice In the presence of the Most High, [36] To defraud a man in his lawsuit-- Of these things the Lord does not approve.*
- *Matthew 23:3 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.*
- *John 5:39-40 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; [40] and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.*
- *Acts 7:51 "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.*
- *Proverbs 1:24-26 "Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; [25] And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my reproof; [26] I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes,*
- *Proverbs 29:1 A man who hardens his neck after much reproof Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.*

I am an old microprocessor chip design engineer from the 1970s, so perhaps this example will help. An old Intel 286 central processor computer chip is simply unable to run Windows 95. It is an impossibility. In order to run Windows 95, one must replace the Intel 286 chip with a modern Pentium 586 central processor chip. (oversimplified for illustration purposes) Now a Calvinist sees all men born Totally Depraved (inherited sin of Adam) as what literally prevents men from, by themselves, believing the gospel. Calvinists teach it is impossible for "unregenerate men" to believe. What is needed is a special "chip upgrade" from the Holy Spirit which enables the regenerated man the ability to believe. So the only way any man believes, as Calvinists teach, is because the Holy Spirit has come down and performed a special 'upgrade' act upon a specific man. Suddenly he springs up and proclaims, "I believe! Why didn't I see this before?" Why? Because without the Holy Spirit's special chip upgrade it is impossible to believe. Therefore, when men go to hell, it is because God never gave them the upgraded chip...they never even had a chance to go heaven. This is the doctrine of Calvinism, and it seems to ignore the fact that all men were created in the image of God. No 'upgrade' is required for belief and faith.

No matter how hard a cow tries to fly on its own, it is unable without a lot of outside help. In the same way, the unsaved, Calvinists maintain, are unable to believe in Christ no matter how hard they try without the outside help of the Holy Spirit. God, they say, has a master "saved-lost list" that was compiled before creation. God not only knew your name before creation but also upon which list you were "pre-destined" to be: lost or saved. Calvinists maintain that this list is not by means of God's intelligence, knowledge or foreknowledge, but by God's sovereign choice. If your name is on the "lost list", there is nothing you can do to go to heaven. God predestined you to go to hell. But if you were on the "saved list" you cannot be saved until the Holy Spirit "upgrades" your brain with the new chip which allows you the ability to believe. Furthermore you can not resist or prevent the "upgrade". Until the Holy Spirit performs this work upon you directly, you are simply a "cow with high hopes".

"Irresistible grace" refers to the action of the Holy Spirit in saving you by imparting the ability for you to believe in Christ. Unless the Holy Spirit "upgrades" your brain, you cannot believe. It is "irresistible" because the sinner cannot resist thereby rendering the "saved" as a puppet acting out the will of the master without freewill. It is "grace" because God has chosen some and not others to be saved. Once you are saved, there is no sin you can commit to cause you to be lost. (Perseverance of the saints or once saved always saved)

Upon four years of research of the Bible it is my conclusion that God in consequence of his foreknowledge of all events infallibly guides those who are destined for salvation.

# Limited Atonement

Calvinism teaches that Christ died only for the elect, but the Bible clearly teaches that He died for everyone, for all mankind. The reason not all are saved is because they failed to repent and receive the Savior, not because He didn't predestine them (provide an 'upgrade chip') for their salvation.

- *1 John 2:2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*
- *Isaiah 53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.*
- *1 Timothy 4:10: For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.*
- *Hebrews 2:9 But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.*
- *1 Timothy 2:4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

Calvinists would point out verses which states that Jesus died for his friends. However, Jesus promptly then states that we are his friends if we obey his commands. Why would we have to be commanded to obey if without free will we have no ability but to fulfill all Christ's command

- such as *John 10:11<sup>11</sup> "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.*
- *Acts 20:28<sup>28</sup> Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you <sup>[a]</sup>overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He <sup>[b]</sup>purchased <sup>[c]</sup>with His own blood., and*
- *John 15:13-14<sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are My friends if you do what I command you.*

As I read the Bible, I see clearly, though, Jesus died for everyone. Verses describe Jesus as the savior of the world, the savior of all men, and etc. Specifically,

- *1 John 2:2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world*

If God predestined everything than our eternal destiny (heaven or hell) is based entirely upon God's choice, not our own. We are unable to choose Heaven or Hell. Therefore Predestination makes God a respecter of persons saving some and damning others.

My limited reading of the Bible disagrees with the above Calvinistic concept and says God is not a respecter of persons:

*Acts 10:34-35 Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, [35] but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.*

*1 Peter 1:17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;*

# Total Depravity

I find in Calvinism that what was really meant is not Total Depravity, but actually Total Inability of man to choose Truth. However, the Word of God teaches that God created man with the ability to reason, choose, and receive truth. Man's standing before God is the worst it can possibly be and this is the true meaning of Total Depravity. It does not mean that each man is as bad and evil as they can be. What is meant is that their position before God requires redemption.

- *Ephesians 2:8: For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;*
- *Romans 10:17: So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*
- *James 1:21: Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.*
- *Isaiah 1:18: "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.*
- *Deuteronomy 30:19: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore CHOOSE LIFE, that both thou and thy seed may live."*
- *Joshua 24:15: If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

# Unconditional Election

Calvinism teaches that God selects those who are to be saved without any condition, but the Bible teaches that there is one condition to salvation: faith. We must believe within our hearts that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, that He died on the cross for our sins, that He has all power as demonstrated by His resurrection and that we confess and repent of our sins and that we publicly confess our faith in Him. Again, faith can only be exercised by 'choice' which can only come from a free will that enables 'choice'.

- *Romans 10:8-11* But what does it say? *"THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"*--that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, [9] that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; [10] for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. [11] For the Scripture says, *"WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."*
- *1 Peter 1:2:* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.
- *2 Thessalonians 2:13:* But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.
- *Luke 7:50* And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."
- *Ephesians 2:8* For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God
- *John 3:14-17* As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; [15] so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. [16] "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. [17] For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

# Personhood and Choice.

We know that being a person encompasses attributes such as having a will, self-awareness, emotions, being able to recognize others, communications, etc.

What is a person? We often use it as a synonym for "human being." But that is insufficient. Any entity that speaks a language, make moral judgments, creates literature and works of art, etc would be a ripe candidate for being considered a "person". Since man is a person who makes moral judgments, than they are required to make choices, irrespective of how depraved man is. Taking man's ability away to make these choices would be to deny that man has been created in the image of God and is void of any moral responsibility to loving God, following God, or even obeying God. Man essentially becomes a pet or a robot and not someone for God to develop a relationship and with whom to fellowship.

A person is the kind of entity that has the moral right to make its own life-choices, to live its life without (unprovoked) interference from others. How, then, should we define "person" as a moral category? Initially, we shall define a person as follows:

PERSON = "any entity that has the moral right of self-determination."

We would not be a person were God to make decisions on ourselves as to our salvation or eternal judgement prior to the creation of the world. He renders judgement instead after our lives are completed. This does not negate His total foreknowledge throughout all eternity. In a way, man self-determines his own destination.

Many properties have been suggested as being necessary for being a person: Intelligence, the capacity to speak a language, creativity, the ability to make moral judgments, consciousness, free will, a soul, self-awareness . . . and the list could go on almost indefinitely”

One condition God places on a person is the right to exercise faith in believing in Jesus Christ as Lord and to live by this faith. It becomes our duty, our obligation, and if you will the moral choice we should make.

“Intelligence must consist of the ability to learn and understand and to cope with new situations.” This is the primary reason the Great Commission is critical. Christians need to be sharing the good news, the gospel to the lost. The lost needs to learn of their standing of before God and that God's offer of salvation is available to them.

“The standard idea is probably that the self, though capable of being aware of things external to it, is also capable of being aware of its own states. Some have described this as a kind of experience. I might be said to have an "inner experience" of my own mental activity, being directly aware, say, of the thoughts that I am presently thinking and the attitudes ("I hope the White Sox win") that I presently hold. But even if we grant that we have such "inner experiences," they do not, by themselves, supply everything that we intend to capture by the term, "self-awareness." When I say that I am aware of my own mental activity (my thoughts, dreams, hopes, etc.) I do not mean merely that I have some inner clue to the content of that mental activity, I also mean that the character of that awareness is such that it gives me certain abilities to critically reflect upon my mental states and to make judgments about those states. If I am aware of my own behavior and mental activity in the right way, then it may be possible for me to decide that my behavior should be changed, that an attitude is morally objectionable or that I made a mistake in my reasoning and that a belief that I hold is unjustified and should be abandoned.“ When I exercise faith, confess my sins and invite Jesus into my life as Lord, I am at the absolute crux of self awareness.

# God Wants A Relationship, A Friend Not A Pet Or A Robot

Isn't this the most awesome thing you can imagine? I, a mere human among countless humans that live, have lived or yet to live can actually know and have a relationship with God Almighty, creator of this universe, creator of all things, seen and unseen. Not only can I know Him, but He has written a book for me so I can know Him intimately. And God calls me a 'friend'. And its not just me, everyone is invited to enter into this relationship with God Almighty.

- *John 15:15 No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

Stating that God determined before creation to create some humans destined irrevocably to hell and some irrevocably to heaven and man was powerless over this predetermination negates any meaningful relationship or friendship with the redeemed. Those selected for heaven would be no more valuable in a relationship than a pet or a robot. Punishment is for wrongs committed. Were this decision made by God prior to creation than God participated in creating creatures compelled to rebel and commit evil. Logically, this would lead to two conclusions:

- First, this action would conclude that God became an active partner in the commencement of evil. May this never be so.
  - *Job 34:10 "Therefore, listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do wickedness, And from the Almighty to do wrong.*
- Secondly, this action would conclude that salvation would be by predetermination and not by faith.
  - *Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*

In John 15:15 above that Jesus calls us his 'friends'. So what is a friend, even in our own limited, finite understanding?

First, someone who is a true friend stands up for you. Our greatest accuser and enemy is Satan. Jesus is constantly before God the Father Almighty defending us. It doesn't matter when or how Satan tries to hurt you emotionally, physically, spiritually or eternally, Jesus does everything to make sure you stay safe. The apostle John notes in *1 John 2:1-2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; [2] and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.* Were you selected to be one of the "predestined" Christians, than Christ would not have to plead your case on your behalf to God the father. Since it was pre-ordained, it is done. Thankfully this is not what scripture teaches and Christ is our friend and consistently advocates on our behalf before God Almighty.

Second, Jesus is not the kind of friend who is repeatedly telling you the negative things other people say about you. Rather He focuses you on love, understanding and forgiveness.

Third, True friends aren't phony with you, they reveal the truth about themselves and they're honest with you, never deceiving you about themselves. A true friend is one you can trust knowing they value you. They're honest not only about themselves, but you as well. At times a friend may share some hard truths you may not be eager to hear, but they do so in love and with grace, holding you to a standard they know your character is worthy of. When we asked Christ into our lives as Lord and Savior we also received the Holy Spirit as our counsellor, benefactor and confident. We have the unique opportunity to pray constantly to Jesus sharing our entire life, all thoughts, all emotions, all decisions, requests on behalf of others, ourselves and guidance. What a great friend we have in Jesus. Why God would even entertain entering a relationship with me is beyond my understanding, but I am so glad He did.

Fourth, A real friend accepts you as you are. God accepts us as Jesus is. Jesus Christ will accept each one of us just as we are right now if we will believe with our heart and confess with our mouths that Jesus Christ is Lord and was resurrected. When we understand that Jesus gave His life so each of us could have eternal, redeemed life with God, than moved by His compassion and mercy we realize how sinful we truly are, we become compelled to confess that we are sinners and ask for God's forgiveness and for God to be our Lord and Savior. Jesus accepts everyone who repents and requests. He encourages us to become a better version of ourselves and helps us to understand the plan He has for our life. God celebrates you from where you are now to your final destiny. Jesus will encourage you to make good decisions, and He will respect your own personal judgments. Jesus encourages your personal growth and evolutions throughout life as well as your walk by faith.

### Just As I Am

By Charlotte Elliott

1. Just as I am, without one plea,  
but that thy blood was shed for me,  
and that thou bidst me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

2. Just as I am, and waiting not  
to rid my soul of one dark blot,  
to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

3. Just as I am, though tossed about  
with many a conflict, many a doubt,  
fightings and fears within, without,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

4. Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;  
sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
yea, all I need in thee to find,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

5. Just as I am, thou wilt receive,  
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
because thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

6. Just as I am, thy love unknown  
hath broken every barrier down;  
now, to be thine, yea thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Fifth, Jesus wants what's best for us. He acknowledges your feelings but at the same time points you towards a happier, healthier life. As a true friend, Jesus is not complacent in your personal growth, He doesn't passively sit by and watch you make choices that are not good for you. So He will constantly counsel to ensure you have the happiest and healthiest version of you.

Sixth, fair weather friends are with you when you're happy and successful. But, when things go wrong for you, they move on to the next happy, successful person. Jesus, our real friend, stays with us through traumas, disappointments, mental health crises, and physical illnesses. He doesn't abandon us and you truly cares about us and will be there for us during our difficult times. So when your life gets more challenging and you find yourself feeling pretty down or overwhelmed you won't have to go through these challenges alone, Jesus will be with you as a true friend in your corner.

The Calvinist's viewpoint has been summarized using the acronym TULIP, which stands for:

- **T**otal Depravity, This is the belief that sin controls every part of man. He is spiritually dead and blind, and unable to obey, believe, or repent. He continually sins, for his nature is completely evil.
  - This is based on verses such as *Romans 3:10*; *as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE*;
  - *Psalm 14:3*, *They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.*
  - *Psalm 53:3*. *Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.*
- **U**nconditional Election, God chose the elect solely based on His free grace, not anything in them. He has a special love for the elect. God left the rest to be damned for their sins.
- **L**imited Atonement, Christ died especially for the elect, and paid a definite price for them that guaranteed their salvation.
- **I**rresistible Grace, Saving grace is irresistible, for the Holy Spirit is invincible and intervenes in man's heart. He sovereignly gives the new birth, faith, and repentance to the elect.
- **P**erseverance of the Saints. God preserves all the elect and causes them to persevere in faith and obedience to the end. None are continually back-slidden or finally lost.

To summarize a very basic picture of the Calvinistic viewpoint would go something like this:

*Man's heart is depraved. If left to himself, he would only do selfish, sinful things. However, God arbitrarily decided, before time began, which people would be saved and which would be lost. Jesus Christ came to earth and died on the cross for the sins of those God had decided would be saved. The Holy Spirit comes upon a person's heart in an irresistible way, so the person will choose to be saved. The saved person can never become unsaved, no matter what.*

For each of the Calvinist's points, the followers of Arminius have a counterpoint.

- **1. Free Will:** Sin does not control man's will. He is sick and near-sighted, but still able to obey, believe, and repent. He does not continually sin, for his nature is not completely evil.
- **2. Conditional Election:** God chose the elect based on their foreseen faith. He loves all men equally. God passed over no one; He gives everyone an equal chance to be saved. This is gleaned from
  - *I Timothy 2:4* *who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*
  - *II Peter 3:9*; *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*
  - *Matthew 18:14*. *So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.*
- **3. Universal Atonement:** Christ died equally for all men, and paid a provisional price that made salvation possible for all, but guaranteed it for none.
- **4. Resistible Grace:** Saving grace is resistible, for God does not overrule man's free will. Man is born again after he believes, for faith and repentance are not gifts of God.
- **5. Falling from Grace:** Believers may turn from grace and lose their salvation.

To summarize a very basic picture of the Arminian viewpoint would go something like this:

*Man's spirit is damaged, but still somewhat good. God, able to see all things past and future, knowing who would say 'yes' to the Gospel, elected those people to salvation. Jesus died on the cross giving everyone the opportunity to repent and turn to Him, excluding no one from the possibility of salvation. The call of God can be resisted and, ultimately, rejected. A Christian can turn from God and no longer be saved.*

The Arminian belief that one may lose his or her salvation may cause some to put too much emphasis on the believer's responsibility to maintain their faith by their own strength rather than relying on God to sustain them. I am of the opinion that only faith is required for salvation and once obtained, never revoked. We have eternal security because of Christ's work on the cross. To lose our salvation would tantamount to saying that Christ's work on the cross was insufficient and that "**God needed**" our works to maintain our salvation. Scripture clearly paints an opposite story.

Both of these belief systems have strong points and weak points: the Calvinists stress the sovereignty of God, that God is in control of everything, a good and biblical concept. However, if we take this too far, we end up saying that God is even responsible for man's sin, but we know this is not true: *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one"* (James 1:13 ESV). Therefore, a balance must be struck that says that God most certainly is in control of everything in this way: He either causes or allows everything that happens to happen. He has self-limited His own involvement in the lives of men and women. He has allowed us some measure of freedom in order that we might freely choose Him.

The topic of Calvinism and Arminianism is a huge subject and I've only touched the surface. The differences between the two group's theology should not stand in the way of fellowship between the two. True believers in both groups serve the same risen savior, Jesus Christ. There is much in both viewpoints that glorifies God.

Whereas I embrace certain aspects of both sets of interpretations, I feel compelled to adopt those whose research has shown me to be Biblically sound. In this regard, the believer can take the best aspects from both of these systems, incorporate them into his or her life, and be completely biblical in his or her walk with God: God is sovereign; nothing happens that He does not cause or allow.

What remains undeniable from both camps includes:

- Man cannot now, nor has he ever been able to, save himself.
- Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for our sins.
  - *John 3:16-17 "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. [17] For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."*
- God, through the Holy Spirit, is even now reaching out to the lost in order to save them,
- God is reaching out to the saved in order to love and strengthen them.
- A Christian's responsibility is ....
  - *"Mark 12:30 ...love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength"*
  - *Matthew 22:37 And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'*
  - *Luke 10:27 And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."*