

CHOSEN BY GOD
The Doctrine of Divine Election (Romans 8:29-30)
Dennis McBride, 1993 - Revised 6/97

Note: Click on the Navigation Plane icon in the tool bar above, then click on a bookmark to proceed to the corresponding section of this study.

INTRODUCTION:

1. *The doctrine of Divine Election teaches that before the foundation of the world God sovereignly placed His love upon those individuals to whom He would grant saving faith. Representative passages include:*

a. ***Eph. 1:3-12*** - “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, just 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* to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, *which He lavished upon us*. . . . In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, *having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will*, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”

b. ***1 Pet. 1:1-2*** - “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, *who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.”

c. ***Rom. 8:29-30*** - “For whom He *foreknew*, He also *predestined* to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He *predestined*, these He also *called*; and whom He *called*, these He also *justified*; and whom He *justified*, these He also *glorified*.”

That passage is commonly called the “Golden Chain Of Redemption”: <i>Foreknowledge, Predestination, Calling, Justification, and Glorification.</i>
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2. *As blessed and comforting as the doctrine of God’s sovereign election should be, it is, in fact, one of the most misunderstood, rejected, and even despised doctrines in Christian theology.*

Many Christians struggle with its implications, or feel it is too deep for them to grasp. Others believe it dishonors God, making Him the arbitrary selector of those who are saved, and the rejecter of those who are eternally lost.

Still others reject it outright because it strikes a blow to human pride, which feels it must have something to contribute to its own salvation.

3. ***Admittedly, God's ways are not ours (Rom. 11:33-34), and often they are beyond our understanding. However, He doesn't ask us to understand everything He does. He asks us to study His Word, believe what it teaches, and submit to its authority even when we don't fully understand His rationale.***

As Paul states it in **Romans 9:10-23** - "There was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, 'The older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'

"What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! 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 does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.' So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

"You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?' On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?

"What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory."

God chooses whom He wills, and He does so for His own reasons.

4. ***Scripture clearly teaches that believers deserve no credit for any aspect of their salvation!***

- ***Eph. 2:8-9*** - "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."
- ***Titus 3:3-7*** - "We also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

5. ***"But Surely," some reason, "faith is the believer's contribution to salvation. After all, doesn't Scripture say that unless we believe we cannot be saved?"***

That's true: we cannot be saved unless we have faith in Christ. But the issue goes beyond the *FACT* or *PRESENCE* of saving faith to the *SOURCE* of saving faith. How do those who come to Christ in faith acquire the ability to do so?

- **John 6:44, 65** - Jesus said that the Father grants saving faith:; “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him. . . . No one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.”
- **Matt. 11:27** - Jesus also said that no one knows the Father unless the Son reveals Him to them: “Nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”
- **Eph. 2:8-9** - Paul added, “By *grace* you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the *gift of God*; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”
- **Phil. 1:29** - Paul said to the Philippians, “To you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”
- **Acts 2:39** - Following his sermon on The Day of Pentecost, Peter said that “the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, *as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.*”
- **Acts 13:48** says, “When the Gentiles heard [that Paul was turning from unbelieving Jews to preach the gospel to the Gentiles], they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; *and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*”
- **Acts 16:14** tells of “a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics. a worshiper of God, [who] was listening; and *the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.*”

6. Dr. J. I. Packer comments:

“There is a long-standing controversy in the church as to whether God is really Lord in relation to human conduct and saving faith or not The situation is not what it seems to be. For it is not true that some Christians believe in divine sovereignty while others hold an opposite view. What is true is that all Christians believe in divine sovereignty, but some are not aware that they do, and mistakenly imagine and insist that they reject it. . . .

“People see that the Bible teaches man’s responsibility for his actions; they do not see (man, indeed, cannot see) how this is consistent with the sovereign Lordship of God over those actions. They are not content to let the two truths live side by side, as they do in the scriptures, but jump to the conclusion that, in order to uphold the biblical truth of human responsibility, they are bound to reject the equally biblical and equally true doctrine of divine sovereignty, and to explain away the great number of texts that teach it.

“The desire to over-simplify the Bible by cutting out the mysteries is natural to our perverse minds, and it is not surprising that even good man should fall victim to it. Hence this persistent and troublesome dispute. The irony of the situation, however, is that when we ask how the two sides pray, it becomes apparent that those who profess to deny God’s sovereignty really believe in it just as strongly as those who affirm it.

“How, then, do you pray? Do you ask God for your daily bread? Do you thank God for your conversion? Do you pray for the conversion of others? . . . If the answer is “yes” -- well, that proves that, whatever side you may have taken in debates on this question in the

past, in your heart you believe in the sovereignty of God no less firmly than anyone else. On our feet we may have arguments about it, but on our knees we are all agreed” (*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, Inter Varsity Press, pp. 16-17).

7. ***Before examining Romans 8:29-30 in-depth, I want to present an overview of what Paul teaches in that passage. I will do so via a series of statements with corresponding explanations.***

a. ***Scripture teaches that all men (persons) are sinners.***

Representative verses:

- 1) ***Rom. 3:9-18*** - “What then? Are we [the Jews] better than they [the Greeks]? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are ***all under sin***; as it is written, ‘There is ***none*** righteous ***not even one***; there is ***none*** who seeks for God; ***all*** have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is ***none*** who does good, there is ***not even one***. . . .There is no fear of God before their eyes.’”
- 2) ***Rom. 3:22-23*** - “There is no distinction; for ***all have sinned*** and fall short of the glory of God.”

b. ***Scripture teaches that all men are sinners by nature (they are born sinners), not merely by choice or circumstance.***

- 1) ***Note:*** I’m not dealing here with *how* men became sinners by nature, but simply with the fact that they are.
- 2) ***Representative verses:***
 - ***Eph. 2:13*** - “[We] were ***by nature*** children of wrath, even as the rest.”
 - ***Mark 7:20-23*** - “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

c. ***Scripture teaches that all men are spiritually dead, depraved, and in bondage to evil.***

Note: Many people believe that even though man is fallen, there is enough residue of the divine image remaining that he is able to take the first step toward God, and to respond to the Spirit’s promptings apart from any inward enabling. However, Scripture clearly describes our fallen status as ***dead*** and ***enslaved*** to sin.

- 1) ***Eph. 2:1-6*** - Describing the pre-Christian state of his readers, Paul said, “You were ***dead*** in your trespasses and sins”

They were spiritually dead and sinners by nature. Therefore they acted like sinners. Paul continues:

“In which you *formerly walked* [denoting action & lifestyle] according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all *formerly lived* in the lusts of our flesh, *indulging* the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were *by nature children of wrath*, even as the rest.

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were *dead in our transgressions, made us alive* together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.”

- 2) ***Eph. 4:17-19*** - “This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you *walk* no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, *in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart*; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”
- 3) ***Titus 1:15*** - “To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, *nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.*”

Note: *John Wesley said*, “Allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by nature, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a mere state of nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly devoid of the grace of God. No man living is destitute of what is [commonly] called *natural conscience: it is more properly termed preventing grace*” (*Sermon: Working Out Our Salvation*, cited in Orton Wiley’s *Introduction to Christian Theology*, pp. 262-263).

But Paul said man’s conscience is defiled and corrupt. Not only can it not *prevent* sin, it is *infected by sin and enslaved to sin*.

- 4) ***Jer. 17:9*** - “The heart is more *deceitful* than all else and is *desperately sick*; who can understand it.”
- 5) ***John 8:34*** - “Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the *slave* of sin.’”
- 6) ***Rom. 6:16-18*** - “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”
- 7) ***Regeneration is called the new birth*** (John 3), ***a new creation*** (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10; 4:24), ***resurrection*** (Rom. 6:4-5), ***being made alive in Christ*** (Rom. 8:10; Col. 2:13). Each of those terms pictures a transformation from death to life.

d. *Scripture teaches that it is impossible for unregenerate man to generate his own righteousness so as to please God.*

- 1) *Jer. 13:23* - “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good who are accustomed to do evil.”
- 2) *Rom. 8:5-9* - “Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

“For the mind set on the flesh is *death*, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 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*; and those who are in the flesh *cannot please God*.

“However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

<p>Question: If we assume that God is pleased when a sinner takes an initial step toward Him, how can we at the same time maintain that an unregenerate person can take that step on his own initiative when Scripture says that unregenerate man is hostile toward God and utterly incapable of pleasing Him?</p>

- 3) *1 Cor. 2:14* - “A natural man *does not accept* the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he *cannot* understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”

How can a natural man perceive the things of the Spirit? He cannot! He must first have the mind of Christ (v. 16). But an unbeliever cannot have the mind of Christ, because he doesn't accept or understand spiritual things. *How, then, can he make any initial overtures toward Christ?*

e. *Scripture teaches that it is impossible for man to be saved apart from divine grace.*

- 1) *Eph. 2:8-10* - “By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”
- 2) The heresy of *Pelagianism* said that unregenerate man can come to Christ on his own, but Pelagianism was universally denounced by orthodox Christianity.
- 3) *Semi-Pelagianism (Arminianism)*, following John Wesley's lead, asserts that fallen man still retains the ability to respond to God's impulses. Granted, He needs *some* measure of grace, but he has within himself the ability to accept or reject any grace offered.

- 4) We agree that man needs some measure of divine grace (help) to come to Christ, but the question is: what is the nature and degree of that help? The remainder of this study will answer that question in detail.

f. Scripture teaches that God must save fallen man. But How?

- 1) The most commonly accepted response is what theologians call Preventive Grace
 - a) **Prevenient** (pre-ven'-yent) means to go or to come before. It refers to something that precedes something else. Regarding salvation, it refers to a measure of grace God grants to unbelievers before they come to salvation.
 - b) **Noted Arminian theologian Orton Wiley** defines Preventive Grace in this way: "When we speak of 'preventive grace' we think of the grace which "goes before," **preparing the soul** for its entrance into the initial state of salvation. It is the preparatory grace of the Holy Spirit exercised toward man helpless in sin. As respects the guilty, it may be considered mercy; as it respects the **impotent**, it is **enabling power**. It is that manifestation of the **divine influence** which precedes the full regenerate life" (*Introduction To Christian Theology*, p. 261).
 - c) I have no argument with that portion of Dr. Wiley's definition. I call what he is describing "biblical Preventive Grace." God *must* prepare hearts to receive the gospel. However, I disagree with the typical Arminian explanation of Preventive Grace, which Dr. Wiley presents in his subsequent comments: "Preventive grace operates on the unified, integrated personality of man. That person is viewed as **a free and responsible agent, yet enslaved by sin and possessed of a 'bent to sinning.'** Grace is needed to **awaken the soul** to reality and **enlist the heart upon the side of truth**. In all of this there is continuous cooperation between grace and the human will until preventive grace is merged into saving grace" (*Ibid.*, p. 263).

In other words, according to Dr. Wiley, Preventive Grace is enabling grace. But it enables only if fallen man permits it to. My question is: what gives a person who is spiritually dead, depraved, enslaved to sin, hostile to God, incapable of pleasing God, and utterly incapable of saving himself the ability to cooperate in permitting enabling grace to enable? The answer should be obvious: nothing! It can't be done. That's why Scripture never describes an unregenerate person as "a free and responsible agent," "yet enslaved by sin," or having "a bent to sinning."

- 2) An illustration of the Arminian Preventive Grace assumption

Arminian Preventive Grace has been likened to a lifeline that is thrown to man caught in a swift-moving river that is rapidly approaching a great waterfall. The man can reach out and grab the lifeline and be saved, or he can ignore it and perish.

3) The problem with an Arminian Prevenient Grace assumption

Unregenerate man is not merely drowning spiritually, he's dead, unable to reach out to take the lifeline or open the door. Unable to respond to divine impulses. It isn't merely that he chooses not to respond, he cannot respond. Yet somehow, according to the theory, God grants enough grace to make it possible for anyone to respond.

4) The attraction of an Arminian Prevenient Grace assumption

I admit that part of me likes that view. In fact, for 33 years I believed it. It seemed to settle the apparent conflict between God's sovereignty and man's freedom. It made sense to think that God would override everyone's sin nature thereby giving everyone an equal ability to respond to the gospel. It also seemed to relieve Him of any responsibility for those who reject Christ and are eternally lost.

5) The *apparent* reasonableness of an Arminian Prevenient Grace assumption

a) It seems reasonable to assume that if God loved the world so much that He gave His Son to die for it, so that all who believe might have eternal life (John 3:16), He would also grant everyone equal ability to respond to the gospel.

i) But John 3:16 says nothing about one's ability to respond. It simply says all who believe will be saved.

ii) Not even Arminians are willing to equate "the world" with every living person, otherwise verse 17 (that the world, through Him, might be saved) teaches universalism, or implies that Christ failed in His mission. Therefore, "world" must be qualified to some degree.

b) It seems reasonable to assume that if God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) and isn't willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9), all men would have equal opportunity to hear the gospel and either accept or reject it.

c) It seems reasonable to assume that when Jesus wept over Jerusalem, saying how often he would have gathered them to Himself as a mother hen gathers her chicks, but they were unwilling to receive Him (Matt. 23:37), they had both the opportunity and ability to do so but chose not to.

d) It seems reasonable to assume that when God holds every sinner personally responsible for rejecting Christ, they had the ability to receive Him but rejected him instead.

e) Each of those issues have biblical answers, but Arminian Prevenient Grace isn't the answer--nor can it be (for reasons I will now discuss).

6) The fatal flaws of an Arminian Prevenient Grace assumption

a) As reasonable as it may sound, it is specifically taught *nowhere* in Scripture.

- i) It is a seemingly logical, rational, reasonable solution to a very sticky problem. But it isn't a *biblical* solution.
- ii) Nowhere in the verses cited above (or anywhere else in Scripture) does it teach that God grants "*overriding grace*", or *equal ability*, to all mankind. Arminian Preventive Grace is *assumed*, not *taught*.
- iii) Note: If a theological assumption conflicts or directly contradicts a specific teaching of Scripture, the assumption is suspect or invalid.

In Romans 9 Paul specifically and methodically defends God's sovereignty in election. If every person has the same choice and ability to make that choice, what's to defend? We simply blame man for rejecting Christ. Why call God's justice and fairness into question?

Before one can reject the doctrine of rejecting personal election to salvation, he must first deal with Romans 9 (and other passages that teach election).

- b) Another fatal flaw of Arminian Preventive Grace is that it *can't possibly do* what its advocates say it does (i.e., neutralize the affects of sin, thereby giving everyone the same ability to receive Christ).

- i) Is Arminian Preventive Grace external only?

Some say that Preventive Grace is merely external to man--God's influences through providence and circumstances to bring people to a place of believing in Him and receiving salvation. It appeals to his innate free choice.

But that view fails to recognize that men are ***spiritually dead!*** -- ***incapable*** of responding to any external stimuli--***incapable*** of loving or pleasing God.

- ii) Is Arminian Preventive Grace internal?

What is Preventive Grace supposed to do within the spiritually dead unbeliever? It makes them capable of responding to the gospel--if they choose to do so. But how does it do that?

Again quoting Orton Wiley: "As it respects the ***impotent***, it is ***enabling power***. It is that manifestation of the ***divine influence*** which precedes the full regenerate life."

"Enabling power" - What does that mean? In what way does God enable dead creatures to respond to Him?

aa) It doesn't create faith

According to its supporters, Arminian Preventient Grace *it doesn't create faith* in anyone, it simply makes it possible for them to believe. Faith becomes *an option*, whereas before, it was *an impossibility*. In effect, it negates the affects of sin and makes everyone spiritually neutral.

If it created faith in unbelievers, all unbelievers would get saved, because everyone receives preventient grace. Then we would have *Universalism*. Plus, we know from Scripture and experience that not everyone believes.

If it created faith in *some* unbelievers, it would cease to be preventient grace and we would have *election* (God granting certain individuals saving faith, while passing over others).

bb) "It wipes the slate clean" (some say).

So, it gives us a clean slate, so to speak, and the response is up to us.

iii) The dilemma

However, why is it that some fallen creatures choose to cooperate with Arminian Preventient Grace and others choose not to?

Illustration: You and a friend are caught in the river. Both have preventient grace. *You reach for the lifeline, your friend doesn't. Why? What enabled you to reach?*

<p>KEY ISSUE: THIS IS THE HEART OF THE MATTER.</p>

Some options:

- **You received more preventient grace than your friend.** (But then God showed favor to you, thereby prompting you to choose Him. That is election, not Arminian Preventient Grace!).
- **You were more righteous than your friend.** (Was that righteousness something you achieved on your own, or was it a gift from God? **If on your own**, then you believe your salvation depends on your own righteousness. **If from God**, He granted you favor over your friend, thereby prompting you to choose Him. That is election, not preventient grace!).

- **You were more intelligent than your friend.** (Was that because you studied more or did God give you a gift of intelligence that He withheld from your friend?)
- **You had more people praying for you than your friend did.** (But the prayers of others are *external* to you, and you're still *dead*).
- **You grew up in a Christian family, your friend didn't (although some siblings reject Christ while others receive Him).** (But the examples of others are external to you, and you're still spiritually dead).
- **Maybe it was because you simply recognized your desperate need for Christ.** (But the question remains: Why did you recognize your need, and your friend didn't?)

Jesus said, "No one *can* come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father" (John 6:65). Jesus is addressing *ability*, not *permission*.

iv) The question of neutrality

Even if God somehow neutralized (overrode) sin's influence so that everyone had the same ability to receive or reject Christ, that still wouldn't solve the problem because *it is impossible to make reasonable, meaningful decisions from a position of neutrality.*

Illustration: Alice in Wonderland at the crossroads. "Which road do I choose." The Cheshire Cat responds: "If you don't know where you're going, it doesn't matter!"

Choice is determined by motive and desire. Neutrality supplies neither.

g. Scripture teaches that man does have a measure of "freedom."

1) Biblical freedom

a) The Bible speaks of two freedoms, which, paradoxically are also two forms of slavery:

Unbelievers are free to righteousness (because they are enslaved to sin; believers are freed from sin (because they are enslaved to Christ. Therefore, *Christian freedom is enslavement to Christ.*

i) **Rom. 6:16-18, 20** - "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as *slaves* for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though *you*

were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, *and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness*. . . . When you were *slaves of sin*, you were *free in regard to righteousness*.

ii) **2 Pet. 2:19** - False teachers come, “promising them freedom while they themselves are *slaves* of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is *enslaved*.”

iii) **John 8:31-32, 34-36** - “Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you *free*. . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the *slave* of sin. . . . If therefore the Son shall make you *free*, you shall be *free indeed*.’”

b) With regard to unregenerate man, human “freedom” *never* includes the ability to please God.

Rom. 8 :7-8 - “The mind set on the flesh is *death*, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 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*; and those who are in the flesh *cannot please God*.

c) Lack of freedom isn’t the problem: too much freedom is!

i) Left to his own devices--to follow his own desires--unregenerate man will always pull further and further away from God (Rom. 3:9-18).

ii) All who go to hell go there because they choose to, not because God made them do so against their wills.

5) Man’s will is always subordinate to God’s will.

a) God doesn’t impose His will on us, but instead lovingly conforms our will to His, thereby making us willing to serve Him (e.g., Jonah).

b) **Note:** Election isn’t fatalism (i.e., things are not preordained to happen according to fate, with us having no real say in the matter). Fatalism is arbitrary, but we are children of a loving, wise, and gracious God. He knows what’s best, and His will prevails. We can trust Him!

7. Now let’s examine in detail the tremendous truths Paul teaches in the “Golden Chain of Redemption”:

Rom. 8:29-30 - “For whom He *foreknew*, He also *predestined* to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;

and whom He *predestined*, these He also *called*; and whom He *called*, these He also *justified*; and whom He *justified*, these He also *glorified*.”

I. FOREKNOWLEDGE

A. ITS BIBLICAL USAGE

1. The root word

The Greek word translated “foreknowledge” is *proegno*. Its literal meaning is “to have fore-known” or “to have foreknowledge”). It occurs seven times in the Greek New Testament.

2. Regarding man’s prior knowledge

Twice it refers to previous knowledge on the part of man: Acts 26:5--the Jews’ previous knowledge of Paul; 2 Pet. 3:17--the Christians’ previous knowledge [being forewarned] of scoffers who would come in the last days.

3. Regarding God’s foreknowledge

Five times it refers to God’s foreknowledge: Three of these times it is used as a verb: Romans 8:29; 11:2, and 1 Peter 1:2; and twice as a noun: Acts 2:23 and 1 Peter 1:20.

B. ITS THEOLOGICAL USAGE

1. Its definition

- a. In theological language, foreknowledge designates the *foresight* of God concerning the entire course of future events. In other words, God knows all things, actual or possible, past, present and future.
- b. Human knowledge is limited, and is derived from observation and reason, but divine foreknowledge is unlimited and is intuitive, innate, and immediate.

2. The key question

Regarding foreknowledge and election, the key question is: Does God choose individuals because they respond to Him, or do they respond to Him because He chose them?

- a. One view of foreknowledge teaches that God, by looking into the future, sees who will exercise faith in Christ and therefore knows who will be saved and identifies those individuals as His elect (i.e., He chose individuals who responded to Him).
- b. Another view teaches that foreknowledge is an act of God whereby before the foundation of the world He sovereignly placed His love upon those individuals whom He would call to Himself in saving faith (i.e., individuals respond to God because He first chose them).

c. Which view is correct?

3. *The answer*

The proper relationship of foreknowledge to salvation becomes clear when we see how the verb “to know” is sometimes used in the Scripture.

a. Old Testament usage

- 1) The Hebrew word *yada*, often translated “know” has special usages that denote “*making one the object of loving care.*”
- 2) Examples
 - **Gen. 4:1** - “Now the man had relations [knew] his wife Eve and she conceived and gave birth to Cain.”
 - **Jer. 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.”
 - **Hos. 13:4-5** - “I have been the Lord your God since the land of Egypt; and you were *not to know any god except Me*, for there is no savior besides Me. *I cared for you [did know you]* in the wilderness, in the land of drought.”
 - **Amos 3:2** - “You only have I chosen [known] among all the families of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

b. New Testament usage

That concept is found in the New Testament also:

- 1) Examples
 - **Matt. 7:23** - Jesus said, “Then I will declare to them, ‘I never *knew* you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”
 - **John 10:27-28** - “My sheep hear My voice, *and I know them*, and they follow Me; and *I give eternal life to them*, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.”
 - **John 17:3** - “This is eternal life, *that they may know Thee*, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”
- 2) “Knowing” in those instances denotes *a special relationship* and is *synonymous with salvation.*

C. SUMMARY

1. *Jesus Himself was foreknown before the world began.*

He was loved and called to a specific task. He was not simply known by the Father, nor did the Father look down the corridor of time to see if the Son would obey the plan of salvation, then appoint Him to that task!

1 Pet. 1:18-21 - “You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

“For *He was foreknown* before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God.”

2. *If you are a Christian, God loved you before you were born, and He predetermined that you would be saved by His grace. That’s why you came to Him, and it’s also the basis of your ongoing communion with Him.*

II. PREDESTINATION

A. PREDESTINATION DEFINED

1. *The English “predestinate” comes from the Latin praedestino, which the Vulgate (the Latin translation of the Bible) uses to translate the Greek proorizo. The Greek proorizo is most often translated “predestinated” but it is also translated “foreordain.”*

2. *This word, which the New Testament uses only with God as subject, expresses the thought of appointing a situation for a person, or a person for a situation, in advance.*

3. *Predestination = Election*

In reference to man, we most often refer to this as “*ELECTION*.”

4. *The doctrine of election declares that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam’s race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and these only, He purposed to save.*

B. SOME KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

1. *The source of election is God, not man.*

- a. Election is based on the sovereign mercy of God. It was not man’s will but God’s will that determined which sinners would be shown mercy and would thereby be saved.

b. Examples:

- **Ex. 4:10-12** - “Then Moses said to the Lord, ‘Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.’ And the Lord said to him ‘Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say.’”
- **Ex. 33:18-19** - “Then Moses said, ‘I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!’ And [God] said, ‘I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.’”
- **Rom. 9:14-24** - (Especially verses 16 and 23 -- “Which He prepared beforehand for glory--then called”).
- **Eph. 1:5-6** - “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

2. ***Election is based on God’s sovereignty, not man’s response.***

a. God’s eternal choice of particular sinners unto salvation was not based on any foreseen act or response on the part of those selected, but was *based solely on His own good pleasure and sovereign will*. Thus election was not determined by, or conditioned upon, anything that men would do, but resulted entirely from God’s self-determined purpose.

b. Question: Isn’t faith man’s part in the redemptive process?

1) Answer: Yes. However, faith is the result of God’s choice, not its cause.

2) Illustrations:

- We see in Christ’s selection of His disciples an illustration of God’s elective purposes in eternity past. First He chose them, *then* they responded.

John 15:16 - Jesus said to the disciples (minus Judas in this context), “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”

- **Acts 13:48** - Those appointed to eternal life believed.
- Other passages we have seen (Rom. 9; Eph. 1, etc.).

3. *Election itself is not salvation, but is unto salvation.*

- a. Those chosen unto salvation are not saved until they are regenerated by the Spirit and justified by faith in Christ.

2 Tim. 2:10 - "For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory."

- b. **Question:** If God already knows who will be saved, why evangelize?

Answer: Because if you don't witness, you will be disobedient and will miss the blessing. God will use someone else, but the elect will still be saved.

III. CALLING

A. THE DEFINITION

1. *Calling is one of the most frequently mentioned aspects of salvation.*

2. *Scripture teaches that all mankind is guilty before God, and that we are utterly incapable of saving ourselves. Unredeemed man is spiritually blind and dead and unable to regenerate or convert himself. How, then, can sinners be saved?*

3. *The New Testament gives a clear answer:*

- a. God calls elect sinners to Himself. That is, He works in the hearts of elect sinners to draw them to Himself in saving faith.
- b. He applies to their lives the plan He had purposed from before the foundation of the world.

4. *Examples:*

- a. *2 Thess. 2:13-14* - "God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this *He called you through our gospel*, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- b. *1 Pet. 2:9* - "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of *Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*"

- c. **2 Pet. 1:10** - “Brethren, be all the more diligent to *make certain about His calling and choosing you*; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.”
- d. **2 Tim. 1:8-9** - “Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, 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.*”

Note: Paul clearly declares that Christians *are not called by God because of anything they have done*, but because of His grace.

Romans 9:15-16 - God told Moses, “‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.”

How then can anyone maintain that God looked down the corridor of time and saw who would choose Him, then elected and called them? That would be salvation based on our actions or works, which clearly contradicts these passages.

Individual Christians come to Christ because *God calls them*; God didn't call them because He knew they'd come to Christ!

CALLING PRECEDES JUSTIFICATION (ROM. 8:29).

B. THE DISTINCTIVES

1. With respect to salvation, Scripture speaks of two different Calls

- a. **Call #1** - The **OUTWARD, GOSPEL, OR GENERAL CALL**, which is the invitation to receive Christ and be saved.
- b. **Call #2** - The **INWARD, EFFECTUAL, OR SPECIFIC CALL**, which is not merely to an invitation to be saved, but is an efficacious act of God that brings man into fellowship with Jesus Christ. It is rightly called “*a heavenly calling*” (**Heb. 3:1**).

That concept is paralleled in Matthew 2:15, which speaks of Christ being “called out of Egypt.” This “calling” cannot be understood as a mere invitation but it actually means that God brought or ushered Christ out of Egypt. In the same way, sinners are “called” out of sin into salvation.

2. The outward vs. the inward Call

Here are a series of contrasts between the two calls:

a. ***The Outward Call is universal and general, for it is given to all sinners irrespective of their race, rank, or religion:***

- ***Mark 16:15*** - Jesus said to His Disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”
- ***Matt. 28:19*** - “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

The Inward Call is particular and special, for it is given only to the elect:

- ***Matt. 22:14*** - “For many are called, but few are chosen.”
- ***John 6:37-44, 65*** - “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

“For this is the will of My Father, that every one who beholds the Son, and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day

“No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. . . . And He was saying, ‘For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.’”

b. ***The Outward Call comes outwardly and objectively to all sinners. It is the Gospel message put in the ear of man:***

- ***Acts 17:30-31*** - “God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

The Inward Call is inward and subjective. It takes place in the heart of elect sinners:

- ***Acts 16:14*** - “A certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.”
- ***John 6:37-44, 65*** - “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. . . . No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me

draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. . . . For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.”

c. *The Outward Call is God’s gracious and sincere command, summons, and invitation that all sinners everywhere should repent and turn to Him through Christ:*

- See the parable of the king who gave a wedding feast - ***Matt. 22:2-14; Luke 14:16-24.***
- This is where most people struggle with the doctrine of election, reasoning that God can’t legitimately offer salvation to those who aren’t elect and can’t respond.
- To the elect, God’s call draws them to Christ. To the non-elect, it confirms them in their rejection. God’s Word will never return void--it will always accomplish its intended purposes (i.e., to confirm either faith or unbelief).

The Inward Call is God’s supernatural act in which He ushers the elect sinners into salvation.

- ***Acts 2:39*** - Peter said to his Day of Pentecost audience, “The promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, ***as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.***”
- ***Gal. 1:15-16*** - Paul said of himself, “He who had set me apart, even from my mother’s womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me.”

d. *The Outward Call can be rejected and resisted by those who hear it:*

- ***Acts 7:51*** - Stephen rebuked his Jewish audience, saying, “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.”
- ***Matt. 22:37*** - Jesus said, “O 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.***”

The Inward Call is irresistible and immutable. It is always effectual in bringing the elect sinners to Christ:

- ***Rom. 8:28-30*** - **ALL** whom He calls will be justified and glorified.

e. ***The Outward Call is based on the Creator-creature relationship.***

- All sinners are commanded to repent and believe the Gospel because God created them and it is the duty of all men to worship their Creator:
- ***Rom. 1:18-20; see also vv. 21-32*** - “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

The Inward Call is based on the redemptive work of God. Those chosen by the Father and purchased by the Son will be called into eternal salvation.

- ***Jude 1*** - “Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those *who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ.*”
- ***Heb. 9:15*** - “For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, *those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*”
- Note the example of Israel in ***Ezek. 36:16-32***:

“Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity. Therefore, I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land, because they had defiled it with their idols.

“Also I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the lands. According to their ways and their deeds I judged them. When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, ‘These are the people of the Lord; yet they have come out of His land.’ But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

“Therefore, say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God, ‘It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations,

which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,' declares the Lord God, 'when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

“Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, that you may not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations. I am not doing this for your sake,' declares the Lord God, 'let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!’”

f. *Man is responsible for refusing the Outward Call:*

Matt. 23:37 - “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and 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*” (*Jesus didn't say “Too bad you weren't among God's chosen.”*).

C. THE DISAGREEMENT

Doesn't God desire that everyone be saved? And doesn't that presuppose that everyone has the ability to respond to the gospel?

- 1. We've already discussed man's inability to respond to God, so whatever view we adopt regarding man's role in salvation, we mustn't contradict the clear teaching of Scripture that he is utterly incapable of responding to God apart from some measure of divine assistance.***
- 2. Yes, Scripture teaches that it is God's will for all to be saved:***

1 Tim. 2:1-4 - “I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ***who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.***”

2 Pet. 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.**”

3. **Scripture speaks of God’s will in three ways:**

a. God’s Sovereign, efficacious will

1) Explanation

All that God decrees will come about. Nothing can stand against His sovereign, efficacious will:

2) Reference

Isa. 46:8-11 - “Remember this, and be assured; recall it to mind, you transgressors. 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, 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.’”

3) Example

By his will He created the heavens and earth. The light could not refuse to shine.

b. God’s Preceptive will (His commands)

1) Examples

- **Eph. 5:17** - “Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”
- **Thess. 5:17-18** - “Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

2) Explanation

We can go against his preceptive will by sinning against his commandments. But when we do, we must pay the consequences.

c. That which delights Him (brings Him pleasure)

Example: God has no delight in the death of the wicked. He punishes their sin because it is good to punish evil, but He finds no joy in it.

4. *Applying the tests:*

- a. God's sovereign, efficacious will can't apply to 1 Tim. 2:1-4 or 2 Pet. 3:9, otherwise everyone would be saved. None would perish.
- b. God's preceptive will can't apply to 1 Tim. 2:1-4 or 2 Pet. 3:9, because that wouldn't make sense. That means God would not allow anyone to perish. Therefore it would be illegal to perish, and He would have to punish people for perishing against His will.
- c. Only the third sense (God's preceptive will) is consistent with the totality of Scripture. It displeases God for people to perish, but they perish because they reject Christ.

5. *Two alternative views:*

- a. That Paul refers to classes of men
 - **Tim. 2:1-4** - "I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, *who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*"
 - Note that "all men" can't refer to every single human being. It would be impossible to pray for all men in that sense. The context qualifies "all men" by listing kings and those in authority (i.e., all classes of men). He goes on to mention Gentiles also (v. 7).
 - That could explain **Titus 2:11-12** as well:

"The grace of God has appeared, *bringing salvation to all men*, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age."
- b. That Peter refers to all the elect
 - **2 Pet. 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.*"
 - Note that the statement is made to believers about believers.
 - The same is true of **Titus 2:11-12** - "The grace of God has appeared, *bringing salvation to all men*, instructing **US** [all the elect] to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age."

D. THE DIRECTIVE

1. *All who are called by God should continually evidence that calling in their behavior!*
2. *Eph. 4:1-6* - "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to **walk in a manner worthy of the calling** with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also **you were called in one hope of your calling**; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

IV. JUSTIFICATION

A. THE DILEMMA

How can a holy God receive unholy, sinful people?

B. THE DECLARATIONS

1. *God has declared that we must be righteous to be acceptable in His sight.*
2. *Beyond that, we must be as righteous as Christ: perfectly righteous.*

C. THE DECEPTIONS

1. *Satan has convinced many that they can be accepted by God if their good deeds outweigh their bad, or if they are better than others on a relative scale.*
 - a. However, God's standard of righteousness is absolute, not relative.
 - b. Examples:
 - *Rom. 3:19-20* - "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; *because by the works of the Law NO flesh will be justified in His sight*; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."
 - *Gal. 3:10-13, 21-25* - "As many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them.'

"Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith.' However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them.'

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.’

“Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impair life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

“But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

- **James 2:10-11** - Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘do not commit murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.”

2. ***Satan has convinced others that they can be accepted by God if they simply redefine God and His requirements.***

- a. Some mistakenly reason that because God is a God of love, He would never condemn them.
- b. Illustration from Unity School of Christianity:

Recently I read an article stating that the men who wrote the New Testament weren't prepared for Jesus as a loving God, so they fashioned Him in the image of the Old Testament God of justice. Jesus condemned no one, they claim. The true God, they say, is the God of the parable of the Prodigal son: a God of love and forgiveness.

But the Jesus who taught that parable is the same Jesus who spoke of judgment and punishment for unbelievers. You can't just pick and choose what you want to believe unless the text can be shown to be corrupt.

3. ***Only God can justify, and He does so on His terms: salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.***

Rom. 3:23-24 - “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

D. THE DEFINITION

1. ***Justification is a legal sentence or declaration issued by God in which He pronounces the repentant sinner free from guilt and acceptable in His sight. He declares that sinner to have met all the requirements of His holy law and to possess a perfect righteousness.***
2. ***J. I. Packer explains:***

“The biblical meaning of ‘justify’ . . . is to pronounce, accept, and treat as just, i.e., as, on the one hand, not penally liable, and on the other, entitled to all the privileges due to those who have kept the law. It is thus a forensic term, denoting a judicial act of administering the law--in this case, by declaring a verdict of acquittal, and so excluding all possibility of condemnation. Justification thus settles the legal status of the person justified” (*Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, p. 304).
3. ***The Gospel teaches that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is the basis for our justification. By His life, death, and resurrection Christ Jesus accomplished all that was necessary for our complete justification (Rom. 5:8ff).***
4. ***A person can either spend eternity attempting (in effect) to meet the demands of God’s law on his own (which he can never do), or he can trust in Christ, who was the perfect law keeper.***
 - ***Gal. 3:13*** - “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.’”
 - ***2 Cor. 5:21*** - “[God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

E. THE DEPOSIT

The believer’s justification is based on ***three great transactions*** rooted in the historical redemptive work of Christ.

1. ***Christ’s righteousness was imputed (credited or deposited) to our account.*** God accepted us as righteous by virtue of the substitutionary obedience of Christ.

Rom. 5:18 - “As through one transgression [of Adam] there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness [of Christ] there resulted justification of life to all men.”
2. ***Our sin and guilt was imputed to Christ’s account and He bore the curse of the Law in our place.***

2 Cor. 5:21 - “[God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

3. ***By resurrecting Christ from the grave, God demonstrated that He accepted Christ's obedience. Thus Christ's resurrection is viewed by the apostle as being foundational to our justification.***

Rom. 4:25 - “[Christ] was delivered up because of [on account of] our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.” *His work was done!*

F. THE DISAGREEMENTS

1. Regarding License:

- a. At this point many raise an objection: If you proclaim justification by faith alone (without works), you will encourage spiritual and moral laxity and will give people license to sin.
- 1) That was the view of the Judiazers of Paul's day and of many modern-day legalists as well. They say we must have law and strict parameters if we're to keep Christians in check and to maintain godliness.
 - 2) Paul addresses that error in Romans 6:1-2: “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”
- b. ***Key Principle: Justification is inextricably linked to sanctification (holiness)!***

One of the basic principles of the Christian life is that *position determines practice*. Therefore if we are truly justified, it will be evidenced by our good works.

- c. ***John Murray correctly states:***

“It is an old and time-worn objection that this doctrine ministers to license and looseness. Only those who know not the power of the gospel will plead such misconception.

“Justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. Justification is not all that is embraced in the gospel of redeeming grace. Christ is a complete Saviour and it is not justification alone that the believing sinner possesses in Him. And faith is not the only response in the heart of him who has entrusted himself to Christ for salvation.

“Faith alone justifies but a justified person with faith alone would be a monstrosity which never exists in the kingdom of grace. Faith works itself out through love (cf. Gal. 5:6). And faith without works is dead (cf. James 2:17-20). It is living faith that justifies and living faith unites to Christ both in the virtue of His death and in the power of his resurrection. No one has entrusted himself to Christ for deliverance from the guilt of sin who has not also entrusted

himself to him for deliverance from the power of sin” (*Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p. 131).

d. ***Peter Toon adds:***

“God’s justification of the sinner must lead to ethical, internal sanctification; but justification can never be based on man’s ethical attainments. God’s justification must lead to righteousness of life, but such righteousness of life is never the basis for God’s justification. The only ground for our justification before God is what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in death and resurrection; he, and he alone, is our righteousness.

“Likewise, the only basis of our sanctification before God and within us is the saving work of Christ, who is our holiness. Our sanctification in Christ before God must lead to a righteous life, but right deeds and right relationships can never be used for our sanctification before the Father. It is clear that the only source of our justification and sanctification is God--Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (*Justification and Sanctification*, Crossway Books, 1983, p. 42).

e. *Paul placed works in its proper order. Saving faith justifies and then the justified sinner produces works in his life. Faith-then-works is the proper order.*

Examples:

- ***Eph. 2:8-10*** - “By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”
- ***Titus 2:14*** - “Our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus . . . gave Himself up for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”
- ***Titus 3:8*** - “This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.”

2. ***Regarding Paul vs. James***

- a. A seeming contradiction arises between Paul and James when we mistakenly confuse Paul’s teaching on faith with James’ teaching on works as an evidence of true faith. Paul and James approach the same doctrine from different angles, but they both teach that a justified sinner will evidence his salvation by living a life of good works.

James was dealing with people who professed to be justified but whose lives denied their claims: they were hearers and not doers of

the Word (1:22), they did not bridle their tongue (1:26), they favored the rich and ignored the poor (2:1-6), they did not have compassion on their brethren (2:16), they wanted to be leaders (3:1), they cursed men (3:9), their hearts were full of envy and strife (3:14), they were given over to lustful fighting (4:1-3), they befriended the world (4:4), they spoke evil of one another (4:11), and they were not patient but held grudges against one another (5:8-9).

In light of all that, is it any wonder that James casts doubt on their conversion and requires evidence to make their profession credible? Paul did the same thing with the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 13:5, and Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of mine" (John. 8:31).

- b. The following comparison may help to show that James and Paul do not contradict each other.
- 1) Paul deals with justification "before God" (Rom. 4:1-2); James deals with justification before men (2:14, 18, 24).
 - 2) Paul speaks of faith because God alone can see faith in the heart; James speaks of a living faith which produces works in the outward life of a man, which can be seen and examined by other men (2:14, 17-20).
 - 3) Paul draws his illustration from Gen. 15:6, wherein the conversion of Abraham is recorded. He refers to Abraham's justification by faith alone. Thus he is dealing with Abraham's salvation. James draws his illustration from Gen. 22:1-19, where, after being a believer for many years, Abraham is asked to give evidence to everyone of his love for and faith in God. James refers to Abraham after he was justified by faith, and emphasizes the results of his salvation (sanctification).
 - 4) Paul's key phrase is "before God." James' key phrase is "show me" (1:18). Faith cannot be seen except by good works.

G. THE DELINEATION

Here are the benefits of justification as given in Romans 5:1-11

1. *Peace with God - v. 1*
2. *Standing in grace - v. 2*
3. *Hope of glory - v. 2*
4. *Victory through trials - vv. 2-4*
5. *God's love w/in us - v. 5*
6. *Deliverance from God's wrath - v. 9*
7. *Reconciliation w/ God - v. 10*
8. *Joy in God - v. 11*

V. GLORIFICATION

A. THE NATURE OF GLORIFICATION

1. It is the final step of salvation

“Glorification is the final step in the process of salvation; it involves completion of sanctification and removal of spiritual defects” (Millard Erickson, *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, p. 64).

2. It is perfect conformity to the image of Christ.

3. It is an instantaneous change

“The instantaneous change that will take place for the whole company of the redeemed when Christ will come again the second time without sin unto salvation and will descend from heaven with the shout of triumph over the last enemy” (John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p. 176).

4. It is synonymous with immortality

The terms are synonymous when immortality is rightly understood as encompassing all the final rewards of the righteous, not merely the continued existence of both believers and unbelievers.

B. THE LIMITATION OF GLORIFICATION

It is for believers only:

“The finally impenitent will be resurrected, but this is a . . . resurrection . . . to damnation--the ‘second death’ (Rev. 2:11). Scripture does not refer to this . . . resurrection as either immortality or glorification” (J. K. Grider, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 443).

C. THE TIME OF GLORIFICATION

1. It is a time yet future

“[Glorification] refers especially to the time when, at the parousia, those who died in Christ and the living believers will be given the resurrection of the body--a final and full ‘redemption of our body’ (Rom. 8:23), preparatory for and suited to the final state of the Christian believer” (J. K. Grider, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 442).

2. It is a time guaranteed in the past

a. Paul uses the past tense

Our calling and justification have already occurred. Our glorification is yet future, yet Paul speaks of it in the past tense (“*glorified*”).

b. The prophetic past

Paul's use of the past tense in Romans 8:29-30 *perhaps imitates the Hebrew use of the "prophetic past,"* by which a predicted event is marked out as so certain of fulfillment that it is described as though it had already taken place (Bruce, *Tyndale Bible Commentaries: Romans*, p. 179).

c. Another example

Note Jude 14 - "Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord *came* with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all.'" *Fulfillment of that prophecy is yet future, but Jude spoke of it in the past tense.* (see also most of Isaiah 53).

d. A present aspect

1) Although our glorification culminates in the future, there is a present element (as with salvation):

2 Cor. 3:18 - "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

2) Paul jumps from justification to glorification with no mention of sanctification. But justification and glorification *imply* sanctification.

3) Sanctification is glorification begun; glorification is sanctification completed.

e. Summary

The fullness of our glorification has not yet occurred, but is an absolute certainty in the mind and plan of God, and its roots are evident in our progressive sanctification.

D. SOME BENEFITS OF GLORIFICATION

1. It will bring the final vindication of believers

Believers are forgiven and justified at the moment of their salvation, but *the final great judgment will reveal those who have true faith in Jesus Christ.* What God did at their initial justification will be confirmed in that final judgment (**Rom. 5:9-11**).

2. It will bring the spiritual perfection of believers

Glorification also means the perfecting of the believer's moral and spiritual character. Growth in Christlikeness, begun in regeneration and continued in sanctification, will be completed in glorification. This truth is explained

in the adjectives Scripture uses to describe the Christian's future flawlessness. For example:

- **Col. 1:22** - "He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him *holy and blameless and beyond reproach.*"
- **Eph. 5:27** - "That He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, *having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.*"
- **1 John 3:2** - "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, *we shall be like Him*, because we shall see Him just as He is."

3. It will bring the perfect unity of believers

Jesus prayed that His disciples would be one even as He and the Father were one (**John 17:22-23**). That unity will be complete when believers are glorified.

4. It will bring the fullness of knowledge

Scripture contrasts the believer's present imperfect knowledge with the perfect understanding which is to come (**1 Cor. 13:9-10**). Now it is partial or fragmentary, but in glorification it will be complete.

1 Cor. 13:12 - "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known."

5. It will bring the resurrection body

- a. The glorification of the believer is linked with his death and passage from this world into the presence of God.
- b. The Christian's present corruptible body is affected and infected by sin, which has been transferred by Adam to the whole human race. That sin soils the spirit and kills the body, but that will change with the resurrection, when the believer's mortal or perishable body will be replaced by an immortal or undying body (**1 Cor. 15:52-54**). Death will no longer be possible.
- c. Paul did not describe in detail the nature of that body, but apparently it is not the same identical body that is buried. There is a point of contact and continuity with that body, but there is also a metamorphosis. In Paul's imagery it is like the seed that is sown and the new plant that arises from it (vv. 36-37).
- d. The Christian's new body will be similar to Christ's body following His ascension.

6. ***It will bring the full realization of each believer's eternal inheritance***

a. In 1 Peter 1:3-5 Peter speaks of the believer's eternal inheritance:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, *to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away*, reserved in heaven for you who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

b. That eternal inheritance is each Christian's spiritual legacy

“Inheritance” in v. 4 describes possessions that are passed down from generation to generation--a legacy one receives because he or she is a family member.

Peter's Jewish readers would recall the promises of God to their forefathers, and be reminded that God's promises never fail.

According to Scripture, the believer's inheritance includes *present as well as future blessings*, all of which will culminate in eternity future when all the promises of God are fulfilled.

c. The believer's inheritance is multi-faceted

1) The Christian inherits God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said, “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’” (***Matt. 25:34***).

2) Every believer is a joint heir with Christ and will reign with Him in His glory.

- ***Rom. 8:16-17*** - “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, *heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ*, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him” (see also Titus 3:7 & James 2:5).

- ***Rev. 20:6*** - “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”

- Jesus told His disciples they would rule with Him in His coming kingdom (***Matt. 19:28***). Paul extends that to every believer in 2 Timothy 2:12.

2 Tim. 2:12 - "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him."

3) We will share Christ's glory

Rom. 8:16-17 - "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him *in order that we may also be glorified with Him.*"

7. It will bring the renewal of the creation

- a. Not only will believers be delivered from the bondage of corruption, creation itself will also be delivered.
- b. The Bible speaks of the creation groaning in travail and awaiting its deliverance:

"The anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility . . . in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its corruption into the freedom of the glory [or glorification] of the children of God" (**Rom. 8:19-21**).

8. Summary

Glorification does not mean that we will be divine like God; we will always be humans. But we will be morally and spiritually without blemish, as He is. Our bodies will be like that of the ascended Christ, we will live in a transformed environment, and we will share in the power and honor of Christ's reign. What a glorious prospect!

E. THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATION OF GLORIFICATION

Our future glorification should purify our present behavior.

1 John 3:2-3 - "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. *And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*"

ELECTION SERIES QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What practical difference should the doctrine of election make in a believer's life?

Note: Keep in mind that election (predestination) is just one link in the chain of redemption. We must consider the entire chain if we are to appreciate the importance of its individual links.

Response:

An understanding of election should bring:

- a. Humility
- b. Joy/Praise
- c. Confidence
- d. Assurance
- e. Clarification of the gospel - God's part & ours
- f. Boldness in witnessing - for the elect's sake
- g. Integrity (no coercion of unbelievers)
- h. A sharper philosophy of ministry

J. I. Packer writes, "Let us work this out. If we regarded it as our job, not simply to present Christ, but actually to produce converts--to evangelize, not only faithfully, but also successfully--our approach to evangelism would become pragmatic and calculating.

"We should conclude that our basic equipment, both for personal dealing and for public preaching, must be twofold. We must have, not merely a clear grasp of the meaning and application of the gospel, but also an irresistible technique for inducing a response. We should, therefore, make it our business to try and develop such a technique. And we should evaluate all evangelism, our own and other people's, by the criterion, not only of the message preached, but also of visible results.

"If our own efforts were not bearing fruit, we should conclude that our technique still needed improving. If they were bearing fruit, we should conclude that this justified the technique we had been using. We should regard evangelism as an activity involving a battle of wills between ourselves and those to whom we go, a battle in which victory depends on our firing off a heavy enough barrage of calculated effects.

"Thus our philosophy of evangelism would become terrifyingly similar to the philosophy of brainwashing. And we would no longer be able to argue, when such a similarity is asserted to be a fact, that this is not a proper conception of evangelism. For it *would* be a proper conception of evangelism, if the production of converts was really our responsibility.

"This shows us the danger of forgetting the practical implications of God's sovereignty. It is right to recognize our responsibility to engage in aggressive evangelism. It is right to desire the conversion of unbelievers. It is right to want one's presentation of the gospel to be as clear and forcible as possible. . . . It is not right when we regard ourselves as responsible for securing converts, and look to our own enterprise and techniques to accomplish what only God can accomplish" (*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, pp. 27-29).

2. Often we use Revelation 3:20 as part of a gospel presentation; is that taking Scripture out of context?

- a. Technically yes, although many (perhaps most) commentators see this verse as having a general application to unbelievers.
- b. Robert Mounce (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, pp. 128-130) comments:

“Verse 20 is often quoted as an invitation and promise to the person outside the community of faith. That it can be pressed into the service of evangelism in this way seems evident. Compared with other world religions, the seeking God of the Judaeo-Christian heritage is perhaps its major uniqueness. In the context of the Laodicean letter, however, it is self-deluded members of the church who are being addressed. To the *church* Christ says, ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock.’ In their blind self-sufficiency they had, as it were, excommunicated the risen Lord from their congregation. In an act of unbelievable condescension he requests permission to enter and re-establish fellowship. . . .

“The invitation is addressed to each individual in the congregation: ‘if any man’ hear and open. The response of Christ to the opened door is that he enters and joins in table fellowship. In Oriental lands the sharing of a common meal indicated a strong bond of affection and companionship. As such it became a common symbol of the intimacy to be enjoyed in the coming messianic kingdom. . . . In Luke 22:30 Jesus tells his disciples that they are to eat and drink at his table in the kingdom. . . . All present fellowship with God is a foretaste of eternal [happiness and bliss].”

- c. My point in referring to that verse earlier in this study was to underscore the impossibility of one who is dead in sin opening the door to allow Christ in. Only those to whom He grants faith can do that.

3. ***In Romans 8:28, does “called according to His purpose” mean:***

- a. Being one of those predestined to salvation or
- b. In His will (at the time that whatever is happening is to work together for good)?

Response:

- a. It refers to those ***predestined to salvation.***
- b. ***Note the context*** - vv. 18ff
 - We still aren’t fully glorified
 - We long for our full salvation
 - We are weak, don’t know how to pray as we should
 - But the Spirit intercedes for us according to God’s will
 - His intercession is worked out as God superintends every event of our lives
 - Nothing can separate us from His redemptive purpose
- b. Note the parallel thought in Genesis 50:20 and Philippians 1:6
 - Gen. 50:19-20 - “Joseph said to [his brothers], “Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place? And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”
 - Phil. 1:6 - “I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

4. *I sometimes view God's relationship to people like my own relationship to my children (love them, discipline them, and want the best for them). It is inconceivable to me that I would allow one of my children to perish and be separated from me forever if it were in my power to stop it. How then can God do that?*

Response:

- a. The point of Romans 8:28-20 is that God will *never* allow any of His children to perish or be separated from Him. *Never!* So to that degree the analogy is consistent. In fact, God cares far more for His children than we ever could for ours, because His love is perfect and His motive is always pure (cf. Heb. 12:5-11).
- b. However, the assumption in this question is that all human beings are in some sense children of God, which is not the case, except by creation.

- 1) **Note:** we must be careful never to build our theology on an analogy unless the analogy is biblically consistent (e.g., throwing a lifeline to a drowning person = a picture of the salvation offer).
- 2) Contrast children of God with Children of the Devil as described in these passages:

- **John 1:12-13** - "As many as received [Christ], to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- **John 8:41-47** - Jesus said to some Jewish antagonists, "You are doing the deeds of your father.' They said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.' Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

"Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

"Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

- **Rom. 9:8** - "It is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants."
- **1 John 3:1, 10** - "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. . . . By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious:

anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”

- **Eph. 2:3** - “Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”

c. I think the intent of the question was to ask how God could allow some of His *creatures* (not “children”) to perish. Or, stated another way, how is it that He grants faith to some but not all.

Note Romans 9:19-26. The perspective in Paul’s mind (and the Holy Spirit’s) is not *why God didn’t elect all, but why He bothered to elect any!*

d. Summary:

- 1) When speaking of election, don’t try to understand it via the analogy of a family. Scripture doesn’t permit that.
- 2) **Important Note:** My purpose here isn’t merely to convince you of one particular position. The broader issue is to encourage you to think biblically, and never be content with superficiality or error simply because you haven’t taken time to study the issue. Also, be sure to take into consideration all biblical data, even if you don’t fully understand it or feel comfortable with it.

5. ***In light of what you’ve taught on election, how are we to understand these verses:***

- **Titus 2:11** (*Salvation has appeared to all men*)
- **1 Tim. 2:4** (*God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*)
- **2 Pet. 3:9** (*God is not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance*)

Response: Please see pages 21-23 of this study for my responses.