

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE
Bible Study Notes #2, August 21, 2005

Depravity

Grand Experiment

Broadcaster Paul Harvey told a version of the following story on the radio many years ago.

There was an old man who was a great admirer of democracy and public education. So close to his heart did he hold both institutions that he tried to bring them together into one grand experiment, a public college where students would practice self-governance. There would be no regulations; the goodwill and judgment of the students would suffice. After years of planning, the school was finally opened. The old man was overjoyed.

But as the months went by, students proved time and time again that they were not the models of discipline and discernment the old man envisioned. They skipped classes, drank to excess, and wasted hours in frivolous pursuits. One night, 14 students, disguised by masks and “animated with wine,” went on a rampage that ended in a brawl. One struck a professor with a brick, and another used a cane on his victim.

In response, the college’s trustees convened a special meeting. The old man, now 82 years old and very frail, was asked to address the student body. In his remarks, he recalled the lofty principles upon which the college had been founded. He said he had expected more—much more—from the students. He even confessed that this was the most painful event of his life. Suddenly, he stopped speaking. Tears welled up in his failing eyes. He was so overcome with grief that he sat down, unable to go on.

His audience was so touched that at the conclusion of the meeting the 14 offenders stepped forward to admit their guilt. But they could not undo the damage already done. A strict code of conduct and numerous onerous regulations were instituted at the college. The old man’s experiment had failed. Why? **Because he took for granted the one essential ingredient necessary for success: *virtue*.** Only a virtuous people can secure and maintain their freedom.

A short time later, on the Fourth of July, the old man passed away. Engraved on his tombstone were the simple words that reflected the success and failure of his most important experiments: “**Thomas Jefferson**, author of the Declaration of Independence and father of the University of Virginia.” Now, as Mr. Harvey says, you know the rest of the story.

Our subject is **Total Depravity**, or perhaps better termed **Radical Depravity!** Our depravity is “**total**” as opposed to “**partial**,” and our natures are **radically corrupted**.

As R. C. Sproul once said, "Man is very, very **bad** and God is very, very **mad**." The doctrine or teaching of Total or Radical Depravity explains the Biblical concept of sin. We know the Bible is a book of *theology*, (or a study of God), but we should also be aware that the Bible is also a book of anthropology (or a study of man). It addresses such questions as:

- What is the basic nature of man? Is this nature good or evil?
- Does man sin because he is a sinner by nature, or because he was raised in an environment of sin and learned to sin?
- If he is born a sinner, or is forced to sin by his environment or training, how can he be responsible for his sin?
- What is the impact or result of this sin and nature? Is he partially or totally corrupted by sin? Is he capable of some good and some evil? How can he deal with this sin and nature?

Psalms 14:1 "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good."

You will notice that the words "*there is*" are italicized. That indicates that the words were added by the translators to make the passage read more smoothly. However, in this case, the added words are a detriment rather than a help. The text should not read, "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God," but simply, "The fool hath said in his heart, No, God," or "The fool hath said in his heart, No, to God."

If David had said, "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God," that would be a direct contradiction of Paul's teaching in Romans 1 and 2. Paul tells us plainly that there is no such thing as an atheist. There are many fools who would like to be atheists, and try to be. But all who claim to be atheists are liars. The Apostle Paul, writing by Divine inspiration, tells us that all men are born with a God consciousness from which they can never escape.

So when David writes, "The fool hath said in his heart, No, God," or "No, to God," he is not suggesting that some men really are atheists. Not at all. David is telling us that all men are foolish rebels by nature, constantly shaking their fists in God's face and saying, "No, God!" Now, read Psalm 14:1-3. You will see that what I have said exactly fits the context.

Psalms 14:1-3 "The fool hath said in his heart, **No, God!** They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good. (2) The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. (3) They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one."

In these three verses, the Holy Spirit describes the character and condition of all human beings by nature since the fall of Adam.

Here are seven facts about the entire human race.

1. All human beings are, by nature, rebellious fools, fools for their rebellion, for man's rebellion is against God Almighty!
2. The whole human race is corrupt, abominable, and filthy before God.

3. We all became corrupt, abominable, and filthy at one time, by Adam's one act of rebellion and treason against God.
4. We all, at one time, turned away from God. - In the same manner of our father Adam we willfully, deliberately turned away from our God.
5. Because of Adam's sin and our sin in him, the entire human race has become totally ignorant of all things spiritual. - *"There is none that understandeth!"*
6. No one left to himself will ever truly seek the Lord. - *"There is none that seeketh after God."*
7. And no one has the ability to do anything that is good and acceptable to God. - *"There is none that doeth good..." "There is none that doeth good, no, not one."*

The Spirit of God tells us that man is, by nature, a totally depraved, helpless, perishing creature. The Scriptures plainly teach the doctrine of man's total depravity. We take our doctrine directly from the Word of God. The basis of our faith is the Word of God alone. We do not build our doctrine upon human opinion, reason, and logic, church tradition, historic creeds, confessions, and catechisms, or denominational history and tradition, but upon *Thus saith the Lord.*" All that we believe we believe because it is plainly stated in the Word of God.

Of course, this is the **first of the five "lesser" distinctives of grace**, or the first of the doctrines of grace, or the first of the five points of Calvinism. This doctrine or teaching is sometimes referred to as the **"root principle."** Why? **The other points flow logically from and grow from the base of this understanding about the nature of man.**

HISTORY of the Debate: Since man has been in sin, there have **always been two camps** on this subject, (as there is on most any issue). Those who believe that man is still basically good, that being created in the image of God endows him with some natural goodness and virtue, that he is born basically innocent and must grow out of it, and that he has the capacity to recognize, understand and respond to the spiritual truth of the gospel and be saved. The others are those who believe that man is corrupt totally in all his being (mind, will and emotions), that we both sinners by nature and deed, and that apart from the grace of God we are hopelessly lost and would never come to God or obey His command to be saved. These two camps are often not even known to many Christians, but everyone has made a choice in this debate, whether we realize it or not.

In the fourth and fifth centuries, the two camps were labeled Pelagian and Augustinian, after a British monk named **Pelagius**, or the great theologian **Augustine** of Hippo (north Africa). Augustine wrote a prayer that was circulated throughout the early church, that said, "Lord command what Thou wilt, and give what Thou command." Pelagius disagreed sharply with the implications of this prayer and said "If I ought, I can." So from the beginning, the stage was set about the depths of man's condition and how much grace was needed from God to deal with it.

Later, in the sixteenth century and the early days of the Protestant Reformation, the two central figures became the German humanist Desiderius **Eramus** and the German theologian Martin **Luther**. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the camps took

up the names of Jacobus **Arminius** and John **Calvin** (Arminians and Calvinists). After both of these men were dead, the debate reached a climax when the Arminians petitioned the Dutch church with their Remonstrance or objections to the teachings of the Reformed church. A Synod or court was called in 1618 in Dort to deal with these objections. Because these objections and attempts to revise the Biblical doctrines were deemed so dangerous by the church, they decided to issue a formal response to their five points, which have become known as these five points of Calvinism. Neither Calvin nor the church ever taught these as distinct points of doctrine, but rather saw them as basic Biblical views of the Scripture held since the beginning of the church.

Later on, in the eighteenth century it was John **Wesley** versus Jonathan **Edwards** or George Whitefield. The great Baptist preacher of London, Charles Haddon **Spurgeon** was another to weigh in on the side of Augustine. Basically the denominations from the 1600's until the middle of the 1900's were all divided on this issue between the Methodists, the Nazarenes, the Wesleyans, the Free Will Baptists, the Pentecostals and others like the Jehovah Witnesses and the Church of Christ on the side of Pelagius and the Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Puritans, and others on the side of Augustine.

Sometime around the middle of the 20th century, the divide and debate became confused and complicated, as many Baptists, charismatics and other modern day evangelicals adopted the doctrine of the Arminians without professing it, and historic Augustinianism or Calvinism was rejected, caricatured and made into something shallow, silly and trite. The modern evangelistic movements quietly pushed these historic teachings into an anathema or accursed doctrine, so that today it is either not addressed at all or automatically agreed to without any understanding of its meaning and impact on the gospel and salvation.

SO, does the Bible clearly and plainly teach that all the human race is totally depraved? We appeal to no authority except the Word of God. Let's see and hear what God says in his Holy Word about this subject:

Ephes. 4:18 (NASB)

being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

1 Cor. 2:14 (NASB)

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.

- So what do these two verses teach about man's condition? **He is darkened and without understanding, and cannot understand spiritual things.**

John 12:40 (NASB)

"He has BLINDED THEIR EYES, AND He HARDENED THEIR HEART; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and BE CONVERTED, AND I heal them."

2 Cor. 4:4 (NASB)

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.

- So what do these two verses teach about man's condition? **He is blinded (by both Satan and GOD) and cannot see the good news of the glory of Christ.**

Romans 8:5-7 (NASB)

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;

Romans 1:30 (NASB)

slanderers, **haters of God**, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

John 3:19 (NASB)

"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.

- So what do these verses teach about man's condition? **He is hostile toward God, an enemy of God, even a hater of God, and loves darkness rather than the light.**

Titus 3:3 (NASB)

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.

John 8:34 (NASB)

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

- So what do these two verses teach about man's condition? **He is a slave to his own lusts and pleasures, a slave to sin.**

2 Tim. 3:13 (NASB)

But evil men and impostors will proceed **from bad to worse**, deceiving and being deceived.

Romans 1:24-32 (NASB)

Therefore **God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity**, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. [25] For they exchanged the truth of God for a

lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

[26] For this reason **God gave them over to degrading passions**; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, [27] and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

[28] And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, **God gave them over to a depraved mind**, to do those things which are not proper, [29] being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, [30] slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, [31] without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; [32] and, **although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.**

- So what do these verses teach about man's condition? **He is often in a state of "devolution" descending from one sin to another of growing depravity, or progressive corruption!**

Ephes. 2:1-5 (NASB)

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. [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. [4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

- Finally what do these verses teach about man's condition? **He is DEAD in his trespasses and sins, and by nature children of wrath.**
- **SO,**
- **What can someone who cannot understand spiritual things do to understand spiritual things?**
- **What can someone who is "blind" do to have sight?**
- **What can someone who is an enemy and hates their enemy, do to become loved by their enemy and love them back?**
- **What can someone who is a slave and destitute in poverty do to buy themselves back and be made free?**
- **What can someone who is in the nosedive of progressive corruption do to turn around and pursue righteousness?**
- **What can someone who is DEAD do to make themselves alive?**

Mark 7:21-22 (NASB) Jesus said:

"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, [22] deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.

Isaiah 53:6 (NASB)

All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

Isaiah 64:6 (NASB)

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And **all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment**; (*So what about our sins?*) And all of us wither like a leaf; And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

Romans 3:10-18 (NASB) God taught very clear anthropology through Paul a re-emphasis of Psalm 14:

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." [13] "Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving," "The poison of asps is under their lips"; [14] "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"; [15] "Their feet are swift to shed blood, [16] Destruction and misery are in their paths, [17] And the path of peace have they not known." [18] "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

- **Please note that this does not mean that we are as bad as we can be, nor that all men are equally bad, nor that men cannot do some good things in the eyes of their fellow man.**
- **Arminians would define "Free Will" as a power to initiate a relationship with God.**

This is manifested in the modern day approaches to evangelism. Ralph Carmichael wrote a famous "invitation song entitled *"The Savior is Waiting."* It says, "if you'll take the first step toward the Savior my friend you'll find the His arms open wide." Well the issue is not whether His arms are open wide or not (they are in a figurative sense). But the issue is whether or not we are able to take that first step or not.

Example of man "falling": Compare a fall from a second story window that leaves one broken, injured and in need of help, to a fall from the top of the Sears tower that leaves one splattered on the street and DEAD. He doesn't need help, he needs life, regeneration,AMAZING GRACE!

- The **Law** helps us to understand this teaching about our sin natures. It leads us to see our desperate condition and need in light of the Standard.

Eccles. 7:20 (NASB)

Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.

Eccles. 9:3 (NASB)

This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead.

Jeremiah 17:9 (NASB)

"The heart is more deceitful than all else, And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?

John 8:44 (NASB)

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.

Romans 14:23 (NASB)

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and **whatever is not from faith is sin.**

- What is the "Standard?" **God's righteousness, *not* our own is the standard.**
- Given choices, (apart from the grace of God) man will always choose based upon his nature. Between **good or evil; obedience or rebellion; life or death; God or self or Satan;** natural man will always choose the latter in every case.
- So, what is our hope? Are we without hope and in despair? **How can we be saved from this body of death?**

Romans 5:12, 19 (NASB) (The source of sin and death)

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--

[19] For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

1 Cor. 15:22 (NASB) (the source of life)

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

John 6:44 (NASB) (the Savior Who draws us to life)

"No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

Matthew 5:48 (NASB) (Here is "the Standard")

"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 19:26 (NASB) (Here is the solution!)

And looking upon them Jesus said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

These passages of Holy Scripture are but a very few of the many, many statements in God's Word about the total depravity of the human race. They stand without comment, declaring that all men are by nature **radically depraved**. To deny what these texts declare is to deny the Word of God. To argue against the doctrine of Total or Radical Depravity is to be found fighting against God himself!

Proposition: The Word of God plainly and universally teaches that all human beings are, since the fall of Adam, born in a state of total depravity: lost, corrupt at heart, condemned under the curse of God's holy law, and utterly incapable of removing that curse or changing their condition.

In fact, as we shall see, man's depravity is so thorough and complete that he cannot even make any contribution toward removing the curse of the law, or changing his condition. Fallen man cannot even make a move toward God, much less bring himself back to God!

Divisions: I want to be as crystal clear in stating the doctrine of man's Total Depravity as I possibly can. Unless we have a clear understanding about the depravity of man, we cannot have a clear understanding about any other gospel truth. So I ask you to give me your careful attention as I show you five things revealed in the Word of God about man's **Total Depravity**.

1. Man by nature is a fallen creature (Eccles. 7:29).
2. We were all born with a decided bias toward evil, with an utter hatred of God (Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 8:7).
3. No one has the ability to save himself by his own works (Gal 2:16).
4. No one has the will, desire or ability to come to Christ by faith (John 5:40; 6:44).
5. The only hope for depraved sinners is the free and sovereign grace of God in Christ (Rom. 9:15-16).

Applications:

- No man has any claim upon the grace of God.
- Any sinner who will come to Christ may freely come.
- All who come to Christ in true faith acknowledge most gladly that they were constrained to come.
- We who have been constrained by almighty, irresistible grace into the arms of Christ, do most gladly acknowledge and praise him for his matchless, free grace.

This is what I am saying - The whole of my salvation and yours, from start to finish, is due entirely to the grace of God.

All that I was, my sin, my guilt,
My death was all my own:

All that I am, I owe to Thee,
 My gracious God, alone.
 The evil of my former state
 Was mine, and only mine:
 The good in which I now rejoice
 Is Thine, and only Thine.
 The darkness of my former state,
 The bondage - All was mine:
 The light of life in which I walk,
 The liberty is Thine.
 The grace that made me feel my sin
 It taught me to believe:
 Then, in believing, peace I found,
 And now I live, I live!
 All that I am, even here on earth,
 All that I hope to be,
 When Jesus comes, and glory dawns,
 I owe it, Lord, to Thee!
"By the grace of God I am what I am." Amen.

Applications & Questions:

1. What does Total Depravity say about the goodness of man?
2. What does Total Depravity say about the need of man?
3. What does Total Depravity say about the innocence of man at birth or until the "age of accountability?"
4. What does Total Depravity change about popular evangelism techniques?
5. What does Total Depravity teach us about our struggles with the "flesh," or the process of sanctification?

Popular Religion

"Until we believe that we are as bad as God says we are, we can never believe that He will do for us what He says He will do. Right here is where popular religion breaks down." - A. W. Tozer

No one knows the one-hundredth part of the sin that clings to his soul. - John Calvin

Property Laws of a Toddler

(Evidences of Original Sin) Test this on the toddlers in your home or church this Christmas!

1. If I like it, it's mine.
2. If it's in my hand, it's mine.
3. If I can take it from you, it's mine.
4. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.
6. If I'm doing or building something, all the pieces are mine.
7. If it looks just like mine, it's mine.
8. If I saw it first, it's mine.
9. If you are playing with something and you put it down, it automatically becomes mine.
10. If it's broken, it's yours

Illustration of serviceman captured by the Iraqis in the Gulf War: He said he never lost hope, because he **"always believed in the basic goodness of man!"**

"We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners!"

"It is not that we MAY not come to Christ on our own, but that we CAN not!"

We cannot understand light until we comprehend (total) darkness. We cannot understand truth until we comprehend error. We cannot understand blessing until we comprehend wrath. We cannot understand God's holiness until we comprehend our depravity! We cannot understand God's grace in salvation until we comprehend our helplessness to do any part! We cannot understand gratitude until we comprehend what we have been given.

Illustration of local businessman's view on the selfish motive of all people to do anything. **"Everyone does whatever they do for what *they* can get out of it!"** Proper view of man's total depravity from a natural perspective!

Message in Tee Shirts: ***There is a God, and you are not Him!***

Message in SCC song: ***"God is God, and I am not!"***

Illustration of **Ed Pitts**: David Kadle said "I have never known a man who more exemplified what it meant to be a Christian." **He always knew Who God was and who he was not! (He understood "amazing grace," even for such a one as he; how much more for me!)**

Expanded Notes:

1. First, I want you to see that **MAN BY NATURE IS A FALLEN CREATURE** (Eccles. 7:29).

Ecclesiastes 7:29 "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man (Adam) upright; but they have sought out many inventions."

When the Lord God created our father Adam, things were far, far different from the way they are now.

- **God created Adam in perfect righteousness.**
- **He had no original sin.**
- **He had no inclination or bias toward sin.**
- **God placed Adam in a perfectly sinless environment in the garden.**
- **By God's decree, Adam was the federal head and representative of the entire human race.**

God deals with only two men: The first Adam and the Second Adam (1 Cor. 15:22, 45-49).

1 Corinthians 15:22 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

1 Corinthians 15:45-49 "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit. (46) Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. (47) The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven. (48) As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly. (49) And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

When the Lord put Adam in the Garden, whatever Adam did would be imputed to all who are in him by nature.

- If Adam obeyed God, his righteous obedience would be confirmed and imputed to all his children.
- If Adam disobeyed God and broke the covenant, his sin would be imputed to all his children.
- **Our father, Adam sinned against God, broke his covenant, and plunged himself and the entire human race into spiritual death, sin, and eternal condemnation** (Gen. 2:15-17; Rom. 5:12-19).

That is what we have seen in the last three studies. Man by nature is a fallen creature.

Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

2. Secondly, I want you to see that the Word of God plainly teaches us that - **ALL MEN, SINCE THE FALL OF ADAM, ARE BORN WITH A DECIDED BIAS TOWARD EVIL, WITH AN UTTER HATRED OF GOD** (Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 8:7).

Mark 7:21-23 Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that - "*From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness,*

wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

Romans 8:7 "Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Sin is not a social disease. It is not something a man has to learn, or be taught. It is the inbred family disease of our race. It is a matter of the heart. Because our hearts are evil, we do evil. The evil tendencies of our hearts are guarded, restrained, and kept in check by many things. But the seeds of evil are in our hearts by nature. This is what our Lord tells us. All men, regardless of age, actions, or social standing, are vile, loathsome, and corrupt at heart. This must be evidently true to any reasonable man.

- History tells us that man is a depraved creature.
- Our daily newspapers tell you that man is depraved.
- We see clear evidence of human depravity in our most darling children.
- Every man's conscience testifies of his depravity.
- Every true believer has a constant painful reminder of human depravity in his own heart.

Man is not good, but evil at heart. This world is what it is because man is what he is, sinful, depraved, and vile.

3. Thirdly, I want you to see that - **NO ONE HAS THE ABILITY TO SAVE HIMSELF BY HIS OWN WORKS.**

Galatians 2:16 "*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*"

Loraine Boettner wrote: "This doctrine of Total Inability, which declares that men are dead in sin, does not mean that all men are equally bad, nor that any man is as bad as he could be, nor that anyone is entirely destitute of virtue, nor that human nature is evil in itself...What it does mean is that since the fall, man rests under the curse of sin, that he is actuated by wrong principles, and that he is wholly unable to love God or to do anything meriting salvation."

Now let me show you why it is impossible for you, or me, or anyone else to be saved by our own works.

- God demands perfection, and we cannot give it.
- We cannot atone for our past sins.
- We cannot change the principles of our heart.
- The very best that we do is marred by sin.

Even in performing our best works, we are motivated and guided by the principles of a sinful heart, so that the very plowing of the wicked is an abomination to God, and our righteousnesses are filthy rags in his sight. Even our holy things are full of evil (Prov. 21:4; Isa. 64:6; Ex. 28:38).

Proverbs 21:4 "An high look, and a proud heart, *and* the plowing of the wicked, *is* sin."

Isaiah 64:6 "But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

Exodus 28:38 "And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD."

4. Fourthly, I want you to see that, according to the plain statements of Holy Scripture, **NO ONE HAS THE WILL, DESIRE OR THE ABILITY TO COME TO CHRIST BY FAITH (John 5:40; 6:44).**

John 5:40 "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

John 6:44 "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

This is the real issue at hand. Modern day religion, for the most part, professes to believe in original sin and total depravity. Very few people openly teach that man can save himself by his own works. **Yet most people do teach that man by nature does have the ability to come to Christ and be saved, that he has the ability in himself, by his own free-will, to believe on Christ.**

By such teachings, they men make salvation to rest ultimately upon man's free-will. According to the commonly received heresy, man's free-will makes the blood of Christ effectual, man's free will controls the operations of God, and man's free-will determines who shall populate heaven.

The Scriptures declare that man is not only morally depraved and sinful, but that he is also spiritually impotent, unwilling and incapable of coming to Christ by faith. Listen to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ again. He says, "*Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life*" (John 5:40). "*No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him*" (John 6:44). And if the Father draws a man, that man will come to Christ; and he says, "*I will raise him up at the last day.*"

In the Scriptures the idea of "Coming to Christ," simply means believing on him. **Spurgeon said**, "It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be our covering and his blood to be our atonement."

Today we are told that coming to Christ is the easiest thing in all the world. But here our Lord himself tells us that - It is utterly and entirely impossible for any man to come to Christ, unless the Father draws him by effectual and irresistible grace. Man by nature is spiritually impotent, and helpless, utterly without strength. Indeed, man is altogether dead spiritually!

- Man's inability does not lie in any physical defect.
- Man's inability is not a lack of mental power.

I am just as capable of believing on Christ mentally as I am of believing in Abraham Lincoln. The mind is just as capable of seeing the moral guilt of sin as it is of seeing the moral guilt of murder.

- Man's inability lies deep within his nature.

Illustration: A wolf cannot be domesticated and tamed into a trusted pet. A loving mother cannot stab her nursing baby to death. She has no ability to do so, because it is contrary to her nature.

- **No man can ever come to Christ of his own accord, because of the obstinacy of the human will.**

The Arminian cries, "Any man can be saved who will." That is certainly true. But that is not the question at all. The question is, Are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? And our Lord answers that question with an emphatic, No!

The human will is so desperately set on evil, so thoroughly depraved, so inclined toward evil, and so disinclined toward good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible grace and call of God the Holy Spirit, no human being will ever come to Christ by faith.

- **No man will ever, of his own accord, come to Christ, because his understanding is darkened (John 3:3).**

John 3:3 "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- He cannot see the exceeding evil of his own heart.
- He cannot see the strict justice of God's law.
- He cannot see the glory of electing grace.
- He cannot see the glory of our Lord's incarnation.
- He cannot see the glory of Christ's obedience unto righteousness.
- He cannot see the glory of Christ's substitutionary redemption.
- He cannot see the glory of Christ's intercession.
- **No man will ever, of his own accord, come to Christ, because his affections are corrupt.**

We love what we ought to hate. And we hate what we ought to love. *"Men love darkness rather than light."*

- **No man will ever come to Christ of his own voluntary accord, without the power of God, because his conscience is depraved.**

Conscience may tell me that such and such a thing is wrong. But how wrong it is conscience does not know. The unenlightened conscience of man will never tell him that...

- He deserves eternal damnation.
- He must abhor himself.
- He must have a perfect righteousness.
- He must have a perfect atonement.
- **It is true that men will not, and it is true that man cannot, by their own power, come to Christ - "No man can."**

As I said a moment ago, man by nature is dead, spiritually dead. Certainly, if words mean anything, that means that man is without any spiritual power or ability whatsoever.

NOTE: If it is true that the Holy Spirit only gives me a choice or a will to come to Christ, and that the power to come is mine, then certainly I would have a right to share in the glory of my salvation.

NOTE: Because man is guilty of sin, and because he sinfully refuses to believe on Christ, he remains under the wrath of God, and eternal damnation will be his just reward.

But I cannot leave you with such a sad and gloomy picture. It is a terribly black scene that I have set before you...

- Man by nature is fallen.
- Our hearts are evil.
- Our works are evil.
- We are spiritually impotent.
- And we are justly condemned.

But there is a bright ray of hope for such creatures as we are.

5. Finally: THE ONLY HOPE FOR FALLEN, GUILTY, DEPRAVED, HELPLESS, AND VILE SINNERS, SUCH AS WE ARE, IS THE FREE AND SOVEREIGN GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST (Rom. 9:15-16)

If salvation depends in any measure upon you or me, all hope is gone. But since it is entirely the work of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ, there is hope even for us! He says, *"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy"* (Rom. 9:15-16).

This is what God does for sinners by his sovereign, eternal grace.

- **He chose to save a great multitude from Adam's fallen race.**
- **He determined to save his elect people by the sacrifice of his Son.**
- **He sent his Son into the world to accomplish eternal redemption for us.**
- **He sends his Spirit to regenerate his chosen people and effectually call them to Christ in faith.**
- **He gives life to the dead.**
- **He convicts of sin.**
- **He reveals Christ.**
- **He causes the awakened sinner, by the power of his irresistible grace to come to Christ,**

Other Verses for Reference:

Genesis 6:5 "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Job 15:16 "How much more abominable and filthy *is* man, which drinketh iniquity like water?"

Psalms 51:5 "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Psalms 58:3 "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

Isaiah 1:4-6 "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. (5) Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. (6) From the sole of the foot even unto the head *there is* no soundness in it; *but* wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

Isaiah 53:6 "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Jeremiah 13:23 "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Matthew 15:19-20 "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: (20) These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

Romans 3:9-12 "What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

Romans 8:2-8 "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 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)
(Discuss illustration of a slave in bondage and his ability to secure his freedom.)

1 Corinthians 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."

Ephesians 2:1-3 "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

(Discuss illustration of a dead man from a terminal disease, and his ability to receive the cure for the disease.)

John 3:19 "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE
Bible Study Notes #4, September 4 & 11, 2005

Unconditional Election

Huckleberry Finn, who disliked church and sermons, complained to Tom Sawyer “I got to go to church and sweat and sweat – I hate them ornery sermons. I can’t ketch a fly in there, I can’t chew. I got to wear shoes all Sunday.” But he really complained about one sermon over all others. “Two of the toughest hours I ever did spend was listening to a Presbyterian minister drone on about *pre-fore-destination*.”

I once met with a colorful local man who told me that he did not have any use for a certain local pastor, because “he teaches that *predetermination* mess and sends babies to hell.”

Then there is the joke about the Christian who never did know what he believed about this subject. He died and went to heaven, only to find two gates with lines. One was marked Calvinist and the other Arminian. He did not know which to choose, so he just picked the Calvinist line. Once he got to the front, he was asked why he was in that line. He responded that it was just the one he chose. So he was told that he was in the wrong line, and that he had to go to the Arminian line. Once he got to the front of it, he was asked why he was in that line. He responded that he was sent there. They said, “you’re in the wrong line!”

But in reality sermons or teachings on predestination or election are indeed rare. In fact, most people (including pastors) are afraid to even bring up these words that God uses in His word repeatedly. *Why?* It seems that most are afraid of the subject, many are mad about the subject (one way or the other), and a few are humbled by the subject.

Indeed this second of what is known as the five points of the doctrines of grace or historic Calvinism is a controversial subject, but *why?* It is not because of its complexity or obscurity, but because of how it challenges our natures, our human pride and our human perceptions of fairness.

- What is the only position that a Christian who claims to believe the Bible can take on the subject of election or predestination that is clearly anti-Biblical, whether they are more Arminian or Calvinistic? *That they just don’t believe in it at all! “That’s just not in the Bible!”* It is clearly a Biblical topic; that cannot be argued. The question is what does it mean?

DEFINITIONS: (all are related terms, really the same doctrine or teaching; one cannot be separated from the other)

Predestination - the doctrine that God decided at the beginning of time who would go to Heaven after death and who would not. This means much more than simply “foreknowledge”, but implies prepared for relationship beforehand.

Election - the fact of being chosen by God, or God's act of choosing somebody for salvation, a task, or special favor. The root word simply means "chosen."

Unconditional - complete or guaranteed, with no conditions, limitations, or provisos attached

Therefore, **unconditional election** refers to the decree and action of God whereby He chooses who will be saved without any basis, conditions or limitations

- How then can we understand the doctrine of election or predestination?
- **Two Approaches to this Teaching or Doctrine:**
 1. **Systematic Theology Approach**
 2. **Biblical Approach**

I. **Systematic Theology Approach to Election**

This does not mean that the approach is anti-Biblical or un-Biblical. It just means that the logic is more systematic based upon the systems observed in the Scriptures, as opposed to the Biblical approach. The Biblical approach is based upon texts of Scripture primarily, rather than systems of thought or theology.

God does expose Himself and His teachings for us in *systems* or organized structures of thought. Observing a system should not become the guide and authority without Biblical support. But systematic approaches can often be helpful for us to understand and to grasp such a doctrine.

One of the most famous systematic approaches to this issue was held at the Synod (or court) of Dort (in the Netherlands) from November 1618 through May 1619. This was after both Calvin and Arminius had both died. Neither taught a simple list of five points.

The followers of Arminius were petitioning the church of Holland to change their formal teaching from what Calvin and others had taught in general to the new ideas that Arminius had developed. They filed their complaints or remonstrance in five articles. The response of the Synod Dort were a reply to the five articles presented to them by the Arminians. These responses of the Synod of Dort (*not Calvin*) became known as the five points of Calvinism.

Their decisions and explanations are known as Canons (or rules) of Dort. The first chapter deals with the topic on unconditional election.

- There are two different ways to begin to discuss the concept of predestination:
 1. The mind of God in eternity past
 2. The nature and problem of man's sin nature

The Synod of Dort started with the second point about man's sin nature. Remember that Total Depravity is called the "root principle." *Why?* IF we get the doctrine of man's nature and sin correct, what conclusion other than (the need for) election can we have?

Let's review the Synod of Dort's Articles of this first Chapter about Unconditional Election:

- Article 1: Addresses the sin nature of man (Ref. Rom. 3:19, 23; 6:23)

With this perspective in mind, is God obligated to save *anyone*? *Should* God save *anyone*? If God saved *no one*, would he be unfair?

The question everyone focuses upon is "Why would God send anyone to hell?" The real question is "Why would God send anyone to heaven?"

- Article 2: Based upon the above nature of man, the need for the Gospel (good news for the problem) logically follows. (Ref. 1John 4:9; John 3:16)

One of the (many) false views or caricatures of election:

"Many want to be saved, but cannot because they are not elect!"

But, who seeks for God, who desires God, who desires to be saved and live for Him? (Rom. 3:11 – Again the issue is the depravity of man!) *Nobody!* And, if anyone desires to be saved, then "whosoever will may come!"

So, everyone gets what they want!

Example of the rich man in Luke 16:19-31: Although he was in torment in Hades and begged for mercy and some relief from his agony, he still was not repentant and did not ask that he might be released and join Lazarus in heaven.

- Article 3: God also provides the *means* for delivering the Gospel to mankind – preaching of the Word! (Ref. Rom. 10:14-15)

Since election is true, why is evangelism necessary? It is the means that God chose to work through! (He could have used any other means, but chose to work through us! What a privilege and responsibility to be involved in His Divine work!)

- Article 4: Describes the hopeless state of those who reject the Gospel. They are under the wrath of God.
- Article 5: Explains that the guilt is with man, *not* with God. Just like the gift (of grace) is with God, not with man! (Ref. Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29)

Why is God not responsible for man's being lost if election is true?

Men are sinners by birth, nature and their own choice!

Men reject His grace by nature and their own choice!

In fact, God must *overcome* our sin, rejection and defiance toward His Gospel and grace!

If this were not true, then those who do believe must receive the Gospel because of something in themselves – a greater wisdom, nature, goodness, power of the will, etc. So they would have something to boast about within themselves that the lost do not! (As opposed to it being something in God!)

- Article 6: States that it is something in God! His eternal decree based only upon His good will and pleasure (love). Because of this will of God, He softens and draws His elect children. (Ref. Acts 15:18, Eph. 1:11)

Predestination and election shows us the very character and nature of God!

In leaving some sinners in their sin, His righteousness, holiness and justice.

In giving grace to some, His love, grace and mercy.

In fact, it is amazing that some **believers** find this doctrine so offensive and terrible! *Who should find it so offensive and terrible? **Unbelievers!***

Believers should find this doctrine so comforting, consoling and assuring!

Why? Our salvation did not originate with us, nor does it depend upon us!

God saves us from beginning to end!

- Article 7: A Summary Statement, with five main points
 1. Election is the unchangeable purpose of God
 2. The only motive(s) for His choice is in His good pleasure and for His glory
 3. God chooses specific individuals for life
 4. These cannot boast in anyway about their election
 5. God does not just begin the process; from beginning to end it is of God
- Articles 8 -18 deal with specific details or aspects about election (These may need to be skipped?)
- Article 12: Deals with the **assurance** of election
How to cultivate the assurance of election:
 1. Do not try to know the mind of God directly. Apart from His revelation of Himself in His Word, we have *no* direct access to Him or His decrees. Trying to figure Him out on our own is hopeless and can lead to disastrous results!
 2. Look to the Scriptures. Let Him speak for Himself and believe it!
 3. Look to ourselves. What evidence can we see in ourselves as believers? Where does the true worship, love for God, desire for God, genuine love for others, Godly thoughts, etc. come from? (Anything good is certainly not from *us*!)
- Article 15: Deals with the very difficult issue of **reprobation** (the converse of election)
The doctrine of reprobation has two main parts:
 1. The passing over of some in His dispensation of grace
 2. The just condemnation and punishment of them for their sin and rejection

This is the most difficult aspect of the doctrine. But it illuminates election!

“God is in no sense the author of sin, but is the Savior from sin and the Judge of sin!”

(Ref. Rom. 9: “hated” is not “loved less”; and even the quoted source of Malachi 1:2-3 is clear that the issue is individuals not nations)

II. Biblical Approach to Election

Let the Bible speak for itself without any attempt to follow some systems of thought. It does not conflict with the above systematic approach, but rather supports it.

A. Various Verses (Read and discuss each)

First, what did Jesus say personally about this?

Matthew 22:14 (NASB) "For many are called, but few are **chosen**."

Mark 13:27 (NASB) "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together **His elect** from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven.

Luke 18:7 (NASB) now shall not God bring about justice for **His elect**, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

John 15:16 (NASB) "**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.

What do we do with the following verse?

Acts 13:48 (NASB) 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**.

(I have never heard of any explanation to this verse except to take it as it reads!)

Then consider the great teaching in Ephesians:

Ephes. 1:4-6, 11-12 (NASB) 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.

[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**.

- **In fact, Ephesians 1 is a great study on this doctrine:**

Paul's approach is not as if this is an incidental or divisive theme, but as an essential, central and unifying theme! Like Romans 8, Ephesians 1 has a golden chain of blessings from God, and election is just one of them.

1. What to Speak

Election is Theocentric, not man centered!

On what basis did this choosing take place?

- a. not of us, because it was before we were (v. 4)
- b. in Christ, and because of Him (v. 5, 6)
- c. for God's pleasure & will (v. 5)
- d. **freely**, as God is free in election (v. 6)

God is utterly Sovereign in election. No where is the term "free will" (for man) found!

2. When to Speak

Some say that election is a problem and should be kept hidden, undiscussed and untaught. *What do you think?*

Why do some feel that way? Because it is mysterious and difficult, but so is the doctrine of the **Trinity!**

Because it is controversial, unpopular and divisive, but so is the doctrine of **hell!**

Because it is so "unfair" (by our standards), but so is the imputation of righteous to us and our sins to Christ!

What is the current impact and effects of the church **not addressing** this doctrine?

Man centered theology, man centered gospels – health, wealth, prosperity, shallow doctrine and teaching that does not take the Bible seriously, cheap emotional evangelism based on techniques and strategy rather than the power and promise of God, etc.

3. Why to Speak

Because it glorifies God! (Eph. 1:6)

Because it glorifies Christ!

Because it diminishes us!

- **How to Speak**

Humbly, with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love for others (Col. 3:12)

Do we speak about these things in this way, as ones who have ***nothing*** to boast about, and who are totally dependent upon God! **OR do we become somewhat “Arminian” in our view of election, in that we boast of our understanding of election (even though not in our salvation)?**

Other Scriptures:

Mark 13:20, 22, 27 (Same as in Matthew 24:22, 24, 31) (NASB) "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. [22] for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead the **elect** astray. [27] "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together **His elect** from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven.

Romans 8:33 (NASB) Who will bring a charge against **God's elect**? **God is the one who justifies**;

What comfort there is in the previous verse!

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

1 Tim. 5:21 (NASB) I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of **His chosen angels**, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.

God evidently also chose the angels who did not rebel against Him.

Now consider how God addresses His children in the following:

2 Tim. 1:9 (NASB) 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,

2 Tim. 2:10 (NASB) 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.

Titus 1:1 (NASB) 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,

1 Peter 1:1-2 (NASB) 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.

In fact, the term is synonymous with believer or Christian. Notice how common this form of address is in the following:

1 Peter 5:13 (NASB) She who is in Babylon, **chosen together with you**, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.

2 John 1:1, 13 (NASB) The elder to **the chosen lady** and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, [13] The children of your chosen sister greet you.

Even to the end of the Scriptures and time, this is common:

Rev. 17:14 (NASB) "These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are **the called and chosen and faithful**."

Sometimes the elect is made synonymous with "beloved."

1 Thes. 1:4 (NASB) knowing, brethren **beloved by God, His choice of you**;

2 Thes. 2:13 (NASB) 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.

Notice the term "sheep" is another comparative term meaning the same:

John 10:26 (NASB) "But you do not believe, **because you are not of My sheep**."

Notice He did not say, "you are not of My sheep because you do not believe!"

Romans 8:29 (NASB) 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;

What is the object of the verb "foreknow"? *whom* So this refers to God's foreknowledge of persons, not their choices or events!

Romans 11:28-29 (NASB) 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.**

Many who object to this doctrine, do not take offense with God's choice of Israel over all other nations and peoples:

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

In fact, all God does throughout history is choose one person or thing after another! What is the basis (as it relates to man) of God's electing one and not another? The Bible never answers except in a negative sense (1Cor. 1) and a non-specific sense (Deu. 7).

1 Cor. 1:26-31 (NASB) 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."

Deut. 7:6-8 (NASB) "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.

Deut. 10:15 (NASB) "Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and **He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples**, as it is this day.

1 Samuel 12:22 (NASB) "For the Lord will not abandon His people on account of His great name, **because the Lord has been pleased to make you a people for Himself**.

Psalms 33:12 (NASB) Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.

Read and study **Romans Chapter 9**, especially focusing on verses **8-26**. **What does this mean?**

Romans 9:8-26 (NASB)

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." [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.** [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.**

[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? [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. [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."

Does our view of election anticipate the kind of responses that Paul obviously did in the above passage? (That it is not fair, it is unjust; and that how does God hold us accountable if we are not in control, how do we balance His sovereignty with our responsibility, etc.) If it does not, perhaps we don't have the right view. If we have found a view that makes it easy to take or accept, it probably is wrong!

The theologian A. A. Hodge has well remarked that, "**rightly understood, this doctrine (1) exalts the majesty and absolute sovereignty of God, while it illustrates the riches of his free grace and his just displeasure with sin. (2.)** It enforces upon us the essential truth that **salvation is entirely of grace.** That **no one can either complain** if passed over, **or boast** himself if saved. **(3.)** It brings the inquirer to **absolute self-despair and the cordial embrace of the free offer of Christ. (4.)** In the case of the believer who has the witness in himself, **this doctrine at once deepens his humility and elevates his confidence to the full assurance of hope**"

- **Comparison of the two views of Election:**

REF: Charts Nos. 56, 57, & 58 in *Charts of Christian Theology & Doctrine*

Arminianism or “Conditional” VS. Calvinism or “Unconditional”

Discuss these verses as opposing the Unconditional Election view:

Ezekiel 33:11 (NASB) "Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord God, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'

1 Tim. 2:3-4 (NASB) This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, [4] who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

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

John 3:5-7 (NASB)

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.'

1 Peter 1:16 (NASB) because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Matthew 11:28 (NASB) "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

Romans 10:13 (NASB) for "Whoever WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE Lord will be saved."

Romans 8:29 (NASB) 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;

1 Peter 1:1-2 (NASB) 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.

- J. I. Packer said "The Arminians say I owe my election to my faith; the Calvinist says I owe my faith to my election."
- **Quotes from Spurgeon about Election (pages 62 – 66 of 2200 Quotations)**

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE
Bible Study Notes #6, September 25, 2005

“LIMITED” (DEFINITE OR SPECIFIC) ATONEMENT

The third of the five points of what is known as Calvinistic theology is by far the most controversial, and the most misunderstood!

The term “**atonement**” is from a Hebrew word meaning “cover” or “cancel”, and a Greek root meaning “exchange” or “reconciliation.” So in general, the word atonement refers to the covering over of sin, the reconciliation between God and man, the canceling of the sin debt and its deserved wrath of God, or the great exchange between God and man whereby man receives His righteousness and pardon and Christ receives man’s sin and punishment.

So if the concept of the atonement is clearly Biblical, **why** is this teaching or doctrine so controversial or misunderstood? Is it *more* controversial or misunderstood?

The controversy comes from the adjective “**limited**” which seems to imply a limiting or devaluing of Christ’s work on the cross. But the limiting is in scope or extent of the atonement being efficacious or effectual, or exactly *who* is “atoned”. So the teaching and its controversy is about the specific or definite nature of the atonement, rather than its power or value.

Read quote #51 from C. H. Spurgeon on p. 18 of *2200 Quotations from ...*

Read quote from John MacArthur about his view of “limited atonement”

Before studying the verses below, consider these questions:

1. What was the purpose or design of the atonement of Christ? Why did He do it?
2. Who was His primary concern? Who was his secondary concern?
3. Why is it true that all Christians (unless you consider universalists) limit the atonement in some ways (extent, scope, power, accomplishment, etc.)?
4. Did the Father impose His wrath and the Son undergo punishment for all the sins of all men, all the sins of some men, some of the sins of all men, or some of the sins of some men, or a combination of these things?

Doesn’t *everyone* “**limit**” the atonement in some sense? What are our choices here?

- a. The atonement is unlimited in scope or intent and in power or value
- b. The atonement is limited in scope or intent but unlimited in power or value
- c. The atonement is unlimited in scope or intent but limited in power or value
- d. The atonement is limited in scope or intent and in power or value

The first view would be a **universalist view**, meaning that all men are saved. The last view would be a **meaningless view**, since only some men would have some benefit of the atonement, meaning that God is not only discriminating but also not omnipotent in

His discrimination. SO, there are basically **two views** of the atonement. (Items 2 and 3 above.) The first is called the Calvinist view, or the **Definite or Specific Atonement** view. The second is called the Arminian view, or the **Unlimited or General Atonement** view.

Loraine Bottner said, "The Arminian view of the atonement can be compared to a wide bridge that extends most of the way across a river. In order to reach the other side, the sinner must take the last and final step. The Calvinist, on the other hand, believes that the bridge, while narrow, does reach to the other side. The sinner does not and cannot take any steps. Regeneration is the rapture of the sinner from one kingdom to the other and it is the work of Christ alone."

5. Depending upon which answer you choose to the above, what does that mean about who is saved and who is responsible for that salvation being accomplished?

- Relative to question #1 above, consider:

Ephes. 1:9-12 (NASB) He made known to us **the mystery of His will**, according to **His kind intention which He purposed in Him** [10] with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him [11] also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined **according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will**, [12] to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be **to the praise of His glory**.

- Relative to question #2 above, consider:

John 6:38 (NASB) "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but **the will of Him who sent Me**.

John 17:4 (NASB) "I **glorified Thee** on the earth, having accomplished **the work which Thou hast given Me to do**.

Romans 5:8 (NASB) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us**.

- Relative to questions #3 - 5 above and the extent of who Christ died for, consider:

Isaiah 53:11-12 (NASB) As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify **the many**, As He will bear their iniquities.

[12] Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the

transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin **of many**, And interceded for the transgressors.

Matthew 20:28 (NASB) just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life **a ransom for many**."

Matthew 22:14 (NASB) "For **many** are called, but **few** are chosen."

Rev. 5:9 (NASB) 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**.

John 10:11, 26-28 (NASB) "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for **the sheep** (*not the wolves or the goats*). [26] "But you do not believe, because you are **not of My sheep**. [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.

- But what about the verses below – Do they contradict the above?

John 3:16 (NASB) "For God so loved **the world**, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

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

1 Tim. 2:3-4 (NASB) This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, [4] who desires **all men** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

2 Peter 2:1 (NASB) 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 Peter 3:9 (NASB) The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for **all** to come to repentance.

2 Cor. 5:19 (NASB) 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.

- Remember to interpret the above verses in and based upon **context!**
- Play clip from *Amazing Grace* DVD (Chapter 10, 20833-21200) about hyperbolic figures of speech like "all", "world", etc.

- For further thought, consider for whom did the high priest of Israel offer his sacrifices? (Exo. 28)

Exodus 28:1-43 (NASB) "Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me-- Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. [2] "And you shall **make holy garments** for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. [3] "And you shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me. [4] "And these are the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a sash, and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister as priest to Me. [5] "And they shall take the gold and the blue and the purple and the scarlet material and the fine linen.

[6] "They shall also make **the ephod of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet material** and fine twisted linen, the work of the skillful workman. [7] "It shall have two shoulder pieces joined to its two ends, that it may be joined. [8] "And the skillfully woven band, which is on it, shall be like its workmanship, of the same material: of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen. [9] "And you shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them **the names of the sons of Israel**, [10] six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, according to their birth. [11] "As a jeweler engraves a signet, you shall engrave the two stones according to the names of the sons of Israel; you shall set them in filigree settings of gold. [12] "And you shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, **as stones of memorial for the sons of Israel, and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders for a memorial.** [13] "And you shall make filigree settings of gold, [14] and two chains of pure gold; you shall make them of twisted cordage work, and you shall put the corded chains on the filigree settings.

[15] "And you shall make **a breastpiece of judgment**, the work of a skillful workman; like the work of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen you shall make it. [16] "It shall be square and folded double, a span in length and a span in width. [17] "And you shall mount on it four rows of stones; the first row shall be a row of ruby, topaz and emerald; [18] and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond; [19] and the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; [20] and the fourth row a beryl and an onyx and a jasper; they shall be set in gold filigree. [21] "And **the stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel: twelve, according to their names**; they shall be like the engravings of a seal, each according to his name for the twelve tribes. [22] "And you shall make on the breastpiece chains of twisted cordage work in pure gold. [23] "And you shall make on the breastpiece two rings of gold, and shall put the two rings on the two ends of the breastpiece. [24] "And you shall put the two cords of gold on the two rings at the ends of the breastpiece. [25] "And you shall put the other two ends of the two cords on the two filigree settings, and put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, at the front of it. [26] "And you shall make two rings of gold and shall place them on the two ends of the breastpiece, on the edge of it, which is toward the inner side of the ephod. [27] "And you shall make two rings of gold and put them on the bottom of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, on the front of it close to the place where it is joined, above the skillfully

woven band of the ephod. [28] "And they shall bind the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a blue cord, that it may be on the skillfully woven band of the ephod, and that the breastpiece may not come loose from the ephod. [29] "And **Aaron shall carry the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment over his heart when he enters the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.** [30] "And you shall put in the breastpiece of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the Lord; and Aaron shall carry the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the Lord continually.

[31] "And you shall make **the robe of the ephod** all of blue. [32] "And there shall be an opening at its top in the middle of it; around its opening there shall be a binding of woven work, as it were the opening of a coat of mail, that it may not be torn. [33] "And you shall make on its hem pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet material, all around on its hem, and bells of gold between them all around: [34] a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, all around on the hem of the robe. [35] "And it shall be on Aaron when he ministers; and its tinkling may be heard when he enters and leaves the holy place before the Lord, that he may not die.

[36] "You shall also make **a plate of pure gold and shall engrave on it**, like the engravings of a seal, 'Holy to the Lord.' [37] "And you shall fasten it on a blue cord, and it shall be on the turban; it shall be at the front of the turban. [38] "And **it shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall take away the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel consecrate, with regard to all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.** [39] "And you shall weave the tunic of checkered work of fine linen, and shall make a turban of fine linen, and you shall make a sash, the work of a weaver.

- Also, does Christ make any distinctions in **who He prays for?** (Heb. 7:25; John 17:1-9)

Hebrews 7:25 (NASB) 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.**

John 17:1-9 (NASB) These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee, [2] even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that **to all whom Thou hast given Him**, He may give eternal life. [3] "And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. [4] "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do. [5] "And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. [6] "I manifested Thy name **to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me**, and they have kept Thy word. [7] "Now they have come to know that everything Thou hast given Me is from Thee; [8] for the words which Thou gavest Me I have given to them; and they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from Thee, and they believed that Thou didst send Me. [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;**

- Therefore, neither we nor the Bible always mean “ALL” everytime we use the word “all.” Neither does the word “world” always mean every single person in the entire world!

- **But what about John 3:16?**

What was the *context*? *Who* was Jesus speaking to? *What* was the Jewish mindset of that day? So, what does “the world” mean? (Nicodemus would expect a Messiah of, for and by the Jews only!) Would God really “give” His Son for people who reject Him, or punish and kill Him for people who eventually go to hell? Was His coming to earth, His life, and His sacrifice on the cross all wasted for some of “the world?”

- **Read John 10 about His sheep**

John 10:2-6, 14-18, 25-30 (NASB) [2] “But he who enters by the door is **a shepherd of the sheep**. [3] “To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and **he calls his own sheep by name**, and leads them out. [4] “When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and **the sheep follow him because they know his voice**. [5] “And a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” [6] This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

[14] “**I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me**, [15] even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and **I lay down My life for the sheep**. [16] “And **I have other sheep, which are not of this fold (Israel)**; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become **one flock with one shepherd**. [17] “**For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again**. [18] “No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

[25] Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these bear witness of Me. [26] “But **you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep**. [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. [30] “I and the Father are one.”

- James Petigru Boyce, founder of the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, noted:
 1. The sheep are those to whom He will give eternal life
 2. They are those for whom He lays down His life
 3. They are not “all,” because He tells those who are rejecting Him that they are not His sheep
 4. The whole language used implies that the salvation of the sheep alone is the object for which His life is laid down.

“Jesus did not say He laid down His life for the wolves, goats and sheep! He died for a particular people – ***My sheep!***”

- But what about (Arminian proof) verses like:

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

Who is Peter writing to? God is not willing for any of *us* or His elect to perish. This is more of a Calvinist proof text!

1 Tim. 2:3-4 (NASB) This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, [4] who desires **all men** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Paul is justifying or defending his ministry to the Gentiles (as well as the Jews).

2 Peter 2:1 (NASB) 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.

That which is bought falls short of redemption. The word for Lord is *despotes* meaning ruler, master or owner. The word for “bought” is *agorazo*, which implies ownership. Peter is not teaching about the atonement at all, much less a universal atonement (that includes even false teachers!).

- Distinguish between *historic* Arminianism or Arminianism of the Remonstrance and modern Arminianism.

“Arminians teach that Christ suffered for us; that what Christ did He did for every person; therefore what He did could not have been to pay the penalty, since no one would then ever go into eternal perdition.” Dr. J. Kenneth Grider (Nazarene Professor)

This is at least consistent with the Bible, since it clearly uses words like ransom, redemption, propitiation, etc.

- Was the sacrifice of Christ a real and complete **payment** for or a **possibility** of salvation? What does logic or common sense have to do with this issue, if everyone is not saved?

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE Bible Study Notes #8, October 30, 2005

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

Special Note @ Reformation Day:

It is noteworthy that today is Reformation Sunday, the Sunday before Reformation Day on October 31. This celebrates and acknowledges the event that sparked the Protestant Reformation, when Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. He posted them there on the eve of All Saints' Day mass (celebrated on November 1), ensuring that these points of discussion would be noticed by the throngs of people coming to worship that next day. He meant these theses to be points of academic discussion, not to serve as the basis of major reform of the Roman Catholic church. However, they were quickly translated into German, copies made of the new printing presses, distributed throughout Europe, and the sparks of a firestorm that swept through the church. November 1 has traditionally been celebrated as All Saints Day and November 2 as All Souls Day; the first in honor of the deceased and departed faithful saints and martyrs of the church, and the second in commemoration of the departed souls that may have not been cleansed from venial sins (and could be helped with prayers and the mass). This was perhaps the church's response and substitution for the Day of the Dead or other pagan festivals about the dead celebrated on November 1. "Halloween" came from a contraction of All Hallows Eve as the day before this special day. (A trivial note is that the New Orleans Saints were so named because the NFL granted them their franchise on November 1, 1966.)

It is very sad that the focus of the world, including all Protestant churches, has become the celebrations related to the new meaning of Halloween, and almost no one thinks about or even knows of Reformation Day. What has become the most commercialized holiday season replaces what should be the most important Protestant celebration of the year. Without the Protestant Reformation, we would all be Roman in our doctrine and the essence of the Gospel and true Christian faith according to the scriptures would be lost.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

We have come to the fourth of the Five Points of Calvinism or the Doctrines of Grace, which is misleadingly named "**Irresistible Grace**". A better term may be **Efficacious Grace**.

As in our last lesson about *Grace Alone*, to understand this doctrine, we must first **define the terms** involved. The Bible is a story of salvation of a very unique and special nature. There is nothing else which gives us a perfect comparison or analogy. (No illustration of grace comes close to the real thing!) One of the many "Bible words" used so much by church goers and genuine Christians alike is **grace!** In many ways it could be called the *keyword of Christianity!* Only with it can any or all of the Biblical doctrines be understood, and without it none of the major doctrines, especially salvation, can be explained or understood.

- **“Grace”** in the Bible means a gift which causes joy, pleasure, or gratification; a kindness granted; a benefit; a favor done without the expectation of return; a gift from God! Its various related forms (as nouns, verbs or adjectives) similarly refer to gifts or gifting or favor without reason, merit or works and based upon the initiative of God alone.

“Grace” is at opposition to, in tension with, and the antithesis of **“works”** (*erga*) in the Bible. These two concepts are ***mutually exclusive***. So it affirms the initiative and gift of God based upon His loving-kindness, mercy and nature; but also denies that it is based upon merit or is deserved in any way by the recipient. **Grace is simply the unmerited favor and gift of God. As discussed before, it can be said and viewed that -**

All God does he does for His GLORY!

All God does for us, He does by His grace!

- **“Irresistible”** may be a very misleading term, as some make it to imply that every grace or influence of God cannot be resisted. That is not what is meant by this term! In this case, “irresistible” means that God can and does overcome all resistance to His plan of salvation and make His influence irresistible.
- **Irresistible Grace refers to the Sovereign work of God to overcome the rebellion of our hearts and bring us to faith in Christ so that we can be saved.**

God is indeed Sovereign in all things (even by definition of God this must be true), but He declares it so in Scripture plainly and clearly:

Daniel 4:34-35 (NASB) "But at the end of that period I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,

And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

[35] "And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,

But **He does according to His will in the host of heaven**

And among the inhabitants of earth;

And no one can ward off His hand

Or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?'

Psalms 115:3 (NASB) **But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.**

The issue here is **God's Sovereignty in salvation**. The theological word for this field of study is called **soteriology**. If God is Sovereign at all, how much more so must He be in salvation!

- To help better understand the issue and point, many use alternate terms like “**efficacious grace**” or “**effectual calling**” to explain the doctrinal teachings of the Scripture that are related to **irresistible grace**.

Remember that “**efficacious**” means **able to effect something**: having the power to produce the desired result, especially a cure or an improvement in somebody’s condition.

- *What do we believe and teach about these things?*

The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith (and *The Westminster Confession of Faith* similarly) states that (in Chapter 10 Sections 1 and 2):

1. At a time appointed by and acceptable to God, those whom God has predestined to life are **effectually called by His Word and Spirit out of the state of death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ**. Their minds are given spiritual enlightenment and, as those who are being saved, they begin to understand the things of God. God takes away their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh. He renews their will, and by His almighty power He sets them to seek and follow that which is good, at the same time effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ. **And to all these changes they come most freely, for they are made willing by divine grace.**
2. **God’s effectual call is the outcome of His free and special grace alone**. Until a man is given life, and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is dead in sins and trespasses, so is entirely passive in this work of salvation, a work that does not proceed from anything good foreseen in him, nor from any power or agency resident in him. **The power that enables him to answer God’s call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, is no less than that which effected the resurrection of Christ from the dead.**

The Shorter Catechism (in answer to Question 31 “What is effectual calling?”) states:

“**Effectual calling** is the Work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, **He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel.**”

Perhaps we should distinguish between **efficacious (or saving or special) grace** and **common (or general) grace**:

- **Common Grace**

Common grace is the grace of God by which He gives people innumerable blessings that are **not part of salvation**. These are general influences of the Holy Spirit which to a greater or lesser degree are shared by all men, and **are capable of being resisted**. Common grace is **different** from saving or efficacious grace in 1) its **results** (it does not bring about salvation), 2) in its **recipients** (it is given to both believers and unbelievers

alike), and 3) in its **source** (as it does not flow *directly* from Christ's atoning work, since Christ's death did not earn any measure of forgiveness for unbelievers, and therefore did not merit the blessings of common grace for them either).

We see examples of **common grace** in many ways and categories, including the physical realm, the moral realm, the creative or talent realm, the societal or governmental realm, and the religious or spiritual realm. Unbelievers may be shaped and reformed by common grace, but such reformation falls very short of regeneration, transformation or sanctification. Unbelievers may know by common grace what they should or should not do, but they do not receive the power to produce a genuine change or conversion with the power and desire to do or not do them.

John 14:17 (NASB) that is **the Spirit of truth**, whom the **world cannot receive**, because it does not behold Him or know Him, **but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.**

Jeremiah 13:23 (NASB) "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good who are accustomed to doing evil.

And, as mentioned before, **these graces** (even when it is the receiving of the Word of God) **can be resisted by men.**

Acts 7:51 (NASB) (Stephen as he was being stoned to death) "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are **always resisting the Holy Spirit**; you are doing just as your fathers did.

Even believers can resist some of God's graces in their lives, as relating to His commanded will or common grace.

Ephes. 4:30 (NASB)

And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

1 Thes. 5:19 (NASB) **Do not quench the Spirit**;

In fact, much of the Bible is a story of men (and even the whole nation of Israel) resistance to God!

- But, consider the **nature of grace**, even in common grace and especially in efficacious or saving grace. When we do, the expression "irresistible grace" becomes **redundant!** And the decreed will of God cannot be resisted or cancelled by men.

Romans 9:18-21 (NASB) So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

[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?

When God is showing His kindness or grace to us, He is granting that grace to His **creatures!** In other words, we are His making and creations, that were created *ex nihilo* (from nothing). Is there really any likelihood that something created by God would ever eventually and ultimately defy or fail to bring God glory as it was intended from the start? How could an all powerful and sovereign God create something or someone that would or could resist or thwart His purposes?

We should note that no one ever speaks of "**irresistible creation**"! What created matter or creature could resist the power and purposes of God??? Likewise, no one ever speaks of "**irresistible birth**"! What child could ever resist his own birth???

Yet these are just two of the many analogies and expressions used to describe our salvation and change when God "graces" us as his elect children.

- As taught before, we must always remember and begin with the **natural condition of man**. If we truly believe that men are radically or totally depraved, dead in their trespasses and sin, that they are unregenerate and fallen, that they are without hope apart from God's grace; then **we must be acted upon with an "irresistible grace"**!
- We should also remember the **nature of God**. He is not a cooperative agent or helper to mankind, but Lord and Sovereign God Almighty! He does not leave His will to be compromised or confirmed by men, but accomplishes all that He desires. He did not send His Son to make salvation *possible*, but to make salvation *sure and secure*!

As B. B. Warfield said, "**Sinful man stands in need**, not of inducements or assistance to save himself, but precisely of saving; and Jesus Christ has come not to advise, or urge, or woo, or help him to save himself, but **to save him!**"

So consider how God presents this gracious action of His upon us in His Scriptures. This inward change wrought by the supernatural power of His Spirit is called:

- **taking away a heart of stone and giving a heart of flesh**

Ezekiel 11:19-20 (NASB) "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.

- **a new creature or creation**

2 Cor. 5:17-18 (NASB) Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is **a new creature**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. [18] Now **all these things are from God**, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,

- **a new birth**

John 3:3-8 (NASB) 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.**' [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."

- **a new birth of the will of God**

John 1:12-13 (NASB) 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.**

- **a making alive**

Col. 2:13 (NASB) 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,

- **a passing of death into life**

John 5:24 (NASB) "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.**

- **a spiritual regeneration and renewal**

Titus 3:5 (NASB) 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,

- **a spiritual resurrection by the same power that raised Christ from the dead**

Ephes. 1:19-20 (NASB) and what is **the surpassing greatness of His power** toward us who believe. These are **in accordance with the working of the strength of His**

might [20] which He brought about in Christ, **when He raised Him from the dead**, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,
 Ephes. 2:4-5 (NASB) **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, [5] **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),**

- **a calling out of darkness into God's marvelous light**

1 Peter 2:9 (NASB) 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;**

- **a new creation of light and knowledge in our hearts**

2 Cor. 4:6 (NASB) **For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

- **Illustrated in the raising of Lazarus from the dead**

John 11:43-44 (NASB) 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.**"

Notice what part Lazarus had in this physical regeneration. Although he may have at first thought he was participating, any real examination later would have forced him to acknowledge that he was the subject of the action, not a helper. Notice also that the church's job is not to regenerate and raise, but to "unbind" them from their old dead clothes and "let them go" to live for Him.

- **All of this really points to the "*ordo salutis*," or the "order of salvation."**
This is the teaching that deals with the logical sequencing of the benefits of salvation worked by Christ which are applied to us by the Holy Spirit.

Man must receive by grace a new nature to act in faith toward God. He needs regeneration *before* he can exercise faith. Faith cannot precede regeneration and cause the new birth. Man is born again from above and then responds in faith to the grace already received. We believe *because* we have born again! This is not only logical, but Scriptural and necessary for God Alone to receive the glory!

- What does this mean for us as believers? How should this truth and understanding change us or our thinking? How should it change our attitude toward God and His grace? How should it change our attitude about our own self importance, selfishness and pride?
- What does this mean for us as the church? How should this truth understanding change us or our thinking? How should it change our approach to evangelism or sanctification? What should be our focus and weapon?

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE

Bible Study Notes #10, November 13, 2005

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

We have come to the fifth and final of Doctrines of Grace, or the Five Points of Calvinism. Like most of them, this point is misleading today and often misunderstood. The term *perseverance* causes misunderstanding, as it implies that the continuation of faith, obedience and even salvation itself is dependent upon and accomplished by the believer alone. Of course, the doctrinal position of the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) against the Remonstrance followers of Arminius was nothing like this misunderstanding. They were emphasizing the Biblical truths that all true Christians will persevere until the end *based upon the preserving power of God! **We persevere because He preserves us!*** They were explaining that the Bible teaches the sovereignty of God in *sanctification* just as it does in *justification*.

What do *you think* this teaching means? Is it synonymous with “once saved, always saved?” Is it the same as the doctrine of eternal security? Does it simply refer to the fact that all those who are truly saved will be saved until they die?

- As in all of these doctrines, we must first define the terms involved. **“Saints”** comes from the root word that simply means “separate” or “set apart.” (A “sanctuary” is a building set apart for special uses.) It does not refer to someone far above normal Christian maturity or obedience. That idea comes from the Roman church. In the Bible the term “saints” is used often to simply refer to the company of believers in an area, a city, a local church, or the whole church universal. *Saints are all God’s children who are all both separate and separated.*
- **“Perseverance”** refers to the saints’ continuance in the state of holiness, righteousness, salvation, and acceptance to God throughout their entire life. This does not refer to sinless perfection, but the defining nature of one’s post-salvation life and its inevitable conclusion. In the Bible, the root usually translated “perseverance” or “endurance” or “patience”, is *hypermeno*, from “under” and “to remain.” Therefore, in those passages it literally means to remain under, or continue to bear.

Romans 5:3-4 (NASB) And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about **perseverance**; [4] and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

Romans 8:25 (NASB) But if we hope for what we do not see, with **perseverance** we wait eagerly for it.

Rev. 2:2-3 (NASB) 'I know your deeds and your toil and **perseverance**, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; [3] and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. (Jesus to Ephesus)

Rev. 2:19 (NASB) 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and **perseverance**, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. (Jesus to Thyatira)

Rev. 3:10 (NASB) 'Because you have kept the word of My **perseverance**, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth. (Jesus to Philadelphia)

Rev. 13:10 (NASB) If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the **perseverance** and the faith of the saints.

Rev. 14:12 (NASB) Here is the **perseverance** of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

- ***The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*** includes a chapter on this teaching which is entitled "Of the Perseverance of the Saints":

Chapter 17: Of The Perseverance of the Saints

1._____ Those whom God hath accepted in the beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect unto, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved, seeing the gifts and callings of God are without repentance, whence he still begets and nourisheth in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit unto immortality; and though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, yet they shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock which by faith they are fastened upon; notwithstanding, through unbelief and the temptations of Satan, the sensible sight of the light and love of God may for a time be clouded and obscured from them, yet he is still the same, and they shall be sure to be kept by the power of God unto salvation, where they shall enjoy their purchased possession, they being engraven upon the palm of his hands, and their names having been written in the book of life from all eternity.

([John 10:28, 29; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 John 2:19; Psalms 89:31, 32; 1 Corinthians 11:32; Malachi 3:6](#))

2._____ This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father, upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ and union with him, the oath of God, the abiding of his Spirit, and the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.([Romans 8:30 Romans 9:11, 16; Romans 5:9, 10; John 14:19; Hebrews 6:17, 18; 1 John 3:9; Jeremiah 32:40](#))

3._____ And though they may, through the temptation of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God's displeasure and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to have their graces and comforts impaired, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves, yet shall they

renew their repentance and be preserved through faith in Christ Jesus to the end.
 (Matthew 26:70, 72, 74; Isaiah 64:5, 9; Ephesians 4:30; Psalms 51:10, 12; Psalms 32:3, 4; 2 Samuel 12:14; Luke 22:32, 61, 62)

John Piper said, “Perseverance of the saints is the almighty work of God to keep us, through all affliction and suffering (*and faith and sanctification*), for an inheritance of pleasures at God’s right hand forever.”

- But immediately, we cringe in doubt of such a *sure* and inevitable doctrine like this, it’s implications for the need for continuing sanctification and holy living after salvation, and we wonder about the exceptions we may even know personally and experientially.
- What about the man who lived faithfully for Christ for decades, served in the church as a deacon, teacher, even pastor, then left his wife for another woman, changed his lifestyle dramatically toward worldliness and sinfulness, abandoned the faith and even renounced Christ and the gospel?
- Or are we saying that someone can walk the aisle at age 10, make a profession of faith, and then proceed to live anyway he wishes, and still go to heaven when he dies, because “once saved, always saved?”

Please understand that this doctrine is *much more* than simply “once saved, always saved!” In fact, that is “hyper-perseverance” view of modern evangelicals that impose God’s sovereign keeping power, but deny His sovereign saving and sanctifying power. It is as if they believe that God waits and depends upon man’s decisions and obedience, but then is bound to keep that which man initiates. Such a simplistic view is often used to defend “easy believism,” reject what is criticized as “Lordship salvation”, and teach that man’s decision and event is all that is needed for hell insurance and heaven assurance. Issues like God’s call and choice, regeneration, sanctification in the life of the believer, and steadfast continuance in the faith until the end are not included or embraced in most circles and teachings.

Example of Bill Clinton: Clinton grew up in Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock. The pastor then and for many years there was a gifted and eccentric expositor named W. O. Vaught. He studied under another expositor named R. B. Thieme in Houston. Dr. Thieme was a gifted student at Dallas Theological Seminary, was very committed to his Greek studies and the verse-by-verse exposition of the Scriptures. But he was so focused upon the simplicity of our faith and that any amount of belief was all that was necessary to be saved, and that repentance had nothing to do with faith. He also taught that a believer could commit any sin and live any way that an unbeliever could, and yet still be saved if he just “believed.” His teaching had a profound influence on W. O. Vaught, who taught in the same manner and the same doctrinal position. Bill Clinton grew up in this teaching and evidently embraced it. He even credited Vaught with teaching him a position on abortion that rationalized his pro-choice position. As we all know now, he did not see any connection with his actions or repentance and his salvation. He felt that his salvation was secure since he had been “saved” so he could live as he wished with no impact or bearing on his salvation. While both Thieme and Vaught were known as very conservative and committed Bible expositors, their position on this one doctrine brought many destructive errors into their teachings. The impact on

one young man who eventually became President of the U.S. has brought an even greater impact on the country and its view of cheap and easy salvation.

This same view has also been reinforced to a lesser degree by others like Scofield, Ryrie and Hal Lindsey.

John Wesley in the 1700's was very committed to the Scriptures and holy living. He could not accept that God could accept that those who named the name of Christ unless their lives also were conformed to His teachings and commandments. He started a whole denomination from his teaching on these methods and manners of Christian living that were necessary to keep us saved.

So we can see the **two extremes of misinterpretation and wrong** responses to the Scriptures on this matter. One is to take the doctrine of perseverance too lightly and presume upon God's obligation to keep us saved no matter how or if we are changed by our "decision" for Him. It seems their concern is that it removes the liberty to live as we please. The other is to take the doctrine too heavily such that we have to persevere all alone to keep God satisfied with us. It seems their concern is that it removes any reason for holy living. This doctrine is rejected by one because it removes their sins of liberty and pride of choice and is rejected by the other because it removes their sins of legalism and pride of morality.

The usual objections are really based upon experience rather than Scriptural positions. That approach would lead us to conclude that David, Peter and many others were lost! As with all of these doctrines, the errors can be traced back to a wrong view of man and God. Since man is not dead and totally depraved, he can participate in his salvation, and therefore also lose it. Since God is not totally sovereign, He depends upon man to do his part and stay saved! We end up always questioning everyone's salvation.

But our response to a "brother" in sin should not be questioning his salvation! What should it be? (Matthew 18)

- But **what do the Scriptures say?** What is the **Biblical position** on these matters?

Even though we may sin from time to time and are far from perfect, we shall be saved to the end and the uttermost:

John 10:27-29 (NASB) (Jesus said) "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; [28] and **I give eternal** (without end) **life** to them, and **they shall never** (not in this life or the next) **perish**; and **no one shall snatch them out of My hand**. [29] "My Father, who has **given them to Me** (is no "Indian giver"), is greater than all; and **no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand**.

Philip. 1:6 (NASB) 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.

Hebrews 12:2 (NASB) fixing our eyes on **Jesus, the author** (beginner) **and perfecter** (finisher) **of** (our) **faith**, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

2 Tim. 2:19 (NASB) Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having **this seal**, **"The Lord knows those who are His,"** and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord **abstain from wickedness.**"

1 John 2:19 (NASB) **They went out from us, but they were not really of us** (the negative assertion that false believers will depart); for **if they had been of us, they would have remained with us** (the positive assertion that true believers will remain); but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.

Psalms 89:30-37 (NASB)

"If his sons **forsake My law**,
And **do not walk in My judgments**,
[31] If they **violate My statutes**,
And **do not keep My commandments**,
[32] Then I will visit their transgression with the rod,
And their iniquity with stripes.
[33] **"But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him,**
Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness.
[34] **"My covenant I will not violate,**
Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.
[35] "Once I have sworn by My holiness;
I will not lie to David.
[36] **"His descendants shall endure forever,**
And his throne as the sun before Me.
[37] "It shall be established forever like the moon,
And the witness in the sky is faithful."

1 Cor. 11:32 (NASB) But when we are judged, **we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned** along with the world.

Hebrews 12:6 (NASB) For those **WHOM THE Lord loves He DISCIPLINES**,
And He scourges every SON WHOM He receives."

Malachi 3:6 (NASB) **"For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.**

Jeremiah 32:40 (NASB) "And **I will make an everlasting covenant** with them that **I will** not turn away from them, to do them good; and **I will** put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.

What are the problems that arise without this understanding and belief of these truths?

1. **lack of assurance** – impedes growth and focus on God and others
2. **lack of confidence** – impedes faith and power
3. **lack of peace** – impedes calm and a sure hope
4. **lack of joy** – impedes contentment and satisfaction in God alone

5. **lack of gratitude** – impedes holy living to God's glory

This perseverance does not depend upon us, but the decrees, election and graces of God. The issue is **not what man does, but what Christ has done!** Yet because of what Christ has done, man must do certain things!

Romans 8:29-39 (NASB) 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.

[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?** Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? [36] Just as it is written,

"For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long;

We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

[37] **But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.** [38] For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height, nor depth, **nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God**, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5:9-10 (NASB) 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.**

1 John 3:9 (NASB)

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.

2 Peter 1:10-12 (NASB) Therefore, brethren, be all the more **diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you**; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; [11] for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

[12] Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things, even though **you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.**

Philip. 2:12-13 (NASB) 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.

But concerning those who appear or profess to be saved, but are not inwardly changed or possessing a new a nature, did not Jesus say:

Matthew 7:21-23 (NASB) **"Not everyone who says** to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; **but he who does** the will of My Father who is in heaven. [22] "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' [23] "And then I will declare to them, **'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'**

And did He not also teach:

Mark 4:5-6 (NASB) "And other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because **it had no depth** of soil. [6] "And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and **because it had no root, it withered away.**

- But then *where do the **Arminians** get their **position*** on this doctrine? What "proof texts" do they misinterpret and use? (Rom. 11:17-22, 1Tim. 1:18-19, John 15:6)

Hebrews 6:4-8 (NASB) For in the case of **those who have once been enlightened** and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, [5] and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, [6] **and then have fallen away**, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame. [7] For **ground that drinks the rain** which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; [8] but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.

But what does this really mean? What are the options for who "those" might be? (truly saved or truly lost)

What about a third choice, (that the writer of Hebrews is using what Luther called **"evangelical usage of the law"** that such a call to strive as diligently as we can to meet the highest standards of the law drives us to an ever increasing dependence upon grace)?

How does the passage end? What does he say that is his position and perspective?

Hebrews 6:9-19 (NASB) **But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.** [10] For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. [11] And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as **to realize the full assurance of hope until the end**, [12] that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of **those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

[13] For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, [14] saying, "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply you." [15] And thus, **having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.** [16] For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. [17] In the same way God, desiring even more

to show to **the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose** (*that is us!*), **interposed with an oath**, [18] in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we may have strong encouragement**, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. [19] **This hope we have as an anchor of the soul**, a hope **both sure and steadfast** and one which **enters** within the veil,

What about **the Example of Peter**? Did he persevere in sanctification? What were some of his failings and sins?

Did not Jesus even say:

Luke 22:31-34 (NASB) "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; [32] **but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail**; and you, **when once you have turned again**, strengthen your brothers." [33] And he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" [34] And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the cock will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."

This teaching and truth is even more strongly presented for Peter and all of us in Jesus' **High Priestly Prayer**:

John 17:9-21 (NASB) "**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; [10] and all things that are Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. [11] "And I am no more in the world; and **yet they themselves are in the world**, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are. [12] "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. [13] "But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves. [14] "I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. [15] "**I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one**. [16] "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. [17] "**Sanctify them** in the truth; Thy word is truth. [18] "As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. [19] "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, **that they themselves also may be sanctified** in truth. [20] "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for **those also who believe** in Me through their word; [21] **that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us**; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.

Perhaps it is then clear why Peter was the one God inspired to write **the glorious promise** so clearly to the persecuted church of his day:

1 Peter 1:3-9 (NASB) 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. [6] In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, [7] that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; [8] and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, [9] obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

Peter wrote this epistle to encourage the persecuted believers. He reminded them that they were aliens in this world, citizens of heaven, children of God, living stones, a royal priesthood, and a people for God's own possession. Notice in this passage that he wanted them to know that they could not and would not ever lose what they had in Christ. Note that:

1. Their heavenly inheritance was guaranteed as they were born again to a living hope that was the (threefold) opposite of all earthly treasures. (vv.3-4)
2. They were kept and protected by God's Own power. (v.5)
3. They were protected by their faith as the instrument of God's keeping power. (v.5)
4. They were strengthened by their testing, but would persevere through their trials and would be found worthy at the end. (vv. 6-7)
5. They would continue to be motivated by love for Christ. (v.8)
6. They would have joy through it all. (v.8)
7. They would be saved and preserved by God for full glory. (v.8-9)

What a great hope, encouragement and promise! Such great truths "**set us free!**" John 8:31-32 (NASB) Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "**If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine**; (evangelical use of the law) [32] and **you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**" (grace to rest in when driven there)

Discuss example from women's retreat: Janet Pope talking about how so many (professing) Christians do not even have an idea what is in the Bible (and do not really even care)!

Illustrations: Father and Son walking a dangerous path. The Father grips the boy and the boy grips the Father. One grip is secure and steadfast, no matter if the other slips or even falls for a purpose of the Father.

Ship outside the harbor but with an anchor line inside to the anchor rock. (Heb. 6:19) May be beaten and tossed, but will be safely pulled into the security of the harbor.

Benediction:

Jude 1:24-25 (NASB) 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.**