

# The Sovereignty of God In Salvation

## Gods' Sovereignty In Salvation

In a discussion about God's Sovereignty in regard to salvation several things must be considered. This matter includes not only the nature of God, but also the nature of man. Since mankind has fallen into sin, it is necessary for Him to be saved, thus the doctrine of Salvation. What follows then is a discussion of how God's Eternal purpose in Christ to redeem His people from their sins comes about. How is it that redemption takes place, and what are the issues involved as they are described in the Bible. It must be understood that God is not only Sovereign in Creation and in Providence, but also in the application of redemption. All of these things happened according to God's purpose in Christ.

**Matthew 1:21** - "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is **He who will save His people from their sins.** NASB

**2 Timothy 1:9-10** - 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, 10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, NASB

It is important to understand that the Bible has much to say about this doctrine of Salvation. In order to understand biblical teaching, and because of much false teaching and controversy through the years of Church history, these matters have been broken down into categories which help us to clarify the issues. These include but are not limited to.....

- God's Nature
- Man's Nature
- The Nature of Salvation
- The Nature and extent of the Atonement(Christ's physical death)

These categories exist because of the way the Bible presents the different teachings about salvation.

## The Doctrine of Salvation in Church History

There have been many and varied controversies down through the history of the church, not only with the doctrines of salvation, but with all doctrines. This is because of the obvious war against the truth being waged by the enemy of the Church, even Satan himself. This happens chiefly through the diabolical efforts of false teachers, who either, knowingly or ignorantly, distort and pervert the truth.

**2 Peter 2:1-2** - 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just **as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies**, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; NASB

These false teachers take advantage of immature Christians with little knowledge of the Bible. The **Bible plainly declares** that those who are led away by false teachers are *"children"* and *"barely escaping those who live in error."* It is incumbent then and therefore for Christians not to be led astray from the truth by false teachers and false doctrines, but rather very discerning about it, so as to grow up in their salvation and in the knowledge of God and our precious salvation in Christ.

**2 Peter 2:18-19** - 18 For speaking out arrogant words of vanity **they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, 19 promising them freedom** while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. NASB

**Ephesians 4:14-15** - 14 As a result, **we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;** 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, NASB

However, one great benefit of the controversies caused by false teachers is that it helps the Church to clarify the truth and to closely examine biblical teaching. In examining the doctrine of Salvation in Church history, a brief overview of the major controversies will help us to clearly see the matters at stake, so we can examine the Bible closely to understand its clear teaching.

### **Pelagius and Augustine**

One of the first major controversies on the doctrine of salvation was one introduced by a man named Pelagius. Pelagius was born in England in 354 A.D. and was an ascetic monk there. He later became a popular teacher in the church in Rome. Pelagius was the author of many false teachings summarized below.....

- He denied Original Sin –
  - Mind, will, emotions were not corrupted by the Fall
- Man had natural ability to obey God's commands
  - Man's will is not in bondage to sin
  - Man could attain Heaven by good works(salvation was by Law or Gospel)
- Divine Grace is not necessary for Salvation
- Sinless Perfection could be attained
- Prescient View of Predestination
- Christians can lose salvation

The chief antagonist of the Pelagian doctrines was Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo. Augustine opposed Pelagianism, teaching that man's nature is corrupted by the Fall, including all of Adam's progeny, and that man's will is in bondage to sin, (being dead in transgressions and sin), and that Divine Grace in Regeneration was necessary in Salvation. Augustine taught that Salvation was totally God's work and that He was due the Glory for it. The chart below pictures the contrast of the two teachings.

Doctrine	Pelagianism	Augustianism
Original Sin	Denied	Affirmed
Natural Will	Ability to obey perfectly	Inability
Grace	Not Necessary	Absolutely necessary
Sinless Perfection	Can be attained	Cannot be attained

Pelagianism became a doctrinal system held by many in the early church. But after close scrutiny in many church councils, it was condemned in 416 and 418 at the **Councils of Carthage**, which assembled to take action concerning the errors of Caelestius, a disciple of Pelagius. It denounced the Pelagian doctrines of human nature, original sin; grace and perfectibility, and fully approved the contrary views of Augustine. Further, the Semi-Pelagian teaching was also condemned as heresy in the second Council of Orange in 529 A.D. **The Council of Orange** dealt with the Semi-Pelagian doctrine that the human race, though fallen and possessed of a sinful nature, is still "good" enough to able to lay hold of the grace of God through an act of unredeemed human will. The Council held to Augustine's view and repudiated Pelagius. Pelagianism as a structured heretical movement ceased to exist after the 6th century but its essential ideas continue to cause disputes and controversies throughout the history of the Church and even today.

## Luther and Erasmus

The German Reformer Martin Luther had a profound affect on the Church. His efforts, along with those of Calvin, Zwingli and others, literally spawned the Protestant Reformation. Of course the main issue at stake with Martin Luther had to do with salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. However, during his ministry he dealt with many doctrinal issues, bringing much needed reform to almost every area of theology. As Luther was in the course of his ministry, a sharp disagreement arose between himself and a Roman Catholic teacher by the name of Erasmus. This disagreement focused sharply on the doctrines of man's nature and human freewill. On September 1, 1524, Erasmus published his treatise *On the Freedom of the Will*. In December of 1525, Luther responded with *The Bondage of the Will*. Luther took the position defined by *Augustinian* theology which had been the historic position of the church officially for some 1000 years. This position of course was established at the second Council of Orange in 529 A.D., but had always been the view of the Church, being clearly defined in the Bible. Erasmus took a position that was *Semi-Pelagian* in nature, maintaining that man morally able to respond to the gospel without the need for Divine Grace.

Erasmus	Luther
Semi-Pelagian	Augustinian
<b><u>Synergistic</u></b> Salvation is accomplished as man and God cooperate. Divine Grace and the human will work together for salvation to happen.	<b><u>Monergistic</u></b> Salvation is wholly the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Mankind possesses no inclination toward the Gospel in his natural state and needs Divine Grace to be enabled to believe.

Whenever a discussion of Human Freewill comes into focus, the basic issue revolves around man's nature. Several questions arise in this matter because of the clear teaching of Scripture and the sinful desire of mankind for Autonomy, his desire to be subject or accountable to no one but himself. Some of these questions are.....

- Is man's will totally free, or somehow limited in his ability to make free choice?
- Was mankind created morally able to do good and evil, and how was this affected by the Fall?
- Can mankind respond to the Gospel on his own without the need for Divine Grace or enablement?
- What role does freewill play in Predestination?
- Once man/woman are saved or regenerated, are they now able to good and evil?

The chart below shows discussions about man's nature and its freedom in different states.

State of man in history	Morally Able to do		Inclined by Nature to	
	GOOD	EVIL	GOOD	EVIL
Created	yes	yes	no	no
Fallen	no	yes	no	yes
Redeemed	yes	yes	yes	no
Glorified	yes	no	yes	no

Again the controversy over the doctrines of salvation rages on in the Church some 500 years later. These same issues and doctrines are closely related to the arguments between Calvinism and Arminianism. We will deal with these issues and questions with a detailed biblical analysis below.

## Calvinism and Arminianism

As with Luther, the French Reformer John Calvin had a massive impact on the Church. His ministry was based in Geneva, Switzerland during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Calvin was born in 1509 and lived until 1564. He is the author of his *“Institutes of the Christian Religion,”* known as one of the foremost theological works in Church History. In 1559 he founded the Geneva Academy, a Bible School which emphasized the principle of Sola Scriptura and placed a strong focus on the Authority of Scripture. Calvin placed a strong emphasis on God being the center focus of all reality, and taught that all teaching and preaching should be centered in and defined by the nature of God. He is the father of the Reformed Faith and many attribute the subsequent development of Presbyterianism to the efforts of John Calvin.

The controversy between Arminianism and Calvinism arose in Holland in the early 1600’s. The founder of the Arminian party was Jacob Arminius (1560-1609). He studied under the strict Calvinist Theodore Beza at Geneva and became a professor of theology at the University of Leyden in the Netherlands in 1603.

Gradually Arminius came to reject certain Calvinist teachings. The controversy spread all over Holland, where the Reformed Church was the overwhelming majority. The Arminians drew up their creed in Five Articles, and laid them before the state authorities of Holland in 1610 under the name Remonstrance, signed by forty-six ministers. The Calvinists responded with a Counter-Remonstrance. But the official Calvinistic response came from the Synod of Dort which was held to consider the Five Articles from November 13, 1618 to May 9, 1619. There were eighty-four members and eighteen secular commissioners. The Synod wrote what has come to be known as the Canons of Dort. These are still part of the church confession of the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church. They state the Five Points of Calvinism in response to the Five Articles of the Arminian Remonstrants. So the so-called Five Points were not chosen by the Calvinists as a summary of their teaching. They emerged as a response to the Arminians who chose these five points to oppose. The chart below shows the Five Points displayed in the helpful acronym **TULIP**. This **TULIP** is an easy way to break down the main doctrines of Salvation that relate to Sovereign Grace.

The Five Points of Calvinism <i>The Five Responses to the Remonstrance at Dort</i>				
T	U	L	I	P
Total Depravity	Unconditional Election	Limited Atonement	Irresistible Grace	Perseverance of the Saints

## **Calvin, Arminius, or the Bible?**

Who is Calvin? What is Arminius? They are simply men who have labored to try and serve the church as teachers. It is a matter of utmost importance that we view the Word of God as God’s own self-revelation to us His people and understand the importance of deriving our understanding of truth from Scripture, with a reliance upon the Holy Spirit for true spiritual discernment. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that however helpful men may be in helping to clarify doctrinal issues, it is the Word of God which is true and only by the Holy Spirit can it be properly understood. It is important that we not follow men, but our allegiance focus on Christ.

**1 Corinthians 1:12-13** - 12 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." 13 **Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he?** Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? NASB

### **Calvinist or Arminian?**

Another problem that arises in this type of discussion is one of labels such as “*Calvinist*” or “*Arminian*.” This issue is that many times one may be typified by the label, such as “*Arminian*”, but the person applying the label does not really know the true meaning of the term, nor do they understand the doctrinal issues at stake. In discussion, a person may be labeled a “*Calvinist*”, yet those giving the label and the one being labeled have different views of meaning of the term “Calvinist.” This can create tremendous confusion when trying to discuss biblical doctrine and understand God’s Holy truth as many of these issues can be quite controversial and emotionally charged. An even greater problem is one of **ignorance of Holy Scripture**. One might endeavor to discuss these matters at length, but not really have a good grasp on the issue in the Bible, not having looked closely at all of the Bible references, in their context, to gain a proper understanding of the issue at hand. When this happens, we are left to trying to grasp supernatural Divine realities with our natural earthly understanding, and the matter becomes one of human appraisal of wisdom and truth, instead of Divine revelation of heavenly Light. The **Scripture plainly declares** that such matters are grasped only by spiritual discernment, not by mere human powers of reason and logic.

**1 Corinthians 2:11-14** - 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so **the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.** 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, **that we might know the things freely given to us by God,** 13 which things we also speak, not in words **taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.** 14 But 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.** NASB

Therefore it is important on these matters to rely upon God for insight into these high and Holy things. Anyone who has looked closely at the matters of the doctrine of salvation knows the difficulty in trying to grasp the words of Scripture on some of the finer details of Sovereign Grace.

### **Why is this important? What is at stake?**

Consider that this controversy has arisen several times over the course of Church history as we have pointed out. Each time the debate intensifies as the matters are defined more clearly and we are exposed more comprehensively to the words of Holy Scripture. Now if these issues continue to arise and create controversy over biblical teaching, and the Church convenes with large councils of Bible scholars to make confessions of orthodoxy and pronounce judgments against heresy, then this alone may speak to us about the serious nature of the matters at hand. It is imperative that we guard the truth of God’s Word, especially knowing the schemes of Satan and false teachers, working diligently to pervert the teaching of Scripture and assault the truth of God’s Word with “*destructive heresies.*”(Gen 3:1-4, 2 Pet 2:1) Moreover, we are exhorted by God in Scripture to “*contend earnestly for the faith,*” and not to succumb to the false teachers who seek to distort the truth.

**Jude 3-4** - 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that **you contend earnestly for the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For **certain persons have crept in unnoticed,** those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, **ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord.** Jesus Christ. NASB

The matters which are at stake in these doctrines of salvation are of grave importance. The heresies which continue to re-emerge again and again in the Church, attack the very heart of the Gospel itself. These heresies are not “*Theological or Christological*”(about God or Christ’s nature), but are *Soteriological*(about Salvation), meaning they focus on the work of Christ and how it relates to mankind. A major problem in the modern Church in regard to this matter, is one of indifference when it comes to the truth of God’s Word. Many Christians would rather not even try to understand these issues because of the difficult nature of grasping matters of



Predestination. I have identified several reasons below which are stated for an indifference to understanding these matters.

- **Controversy** – It is not worth arguing about.
- **Work of Study** – It takes too much work to understand.
- **I am only human and can't grasp God's mysteries** - Too hard to understand.
- **Offense of Sovereign Prerogative** – Some cannot accept the clear Sovereign rights of God presented in the Scripture feeling that the autonomy has been stolen

The problem here is obviously one of indifference, if not a severe lack of honor and respect toward God and His Holy Word. Consider, if God deems these matters of such importance that He speaks volumes about it in Holy Writ, then it is incumbent upon us to **“hear and understand”**, and also to **“take heed”** to the things which God has spoken. Moreover, we are to love the Word of God, for it is God's revelation of Himself to us. Dear reader, what has plagued our hearts so severely that we do not earnestly desire to lay hold of God's awesome and wonderful Word which He has so freely given us? Is it not the great delight of our hearts? Consider the Words of the Psalmist and His relationship to God through Scripture.

**Psalm 119:97-104** - 97 **O how I love Thy law ! It is my meditation all the day.** 98 Thy commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. 99 I have more insight than all my teachers, For Thy testimonies are my meditation. 100 **I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Thy precepts.** 101 I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Thy word. 102 I have not turned aside from Thine ordinances, **For Thou Thyself hast taught me.** 103 **How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!** 104 **From Thy precepts I get understanding;** Therefore I hate every false way. NASB

Dear reader, if God's Holy Word is not worth contending for, then what is? And if we need to study and examine the Word many times to grasp some of its truths, why would we consider that anything less than a Divine privilege? I am concerned that many modern Evangelicals would rather sit in front of the TV eating “bon bon's” and be instructed by the devils in Hollywood, then spend time examining Holy Scripture to mine its precious truths. Should not we also expect the Word to be a mystery from Heaven requiring Divine revelation to grasp? Indeed we should, for it cannot be apprehended by mere human powers of reason and logic. And if we examine Holy Scripture, and there encounter a Sovereign God who has made everything for His own purpose, including ourselves, and He likens us to clay in the hands of a potter, should we not willingly surrender to His Divine molding to shape us into a vessel for His own purpose? Or shall we find ourselves rebelling against the King of Heaven in protest that He has no right over us because we are free to do our own will? Shall the clay protest against the potter about its purpose for existence? This is the very argument of Paul in Romans chapter nine.

**Romans 9:19-21** - 19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" 20 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? 21 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? NASB

### **No Middle Ground**

Now when we come to doctrines in the Bible, one great tool of the enemy is to make an issue unclear so that we cannot discern the truth. This is especially important on the issues related to Predestination. But consider that on any one point of these doctrines, they are either true or not true, indeed that cannot be somewhere in the middle. Notice how with these issues below, they are either one way or the other, but cannot be somewhere in the middle.

- **Total Depravity** – Either man is able to understand and believe the Gospel apart from Divine Grace OR He is unable and must have Divine Grace to be enabled
- **Unconditional Election** – God elects people to salvation conditionally OR unconditionally
- **Eternal Security** – Either a Christian can lose his salvation OR he cannot

## Calvinism and Arminianism Defined

Let us look at the controversy here and it will become clear just what is at stake. God has said volumes about these matters in Scripture and we should therefore pay careful attention to the words of Scripture in regard to these matters. The chart below will bring some clarity as to what matters were being debated by the Remonstrants and the Calvinists at the Synod of Dort in 1619.

Arminianism		Calvinism	
Semi-Pelagian		Augustinian	
<b>Synergistic</b> Salvation is accomplished as man and God cooperate. Divine Grace and the human will work together for salvation to happen.		<b>Monergistic</b> Salvation is wholly the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Mankind possesses no inclination toward the Gospel in his natural state and needs Divine Grace to be enabled to believe.	
<b>Free Will or Human Ability</b> Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does not interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature.	<b>T</b> Total Depravity	<b>Total Inability or Total Depravity</b> Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not--indeed he cannot--choose good over evil in the spiritual realm.	
<b>Conditional Election</b> God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what man would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted solely from man's will.	<b>U</b> Unconditional Election	<b>Unconditional Election</b> God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man.	
<b>Universal Redemption or General Atonement</b> Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe on Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins.	<b>L</b> Limited Atonement	<b>Limited Atonement or Particular Redemption</b> Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners.	
<b>The Holy Spirit Can be Effectually Resisted</b> The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation; He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) precedes and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work.	<b>I</b> Irresistible Grace	<b>Irresistible Grace or Effectual Calling</b> In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected; whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ.	
<b>Falling from Grace</b> Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith, etc. All Arminians have not been agreed on this point; some have held that believers are eternally secure in Christ--that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.	<b>P</b> Perseverance of the Saints	<b>Perseverance of the Saints</b> All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.	

So by examining the controversy, the issues of biblical teaching in regard to Predestination and Salvation become clear as we see the different sides taken in the matter. It becomes clear that there is more at stake than just one or two issues but the nature of Man and of Salvation and saving Grace come into sharp focus.

# The Sovereignty of God

## In Salvation

### The Doctrine of Salvation in the Bible – What does the Bible say?

As we examine these matters in the Bible, it is important to try to use biblical and relevant terms as much as possible in our discussion. This is because the Bible is very clear about defining its terms used to describe things, therefore when we use biblical terms we have biblical definitions which bring meaning to those terms.

#### TULIP is not the best

In seeking to use biblical terms, and terms which describe the issue at hand, it becomes evident that the **TULIP** acronym does not really describe the issues at stake very clearly. Therefore I have chosen other terms to describe the same Five Points which better describe the heart of the issue at hand. These five terms are....

- Natural Ability or Natural Inability
- Prescient Election or Sovereign Election
- Universal Redemption or Particular Redemption/Definite Atonement
- Human Resistance or Effectual Calling
- Falling from Grace or Eternal Security

The chart below presents these terms in contrast for clarity of the issues.

Five Important Biblical Doctrines Related to Predestination in Salvation			
Semi-Pelagian		Augustinian	
<u>Synergistic</u> Salvation is accomplished as man and God cooperate. Divine Grace and the human will work together for salvation to happen.		<u>Monergistic</u> Salvation is wholly the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Mankind possesses no inclination toward the Gospel in his natural state and needs Divine Grace to be enabled to believe.	
Man is naturally able to understand and believe the Gospel apart from Divine enablement.	Natural Ability	Natural Inability	Man is naturally unable to understand and believe the Gospel apart from Divine enablement.
The condition for salvation is faith which man exercises of his own ability. God chooses those who choose Him.	Prescient Election	Sovereign Election	The condition for salvation is the Sovereign electing will of God alone.
Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone.	Universal Redemption	Particular Redemption	Christ did in fact secure the salvation of His Church individually and definitely.
Man's will is free and he can successfully resist the Spirit's call.	Human Resistance	Effectual Calling	The calling of God to the elect does effect salvation infallibly.
Because faith is the necessary condition for Salvation, it can be lost when man discontinues his faith.	Falling from Grace	Eternal Security	The nature of saving faith is eternal and cannot be reversed.

Having now used more relevant and biblical terms about these matters, let us now look to the Bible for clarity on these issues.



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## In Salvation

### Human Ability or Inability – What does the Bible say?

The bible makes it very clear that ***“no one is good, no not one.”*** Jesus said, ***“there is only one who is good, God.”*** It is no secret that from the earliest time in their lives people sin against God. An observant look at young children will tell us this. But the Word of God has confirmed it again and again. People are steeped in sin from birth (Ps 51:5). It is the natural state of mankind, that we are sinners, fallen short of God’s required standard (Rom 3:23, 5:12). Mankind fell into sin and darkness when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and transgressed against the Law of God (Original Sin). Because of this, Mankind’s rebellion corrupted his entire being, body and soul (mind, will, emotions). In fulfillment of God’s Word, they died, both spiritually and physically (the aging process began), they no longer had communion with God, no longer did we naturally understand the things of God or even have a desire to do so. Mankind is therefore described as ***“dead in transgressions and sins”*** (Eph 2:1, Col 2:13), in need of new life to be resurrected from the deadness of sin. ***The truth is, mankind neither pleases God nor seeks after God, and that in his natural state does not even possess the ability to savingly understand the things of God(that is the spiritual matters of the kingdom of God relating to man’s need to be saved and God’s provision to save Him).***

### Natural Human Inability

#### What Does the Bible Say?

**Dead in trespasses and sins** – Eph 2:3, Col 2:13  
**Hostile to God** – Rom 8:7  
**Cannot submit to God’s Law** – Rom 8:7  
**Cannot Please God** – Rom 8:8  
**Cannot understand the things of God** - 1 Cor 2:14, Rom 3:11  
**Cannot accept the Holy Spirit** – John 14:17  
**Cannot see the Kingdom of God** – John 3:3  
**Cannot hear the Words of Christ** – John 8:43  
**Cannot see the Light of the Gospel (Blinded minds)** – 2 Cor 4:4  
**Thinks the Gospel foolishness** – 1 Cor 1:18  
**Does not seek for God** – Rom 3:11  
**Does not fear God** – Rom 3:18  
**Heart is deceitful and desperately wicked** – Jer 17:9  
**Without God given faith our deeds are sinful** – Rom 14:23

Examine the chart above very closely. Pay attention to the biblical words used to describe man’s condition.

### Unable to See, Hear, or Understand

When the Bible speaks of man’s fallen nature, it speaks of man’s inability by using words like, ***“cannot.”*** It is not that man “will not”, but that he/she ***“cannot”*** see or hear or even understand

the Gospel. The Bible plainly declares that *mankind has a natural inability to see, hear, or understand, the things of God.*

Jesus makes it clear that mankind has an INABILITY TO SEE the Kingdom apart from regeneration.

**John 3:3** - 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" NASB

A. unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God – Here Jesus states that unless one becomes “born again”, that is regenerated by God, he “cannot see the Kingdom of God.” The word “*cannot*” speaks of man’s ability, not his willingness.

**2 Corinthians 4:3-4** - 3 And even if **our gospel is veiled**, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has **blinded the minds of the unbelieving**, that they might not **see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ**, who is the image of God. NASB

This is also affirmed by Paul, in the passage above.

A. our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing – Here is a clear biblical statement about those who are not saved and their ability to see the Gospel. Paul clearly says the Gospel is veiled to them. The purpose of a veil is to keep one from seeing. This evil work is attributed to Satan(the god of this world in the next verse).

B. in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ – Again he affirms his statement that the Gospel is veiled stating that their “*minds are blinded.*” This means that they cannot see(blinded) in the minds(understand), a typical biblical idiom to understanding. They cannot see with their minds because they are blinded by Satan. The “*light of the Gospel*” does not enlighten the mind of the unbeliever. Further, it is the Gospel of the “*glory of Christ*” to which they are blinded. They do not see the beauty and treasure of Christ, because they do not realize who He is or their need to be saved because they cannot see these things, they are without understanding apart from grace.

Likewise, in the passage below, Jesus makes it clear that mankind has an INABILITY TO HEAR His Word.

**John 8:43** - 43 "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because **you cannot hear My word.**" NASB

A. you cannot hear my word – Here Jesus makes a clear statement about the ability of the ungodly Pharisees to hear His words. He says they “cannot hear.” The word “*cannot*” speaks of man’s ability, not his willingness. He points out that they “*do not understand*”, because they “*cannot hear.*” This is a theme in the teaching of Jesus. In the passage below He tells His disciples that the reason they understand the Kingdom and others do not is because it only comes by divine enablement, saying they do not know because it has “*not been granted*” to them.

**Matthew 13:10-13** - 10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" 11 And He answered and said to them, "**To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.**" 12 "For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. 13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; **because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.**" NASB

In the passage below, Paul makes it clear that mankind has an INABILITY TO UNDERSTAND.

**1 Corinthians 2:14**- 14 But 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. NAS

A. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him - Here Paul makes it clear that in his natural state(this is in contrast to the spiritual man who has the Spirit, after regeneration, v-12, v-16), mankind “*does not accept the things of God*” because they are “*foolishness*” to him. His understanding is so corrupted that the idea of God, sin, being saved and reconciled are “*foolish*” ideas because his thinking is corrupted.

B. and he **cannot** understand them, because they are spiritually appraised – Here Paul describes why man's thinking is corrupted, it is because he **"cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God."** The word **"cannot"** speaks of man's ability, not his willingness. Although because he is **unable** he is therefore also unwilling, as it states, he **"does not accept."** This is because he does not have the Spirit (given at regeneration) by which he can **"appraise"** spiritual things.

## **Mankind is in rebellion against God and enslaved to sin**

Paul makes it very clear that mankind is in a state of rebellion against God naturally. The Bible plainly declares that mankind is in **REBELLION AGAINST GOD**.

**Romans 3:9-12, 18** - 9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; 10 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.**" 18 "**There is no fear of God before their eyes.**" NAS

A. 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. " 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes – Here Paul describes mankind in several ways in relation to God....

- **None righteous**
- **None who understand**
- **None who seeks for God**
- **All have turned aside**
- **None who does good**
- **None who fear God**

He makes it very clear that this is not a general statement about most people, but twice he says, **"not even one."** These are plain clear statements expressing mankind's rebellion against God's Sovereign authority, even going so far as to say that no one even seeks after God.

In the passage below, Paul describes mankind as prone to evil. Indeed unregenerate persons have an inability to submit to God and are therefore in rebellion against Him and have their minds set on the sinful nature.

**Romans 8:5-8** - 5 For **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. 6 For **the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 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; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.** NASB

A. 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 - The natural state of all men is in the **"flesh."** This speaks of man's "sinful nature" or his natural state of sin. Here it is clear that mankind is in rebellion against God by the words **"hostile toward God."** Man has hostility toward God, this is rebellion against God's Sovereign authority. Paul makes this even clearer when he states that the flesh **"does not subject itself to the Law of God."** Instead of submission it is rebellion. Further this is because of his inability, stating plainly that the flesh is **"not even able to do so."** **"Able"** speaks of ability not willingness.

B. and those who are in the flesh cannot please God – Paul further clarifies this rebellion by stating that the flesh has an inability to please God. He states, that "those in the flesh", that is ("not born again"), **"cannot please God."** The word **"cannot"** speaks of ability not willingness.

The Bible plainly declares that mankind is **ENSLAVED TO SIN**, their hearts being deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer 17:9). This is to say that Man's will is **"bound to sin"** and naturally

prone to evil because he is in the flesh. Sin is a willful transgression of the Law, therefore when man sins, he does so willingly. This speaks of man's will, his choices about his moral conduct.

***In the passages below it is clear that man's will is not free but instead in "bondage to sin."***

**John 8:34** - 34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.** NASB

**Romans 6:6** - 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should **no longer be slaves to sin;** NASB

**Romans 7:14** - 14 For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, **sold into bondage to sin.** NASB

**Titus 3:3-5** - 3 For 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. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 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.** NASB

This idea is further clarified in passages that state that ***"no one does good"*** of his own. Until one is cleansed by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, they are simply **unable** to please God in any sense, being slaves to sin.

**Romans 3:12** - 12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless; **There is none who does good, There is not even one.** "

**Isaiah 64:6** - 6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And **all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;** And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. NASB

**Romans 14:23** says, **"Whatever is not from faith is sin."**

It is clear therefore that the natural person, apart from the regeneration of the Holy Spirit (being born again), abides in a sinful and rebellious state in relation to the Holy God, and is therefore ***"by nature, an object of God's wrath."***

**Ephesians 2:3** - 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. NASB

Having pointed these things out, consider the chart below. Does it seem true that man is "naturally able" to understand the Gospel apart from divine grace? And if man "cannot understand" the Gospel, how then can he believe it?

Semi-Pelagian		Augustinian	
Man is naturally able to understand and believe the Gospel apart from Divine enablement.	Natural Ability	Natural Inability	Man is naturally unable to understand and believe the Gospel apart from Divine enablement.

The fact remains that divine grace is necessary for man to understand and believe the Gospel. This is called regeneration. We will discuss this at length below.

A couple of supporting statements clarifies for us an Augustinian view of Salvation.

### **Westminster Confession of Faith - Of Free Will**

3. Man, by his Fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

### **Synod of Dort - ARTICLE 3**

Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto; and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, or to dispose themselves to reformation



## Not sick, but Dead

Consider how the Bible describes the radical corruption of sin in mankind. It clearly describes he/she as corrupted in their whole being. Mankind is not good, cannot do good, hates the light of God's truth, drinks in sin like water, has both a defiled conscience and mind, and cannot please God or subject himself to the law of God.

**Romans 7:18** - 18 For I know **that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh**; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. NASB

**Isaiah 64:6** - 6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And **all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment**; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. NASB

**Job 15:14-16** - 14 "What is man, that he should be pure, Or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? 15 "Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones, And the heavens are not pure in His sight;

16 **How much less one who is detestable and corrupt, Man, who drinks iniquity like water!** NASB

**John 3:19-20** - 19 "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and **men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. 20 "For everyone who does evil hates the light**, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. NASB

**Titus 1:15** - 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.** NASB

**Romans 8:7-8** - 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; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**

Sin has so corrupted the nature of mankind that he has a **"natural inability"** as we have pointed out. It is not that he has been seriously hurt in the battle with sin, but has been slain by it, mortally wounded, killed. When the Bible describes the state of man's natural condition, it uses imagery that shows man's complete inability to respond to anything apart from a divine working of new life. The **Bible plainly declares** that mankind is **"dead in transgressions and sins"** and wholly unable to respond to spiritual things.

**Colossians 2:13** - 13 And when **you were dead in your transgressions** and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, NASB

**Ephesians 2:1-2** - 1 And **you were dead in your trespasses and sins**, 2 in which you formerly walked 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. NASB

A. you were dead in your trespasses and sins – Here is the former state of the Christian believer – DEAD! And that, in **"transgression and sins!"** This is a theme in the teaching of the Lord Jesus who frequently refers to unbelievers as "dead" and in desperate need of regeneration. This is the reason for the great need of REGENERATION, without which **"no one can SEE the kingdom of God."** (John 3:3-6, John 6:65) Here is seen the consequence of sin and transgression, DEATH! Not that they were physically dead, but in that wretched state of spiritual death which rendered them helpless to hear or understand the things of God and His kingdom (1 Cor 2:14, Rom 8:5-8). Here is the definitive statement in the bible on depravity or natural inability.

**John 5:21-24** - 21 "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so **the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.** 22 "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, 23 in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. 24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but **has passed out of death into life.** NASB

**Matt 8:22** - 22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me; and **allow the dead to bury their own dead.**" NASB

**Luke 15:24** - 24 for **this son of mine was dead**, and has come to life again; , 32'But we had to be merry and rejoice, for **this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live**, and was lost and has been found.' "

**1 John 3:14** - 14 We know that we have **passed out of death into life**, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. NASB

Consider how this image of a dead person corresponds to our sinful state apart from regeneration by the Holy Spirit. A dead person cannot see, hear, move, talk, think, understand, or respond to any kind of stimulus in any way. They are wholly unresponsive and unable to change.

**John 11:43-44** - 43 And when He had said these things, **He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."** 44 **He who had died came forth**, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." NASB  
**Romans 5:6** - 6 For **while we were still helpless**, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. NASB  
**Jeremiah 13:23** - 3 **"Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots?"** Then you also can do good, Who are accustomed to doing evil. NASB

Consider the statement of Albert Barnes on man's dead condition....

*"A corpse is insensible. It sees not, and hears not, and feels not. The sound of music, and the voice of friendship and of alarm, do not arouse it. The rose and the lily breath forth their fragrance around it, but the corpse perceives it not. The world is busy and active around it, but it is unconscious of it all. It sees no beauty in the landscape; hears not the voice of a friend; looks not upon the glorious sun and stars; and is unaffected by the running stream and the rolling ocean. So with the sinner in regard to the spiritual and eternal world, he sees no beauty in religion; he hears not the call of God; he is unaffected by the dying love of the Saviour; and he has no interest in eternal realities. In all these he feels no more concern, and sees no more beauty, than a dead man does in the world around him. Such is, in fact, the condition of a sinful world. There is, indeed, life and energy and motion. There are vast plans and projects, and the world is intensely active. But, in regard to religion, all is dead. The sinner sees no beauty there; and no human power can arouse him to act for God, any more than human power can rouse the sleeping dead, or open the sightless eye-balls on the light of day. The same power is needed in the conversion of a sinner which is needed in raising the dead; and one and the other alike demonstrate the omnipotence of him who can do it."*

Plainly stated mankind is dead and in need of new life. Therefore in order for our sinful state to be corrected, we must resurrected from the dead, something which is obviously attributed only to God. The **Bible plainly declares** that salvation is a resurrecting work, accomplished wholly by the **"monergistic"** work of God, whereby God infuses life into the dead and regenerates them granting them spiritual life.

**Ephesians 2:5** - 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), NASB

**John 5:21** - 21 "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so **the Son also gives life to whom He wishes**." NASB

Therefore, when the Bible describes our salvation, it attributes the saving process wholly to the work of God, and speaks about the inability of man to even come to Christ apart from divine grace, and the impossibility of mankind being saved apart from God's saving work of regeneration.

**John 6:44,65** - 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, 65 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."** NASB

**Matthew 19:23-26** - 23 And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 "And again I say to you, **it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."** 25 And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" 26 And looking upon them Jesus said to them, **"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."** NASB

**Titus 3:5** - 5 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**, NASB

Furthermore, when the Bible describes our salvation, it attributes the saving process wholly to the work of God, and speaks about God's divine enablement as a **"monergistic"** work.

**Deuteronomy 30:6** - 6 Moreover the **LORD your God will circumcise your heart** and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live. NASB

**Ezekiel 36:26-27** - 26 "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. 27 "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. NASB

**1 Peter 1:3** - 3 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,

**Matthew 11:27** - 27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; **nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.**

**John 3:27** - 27 John answered and said, **"A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given him from heaven."** NASB

# The Sovereignty of God

## In Salvation

### Regeneration – What does the Bible say?

When we think about the biblical word “**regeneration**”, we must consider first its nature. Regeneration is a word derived from its root, “genesis” or “generate” meaning beginning or create. It is “re” or “again generation.” Plainly said by the apostle Paul.....

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

When anyone is born again by the Holy Spirit, he/she becomes a “**new creation**” of God. They are **recreated by the supernatural creative power of God**. This is why Paul says in Galatians 6:15 that the true substance of saving faith is not a human work, but the work of the creative power of God.

**Galatians 6:15** - 15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a **new creation**. NASB Salvation, then and therefore is **supernatural**. It is a work performed by God, transcending the earthly abilities of any man. So we see then that salvation is first the work of God, and it then results in many diverse blessings and benefits of which mankind is a partaker. Let us then consider the following definition of Regeneration.....

*“A sovereign act of God, performed by the Holy Spirit, in which the sinner is given the capacities needed to understand, believe, and enter the Kingdom of God by God given faith and granted eternal life. His/her mind and will are **divinely enabled** to comprehend sin and righteousness and judgment. His/her spirit is resurrected from its natural dead state, restoring communion with God who is Spirit. It is a fundamental change in the nature of mankind having the very nature and eternal life of God implanted into the human soul. At this time the Holy Spirit enters into the being of mankind performing this transformation eternally.”*

Let us consider the nature of regeneration from biblical texts. As we survey these Bible texts, consider how they are all pointing to the supernatural and Sovereign work of God in salvation.

**Regeneration** is the **act of God**, not of human doing –

**1 Peter 1:3** - 3 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,

**1 Peter 1:23** - 23 for you **have been born again** not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. NASB

**James 1:18** - 18 **In the exercise of His will He brought us forth** by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. NASB

**Ezekiel 11:19-21** - 19 "And **I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them**. And **I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh**, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

**Regeneration** changes the **mind and will**

**Ezekiel 36:26-27** - 26 "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. 27 "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.

**1 John 3:9** - 9 No **one who is born of God practices sin**, because His seed abides in him; and **he cannot sin, because he is born of God**. NASB

**1 John 5:18-21** - 18 We know that **no one who is born of God sins**; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him. 19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and **has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true**, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. NASB

**1 John 5:4** - 4 For **whatever is born of God overcomes the world**; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. NASB

**1 Corinthians 2:12-16** - 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God**, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those **taught by the Spirit**, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But 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. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. 16 For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? **But we have the mind of Christ**. NASB

**Regeneration** raises mankind's dead spirit to eternal life and implants God's nature into him/her **Colossians 2:13** - 13 And when **you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him**, having forgiven us all our transgressions, NASB **Ephesians 2:5-9** - 5 **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)**, 6 and **raised us up with Him**, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 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, that no one should boast. NASB **Ephesians 4:24** - 24 and put on the new self, which **in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness** of the truth. NASB

**John 5:24** - 24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who **hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life**, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. NASB

**John 6:39-40** - 39 "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**. 40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, **may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day**." NASB

Regeneration then, is the very nature of salvation itself. It is the *saving act* of salvation, performed by God, whereby salvation is applied to the elect in time and space. It is the point in time when the called of God are supernaturally transformed by God. This is why the Bible says we were saved **"by the washing of regeneration."**

**Titus 3:5** - 5 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**. NAS

Furthermore, this is the very reason why Jesus emphatically stressed, **"You must be born again"** to **"enter the Kingdom of God."** The **Bible plainly declares** that no can see or enter the Kingdom of God apart from the supernatural creative power of God in Regeneration.

**John 3:3-7** - 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God**." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God**." 6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 "Do not marvel that I said to you, **'You must be born again.'**" NASB

A. Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." - Here we may see, God Himself, in the flesh, speaking to man about how to see His Kingdom. Here is where Christianity becomes very exclusive, **"unless"** Jesus declares. That is, in no other way but this way, can you **"see the Kingdom of God."** The word **"cannot"** speaks of man's inability, not His unwillingness. Mankind has an inability to see the Kingdom of God without the supernatural creative power of God in the new birth. People who are dead in trespasses and sins have no capacity of sight, hearing, or understanding of the Gospel. (1 Cor 2:10-14, 2 Cor 4:3-4, John 8:43, Matt 13:10-13, Romans 3:9-12, 18, 6:16, 7:14)

B. he cannot enter the Kingdom of God - The kingdom of God is here rightly understood as God's salvation wherein one enters into a justified state of being having one's sins forgiven and satisfied upon the merits of Christ alone. One **"cannot enter"** or possess this saving work of Christ apart from the divine grace of Regeneration.

C. You must be born again - Consider, God has come in the flesh and given us understanding. Here he says to us, "You must be born again if you want to see or enter the Kingdom of God." Here then the repetition by which the Savior speaks this very important word, **"you MUST"** says He, be **"born again."**



## The analogy of birth and new life

Consider that Jesus uses the analogy of birth. A person no more had some choice in the matter of their natural birth as they do their spiritual birth. We did not choose to be physically alive, and we did not choose to be born, it is something that happened to us. This Sovereign work of God is performed by God before any person has capacities to even see, hear or understand the Gospel, being dead in sin. A person's ability to receive Christ as Savior and believe the Gospel are granted by the Sovereign choice and resurrecting ability of God.

**John 1:12-13** - 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, 13 **who were born** not of blood, **nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.** NASB

**John 6:44** - 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. NASB

**Romans 9:16** - 16 So then it **does not depend on the man who wills** or the man who runs, **but on God who has mercy.** NASB

**Matthew 11:27** - 27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; **nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.**

Lazarus had no capacities to raise himself from the dead, nor did he possess the ability to resist the powerful Word of God to be resurrected (John 11:43). This is clearly portrayed in the prophecy of Ezekiel where the nation of Israel will corporately be raised from their spiritual death and brought into the glorious Kingdom of God in the Day of their restoration.

**Ezekiel 37:11-14** - 11 Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. **We are completely cut off.**' 12 "Therefore prophesy, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' Behold, **I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people;** and I will bring you into the land of Israel. 13 "Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. 14 **"And I will put My Spirit within you, and you will come to life,** and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD.' NASB

Do babies resist being born? Do people being raised from the dead resist the free gift of life?

Have they even the ability to do so? The answer is of course, no! People do not resist this regenerating work of God because it is this work whereby God overcomes the resistance of the fallen human nature by giving them the capacities to understand their dreadful state of death and their great need to be saved by God's power and free grace.

**Acts 10:44-45** - 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, **the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.** 45 And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were

amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also. NASB

**Acts 13:48** - 48 And 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.** NASB

## Regeneration is an invisible work of which we only see the results over time

When someone is born again, we are not always immediately aware of it because we only see what happens after someone gets saved. There is an obvious change that happens in the life as we see God's power changing us (sanctification). But we were not aware when the secret power of God actually resurrects someone from spiritual death and grants them new life.

**John 3:8** - 8 "The wind blows where it wishes and **you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going;** so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." NASB

Wayne Grudem explains this very clearly in chapter 34 of his Systematic Theology....

*"Exactly what happens in regeneration is mysterious to us. We know that somehow we who were spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1) have been made alive to God and in a very real sense we have been "born again" (John 3:3, 7; Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13). But we don't understand how this happens or what exactly God does to us to give us this new spiritual life....."*

*Because regeneration is a work of God within us in which he gives us new life it is right to conclude that it is an instantaneous event. It happens only once. At one moment we are spiritually dead, and then at the next moment we have new spiritual life from God. Nevertheless, we do not always know exactly when this instantaneous change*

occurs. Especially for children growing up in a Christian home, or for people who attend an evangelical church or Bible study over a period of time and grow gradually in their understanding of the gospel, there may not be a dramatic crisis with a radical change of behavior from “hardened sinner” to “holy saint,” but there will be an instantaneous change nonetheless, when God through the Holy Spirit, in an unseen, invisible way, awakens spiritual life within. The change will become evident over time in patterns of behavior and desires that are pleasing to God.

In other cases (in fact, probably most cases when adults become Christians) regeneration takes place at a clearly recognizable time at which the person realizes that previously he or she was separated from God and spiritually dead, but immediately afterward there was clearly new spiritual life within. The results can usually be seen at once—a heartfelt trusting in Christ for salvation, an assurance of sins forgiven, a desire to read the Bible and pray (and a sense that these are meaningful spiritual activities), a delight in worship, a desire for Christian fellowship, a sincere desire to be obedient to God’s Word in Scripture, and a desire to tell others about Christ. People may say something like this: “I don’t know exactly what happened, but before that moment I did not trust in Christ for salvation. I was still wondering and questioning in my mind. But after that moment I realized that I did trust in Christ and he was my Savior. Something happened in my heart.” Yet even in these cases we are not quite sure exactly what has happened in our hearts. It is just as Jesus said with respect to the wind—we hear its sound and we see the result, but we cannot actually see the wind itself. So it is with the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.”

## Regeneration precedes faith

Many times we fail to understand the Bible about this because of how the experience happened to us. Again Grudem explains...

*“The idea that regeneration comes before saving faith is not always understood by evangelicals today. Sometimes people will even say something like, “If you believe in Christ as your Savior, then (after you believe) you will be born again.” But Scripture itself never says anything like that. This new birth is viewed by Scripture as something that God does within us in order to enable us to believe.*

*The reason that evangelicals often think that regeneration comes after saving faith is that they see the results (love for God and his Word, and turning from sin) after people come to faith, and they think that regeneration must therefore have come after saving faith. Yet here we must decide on the basis of what Scripture tells us, because regeneration itself is not something we see or know about directly:”*

We heard the Gospel and then we believed, at least it seemed like that is what happened. But we were not aware that our belief was the granting of faith to us by God’s Sovereign choice and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth. But that is in fact what happened. We only learn of this great truth after we examine Holy Scripture and understand the process of salvation. Jesus made this very clear.....

**John 6:63-65** - 63 **"It is the Spirit who gives life;** the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. 64 "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. 65 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."** 66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore. NASB

Here Jesus explains that the reason many people do not believe. This is why he says in verse 65 **“for this reason I have said to you”**, referring to verse 64 where he says **“some of you do not believe.”** The **Bible plainly declares** that the reason people do not believe is because saving faith has not been granted to them by God.

**Matthew 13:11** - 11 And He answered and said to them, **"To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted."** NASB

And to those who believe the **Bible plainly declares** it is because it has been granted to them by God.

**Philippians 1:29** - 29 For **to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him,** but also to suffer for His sake, NASB

This is also clearly seen in the salvation of the Apostle Paul(Acts 9:18) or of Lydia in Acts chapter 16.

**Acts 16:14** - 14 And 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.** NASB

# The Sovereignty of God

## In Salvation

### Sovereign Election – What does the Bible say?

The Bible plainly declares that God chooses who will be saved. This is called “*election*” and refers to God’s electing certain individuals to salvation and that this happened before He ever created the world. This is taught in many places in the Bible.

**John 15:16** - 16 "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, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you. NASB

**Ephesians 1:3-6** - 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. NASB

**Titus 1:1-2** - 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, 2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago. NASB

**2 Timothy 2:10** - 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. NASB

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** - 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. NASB

**1 Peter 1:1-2** - 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 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. NASB

**Matthew 11:27** - 27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

This teaching in the Bible is closely related to the idea of “*predestination*”, another concept clearly presented in the Bible. In fact, “*predestination*” is a Biblical word which refers to the fact that God has set the destiny of His chosen people from before the beginning of time. This is presented in many places in Scripture.

**Acts 13:48** - 48 And 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. NASB

**Romans 8:28-30** - 28 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 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; 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. NASB

**Romans 9:22-25** - 22 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? 23 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, 24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. NASB

Therefore when we speak about the doctrine of “*election*” or “*predestination*,” we must realize that this is a Biblical doctrine which occurs many places in the Bible. Rarely does anyone deny this teaching, but there is much controversy over the nature and basis of it.

- Who does God choose and why?
- On what basis does God choose? Is it because of some foreseen act or faith of people, or is it because of His own free and sovereign purpose?

These questions and more will be addressed below.

## Election is unconditional

When we speak about election being “unconditional” we mean that our election by God is “not conditioned” upon anything that God sees in people which makes them *worthy* of His choosing them, or somehow *merits* His choice of them. Scripture never speaks of election in this way. Rather it speaks of God’s “**free and sovereign grace**” when discussing what *motivated* His choice. Salvation is by “**grace alone**”, not on the basis of any human works or merit. The word grace means “**unmerited favor**” and speaks about God’s freely bestowed gift of salvation.

**Titus 3:5** - 5 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, NASB

**2 Timothy 1:9** - 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, NASB

If grace could be merited, it would “**no longer be grace**” but God would owe us salvation.

**Romans 11:5-6** - 5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. **6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.** NASB

Even the faith by which we believed is seen to be “**the gift of God**” and we are specifically told is it “**not of ourselves.**”

**Ephesians 2:8-9** - 8 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**, that no one should boast. NASB

Scripture speaks in this way as to exalt God’s free and sovereign choice in the matter so that we glorify Him for His “**freely bestowed**” grace and so that we do not “**boast**” or somehow take credit for the fact that we have been saved. Notice in the passage in Ephesians below the Scripture plainly says that “**He predestines us...according to**”....

- to the kind intention of **His will**
- to the praise of the glory of **His grace**
- it is **freely** bestowed

**Ephesians 1:4-6** - 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 **He predestined us** to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, **according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us** in the Beloved. NASB

The Bible plainly declares that we are in Christ by God’s choice and His doing so that we will not boast or take credit for our salvation because of our wisdom, strength or heritage in any way.

**1 Corinthians 1:26-31** - 26 For **consider your calling**, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but **God has chosen** the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and **God has chosen** the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised, **God has chosen**, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, 29 **that no man should boast before God. 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus**, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 that, just as it is written, “**Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.**” NASB

The Bible plainly declares that we are chosen by God **not on the basis of our own will**, but on the free mercy of God.

**Romans 9:10-16** - 10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 11 **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**, 12 it was said to her, “The older will serve the younger.” 13 Just as it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” 14 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.** NASB

**John 1:12-13** - 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, 13 who were born not of blood, **nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.** NASB

In fact, the Gentile nations of the world were kept in darkness until God desired to reveal Himself to them, even though they were not seeking for Him (Rom 3:11).



Isaiah 65:1 - "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here am I, here am I,' To a nation which did not call on My name. NASB

## Election and Foreknowledge

The biblical word **“foreknowledge”** is often used in connection with election. Both Peter and Paul say that foreknowledge is connected to our election.

**1 Peter 1:1-2** - 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **who are chosen 2 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. NASB

**Romans 8:28-30** - 28 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 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; 30 and **whom He predestined, these He also called**; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. NASB

Occasionally someone will suggest that God's election is based on His **“foreknowledge”** of who will believe. This view suggests that God simply looks into the future to see who will believe, and He chooses those whom He sees choosing Him. If divine foreknowledge simply means God's knowledge of what will happen in advance, then this view may seem correct. But that is not the biblical meaning of **“foreknowledge.”** [*Gk. – prognosis*] John MacArthur speaks of this..... *“When the Bible speaks of God's foreknowledge, it refers to God's establishment of a love relationship with that person. The word “know,” in both the Old and New Testament, refers to much more than mere cognitive knowledge of a person. Such passages as Hosea 13:4-5; Amos 3:2 (KJV); and Romans 11:2 clearly indicate this. For example, 1 Peter 1:20 says Christ was “foreknown before the foundation of the world.” Surely this means more than that God the Father looked into the future to behold Christ! It means He had an eternal, loving relationship with Him. The same is true of the elect, whom we are told God “foreknew” (Romans 8:29). That means He knew them--he loved them--before the foundation of the world.”*

**Hosea 13:4-5** - 4 Yet 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. 5 I **cared for you[knew you-NKJV]** in the wilderness, In the land of drought. NASB

**Amos 3:2** - 2 "You only have I **chosen[known-NKJV]** among all the families of the earth; Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities." NASB

**Romans 11:2** - 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?" NASB

As a matter of fact, consider that in the same context of 1 Peter chapter 1, Peter speaks of our election being **“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”** (v-2) and also speaks of Christ being **“foreknown before the foundation of the world”** (v-20). But consider that elsewhere in the New Testament where Christ's election as Savior and foreknowledge of His cross are mentioned, that is said to be **“by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God.”** Here foreknowledge has a much fuller meaning than just “a prior knowledge”, but rather a predetermined plan in which Christ is “foreknown,” that is, “chosen, elect, planned to be the one” by God. Further, Acts 4:27 says that His cross was predestined by God to occur. In these contexts consider that foreknowledge is the very **DECREE AND FOREORDINATION** of God.

**Acts 2:23** - 23 this Man, **delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God**, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. NASB

**Acts 4:27-28** - 27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 **to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.**" NASB

Therefore when we speak of the biblical word **“foreknowledge”** we see that it has a much fuller sense than just prior knowledge. Consider these words from Zodiates NT Word Study.....

**4267. prognôskœ**; fut. prognôsomai, 2 d aor. proégnœn, from pró (4253), before, and ginôskœ (1097), to know. To perceive or recognize beforehand, know previously, take into account or specially consider beforehand, to grant prior acknowledgement or recognition to someone, to foreknow.

(I) Used of mere prescience, to know before (Acts 26:5; 2 Peter 3:17).

(II) **Used of God's eternal counsel it includes all that He has considered and purposed to do prior to human history.** In the language of Scripture, something foreknown is not simply that which God was aware of prior to a certain point. Rather, it is presented as that which God gave prior consent to, that which received His favorable or special recognition. Hence, **this term is reserved for those matters which God favorably, deliberately and freely chose and ordained.**

(A) **Used of persons, to foreknow with approbation, to foreapprove or make a previous choice of, as special people (Rom 8:29; 11:2).**

(B) Used of events, to previously decide or plan, to foreknow for God is to foreordain 1 Peter 1:19,20 presents Christ as the "Lamb of God foreknown from the foundation of the world" (a.t.). He is said to be foreknown because God had planned and determined in His eternal counsel to provide His Son as a sacrifice for His people. Certainly more is meant than that God knew ahead of time that Christ would so come and die. God's foreknowledge is given here as the cause for His Son's sacrifice — because He planned and decreed it.

(C) **In Rom 8:29**, in relation to believers, *proginōskō* occurs with the verb *proōrizō* (4309), **to predestinate. Foreknowledge and foreordination are logically coordinate.** The former emphasizes the exercise of God's wisdom and intelligence in regard to His eternal purpose and the latter emphasizes the exercise of God's will in regard to it. **What He has decreed is what He has decided.** This foreknowledge and foreordination in the Scripture are always unto salvation and not unto perdition. Therefore, it should be said that the Lord never foreordains someone to be lost. **Rather, He foreordains unto salvation those whom He specially considered and chose in eternity past (see Matt 7:23; John 10:14; Rom 11:2; 1 Cor 8:3; Gal 4:9; 2 Tim 2:19; Sept.: Hos 13:5; Amos 3:2).** Any thought of the lost being appointed or ordained unto condemnation should be understood as an act of passing over in which the lost are permitted to suffer the consequences of their choice of sin (1 Peter 2:8). **The salvation of every believer is known and determined in the mind of God before its realization in time. Thus, *proginōskō* corresponds with the idea of having been chosen (*eklēgomai* [1586], to choose) before the foundation of the world mentioned in Eph 1:4 and logically precedes the action indicated by *proōrizō*.** ***Proginōskō* essentially entails a gracious self-determining on God's part from eternity to extend fellowship with Himself to undeserving sinners (Rom 8:29).**

(from *The Complete Word Study Bible and The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament Copyright © 1991, 1992, 1994, 2002 AMG International, Inc.*)

## **Election is a theme in God's plan and appears throughout the Bible**

The doctrine of election is not just a New Testament reality, but does in fact appear throughout the Scripture as it characterizes the way God deals with man. Consider this brief definition of election from the Nelson's Bible Dictionary..... **ELECTION** - *The gracious and free act of God by which He calls those who become part of His kingdom and special beneficiaries of His love and blessings. The Bible describes the concept of election in three distinct ways. Election sometimes refers to the election of Israel and the church as a people for special service and privileges. Election may also refer to the election of a specific individual to some office or to perform some special service. Still other passages of the Bible refer to the election of individuals to be children of God and heirs of eternal life.* (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986)

Election therefore, is a method of God for selecting specific individuals for His own purposes, and usually provides *special services* that they will perform and bestows upon them *special privileges* of which they alone are the beneficiaries.

God chose **Noah** to build an ark out of gopher wood so that he and his family could be saved from the flood, when the entire population of the whole earth was to be destroyed by God, and also possessed a faith that became for him and his family eternal salvation.

**Hebrews 11:7** - 7 By faith **Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen**, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. NASB

God chose **Abraham** from among the Gentiles in Chaldea to bring Him into the Land of Canaan, and to be the ancestor of Christ, and a "*father of many nations*," through whom "*all the families of the earth would be blessed*."

**Genesis 12:1-3** - Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, **To the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation,** And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 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 shall be blessed.**" NASB

**Nehemiah 9:7** - "Thou art the LORD God, **Who chose Abram And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, And gave him the name Abraham.** NASB

**Joshua 24:2** - 2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, **Terah, the father of Abraham** and the father of Nahor, and **they served other gods.** NASB

God chose **Moses** to be the deliverer of Israel from the cruel labor of Pharaoh.

**Exodus 3:10** - 10 Therefore, **come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh,** so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." NASB

God chose **Israel** to be delivered from the cruel labor of Pharaoh, in order show them His mighty deeds in delivering them, and to bestow upon them the special privileges of His covenant relationship with them, and to even make them recipients of eternal life through Christ and heirs of the Gospel. Consider that in the calling of Israel out of Egypt, they were given the specific privilege of bringing forth the Word of God and also the Messiah Himself.

**Deuteronomy 7:6-8** - 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. 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. NASB

**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.** NASB

**Isaiah 44:1-3** - "But now listen, O Jacob, My servant; And **Israel, whom I have chosen:** 2 Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, 'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And **you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.** 3 'For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; **I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, And My blessing on your descendants;** NASB

Consider in the election of Israel by God, just a few of the following special privileges and services to which they were appointed by God. (Rom 9:3-5)

- To be the nation through whom the **Messiah** would come
- To be the people through who God would give the **Word - Law and the Prophets**
- A **personal relationship** with God as He led them by prophet and fire and cloud
- To be heirs of **Salvation by grace through faith**, through God's promise to them
- The **Levitical Priesthood** and the service of worship to God, even the "Shekinah" glory
- To be the nation who would inherit **the promised land and the Kingdom** on earth

**Romans 9:3-5** - 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, **to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh,** who is over all, God blessed forever. NASB

And this is just a few of those chosen by God in the Old Testament. Now consider, Gideon, Samson, David, Solomon, and many, many more who by no doing of their own, became the recipients of God's special favor(grace), having been specifically picked out by God for His service and the privileges that come along with it. But this is not just an Old Testament concept, appearing clearly in many places in the New Testament in the conversion of some, and also being clearly taught in NT doctrinal passages as the very ground of Salvation. People get saved and come to Christ because they have been elected by God beforehand for this privilege.

**Romans 11:5-6** - 5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant **according to God's gracious choice.** 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. NASB

God chose to save **Cornelius** and his family. Consider the account of Cornelius in Acts chapter 10. In this account, God Sovereignly saves Cornelius and his family and friends in a very

specific and unusual way. Notice several things in this account which are initiated by God to save this Gentile Roman centurion.

- God gives an Angelic vision – **v-1-8**
  - specifically sending him to Peter, even telling him where he is staying
  - verse 22 says **“he was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you”**
  - he needs the Gospel to be saved
- God prepares Peter by heavenly vision – **v-9-16**
- God sends Peter specifically to Cornelius – **v-17-23**
- Peter preaches the Gospel – **v-34-43**
- God Sovereignly imparts the Holy Spirit to the whole crowd(Cornelius’ relatives and friends) – **v-44**

God chose **Saul of Tarsus**, not only for salvation, but also to be His Gospel messenger to the Gentile world. Even in the midst of Saul’s vicious hatred of the Church, God chooses him out to be saved.

**Acts 9:13-17** - 13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, **how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem**; 14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Thy name. " 15 But the Lord said to him, **"Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel**; 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." NASB

God chose **Lydia** to be saved. Lydia’s regeneration is clearly described in Acts chapter 16.

**Acts 16:14-15** - 14 And 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**. 15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. NASB

God chose the **disciples** to be saved. He specifically tells them that they did not choose Him, but that He chose them. Consider how the Bible describes their election to Salvation.

**John 15:16,19** - 16 **"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, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.... 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**, therefore the world hates you. NASB

**John 6:70** - 70 Jesus answered them, **"Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve**, and yet one of you is a devil?" NASB

The New Testament speaks again and again about the election of the church to salvation. The very word **“church”** is a word which means to **“call out of.”** [Gk. **ekklesia**]

**1 Peter 2:9** - 9 But **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; NASB

**Mark 13:20** - 20 "And 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. NASB

**Colossians 3:12** - 12 And so, as those who **have been chosen of God**, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; NASB

God reserves the right to choose whomever He will for His own purposes. This is seen in many places in Scripture. Here are a few examples.

**Luke 1:30-31** - 30 And the angel said to her, **"Do not be afraid, Mary ; for you have found favor with God**. 31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. NASB

**John 5:5-9** - 5 And **a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness**. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, **"Do you wish to get well?"** 7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." 8 Jesus said to him, "Arise, take up your pallet, and walk." 9 And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk. NASB

**Acts 10:40-41** - 40 "God raised Him up on the third day, and granted that He should become visible, 41 **not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God**, that is, to us, who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. NASB



# Romans 9

## An Exposition – God’s Free and Sovereign Grace

### Romans 9 - Outline

A. Paul's Sorrow over Israel's present rejection of Christ	9:1-3
B. Paul enumerates Israel’s privileges and blessing	9:4-5
C. God's Sovereignty in salvation and in judgment explained in the cases of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, and Pharaoh	9:6-17
D. God shows mercy and judgment according to His own sovereign purpose, and none have a right or power to find fault with His decisions	9:18-21
E. God’s grand design in the dispensing of judgment and mercy	9:22-24
F. The prophets predicted the calling of the Gentiles and their salvation, and the rejection of the Jews	9:25-29
G. The faith of the Gentiles and the stumbling of the Jews	9:30-33

**Romans 9:1-5** - 1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. NASB

A. 1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. -

**Paul’s sorrow over Israel’s rejection of Christ, as a corporate body. Note the context of the passage carried over from Chapter 8, the salvation of the called and elect, 8:28-32. From this it is clearly seen that the context of Chapter 9 is the salvation of individuals, not corporate callings or privileges, and also in verses 9:30-32.**

*Albert Barnes* - The chapter, therefore, has not reference to national election, or to choice to external privileges, but has direct reference to the doctrine of the election to salvation which had been stated in chap. 8. To suppose that it refers merely to external privileges, and national distinctions, makes the whole discussion unconnected, unmeaning, and unnecessary.

B. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, -

**Paul’s sorrow is so severe that he is willing to trade his faith for Israel’s acceptance of Christ. Here is the deep and godly compassion of a man who believes in God’s Sovereignty through and through.**

C. 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. -

**Paul here enumerates the great privileges which belong to Israel and yet means to show that in spite of all of these, they are lost in regard to salvation. This is the reason for his sorrow. He will show in this chapter that salvation is rooted in a divine privilege which is given to individuals based on nothing more than God's free and sovereign grace. It is not according to works(v-11,16,31-32) or according to man's will(v-16), but according to God's free and sovereign design(v-8,11,15-18,21-24,28-29)**

**Romans 9:6-9** - 6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; 7 neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "through Isaac your descendants will be named." 8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. 9 For this is a word of promise: "At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son." NASB  
A. 6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. -

**God's promises to Israel in His Word have not failed but are being realized even now by those whom God has called.**

B. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; 7 neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "through Isaac your descendants will be named." 8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. 9 For this is a word of promise: "At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son." -

**Salvation is not based on Abraham's heritage – Isaac was the promised one and came by supernatural appointment, Ishmael was a product of fleshly efforts, not God's supernatural design**

**Romans 9:10-13** - 10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 11 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, 12 it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." 13 Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." NASB

A. 10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; -

**Salvation is not based on Isaac's heritage – Both Jacob and Esau had one father, but only one was chosen by God for His redeeming privileges**

B. 11 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, 12 it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." 13 Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." -

**Salvation is not based on good or bad works, but is according to God's purpose in election, and because of Him who calls. – Rom 11:5, Eph 1:4-6, 1 Thess 1:4, 2 Tim 1:9**

**Romans 9:14-15** - 14 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." NASB

A. 14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! -

**God is not unjust. Consider why Paul raises this question.**

1. **If Paul had designed to show that salvation was based on man's will, he would have never brought this up, for no one would try to charge God with injustice, and would not feel like their rights were being violated.**
2. **Paul brings up this matter anticipating the readers accusation of God being unjust because the matter of salvation is by God's choice, not by human effort(v-11,16,31-32) or human will(v-16).**

B. 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." -

**The dispensing of God's mercy and compassion is according to His own free will.**

1. **Those who receive the mercy of salvation, receive it by "God's purpose according to His choice"(v-11) and by His own free grace(otherwise it is no longer grace).**  
Romans 11:6-8 - 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, **otherwise grace is no longer grace.** 7 What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but **those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;** 8 just as it is written, "**God gave** them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day." NASB
2. **The choice of His will to dispense mercy to one and not the other is the reason for Isaac's blessing(not Ishmael's), and Jacob's blessing(not Esau's). It is not based on their heritage, or works, or their human willing(v-16).**

**Romans 9:16-18** - 16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. 17 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." 18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. NASB

A. 16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. -

**Consider the "it" in verse 16.....what is "it" referring to? "It" refers to the dispensing of God's mercy and compassion.**

1. **"It" refers to the dispensing of God's mercy and compassion to the children of promise, (not the children of the flesh), v-8.**
2. **"It" refers to the dispensing of God's mercy and compassion to those God has chosen v-11, not because they have one father Isaac, or because they do good or bad.**

**Here "it" does not depend on man's will BUT on God who has mercy. This verse plainly states that salvation does NOT depend on man's will but on God's FREE mercy.**

B. 17 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." -

**Paul reasons that God did as He willed with Pharaoh,(and this was not unjust, for it was God's privilege and right), and His purpose was to show His power in judgment over**

**Pharoah and His ability to harden Pharoah's heart in order to accomplish His purpose. This purpose was the fame of God's name which He clearly accomplished both in that day(Num 14:15, Eze 20:9, 14, 22, Psalm 46:10) and to this day.**

Proverbs 21:1 - The **king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD;**  
He turns it wherever He wishes. NASB

C. 18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. -

**It is re-asserted(verse 15) that God dispenses His mercy to whomever He “desires” or wills. But what of this statement, “*He hardens whom He desires.*” Who shall charge God with injustice? And by what power shall His Sovereign authority be overruled? By what court shall you arraign or try God?**

**Romans 9:19-21** - 19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" 20 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? 21 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? NASB

A. 19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" -

**Paul again anticipates an argument from those who would charge God with injustice. Here the argument is, if God is free in the dispensation of His mercy and in the execution of His judgment, then why does He blame men for their wrongdoing? Consider....this argument would never be raised if Paul were reasoning that salvation(the dispensing of God's mercy) was according to the will of man, or that its rejection was because of the stubborn will of man.**

B. 20 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? -

**Here Paul shuts the mouth of anyone who would dare challenge the design and purposes of God. He reasons that God is the Creator, and has the Sovereign Prerogative to do as He pleases with what he has made.**

C. 21 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? -

**Here it is affirmed that God has a “*right over the clay.*” Clay here is analogous to “people.” Here “*honorable use*” speaks of the privileges of eternal salvation(v-22-24) and “*common use*” speaks of those “*vessels of wrath, prepared for destruction.*” This is a very humbling and fearful concept indeed. Dear reader, NOW is the day of salvation, the free offer of the Gospel is extended to you! Why will you be destroyed? Repent and trust Christ by faith and you SHALL be saved!**

**Romans 9:22-24** - 22 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? 23 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, 24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. NASB



A. 22 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? -

Here is the second point Paul uses to answer the objection of verse 19. The first point was, *“the potter has a right over the clay.”* And here then God is *“willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known.”* Further He is *“enduring with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.”* God is willing to permit sin in His creation for at least four purposes here;

- *To demonstrate His wrath*
- *To make His power known*
- *To display much patience with the vessels of wrath*
- *To make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy*

Here the Sovereignty of God over evil in His world is clearly seen. God will do as He pleases with the wicked, and He will do it for the purposes of revealing His Goodness to His chosen vessels of mercy. This as an answer to the objection in verse 19, *“why does He still find fault,”* is a crystal clear statement of God’s own Sovereign and Free right(or prerogative) to do as He pleases with His creation.

B. 23 And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy -

Here is given the reason why God *“demonstrates His wrath, power and patience”* with the wicked. It is to *“make known”* or to DISPLAY *“the riches of His glory”* to His own *“vessels of mercy.”* Note then, that the vessels of mercy should look at the destruction of the wicked and stand in awe at the wrath, power and patience of God in dealing with them. The Bible plainly declares that God’s purpose in the destruction of the wicked is to display His glory.

C. which He prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. -

Here it is stated that God *“prepared beforehand for glory”* the vessels of mercy, that is, His church, the saved, the elect, the called, the foreknown remnant of Jews and the foreknown people who have received mercy from among the Gentiles. Consider that the Bible plainly declares that God PREDESTINES the vessels of mercy by *“preparing them beforehand for glory”* and that this is God’s work, He prepares, and this according *“to His own purpose and grace”* (2 Tim 1:9). Also, consider what they vessels of mercy have been prepared for, GLORY! Prepared for GLORY! We become partakers of the nature of God! (2 Pet 1:4)

**Romans 9:25-29** - 25 As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'" 26 "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, ' you are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God." 27 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved; 28 for the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly. " 29 And just as Isaiah foretold, "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, We would have become as Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah." NASB

A. 25 As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'" 26 "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God." -

**Here the prophecy of Hosea is fulfilled in God's choosing of certain Gentiles to be saved and to receive the designation, "*my people*" and also "*the sons of the living God.*" Paul uses this to show that Israel(the sons of Abraham) did not corporately receive the promised blessing of salvation, but only a believing remnant of Jews did along with a believing remnant of Gentiles. Here the point of verse 6-7 is re-affirmed,**

**Romans 9:6-7 - it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; 7 neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants**  
NASB

**It is rather the ones who are "*according to the purpose of God's choice*" (verse 11), and the ones "*on whom I will have mercy*" (verse 15,18), and the people He has "*prepared beforehand for glory*" (verse 23) who are the recipients of His promise of salvation.**

B. 27 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved; 28 for the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly. " 29 And just as Isaiah foretold, "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, We would have become as Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah." -

**Here Paul re-affirms the fact that only a remnant of Jews will be saved, and that at the mercy of God, for if God would not have graciously "*left a posterity,*" the Jews would have been destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah.**

**Romans 9:30-33 - 30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."** NASB

A. 30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. -

**Because Israel sought to BOAST in their own HERITAGE(being Abraham's seed), and in their own ability to be righteous before God by WORKS(keeping the Law), they have been corporately cut off from the blessing of salvation. They should have rather glorified God for His mercy by humbly acknowledging their dependence on God by FAITH, and trusted in His righteousness, provided by CHRIST ALONE, to be considered JUSTIFIED in God's sight.**

B. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." -

**They stumbled by rejecting Christ the Messiah, instead of believing in Him, who alone merited the righteousness of God for sinners. Here is the reason Paul weeps in verse 2.**

## God is Sovereign in the Dispensing of His Grace

This is to say that God is the authority when it comes to who receives grace and who does not. If it was not this way, man would be “sovereign” in this matter and could therefore boast. But then grace would no longer be grace, it would no longer be “*freely*” bestowed to whomever He wills to have mercy upon, “*I will have mercy on whom I have mercy.*” (Rom 9:15)

**Luke 4:25-28** - 25 "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; 26 **and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.** 27 "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and **none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.**" 28 And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; NASB

This idea is seen in many places in the Bible and concerns matters much broader than just salvation.

**1 Chronicles 29:11-13** - 11 Thine, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O LORD, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all. 12 **Both riches and honor come from Thee, and Thou dost rule over all, and in Thy hand is power and might; and it lies in Thy hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone.** 13 Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name. NASB  
**Exodus 4:11** - 11 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?"** NASB

**Isaiah 45:7** - 7 The One forming light and creating darkness, **Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.** NASB

## God Sovereignly bestows the revelation of Salvation on whomever He wishes

Salvation is a revelatory process and comes by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. The way God saves is by regeneration (being born again). See the above lesson on Regeneration. Now consider how Jesus rejoices in the fact that some have this revelation from God and some do not.

**Matthew 11:25-28** - 25 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that **Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes.** 26 **"Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight.** 27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; **nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.**" NASB

Or even more than this, consider that the Scripture plainly declares that God is responsible for the blindness of some.

**Romans 11:7-10** - 7 What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, **but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;** 8 just as it is written, **"God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day."** 9 And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, And a stumbling block and a retribution to them. 10 **"Let their eyes be darkened to see not,** And bend their backs forever." NASB

**Isaiah 6:8-10** - 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" 9 And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.'" 10 **"Render the hearts of this people insensitive,, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Lest they see with their eyes, Hear with their ears,, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed."** NASB

Now, specifically in regard to salvation, since man is dead in trespasses, and has a Natural Inability to even know or understand the Gospel, it is clearly seen that God fulfills the electing process through the work of Regeneration. This is accomplished by His own free and sovereign dispensation of the revelation of sin, righteousness and judgment, which He gives to His elect and by which they are brought to the point of repentance, faith and conversion. Consider the following quote from Hodge.....Theology pg 441 #(4)

*"God is no less sovereign in the distribution of his favours. He does what He wills with his own. He gives to some riches, to others, honour; to others, health; while others are poor, unknown, or the victims of disease. To some, the light of the gospel is sent; others are left in darkness. Some are brought through faith unto salvation; others perish*

*in unbelief. To the question, Why is this? the only answer is that given by our Lord. "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight."*

In summary, we can say that God has had a special love relationship with the elect from all eternity, (foreknowledge), and this love relationship is His choosing them for salvation. The ultimate question of why God chose some for salvation and left others in their sinful state is one that we, with our finite knowledge, cannot answer. We do know that God's attributes always are in perfect harmony with each other, so that God's sovereignty will always operate in perfect harmony with His goodness, love, wisdom, and justice.

## Reprobation

If God does elect people to be saved from out of the whole of humanity, then He obviously passes over those He does not choose. This is called Reprobation. Consider this definition from Grudem.... *"When we understand election as God's sovereign choice of some persons to be saved, then there is necessarily another aspect of that choice, namely, God's sovereign decision to pass over others and not to save them. This decision of God in eternity past is called reprobation. Reprobation is the sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons, in sorrow deciding not to save them, and to punish them for their sins, and thereby to manifest his justice."*

The Scripture speaks of this reality in many places. Here are a few.... (Rom 9:17-21, Ps 92:5-7)

**Romans 11:6-8** - 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. 7 What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but **those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened**; 8 just as it is written, "**God gave** them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day." NASB

**1 Peter 2:8** - 8 and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, **and to this doom they were also appointed**. NASB

The fact is this is a very terrible thing to consider but is nonetheless true. The reality of Hell and Damnation is in fact a horribly difficult matter to consider, but it is nonetheless still a part of God's eternal plan by which He is glorifying His own nature as God. Reprobation and Damnation are purposes of God which serve His higher purpose of the manifestation of His Glory (see page 23 above). The Scripture is clear about this matter.

**Exodus 9:16-17** - 16 But, indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, **in order to show you My power, and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth**. 17 Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go. NASB

**Proverbs 16:4** - 4 The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, **Even the wicked for the day of evil**. NASB

Nevertheless, there is a very real sorrow on the part of God when people perish.

**Ezek 18:32** - 32 "For **I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies**," declares the Lord GOD. "Therefore, repent and live." NASB

Grudem comments... *"But it might be objected at this point, if God genuinely feels sorrow at the punishment of the wicked, then why does he allow it or even decree that it will come about? The answer must be that God knows that this will ultimately result in greater glory for himself. It will show his power and wrath and justice and mercy in a way that could not otherwise be demonstrated. Certainly in our own human experience it is possible to do something that causes us great sorrow but which we know will result in long-term greater good. And so, after this faint human analogy, we may somewhat understand that God can decree something that causes him sorrow yet ultimately will further his glory."*

## Election comforts, produces thanksgiving and glorifies God and His people

For those whom God has chosen, election is a very comforting thing because it speaks to us about the certainty of our salvation. If God has chosen to save us, then who will thwart His intended purpose? The fact is, no one will because our salvation is rooted in the eternal counsel of God's decree from before the world began.

**2 Timothy 1:9** - 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**, NASB



**Ephesians 1:4-6** - 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 **He predestined us** to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, **according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us** in the Beloved. NASB

**Romans 8:30-35** - 30 and **whom He predestined**, these **He** also called; and whom **He** called, these **He** also justified; and whom **He** justified, these **He** also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect?** God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** NASB

When we consider that our salvation is rooted in the free and sovereign purpose of God, we should rejoice with much thanksgiving, for we were not worthy to be saved but, on the contrary should have rightfully perished because of our sin and rebellion against God. So then, we exult and rejoice in this amazing grace, which has come to us and set us free from sin and death. We should glorify God for our salvation and proclaim His goodness by thanking Him because of it.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** - 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. NASB

**Psalms 65:4** - 4 **How blessed is the one whom Thou dost choose, and bring near to Thee**, To dwell in Thy courts. We will be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, Thy holy temple. NASB

**Psalms 106:4-5** - 4 Remember me, O LORD, in Thy favor toward Thy people; Visit me with Thy salvation, 5 **That I may see the prosperity of Thy chosen ones, That I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, That I may glory with Thine inheritance.** NASB

## **Election should encourage Evangelism**

We should be zealous to preach the Gospel and evangelize people because God has promised to save people from every tribe and nation, indeed from every language and ethnic group in the world.

**Revelation 5:9-10** - And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; **for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.** 10 "And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." NASB

When we see Paul in his missionary journeys in the book of Acts, we see him being encouraged by God to evangelize in certain areas because of God's election of people there.

**Acts 18:8-11** - 8 And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. 9 And **the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; 10 for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city."**

11 And **he settled there a year and six months**, teaching the word of God among them. NASB

Paul later reminds us that he does everything he does for sake of God's elect, the church whom he so zealously sought to save by his relentless preaching of the Gospel.

**2 Timothy 2:10-11** - 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. NASB

Further, Paul, after reasoning in Romans chapter 9 that God elects according to His own free and sovereign purpose, explains that people get saved when they call upon the name of the Lord. He explains that we must preach the Gospel in order for God's purpose in election to be accomplished saying, **"How shall they hear without a preacher?"**

**Romans 10:12-15** - 13 for "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And **how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent?** Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" NASB

## From the Canons of the Synod of Dort

Consider a few statements from the Synod of Dort.....

**ARTICLE 7.** - Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He has out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from the primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom He from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect and the foundation of salvation. This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God has decreed to give to Christ to be saved by Him, and effectually to call and draw them to His communion by His Word and Spirit; to bestow upon them true faith, justification, and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of His son, finally to glorify them for the demonstration of His mercy, and for the praise of the riches of His glorious grace; as it is written "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves." (Eph 1:4-6). And elsewhere: "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." (Rom 8:30).

**ARTICLE 8.** - There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those who shall be saved, both under the Old and New Testament; since the Scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose, and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which He has chosen us from eternity, both to grace and to glory, to salvation and to the way of salvation, which He has ordained that we should walk therein (Eph 1:4,5; 2:10).

**ARTICLE 9.** - This election was not founded upon foreseen faith and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite, cause, or condition of which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc. Therefore election is the fountain of every saving good, from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to the testimony of the apostle: "For he chose us (not because we were, but) in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." (Eph 1:4).

**ARTICLE 10.** - The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which does not consist herein that out of all possible qualities and actions of men God has chosen some as a condition of salvation, but that He was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to Himself, as it is written: "Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad — in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls — she (Rebekah) was told, 'The older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written: 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'" (Rom 9:11-13). "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48).

**ARTICLE 11.** - And as God Himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient, and omnipotent, so the election made by Him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled, or annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished.

# The Sovereignty of God

## In Salvation

### Effectual Calling – What does the Bible say?

As we have seen, Salvation is actually a supernatural work of God which is accomplished by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. This is because mankind has a Natural Inability to see, hear or even understand the Gospel (see the above on Natural Inability). More than this, God unconditionally elects those who will be saved, and he does this from before the beginning of time (see above on Unconditional Election). This is to say that election is not conditioned upon any response in man but happens because of the free electing grace of God. People get saved in time and space, because God has chosen them in eternity past and regenerates them in the course of their life.

**John 3:3** - 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" NASB

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** - 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. NASB

Therefore it is necessary, since Salvation is a supernatural work which is initiated by God in election and brought to pass by the new birth, that the outworking of this election have, some point in time and space when it comes to fruition (Regeneration). This is actually a process of **"drawing"** and **"calling"** which happens by the Holy Spirit. The **Bible plainly declares** that those whom God has elected and predestined, are **"drawn"** by God to Himself.

**John 6:44** - 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. NASB

**Jeremiah 31:2-3** - 2 Thus says the LORD, "The people who survived the sword Found grace in the wilderness- Israel, when it went to find its rest." 3 The LORD appeared to him from afar, saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; **Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.**" NASB

**Exodus 19:4** - 4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and **how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.** NASB

Not only this, but when speaking of the Church and those who are the recipients of salvation, the **Bible plainly declares** that they are **"called"** by Him at some point in their life. This obviously gives light to the fact that **God is the initiator** in the process of salvation.

**Romans 8:28** - 28 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.** NASB

**Romans 1:5-7** - 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake, 6 among whom **you also are the called of Jesus Christ;** 7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, **called as saints:** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

**Romans 9:23-24** - 23 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, 24 even us, whom He also called**, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. NASB

**1 Corinthians 1:9** - 9 God is faithful, through whom **you were called into fellowship with His Son,** Jesus Christ our Lord. NASB

**1 Corinthians 1:23-24** - 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 **but to those who are the called,** both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. NASB

**2 Thessalonians 2:14** - 14 And it was for this **He called you through our gospel,** that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

**1 Timothy 6:12** - 12 Fight the good fight of faith; **take hold of the eternal life to which you were called,** and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. NASB

**2 Timothy 1:9** - 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, NASB

**Hebrews 9:15** - 15 And 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.** NASB

**1 Peter 5:10** - 10 And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, **who called you to His eternal glory in Christ,** will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. NASB

And more than this, our salvation is spoken of as a “**calling**” by God. This speaks of a divine favor or privilege which has been given to all the saints.

**Romans 11:28-29** - 28 From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; 29 for **the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.** NASB

**1 Corinthians 1:2** - 2 to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, **saints by calling** , with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: NASB

**1 Corinthians 1:26** - 26 For **consider your calling , brethren,** that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; NASB

**Ephesians 1:18** - 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the **hope of His calling** , what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, NASB

**Hebrews 3:1** - 3:1 Therefore, **holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling,** consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. NASB

### **All the Elect will be Saved**

In fact, the **Bible plainly declares** that everyone whom God the Father chooses for salvation will absolutely be saved and glorified in the end. This is because the purpose of the Sovereign God to save His own people, whom He elects, predestines and calls, cannot be frustrated but rather God works everything after the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11), especially His plan of redemption. Consider how this is clearly portrayed in the words of Jesus in John Chapter 6.

**John 6:37-39** - 37 “**All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me,** and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 “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. NASB

Jesus emphatically states the certainty of the salvation of **ALL** that the Father has given Him. Oh what comfort for the saints! What certainty upholds their salvation, even the purpose of the Sovereign Almighty God. This will be examined further under the doctrine of Eternal Security. This idea is repeated by Paul when speaking of those who were being saved in Acts chapter 13.

**Acts 13:48** - 48 And 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.** NASB

Question - How many believed? Answer, “**as many as had been appointed to eternal life.**” This is repeated again in Romans 8:30 where Paul tells us that **ALL** who have been predestined will in fact be Called, Justified and Glorified.

**Romans 8:30** - 30 and **whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.** NASB

### **The Golden Chain**

In Romans Chapter 8, we have a passage which is referred to as “**the Golden Chain of Salvation.**” This is because of the profoundly assuring and comforting words which express the purpose of God in Salvation there.

**Romans 8:28-30** - 28 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 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; 30 and **whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.** NASB

Here we see several truths which undeniably show us the “**Effectual Calling**” of God upon His saints. Notice first that God is the active protector and divine initiator of His eternal blessing of salvation upon those whom He has called.



**Romans 8:28** - 28 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.**

Here we see that **“God is causing all things to work together” “to those who are called.”** Surely this is foremost a statement about God’s purpose to save them. He will cause all things to work for their good until they are finally saved. In this causing He will certainly draw them and regenerate them and bring them to “Conversion”, even to a saving repentance and faith in Christ.

**1 Peter 1:3** - 3 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, NASB

**Philippians 2:12-13** - 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; **13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** NASB

Second, we see that those who are **“foreknown”** (foreloved) by God, He has predestined them to be like Christ. This is absolutely a statement about salvation for no one can be like Christ until they are ultimately glorified by God at the resurrection.

**Romans 8:29** - **29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son.... NASB

See here that those whom God has **“foreknown”**, have been **“predestined,”** that is, their **“destiny”** has been **pre-determined** by God. This is taught in many places in Scripture.

**Ephesians 1:5-6** - **5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself,** according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. NASB

**Ephesians 1:10-12** - 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 should be to the praise of His glory. NASB

Thirdly, notice how a brief order of the process of salvation are brought to light in verse 30.

**Romans 8:30** - 30 and **whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.** NASB

See here that those whom have been predestined, are called and that these are brought to Justification because the calling by the Spirit **“effects”** salvation in them. Thus it is an **“Effectual Calling.”** Through the revelation of the Spirit, those who are called are brought to a place of **willing response** to the Gospel, by the enabling of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Jesus speaks of this in John Chapter 6....

**John 6:65** - 65 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.**" NASB

We also see this “Effectual Calling” at work in many who were saved in the narrative passages in the Book of Acts. Paul, Lydia and Cornelius are a few examples (see page 58 above).

## Is Grace Irresistible?

First, it can be plainly reasoned that because salvation is a supernatural work of God, given to those whom He has elected and predestined in eternity past, and because they will ALL eventually come to saving faith by the working of the spirit in effectual calling and regeneration, that none will or can, resist the Spirit’s work in the saving process.

**Deuteronomy 30:6** - 6 Moreover **the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,** in order that you may live. NASB

Second, is it not plain that because regeneration precedes faith, and that regeneration is actually a divinely initiated and supernatural work of God which changes the human mind and will and raises the sinner from spiritual death to life, implanting the very nature of God into them, that this is a divinely powerful work of the Creator God which is accomplished according to the good pleasure of His will and cannot be thwarted by the creature.

**Titus 3:5** - 5 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,** NASB

**Ezekiel 36:26-27** - 26 "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. 27 "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. NASB

Consider this quote from David N. Steele...

*"The gospel invitation extends a call to salvation to every one who hears its message. It invites all men without distinction to drink freely of the water of life and live. It promises salvation to all who repent and believe. But this outward general call, extended to the elect and non-elect alike, will not bring sinners to Christ. Why? Because men are by nature dead in sin and are under its power. They are of themselves unable and unwilling to forsake their evil ways and to turn to Christ for mercy. Consequently, the unregenerate will not respond to the gospel call to repentance and faith. No amount of external threatenings or promises will cause blind, deaf, dead, rebellious sinners to bow before Christ as Lord and to look to Him alone for salvation. Such an act of faith and submission is contrary to the lost man's nature. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, in order to bring God's elect to salvation, extends to them a special inward call in addition to the outward call contained in the gospel message. Through this special call the Holy Spirit performs a work of grace within the sinner which inevitably brings him to faith in Christ ... 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!"*

Lastly, let us consider what we have learned. Are people saved because they have chosen to follow Christ because they were wise enough to choose Christ, or because God has chosen to save them before they were born and had done anything good or bad?

**Romans 9:11** - 11 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, NASB

And what does this say about people's ability to resist the Spirit's work in salvation? Could Paul have chosen not to be God's appointed instrument to take the Gospel to the Gentiles?

**Acts 9:13-17** - 13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, **how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem;** 14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Thy name. " 15 But the Lord said to him, **"Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;** 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." NASB

**Galatians 1:15-16** - 15 But **when He 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, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, NASB

Could Jeremiah have decided not to be God's prophet to the nations? Not hardly....

**Jeremiah 1:4-5** - 4 Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, 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."** NASB

With this in mind, let us consider again whether or not we would take a Semi-Pelagian or an Augustinian view of this doctrine.

Man's will is free and he can successfully resist the Spirit's call.	Human Resistance	Effectual Calling	The calling of God to the elect does effect salvation infallibly.
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Let us consider that in the final analysis, no one who is saved would have it any other way. Are not the saints eternally grateful that God has effectually called them to Himself? Will they not rejoice forever in Heaven that **Salvation Belongs to the Lord** and glorify Him for saving them by His free grace! Indeed they will.

# The Sovereignty of God

## In Salvation

### Particular Redemption – What does the Bible say?

When considering whether or not God's work of redemption is Universal or Particular, we must consider the language of Scripture. Either it will bear out one or the other, for they cannot both be true. Surely we are aware of the overwhelming amount of Scripture which describes the benefits of the atonement being the **DEFINITE** possession of the believers, the Church in **PARTICULAR**, and the sufficient work of Christ which affords the elect Church of God all of the promises of Reconciliation and eternal blessing from God. Because of the merit of Christ's Atonement upon the cross at Calvary, all of this belongs in particular to the Church. [Us, We, Our, They]

**Matt 1:21** - 21 "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is **He who will save His people from their sins.**" NASB

**John 10:11** - 11 "I am the good shepherd; **the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.** NASB

**Acts 20:28** - 28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God **which He purchased with His own blood.** NASB

**Romans 5:8-11** - 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward **us**, in that while **we** were yet sinners, **Christ died for us.** 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we** shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 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. NASB

**Romans 8:31-33** - 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for **us**, who is against **us**? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but **delivered Him up for us all**, how will He not also with **Him freely give us all things?** 33 Who will bring a charge against **God's elect?** God is the one who justifies NASB

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

**Galatians 1:3-4** - 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 **who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us** out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, NASB

**Galatians 3:13** - 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" NASB

**Ephesians 1:7** - 7 **In Him we have redemption through His blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, NASB

**Ephesians 5:25** - 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and **gave Himself up for her;** NASB

**Colossians 1:13-14** - 13 For He delivered **us** from the domain of darkness, and transferred **us** to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 **in whom we have redemption**, the forgiveness of sins. NASB

**Titus 3:5-6** - 5 **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, 6 whom He **poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ** our Savior, NASB

**Hebrews 10:14** - 14 For **by one offering He has perfected** for all time **those** who are sanctified. NASB

**1 Peter 2:24** - and **He Himself bore our sins** in His body on the cross, that **we** might die to sin and live to righteousness; for **by His wounds you were healed.** NASB

**1 John 1:7** - 7 but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, **we** have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.** NASB

All of these verses, and many more, make it abundantly clear that Christ's work does **DEFINITELY** secure for the Church in **PARTICULAR**, all the benefits of Reconciliation to God. This fact is not normally disputed by anyone.

### Universal Atonement?

It is rather evident in Scripture that the benefits of the Atonement are NOT afforded to the unbeliever. It is only those who believe who are Justified.

**Romans 3:21-24** - 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 **being justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Surely salvation is given to those for whom God has purposed it from before the beginning of time and it is brought to pass in time and space through the Effectual Calling of the Spirit culminating in Regeneration.

**Romans 8:28-30** - 28 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 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; 30 and **whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.** NASB

This activity of God brings the sinner to Repentance and Faith (being virtues given to them by God), and this results in Conversion, Justification and Imputation, and ultimately Sanctification and Glorification. Thus at the point of Repentance and Faith, the sinner is Justified having his/her sins Propitiated (God's wrath satisfied), and Expiated (our guilt removed), and the righteousness of Christ Imputed to them.

**Romans 3:25-28** - 25 whom God displayed publicly as a **propitiation in His blood through faith**. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and **the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus**. 27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28 For we maintain that **a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.** NASB

These benefits which have been above described are afforded to the believer, who have the merits of the precious blood of Christ applied to them and are thus SAVED and JUSTIFIED.

**Romans 5:9** - 9 Much more then, **having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.** NASB

But how do we interpret passages of Scripture which seem to imply that the Atonement was Universal in its scope? Are we to believe that the benefits of the Atonement of Christ extend even to the unbeliever? Did Christ actually die for the specific sins of non-elect people? Let us look at these.

**John 1:29** - 29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God **who takes away the sin of the world!**" NASB

If God has in Jesus Christ **"taken away" the sins of all non-elect people**, then how can He punish them in hell? Surely it cannot mean that He has taken away their sins, *it must mean something else*, for they will all be punished in Hell, and this at the perfect and good justice of God.

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

1 John 2:2 cannot mean that the **specific sins of the all the people** in the whole world have been **"propitiated,"** for propitiation is the satisfaction of God's wrath for sin, and Scripture makes it very clear that apart from saving faith, sinners are doomed for the wrath of God. If one would take John 1:29 and 1 John 2:2 to mean the benefits of the Atonement extend to all people everywhere, then why is it necessary to preach the Gospel, because people would already have their sins **"taken away and propitiated"** and there would be no need for repentance and faith. Therefore, *it must mean something else* or have some other application which is consistent with all of Scripture.

**Hebrews 2:9** - 9 But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God **He might taste death for everyone.** NASB

If Christ has already **"tasted death for everyone,"** then why is there any need at all for anyone to die. Is it not rather plain that this "tasting death" is not sufficient to cover or Atonement for the sins of



non-elect people, for they will actually “*taste death*” themselves. Hell is a reality which portrays that the Atonement is **not benefiting the non-elect in the same way** it is benefiting the elect.

**2 Corinthians 5:19** - 19 namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself**, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. NASB

**1 John 4:14** -14 And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be **the Savior of the world**. NASB

Here again we have Scriptures which some will say shows that Christ’s Atonement is for the “whole world.” But this is refuted in the simple question of what is implied but such foolishness. Is the whole world of people reconciled to God through Christ in a saving sense, so that they all go to Heaven and escape the wrath of God? Of course this is not true. Also, then, is Jesus the Savior of the whole world of people in the sense that they have received salvation from sins and are reconciled to God? Nothing could be further from the truth. It is evident then that all these passages *must* have some other meaning than the implied meaning that the specific sins of unbelieving people are atoned for by Christ’s physical death.

### **Sufficient but not Efficacious**

When we speak of how the death of Christ should be viewed concerning the sins of the non-elect, we must understand that the Bible *never* makes any statement that talks about the specific sins of unbelieving people has being atoned for by Christ’s death. Rather, it speaks of “*the sins of the whole world*” or “*the sins of the world,*” grouping all sin together in one heap. But when speaking of the elect, the Scripture affords all the benefits of the Atonement to them, specifically talking about the actual sins of each individual.

**Ephesians 1:7** - 7 In Him **we have redemption through His blood**, the forgiveness of **our trespasses**, according to the riches of His grace, NASB

This is because the benefits of the Atonement are afforded to the believers through their belief in the Gospel. And this is in fact the free offer of the Gospel that goes out into “*the whole world.*” The death of Christ becomes **EFFICACIOUS** for those who believe, but remains **non-effectual** for those who do not.

**Romans 3:22-24** - 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace **through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus**; NASB

The passages which refer to Christ’s death as universal in scope clearly mean that His death was **SUFFICIENT** to atone for [all sins of all time of all people], but only becomes **EFFICACIOUS** or effectual for those who believe the Gospel and thus receive eternal salvation. Because of Christ’s perfect unblemished sacrifice, His death is *infinite* in its ability and strength to atone for “*the sins of the whole world,*” but this Atonement is only applied through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is clear that the **Bible plainly declares** that **REDEMPTION** is afforded in **PARTICULAR** to the elect Church of God only, and by God’s foreknowledge and predestination, they **ALL** come to this saving faith by the effectual calling and regeneration of the Spirit.

### **Particular Redemption can be reasoned from the Decree**

When God planned to redeem a people for his very own, and this through the Atonement, He definitely had the sins of the church in mind. This is in fact what the Covenant of Grace was. It was an agreement between the members of the Godhead to carry out the eternal plan of redemption through the role of each. The Father *planned* redemption(Election), the Son *purchased* redemption(Atonement), and the Spirit *applied* redemption(Regeneration). Thus the Church is saved by the **Decree** of the Eternal God.

**2 Timothy 1:9** - 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**, NASB

Consider a few questions when you think about God's plan to redeem and His subsequent Decree to save His elect.

- Does the atonement definitely secure salvation for the elect?
- Did God enable salvation for all men or accomplish it for His Church?
- Did God plan to redeem more than the elect number within the Church, those who have been called out?

God did in fact plan to save the Church as we have pointed out. This can be clearly seen in the outcome of all of History. In the end, the Church will be called effectually by the Spirit, fully redeemed and reconciled to God, and have fellowship with God in Heaven forever. This shows the exact purpose of the Decree of God from eternity past. This is because whatever comes to pass has been **eternally Decreed by God**. This means that God has **"approved"** of all of the events of History, (in the ultimate sense of permitting or preventing them). This we call **"Foreordination."** God has **"Fore"** (from before time began), **"ordained"** all that ever does come to pass in History. Consider how *Jonathan Edwards* has described this.... *"Whether God has decreed all things that ever come to pass or not, all that own the being of a God, own that He knows all things beforehand. Now, it is self-evident that if He knows all things beforehand, He doth approve of them or doth not approve of them; that is, He is either willing they should be, or He is not willing they should be. But to will that they should be is to decree them."*

When we ask the question, "who does finally get atoned for?", the answer is very clear, the believer in Christ.

Therefore, we see that in the end, the benefits of the Atonement are **EFFICACIOUS** for the believers **only**. The redemption which is in Christ Jesus is a **Particular Redemption**. This is clear from the outcome of History, which is equivalent to the original intention of God's plan, His eternal Decree by which He caused all things.

### Christ's Priesthood is Exclusive

It is plainly evident that Christ is not interceding for unbelievers. If He were, they would have an advocate with God and the benefit of this would be perfect mediation between God and man. But this is in fact NOT the case. The **Bible plainly declares** that Christ's sacrifice (the Atonement) benefits only the believer in Christ.

**Hebrews 10:10-15** - 10 By this will **we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**. 11 And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; 12 but He, having **offered one sacrifice for sins for all time**, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. 14 For **by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified**. NASB

When Jesus prays for the Church in His High Priestly prayer, He clearly does not pray for the world, or the unbelievers, but for "those whom you have given me" only. This is because this is a prayer of intercession which will in fact be answered by the Father absolutely and completely in the course of time.

**John 17:9-20** - 9 **"I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me**; for they are Thine; 20 **"I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; NASB**

Other verses also make this clear, that His intercession is for the believers only.

**Romans 8:33-34** - 33 **Who will bring a charge against God's elect?** God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, **who also intercedes for us**. NASB

**Hebrews 4:14-15** - 14 Since then **we have a great high priest** who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast **our confession**. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. NASB

**Hebrews 7:25** - 25 Hence, also, He is able to save forever **those who draw near to God through Him**, since **He always lives to make intercession for them**. NASB

# The Sovereignty of God

## In Salvation

### Eternal Security – What does the Bible say?

Someone may ask, “is my salvation secure, or can I lose it.” As you read on we will answer this question in detail, but for now let us say that if it depended on us, or our ability to “remain faithful” to God, we would be hopelessly lost. Who is it that possesses such mighty strength in themselves as to never fall away or sin against God? Which one of us stands in the great hour of temptation except by the keeping power of God? The truth is that Christians stand in the faith not by their own strength, but by the power of God. Your salvation is secure not because you have great faith, but because your faith is in the One who is Great! If you belong to Christ, He will not leave you or forsake you, rather being the Good Shepherd, He will **“lose none of all that the Father has given”** him. He will see to it that you make it to Heaven’s door, and you can rest assured that you have eternal life if you have been born again as He commanded. The Bible plainly declares that those who truly believe will in fact Persevere to the end by Christ’s power.

**Colossians 3:3-4** - 3 For you have died and **your life is hidden with Christ in God**. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. NASB

**1 Peter 1:3-5** - 3 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, 4 **to obtain an inheritance** which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 **who are protected by the power of God through faith** for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. NASB

Consider these words of Peter. He says that God has **“caused us to be born again to a living hope”** and that this was to **“obtain an inheritance.”** Here is seen a twofold purpose of God in saving us, that we would have a **“living hope”** and that we would **“obtain an inheritance.”** This means that God expects us to have a hope in the future inheritance in Heaven which is alive, and vibrant and sure, because of the One who has caused it. But so as to make the ground of this hope solid, he tells us, **“who are protected by the power of God through faith.”** Now here we have living hope and are assured that this inheritance is ours! Who shall thwart the mighty power and purpose of God to protect us through faith, so that we will, in the end, receive the promised inheritance? None indeed! Could there be words which describe a more secure foundation of our hope? Note well dear Christian who it is that keeps you in the day of doubt and trouble.

### They Shall Never Perish

In teaching of Jesus, he has very clearly designed to encourage us that we shall not fall away, but be kept by Him until the day of safety. Consider the heavenly words of John 10....

**John 10:27-29** - 27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and **I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish**; and **no one shall 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**." NASB

What Jesus is dealing with here is the infallible security of those whom the Father has given to Him (v-29), **“they shall never perish.”** Here the Lord makes some astounding statements about the security of the believer and their final perseverance. Here Jesus makes an emphatic statement that **“His sheep, shall never perish”** and that because He has given them **“eternal”** life. What else could the Lord have designed to say here except that our salvation is secure and that we **“shall”** live forever? However, in order to emphasize the strong nature of His statement he says, **“no one shall snatch them out of my hand.”** Here we see that His hand is what keeps us, and His point is He will keep us unto Himself and none shall pull us away or snatch us away. If this were not enough to convince us of this security, He says, **“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."* Learn, the guarantee of the final perseverance of Christ's sheep is secured not by human power, but in the hands of the Father and the Son, and because of the great power of God, none shall be lost but rather kept forever, having eternal life. The Bible plainly declares that the final perseverance of the saints is not in human hands, but in the hands of God. This is common in the teaching Jesus. Consider what He said in John 6 about *"those whom the Father had given Him."*

**John 6:39-40** - 39 "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.** 40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and **I Myself will raise him up on the last day."**  
NASB

Here Jesus clearly says of everyone *"given to Him by the Father,"* that He will *"lose nothing,"* and will in *"raise them up at the last day."* Again He makes emphatic statements about the security of the one who *"believes in Him"* (v-40). The point here is *"He will lose nothing,"* it is in *"His"* hands. And what is more, they will be resurrected and live forever, *"I will raise it up on the last day."* He also describes the quality of the life He gives as *"eternal"* and repeats for emphasis, *"I myself will raise him up on the last day."* Those who pervert this text to say something other than the clear infallible nature of the security of the believer discourage the saints and lie about the truth of their security. Dear Christian, hold firmly to this promise of our Shepherd, He will see us through to the end and we shall never perish!

### The Saints will Persevere

The New Testament writers made this doctrine very clear. We have already examined the teaching of Peter above, but consider some statements from the Apostle Paul and even the Apostle Jude, the brother of Jesus. In Romans chapter 8, Paul makes the security of the believer to rest wholly upon the nature and purpose of God. Consider that great statement in verse 1...

**Romans 8:1-2** - 1 There is therefore now **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has **set you free from the law of sin and of death.** NASB

Here Paul speaks about the nature of Christ's atoning work and the state of the Christian's justification. We are *"not condemned"* by God's Law but rather *"set free"* from that Law having the debt of sins completely paid and the matter settled. This is what it means to be a Christian! Or consider the profound truths exposed about our security and final perseverance in the Golden Chain, verses 28-30.

**Romans 8:28** - 28 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.**

Here the saints are seen as called to God's purpose, in which He is causing all things to work together for the good of. Shall God cause all things to work together for the good, and then finally fail to bring us to the end of it? Not hardly!

**Romans 8:29** - **29 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;

Is it not profoundly clear in this statement that our *"destiny"* shall be conformity to the *"image of Christ?"* It is and this is our destiny, we shall be like Him in the end and share in His glory!

This is confirmed elsewhere in Paul.

**Philippians 3:20-21** - 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 **who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory,** by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. NASB

What is more is that the calling and the foreknowledge and the predestination all have an end. This end is made crystal clear in verse 30, "glorification."

**Romans 8:30** - 30 and **whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.** NASB

The saints whom God has called, foreknown and predestined, shall be *"glorified."* These are the ones whom He elected from all eternity, shall we now think that they will be lost? Impossible!

Jude, the brother of our Lord makes a similar statement. He speaks of the keeping power of Christ and relates this to our final salvation.

**Jude 24** - 24 Now **to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand** in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, 25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. NASB

The **Bible plainly declares** that it is God who ***“keeps us from stumbling.”*** This means that God makes us persevere so that we do not finally fall away. This is in view in the following statement, ***“to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless.”*** Here again we see the divine nature of our salvation, we are ***“blameless”*** or guiltless in His presence because ***“He is able”*** to make us guiltless. We have had the guilt of all of our sins washed away by the powerful blood of Jesus so that we stand in His presence blameless! Dear saint, here is your rest, it is the shadow of the mighty cross of Jesus!

**Romans 8:31-34** - 31 What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?** 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 **Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns?** NASB

Learn, the saints will persevere to the end and be glorified in the presence of God because of God's Almighty power, His immutable purpose to save His elect, and His all-sufficient sacrifice of atonement at Calvary!

### **Does secure salvation depend on man or God?**

We are the sheep, He is the Good Shepherd. He will lose none of all that the Father has given Him (John 6:39). It is Christ who keeps us, and our assurance is rooted in His sovereign love and His mighty power to keep us and give us eternal life!

**John 10:27-29** - 27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and **I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish;** and **no one shall snatch them out of My hand.**

Notice these works are attributed to Him, not to us. We are saved because He has caused us to be born again (1Pet 1:3), and we are protected by His power (1 Pet 1:5), sustained till the end blameless (Jude 24), and further in Hebrews 10, we are made perfect forever by His sacrifice.

**Hebrews 10:14** - 14 For **by one offering He has perfected for all time** those who are sanctified. NASB  
The security of our salvation does not rest on our ability, but on God's. Perseverance is the work of God in salvation, not man. This is what is meant in the phrase, "the Sovereignty of God in salvation." We are saved by God's Sovereign electing love and power, not our human ability to keep ourselves from falling. If salvation depended on us or our ability, we would be hopelessly lost. True believers persevere by God's power. This is crystal clear in the following Pauline passage. Here Paul speaks of God's ability to ***“sanctify us entirely,”*** and to ***“preserve our whole being,”*** and to present us ***“without blame”*** at ***“the coming of our Lord.”***

**1 Thessalonians 5:23-24** - 23 Now may the God of peace Himself **sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame** at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and **He also will bring it to pass.** NASB

This is emphatically clear in verse 24 where attributes all this work to God and His faithfulness. The security of salvation rests firmly on the faithfulness of God, not man. This is exactly Paul's point. He makes a very similar statement in 1 Corinthians. Here he says God shall ***“confirm us to the end, blameless.”***

**1 Corinthians 1:7-9** - 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of **our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless** in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 **God is faithful,** through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. NASB

The **Bible plainly declares** that our final perseverance is **a matter of God's faithfulness.** He makes a very similar statement in Philipians.

**Philipians 1:6** - 6 For 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.** NASB



Dear saint, do you need more evidence that your salvation is secure? Believe God's promise! However much more is to be found. Consider that John the Apostle speaks also directly to this point when he tells us that Jesus, *"the one who is born of God, keeps us"* and *"the evil one does not touch him."*

**1 John 5:18** - 18 We know that no one who is born of God sins; but **He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.** NASB

The Bible plainly declares that the Satan cannot cause us to habitually sin so as to fall away from the faith because Christ is the One who *"keeps him."*

### Sealed by the Holy Spirit

The New Testament makes it clear that regeneration is an irreversible act of God (*see pgs. 49-52 above*). If you are born again, you cannot be unborn. Someone will ask, what about those who believe for a while, but later commit apostasy and turn from the faith? We will answer that specifically below. *Indeed the scriptures declare that having believed the gospel we are "sealed" with the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing that we will inherit the kingdom.* In these passages, it speaks of the Holy Spirit being the earnest or deposit, which is the guarantee of redemption. You cannot lose your salvation because God will see to it that you remain in Christ. Salvation is not something you lose, it is an *eternal* relationship with God you have entered into because of His mighty power and calling. You have become a child of God, because the Holy Spirit has transformed your being (born again), implanting the life of God into your being, and sealing you for the day of redemption, if you are in Christ.

**2 Corinthians 1:21-22** - 21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, 22 who also **sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.** NASB

Here Paul speaks of being "sealed" by the Spirit, and he says of this that it is a pledge. In other words, it is an earnest, a down payment toward the full payment of redemption. The Greek word here for pledge is *"arrhabon"* and means *"a pledge, part of the purchase-money or property given in advance as security for the rest:--earnest."* Therefore this is to say we are guaranteed by God to be redeemed. Paul makes similar statements as these in Ephesians.

**Ephesians 1:13-14** - 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. NASB

Paul again tells us of this *"sealing in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise"* and tells us that this is a pledge of our inheritance. Because you have received the Holy Spirit to indwell your being, you are guaranteed the outcome of redemption. This is clear from the statement *"with a view to the redemption."* The sealing of the Spirit is *unto* the redemption. This is clear also in Ephesians chapter 4.

**Ephesians 4:30** - 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, **by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.** NASB

Here Paul describes our sealing as being for the purpose of redemption. The Bible plainly declares that Christians are *sealed* by God for the end result of being redeemed. The final perseverance and salvation of true believers in Christ is certain.

**John 5:24** - 24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and **believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.** NASB

### Eternal Security is evident because of Election

The *primary* reason that you have been saved is because God chose you for salvation from the beginning (2 Thes 2:13). If you are in Christ, you're the *"elect"* or *"chosen"* of God. For this reason, you WILL persevere till the end of your life in faith and repentance. *God will so work that those whom he has chosen for eternal salvation will be enabled by Him to persevere in faith to the end and fulfill, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the requirements for obedience.*