

ABANDONED TRUTH

By Tom Ross, Pastor

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Chesapeake, Ohio

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Introduction to Sovereign Grace

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Psalms 11:3 states; **"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"** Pastor Al Gormley of the Bryan Station Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky preached from this text on the day when Wilmington Baptist Temple in Wilmington, Ohio was organized as a New Testament Baptist Church on August 29, 1981. I was privileged to be in attendance on that day as a charter member of Wilmington Baptist Temple.

His sermon consisted of exhortations to **"earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints."** He emphasized the importance of standing for the "Doctrines of Grace" in a day when most Baptists have departed from these precious truths. Part of the "faith once delivered" is the teaching of God's sovereign grace in the salvation of unworthy and helpless sinners.

There has never been a time in my brief Christian life that I have not believed in the system of belief known as the "Doctrines of Grace." Therefore, it is with great delight that I begin this series of studies. My hope and prayer as always is that the saints might be built up in the most holy faith, and that the God of all grace would be exalted and glorified.

THE PRESENT DILEMMA

The Twentieth Century has been marked by a major departure from the orthodox, biblical teaching of the doctrine of soteriology or salvation. Many have sold the truth in their quest for success and recognition among popular evangelical leaders. The acid test for any belief has never been whether it is accepted by the majority,

but whether it is according to "the law and the testimony", found in the infallible Word of the Living God.

Most of today's preaching consists of storytelling and psychology aimed at entertaining the flesh of the natural man with the hope of getting him down the aisle to make a profession of faith in Christ. The invitation at the end of the sermon has become the focal point of evangelism rather than the sinner's need for repentance and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Sinners often walk the aisle, repeat a prayer, and then are enthusiastically assured by the preacher that they are "eternally secure". Yet, their lives often remain unchanged while trusting in an empty profession. Churches have become filled with spiritual Ishmael's, produced out of the energy of the flesh rather than the power of God.

Whenever there is a departure from a scriptural presentation of the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation, there will also be a departure in the methods used to persuade sinners to trust Christ. For example, Jack Hyles, who is revered in most Fundamentalist camps made the following statement in his book, 'How to Boost Your Church Attendance':

"Many of us in our preaching will make such statements as, 'Now, in conclusion'; 'Finally, may I say'; 'My last point is...'. These statements are sometimes dangerous. The sinner knows five minutes before you finish; hence he digs in and prepares himself for the invitation so that he does not respond. However, if your closing is abrupt and a lost person does not suspect that you are about finished, you have crept up on him and he will not have time to prepare himself for the invitation. Many people may be reached, using this method. " [1](#)

The only answer to the shallow teachings of Arminianism and "easy believism" is a return to the old paths of God's sovereign grace in the salvation of sinners. As J.I. Packer stated:

"There is really only one point to be made in the field of soteriology: the point that God saves sinners. GOD--the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit; three Persons working together in sovereign wisdom, power and love to achieve the salvation of a chosen people, the Father electing, the Son fulfilling the Father's will by redeeming, the Spirit executing the purpose of the Father and Son by renewing. SAVES--does everything, first to last, that is involved in bringing man from death in sin to life in glory: plans, achieves and communicates redemption, calls and keeps, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies. SINNERS--men as God finds them, guilty, vile, helpless, powerless, unable to lift a finger to do God's will or better their spiritual lot. GOD SAVES SINNERS--and the force of this confession may not be weakened by disrupting the unity of the work

of the Trinity, or by dividing the achievement of salvation between God and man and making the decisive part man's own, or by soft-pedaling the sinner's inability so as to allow him to share the praise of his salvation with his Savior. This is the one point of Calvinistic soteriology which the 'five points' are concerned to establish and Arminianism in all its forms to deny: namely, that sinners do not save themselves in any sense at all, but that salvation, first and last, whole and entire, past, present and future, is of the Lord, to whom be glory for ever; amen." [2](#)

IDENTIFYING THE TERMINOLOGY

Many excellent books have been written on the doctrines of grace without simply defining several terms that are frequently used by theologians. Many people refer to the doctrines of grace as the "Five Points of Calvinism." I prefer to use the term "Doctrines of Grace" for two reasons. First, because it is the language of scripture. Secondly, because I don't believe that these doctrines originated with John Calvin or any other man for that matter. They are teachings that originate with God who inspired the Holy Scriptures. They are teachings that the Lord's churches have been proclaiming throughout the centuries.

1. **Total depravity**--refers to the fallen state of the natural man who inherits a sin nature at conception. Every sinner is spiritually dead, with no capacity or desire for spiritual things. He is incapable in and of himself to come to a saving knowledge of Christ apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Every faculty of the sinner has been corrupted as a result of the fall of Adam. In short, man has been completely ruined by sin without any hope of restoration apart from the distinguishing grace of God.
2. **Unconditional Election**--refers to the sovereign choice of some men unto salvation by God the Father, before the foundation of the world, not according to any foreseen merit or faith that he saw in the sinner, but according to his own good pleasure and purpose of grace.
3. **Limited Atonement (Particular Redemption)**--refers to the teaching of the specific intent and extent of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. He died only for the elect. He came to redeem and reconcile only those whom God chose. He acted as substitute and surety only for those whom the Father had given Him before the world began. Christ did not shed one drop of blood in vain. He did not die for the devil, reprobate angels, or for any sinner who dies in unbelief and goes to Hell.
4. **Irresistible Grace (Effectual Calling)**--refers to the fact that all whom the Father elected and the Son died for will assuredly come to salvation

through the power and work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. When the Spirit draws in the effectual call the sinner most willingly comes to Christ, as it is impossible to resist the will and power of God.

5. **Preservation and Perseverance of the Saints**--refers to the fact that all the elect are preserved from final apostasy in hell by the power of God, and that all true children of God who have been changed in regeneration will preserve in holiness. Simply stated, it is impossible for one of God's elect to be kicked out of His family, become a child of the devil, lose God's salvation and go to Hell.
6. **Man's Free Will**--refers to the popular opinion of many that man's will was not corrupted by the Fall of Adam. That he has the ability to choose and come to Christ of his own volition. Arminians teach that man's supposed free will is one of the moving causes of his salvation, thus basing salvation upon man's decision making process rather than the power of God. (Because of the controversy surrounding free will an entire lesson will be devoted to its refutation later.)
7. **Arminianism**--refers to the teachings of James Arminius the Dutch theologian of the Sixteenth Century. Arminians are in direct opposition to all of the five points of the doctrines of grace. Most of professing Christendom ascribe either in part or in whole to this system of teaching. Most Baptists are what I call "Whiskey Calvinists" because they believe only one-fifth of the doctrines of grace, namely eternal security.

There are only two systems of thought that are found in the world today concerning the salvation of men. One ascribes salvation partly to God and partly to man in cooperation with each other which is grace mixed with works. The other ascribes salvation entirely to God apart from the works of sinful man. The latter system is what is taught in the scriptures as I shall endeavor to prove in this study. Romans 11:5-6 states; **"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work..."** verse 36; **"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."**

END NOTES

Just click on the highlighted area to return to your reading.

1. [Hyles](#), Jack, How to Boost Your Church Attendance (Grand Rapids, MI, 1958), pp. 32-35.

2. [Steele](#), David N. and Thomas, Curtis C., The Five Points of Calvinism (Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.), 1979
p. 14.

A Historical Survey of Sovereign Grace

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INTRODUCTION

No study of the doctrines of grace would be complete without briefly considering their history since the times of Christ and the Apostles. Generally speaking, most Baptists historically believed and preached the doctrines of grace. In the Twentieth Century we have witnessed a major departure from the "faith once delivered" with reference to the doctrines of grace, which has subsequently led to doctrinal departures in other vital areas as well. Arminianism is the common bond which holds the Ecumenical and Charismatic Movements together, and which eventually will lead its adherents back to the "Mother of Harlots", the Roman Catholic Church.

WHAT JESUS AND THE APOSTLES TAUGHT CONCERNING GRACE

Any person who reads the New Testament apart from a preconceived prejudice will undoubtedly come to the conclusion that Jesus and the Apostles believed, preached, and wrote about the doctrines of grace. These precious truths are exalted throughout the entire New Testament. In fact, the theme of the New Testament is

grace. The very essence of the Gospel itself, is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, laid down His life, and shed his precious blood for helpless and unworthy sinners. Sinners, who in time are brought to spiritual life by the power of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word of God and drawn to saving faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, and who are kept by the power of God. The very first reference to the saving work of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew comes by way of announcement when the angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph in a dream; **"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins"** (Matt. 1:21). The New Testament opens with a declaration that Jesus would actually secure salvation for His people, the elect whom the Father gave Him before the world began. The doctrine that Arminians hate the most, Particular Redemption, is set forth in the very first chapter of the New Testament!

Jesus believed that distinguishing grace was a sovereign act of God. In Matthew 11:25-27 we find him praising the Father for sovereign grace; **"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."**

Perhaps the strongest testimony to the fact that Jesus believed the doctrines of grace is found in John chapter six after Jesus had just fed the 5000. The multitudes were following him because he had fed them, not because they had been spiritually attracted to Him. In response, Jesus tells them that He is the true bread from heaven, sent by the Father to give life to those who believe. He then explains exactly why He came in verses 37-40; **"All that the Father giveth me (election) shall come to me (effectual calling); and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me (cf. Job 23:13,14 and Dan. 4:35). And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing (*preservation of the saints*), but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day"**. Jesus then explains that the natural man is incapable of coming to Him apart from the distinguishing, drawing power of God; **"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"** (John 6:44).

A brief sampling of excerpts from the Book of Acts and the Epistles will suffice to prove that the followers of Christ believed in the Sovereignty of God and the doctrines of grace. The salvation account of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus furnishes us with a striking illustration of God's grace in the effectual call. Saul hated the followers of the Lamb, and was on his way to persecute them.

He was not seeking the Lord, he was seeking the destruction of the Lord's people when Jesus apprehended him, humbled him, and called him to salvation. It was not Saul who sought God and laid hold on Christ, it was God who sought Saul and Christ who laid hold on him, making him **"willing in the day of his power"** (Psalms 110:3).

In Acts 13, Paul preached Christ to the Jews and Gentiles at Antioch. When the Jews rejected the message Paul turned to Gentiles and Luke records their reaction in verse 48; **"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed"**. In no uncertain terms, saving faith is expressed as the result of God's election or ordination to eternal life.

Paul the Apostle, who wrote 14 books of the New Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is often found expounding the doctrines of grace. Who can deny that Paul believed in the five points of sovereign grace in light of Romans chapter nine or Ephesians chapter one? Even a casual reading of these two chapters reveal that Paul did not attribute salvation to the free will or cooperation of the natural man, but to the immutable will of God and His eternal purpose of grace.

James refers to election in his epistle; **"Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him"** (James 2:5).

Peter opens his first epistle by addressing the; **"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..."**, and later refers to believers in the following way; **"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"** (2:9).

John's first epistle is very practical in nature as he writes about the characteristics that should be evident in life of one who has been born of God. Yet, in the midst of the most practical epistle of the New Testament, John declares; **"We love him, because he first loved us"** (4:19). John believed that the New Birth was a work of God alone, and that God was the first cause in our salvation.

From a brief sampling of the New Testament it is quite evident that Jesus Christ and the Apostles believed in what we refer to today as the doctrines of grace.

SOVEREIGN GRACE THROUGH THE REFORMERS

Proving that the New Testament writers believed in the doctrines of grace was relatively simple because the proof came from an infallible, authoritative source. Whenever we begin to read history that has been written by uninspired men our task becomes more difficult because we must rely on men who were tainted with certain prejudices. Yet, history as a secondary source can be used to show that the doctrines which we now preach and defend are not new-fangled inventions. Most of what we today refer to as Systematic Theology has been formulated in response to error that was prevalent in any given period of time. The formulation of the system we today call the doctrines of grace is no exception.

In the fifth century a man named Pelagius vehemently opposed the doctrines of God's sovereign grace. David Steele wrote:

"Pelagius denied that human nature had been corrupted by sin. He maintained that the only ill effects which the race had suffered as the result of Adams's transgression was the bad example which he had set for mankind. According to Pelagius, every infant comes into the world in the same condition as Adam was before the fall. His leading principle was that Man's will is absolutely free. Hence every one has the power, within himself, to believe the gospel as well as to perfectly keep the law of God." [1](#)

Augustine, the Catholic theologian of the fifth century, responded to the heresy of Pelagius and declared that man was totally depraved, and that the act of faith resulted, not from the sinner's free will, but from God's free grace which is given to the elect only. Augustine, who would today be scorned by Catholics, and who was no friend to Baptists obviously believed some truth concerning the doctrines of grace.

After Augustine soundly refuted the errors of Pelagius, a new form of heresy arose within the Catholic Church, promoted by a man named Cassian. His system of theology is today referred to as Semi-Pelagianism because he mixed what Augustine taught with what Pelagius taught. He acknowledged that Adam's sin extended to all mankind, and that his nature was corrupted by sin. But he also taught a system of universal grace for all men by teaching that the Holy Spirit worked on all men alike and that salvation was dependent upon the decision and response of man's free will. In reality, most of the people whom we would today label as Arminians are in actuality Semi-Pelagians.

The Protestant Reformers rejected the theories of Pelagius and Cassian, attributing salvation to the sovereign grace of God alone. J.I. Packer wrote:

"All the leading Protestant theologians of the first epoch of the Reformation, stood on precisely the same ground here. On other points, they had their differences; but in asserting the helplessness of man in sin, and the sovereignty of God in grace, they were

entirely at one...Here was the crucial issue: whether God is the author, not merely of justification, but also of faith; whether, in the last analysis, Christianity is a religion of utter reliance on God for salvation and all things necessary to it, or of self-reliance and self-effort." [2](#)

Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Farel, and Wycliff all believed what we would today identify as the doctrines of grace. I believe that there were Baptist groups who believed the doctrines of grace before any of the Reformers as I shall later prove. The thing that has often puzzled me about the Protestant Reformers is their insistence on defending what John Gill referred to as the "pillar of Popery", infant baptism. All the Protestant reformers viewed baptism as a sacrament or a means of grace, which logically denies real sovereign grace by making it depend in some way upon an individual's baptism.

The systematic forms of the five points of Arminianism and Calvinism did not come into being until the early 1600's. James Arminius was a Dutch seminary professor. In 1610, one year after his death his followers issued five articles of faith based upon Arminius' teachings, which are today referred to as Arminianism. They presented the teachings as a formal protest to the State of Holland, insisting that the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism both needed to be changed. In 1618 the Synod of Dort assembled to examine the protests of the Arminians in the light of the Scriptures. In May of 1619 they came to the conclusion that the five points of Arminianism did not reconcile with the Holy Scriptures. They also issued a five point response refuting each of the five errors of Arminius. These five points are commonly referred to today as the Five Points of Calvinism or the Doctrines of Grace.

From the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century until the latter part of the nineteenth century the doctrines of grace were commonly held by all Protestants except for the Methodists. All the noted Protestant preachers were thorough Calvinists. In the Puritan era, John Owen, Steven Charnock, John Flavel, Thomas Brooks, Thomas Manton, and Thomas Boston, to name only a few, proclaimed these precious truths upon the housetops. In America, Cotton and Increase Mather, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield, and John Murray were all Protestants who loved and cherished the precious truths of the doctrines of grace. Bancroft, the American historian pronounced the Pilgrim Fathers as; "Calvinists in their faith according to the straightest system." [3](#)

It is sad, but true, that most Protestant denominations in our day have a Calvinistic creed and an Arminian clergy. To most the doctrines of grace are unimportant and Arminianism is not even questioned. The mainline denominations have sold the truth for a mess of Ecumenical pottage. Protestants have always had the birthmarks of Rome, because they were conceived and have their origin by way

of the Mother of Harlots. In our day we see the daughters resembling more and more their Mother, the Roman Catholic Church.

I would like to quote from the learned John Gill, a Baptist theologian of the 1700's who linked Arminianism and Popery together, in his book *Cause of God and Truth*:

"This work was published at a time when the nation was greatly alarmed with the growth of Popery, and several learned gentlemen were employed in preaching against some particular points of it; but the author of this work was of opinion, that the increase of Popery was greatly owing to the Pelagianism, Arminianism, and other supposed rational schemes men run into, contrary to divine revelation. This was the sense of our fathers in the last century, and therefore joined these and Popery together in their religious grievances they were desirous of having redressed; and indeed, instead of lopping of the branches of Popery, the ax should be laid to the root of the tree, ARMINIANISM AND PELAGIANISM, THE VERY LIFE AND SOUL OF POPERY." [4](#)

BAPTISTS AND THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

It is my firm conviction that the scriptures teach that Jesus Christ established a New Testament Church during His earthly ministry consisting of saved people who were scripturally baptized. He promised that His kind of church would be perpetuated until the end of the age. I believe the scriptures teach that the kind of church Jesus organized and authorized to carry out the Great Commission was in doctrine and practice what we would today identify as a Sovereign Grace Baptist Church. Until the latter part of the eighteenth century Baptist history was written mainly by our enemies. Up until the nineteenth century it was rare to see Baptist works published because, as a general rule, they were poor and persecuted by Catholics and Protestants alike. Yet believing that Jesus meant what he said; "... I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"; "...and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world", it is the firm conviction of the writer that the Lord's churches have never identified with Rome, and have upheld and supported the doctrines of grace, as the "pillar and ground of the truth" through the centuries.

Much of the history of the ancient Baptists revolved around their opposition to the traditions and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, long before the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. The Novations of Italy, the Donatists of North Africa, the Bogomils and Paterines of Europe, the Albigenses and Waldenses of France, and the Anabaptists of Germany historically rejected

infant baptism, sprinkling as a mode of baptism, the validity of Romish ordinances, baptismal regeneration, the priestcraft, purgatory, worship of saints and idols, Mariolatry, and salvation by human merits. Consequently, historical accounts of their beliefs and practices have been recorded by their Romish persecutors. It is generally accepted by historians that these ancient Baptists accepted the scriptures as their final authority for all faith and practice, and that salvation was the free gift of God. Because the five points of the doctrines of grace were not put into a concrete, systematic form until the sixteenth century, little is written prior to that time concerning those who believed the doctrines.

The renowned Catholic theologian, Augustine of Hippo, believed the doctrines of grace and fought fiercely against the errors of Pelagius in the fifth century. However, this same Augustine opposed the Donatists of North Africa because of their rejection of infant baptism and the idea of a pure local church being made up only of true believers. We read nowhere in the annals of history that Augustine opposed them concerning their views on depravity and election which implies that they were orthodox concerning their views on sovereign grace.

The ancient Albigenses of Southern France are recorded as believing in sovereign grace as far back as the tenth century. Peter Allix, in his book entitled; *Remarks Upon the Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of the Albigenses*, quotes a Friar Inquisitor who wrote concerning the heresies of the Albigenses in 1461:

"First, They say it is clear, that when God pardons sin, he doth it not with any respect to the merit of any man, but of mere grace; whence it follows evidently, that the remission of sins cannot be attributed to a man's confession of them; for if it were so, we must own that the remission is no longer of free gift, but that it is a recompense given by God to the merit of him that confesseth. Secondly, they say, if it be confession that procures a man the pardon of his sins, what will become of that passage in the third chapter of the Epistle to Titus, where it is expressly declared, that God hath saved us of his mercy, and not according to the works of righteousness that we have done? Or how shall we explain that in the ninth of the Romans, that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy: We know, that the first grace that God works in us is the remission of sins: now if this grace be absolutely the effect of the mercy of God, it cannot be the effect of confession, which by consequence is not necessary to salvation." [5](#) (The confession he refers to is the Romish practice of auricular confession.)

The Paterines, who flourished in Italy and France from the eleventh to the thirteenth century believed the doctrines of grace. W.A. Jarrell wrote concerning the Paterines;

"They were Baptists on the doctrine of election and appealed to the texts in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, employed by others also in proof of the doctrine of unconditional predestination."

[6](#)

The Waldenses of France wrote the "*Noble Lesson*" in 1100 AD Two portions of the document are of great interest to Baptists. The following quotes are in S. Moreland's book, *The Churches of the Valley of Piedmont*:

"Now after the Apostles, were certain Teachers, who taught the way of Jesus Christ our Savior. And these are found even at this present day (referring to church perpetuity), But they are known to very few, who have a great desire to teach the way of Jesus Christ, But they are so persecuted, that they are able to do but little, so much are the false Christians blinded with error, and more than the rest they that are Pastors, for they persecute and hate those who are better than themselves, and let those live quietly who are false deceivers... 'And give us to hear that which he shall say to his Elect without delay; Come hither ye blessed of my Father, Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World, Where you shall have Pleasure, Riches, and Honor. May it please the Lord which formed the World, that we may be of the number of his Elect to dwell in his Court for ever. Praised be God. Amen." [7](#)

From these two quotes it appears that the ancient Waldenses believed in church perpetuity as well as the doctrine of election.

A Waldensian Confession dated 1120 AD states:

"God saves from corruption and damnation those whom he has chosen from the foundations of the world, not for any disposition, faith or holiness he foresaw in them, but of his mere mercy in Christ Jesus, his Son, passing by all the rest according to the irreprehensible reason of his own will and justice." [8](#)

A Waldensian confession dated 1655 AD states:

"God saved from corruption and damnation those whom he has chosen from the foundations of the world, not for any disposition, faith or holiness he foresaw in them, but of his mere mercy in Christ

Jesus, his Son, passing by all the rest according to the irreprehensible reason of his own will and justice." [9](#)

The German and Dutch Anabaptists believed in the doctrine of election as I shall prove from three quotes from their most influential leaders. Denck wrote;

"Christ, the Lamb of God, has been from the beginning of the world a mediator between God and men, and will remain a mediator to the end. Of what men? Of you and me alone? Not so, but of all men who God has given to him for a possession." [10](#)

John Muller in 1525 wrote;

"Since faith in the free gift of God and not in every man's possession, as the Scriptures show, do not burden my conscience. It is born not of the will of the flesh, but of the will of God...No man cometh unto me except the Father draw him. The secret of God is like a treasure concealed in a field which no man can find unless the Spirit of the Lord reveal it to him." [11](#)

Menno Simons the Dutch Anabaptist wrote;

"O Lord God, thou hast loved us with an eternal love. Thou hast chosen us before the foundation of the world, that we should be unblamable and holy before thee in love, not regarding what we find written by the faithful Paul concerning Esau, Pharaoh, and Israel. He has done all this on our behalf in order that we should give the honor to thy name, and not to ourselves. What do we miserable sinners have of which we may boast? What do we have that we have not received of thee?" [12](#)

After the invention of the printing press, the Protestant Reformation, and the translation of the Scriptures into English, the Baptists are shown historically to be staunch defenders of the doctrines of grace. The Particular Baptists in England were strong in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They derived the name Particular from their strong stand on the doctrine of particular redemption, to distinguish them from those who believed in a general atonement. The London Confession of 1644 which was signed by William Kiffin and John Spilsbery was decidedly Calvinistic. The third article reads;

"That God hath decreed in himself touching all things, effectually to work and dispose them according to the counsel of his own will, to the glory of his Name...And touching his creature man, God had in Christ before the foundation of the world, according to the good pleasure of his will, foreordained some men to eternal life through

Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of his grace, leaving the rest in their sin to their just condemnation to the praise of his Justice." [13](#)

The Second London Confession printed in 1677 is even more Calvinistic. The ninth article on Free Will reads;

"Man by his fall into a state of sin hath wholly lost all ability of Will, to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in Sin is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself; or to prepare himself thereunto." [14](#)

The majority of Baptist writers and theologians in England were staunch proponents of sovereign grace. Benjamin Keach, Hanserd Knollys, John Bunyan, John Gill, John Brine, Abraham Booth, John Rippon, J.C. Philpot, and C.H. Spurgeon all held unashamedly to the five points of the doctrines of grace.

Because most Baptists in our day freely quote the writings of C.H. Spurgeon, I have taken the liberty to insert two quotes which are taken from his autobiography under the chapter heading *A Defense of Calvinism*:

"What is the heresy of Rome, but the addition of something to the perfect merits of Jesus Christ--the bringing in of the works of the flesh, to assist in our justification? And what is the heresy of Arminianism but the addition of something to the work of the Redeemer? Every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here. I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such a gospel I abhor." [15](#)

Spurgeon concludes his chapter on *A Defense of Calvinism*, by saying;

"I ask the man who dares to say that Calvinism is a licentious religion, what he thinks of the character of Augustine, or Calvin, or Whitefield, who in successive ages were the great exponents of the

system of grace; or what will he say of the Puritans, whose works are full of them? Had a man been an Arminian in those days, he would have been accounted the vilest heretic breathing, but now we are looked upon as the heretics, and they as the orthodox. We have gone back to the old school; we can trace our descent from the apostles. It is that vein of free-grace, running through the sermonizing of Baptists, which has saved us as a denomination. Were it not for that, we should not stand where we are to-day. We can run a golden line up to Jesus Christ Himself, through a holy succession of mighty fathers, who all held these glorious truths; and we can ask concerning them, 'Where will you find holier and better men in the world? [16](#)

It amazes me that gentlemen like the late John R. Rice who was editor of *The Sword of the Lord* print edited sermons by Spurgeon in his Arminian periodical! It would do Baptist preachers in our day well to read some of the Baptist writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who were strong sovereign grace men.

In America the doctrines of grace had almost universal acceptance among Baptists until the latter part of the 1800's. In *Asplund's Register of Baptist Churches* 1792, he records that 92% of all American Baptists believed in the doctrines of Grace. I believe the reason for the dismal descent into the pit of Arminianism came gradually as a result of the influences of John Wesley, Charles G. Finney, and Dwight L. Moody. These three men, who were not even Baptists, conducted several evangelistic campaigns in America which produced massive outward results. Their success, however, was tainted with unorthodox theology which continues to be a detriment to Baptists to this day. Because results were produced, the idea that the end justifying the means began to be more important to Baptists than right doctrine.

The doctrinal stance of Baptists has shifted so dramatically in the 1900's, to the extent that if you believe and preach the doctrines of grace, you are considered a heretic rather than an earnest contender for the faith once delivered. In our day the Arminian influence of men like John R. Rice, Jack Hyles and Curtis Hudson is rampant. As a result Baptist churches have become doctrinally weak which always leads to the easy reception of error.

To illustrate what I am saying in many Bible colleges and institutes, the writings and methods of Charles G. Finney are promoted as being sound and scriptural. Noel Smith, an influential preacher in the Bible Baptist Fellowship, and teacher at the Bible Baptist College in Springfield, Missouri once made the following statement:

"Knowing God as I do through the revelation He has given me of Himself in His Word, when I am told that God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, I know it

means that the Triune God has done, is doing, always will do, all that the Triune God can do to save every man, woman, and child on this earth. if it doesn't mean that, then tell me I pray you, what does it mean? What is hell? It is an infinite negation. It is infinite chaos. And it is more than that. I tell you, and I say it with profound reverence, hell is a ghastly monument to the failure of the Triune God to save the multitudes who are there. I say it reverently, I say it with every nerve in my body tense; sinners go to hell because God Almighty Himself cannot save them! He did all He could. He failed." [17](#)

When you consider that young preachers are being influenced by this type of teaching, it is little wonder why the Baptists are no longer distinguished for having a strong doctrinal foundation.

American Baptist history is filled with testimonies proving that the doctrines of grace were considered scriptural and orthodox. The first Baptist church in America was started in 1638 in Newport, R.I. by John Clark who stated:

"Election is the decree of God, of His free love, grace, and mercy, choosing some men to faith, holiness and eternal life, for the praise of His glorious mercy." [18](#)

Obadiah Holmes, a contemporary of John Clark, who lived from 1607 to 1682, said:

"Those destined to be saved are, to be sure, those whom God chooses to save, His elect, for He knows who are His..., and because man does not save himself, he cannot cause himself to be lost. All that are in the covenant of grace shall never fall away or perish." [19](#)

The Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1742) states;

"Although God knoweth whatsoever may, or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions; yet hath He not decreed anything because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass on certain conditions. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to Eternal Life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of His glorious justice." [20](#)

Adoniram Judson, the first American missionary to Burma wrote the following in his Burman creed:

"God, who pitied the sinful race of man, sent His only beloved Son into the world to save from sin and hell, who also sends the Holy Spirit to enable those to become disciples who were chosen before the world was and given to the Son, we worship." [21](#)

Francis Wayland (1796-1865) was a distinguished Baptist pastor, writer, and educator wrote the following:

"My mind at one time rebelled against the doctrine of election. It seemed to me like partiality. I now perceived that I had no claim whatever on God, but that if I were lost it was altogether my own fault, and that if I was saved, it must be purely a deed of unmerited grace. I saw that this very doctrine was my only hope of salvation, for if God had not sought me, I should never have sought him." [22](#)

W.B. Johnson, the first president of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1845-1850 said:

"The denomination to which I have the honor to belong holds...the sovereignty of God in the provision and application of the plan of salvation." [23](#)

J.R. Graves, the staunch Landmark Baptist of the last century made the following remarks in the *Great Carrollton Debate*:

"He (Christ) did not contract for the lost angels, nor for all men. He only took hold of the seed of Abraham, not of Adam...If He had taken hold of the nature of the lost angels, they would all have been saved. If of the seed of Adam, all men would have been saved, and Universalism would have been the true doctrine. But he contracted as surety, Mediator, only for the seed of Abraham--the elect of mankind...I know this is death to Arminianism, the natural religion of all natural men. They want to believe that they elect themselves, and then Christ takes them into his Covenant...Infidels may wrest this hard doctrine, more fully developed by Paul than any other Apostle, to their own destruction, but a host of the best and clearest minds that have ever lived on earth have advocated it--as Augustine, Calvin, etc., and Knox, Henry--and it is crystallized in the creeds of Presbyterians, Episcopalians, as well as Baptists. We see here no universal Atonement or Redemption." [24](#)

I have just given a sampling of the voices in American Baptist history who proclaimed the doctrines of grace. Time does not permit me to quote Issac Backus, Basil Manly, J.P. Boyce, R.B.C. Howell, Richard Fuller, J.L. Dagg, J.M. Pendleton, A.H. Strong, B.H. Carroll, J.B. Moody, and J.B. Gambrell, men who were firm defenders of the doctrines of grace. I have proven that opposition to the

doctrines of grace is in reality an opposition to scripture, reason, and historical orthodoxy.

END NOTES

Click On The Highlighted Area To Resume Your Reading

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TOTAL DEPRAVITY AND INABILITY

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INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of man's total depravity and inability is a most repulsive doctrine to the natural man. People in our day don't want to hear that they are sinners by birth and by choice. They don't want to hear of the awful effects of the fall of Adam and the consequences of sin. They don't want to hear that they are "dead in trespasses and sins", "without hope", "without God", "without strength", and unable to save themselves. They do not want to hear that Christ is their only hope and the only way of salvation and acceptance with God. They would rather hear preachers who will raise their level of comfort and self esteem. The total depravity of man is a fact presented in the Scriptures. The Psalmist wrote; **"Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity."** (Psalm 39:5) The word vanity means something worthless, trivial or less than nothing which aptly describes every lost man who possesses no goodness, righteousness or holiness to offer unto God. The Preacher in Ecclesiastes 7:20,29 wrote; "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not... Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions." Man is a

fallen and corrupt creature that is estranged from God and in love with sin and self. He is unable to please God and unwilling to come to Christ if left to himself. He is helpless apart from the supernatural and divine intervention of God in the new birth. This is the Bible truth about man

J.C. Philpot stated:

"As no heart can sufficiently conceive, so no tongue can adequately express, the state of wretchedness and ruin into which sin has cast guilty, miserable man. In separating him from God, it severed him from the only source of all happiness and holiness. It has ruined him body and soul: the one it has filled with sickness and disease; in the other it has defaced and destroyed the image of God in which it was created. It has made him love sin and hate God." [1](#)

THE ORIGIN OF SIN AND DEPRAVITY

In order to understand man's depravity we must not just examine the symptoms of it, but go to the source and root of his depravity. It is an undeniable fact that our world is infected by the disease of sin. Murder, warfare, covetousness, robbery and rape are common occurrences in our sin sick world. The world is not becoming a better place, as the evolutionists and humanists claim. II Timothy 3:13 states: "**But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.**"

Sin's origin can be traced back to Satan. He was one of the angels which God had created and named Lucifer, son of the morning. His fall from heaven is recorded in Isaiah 14:12-17. Satan's desire was to exalt himself above God and usurp his authority. He wanted to dethrone God and act as sovereign over the creation. Satan's desire then was the same as it is now, he wants people to worship him rather than God. When Satan led his rebellion he left out one major detail, God's throne cannot be usurped by men or devils. He is the Creator, and all of His creation must submit to His purposes. God cast Satan down from heaven along with one-third of the angels. The thing that got Satan kicked out of heaven was his prideful self-will. There are only two created beings in all of God's creation who really had a free will, Satan and Adam. Both willingly chose to rebel against God. So much for the mythical power of free will!

In tracing sin's origin among mankind we must go back to the fairest spot on earth, the Garden of Eden. After creating the heavens and the earth, the grass and the trees, the moon and the stars, and the animal kingdom in five days, the

crowning act of God's creation was to create man on the sixth day. Upon completion of Creation Genesis 1:31 records: "**And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.**"

God created Adam in his own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27), and gave him dominion over all the animal kingdom. Adam was created a moral, rational, and upright individual. He was without sin and enjoyed fellowship with his Creator. God then placed Adam in the fairest spot in all of Creation, the Garden of Eden and gave him the responsibility to dress and keep the garden. God even created Eve as a helpmeet and companion for Adam. Mankind's original parents were in the most desirable and blissful state that could be imagined. They were dwelling in a world not marred or corrupted by sin.

God laid down the law to Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:16-17 which states: "**And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**" God was gracious enough to warn our first parents of the consequences of transgressing His holy law. They would be separated from the fellowship and goodness of God. They would be cut off from their source of happiness and joy if they willfully disobeyed the command of God.

The fall of man is recorded in very plain and simple language in the third chapter of Genesis. Satan, having been cast out of heaven for rebellion, set out to deceive and corrupt Adam and Eve. He came to Eve as an "angel of light", appearing to be something he was not. He was beautiful to look upon and preached a slick-sounding message. The first sentence he spoke to Eve was; "**Yea, hath God said...**", in which he questioned the authority of God. He then proceeded to lie and give a false promise to Eve by telling her that God had deceived her. Satan boldly said; "**Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.**" Eve should have fled the very appearance of evil. The devil had deceived and seduced her as the scriptures testify in I Timothy 2:14: "**And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.**" Eve died spiritually when lust conceived and brought forth sin. Rather than heed the warning of God she was snared by the wiles of the devil and taken captive by him.

Eve was deceived, but Adam deliberately and willfully chose to disobey the command of God. The only man who actually had the ability to exercise a morally free-will plunged the entire human race into sin and condemnation by transgressing the holy law of God. The very essence of Adam's sin was his competition with God for sovereignty and authority.

C.D. Cole comments:

"The only possible sense in which man became like God was in spirit and aim-- not in reality. Adam and Eve asserted their independence of God. They would make their own laws and do as they pleased. They rebelled against His will for their lives. They rejected His expressed will as to what they could have. They would determine (know for themselves) what is good and evil--what is right and wrong. They would no longer be tied to God's Word about what they could do. They would be a law unto themselves and do as they pleased. They would do that which was right in their own eyes. Thus, they entered into competition with God for sovereignty. In spirit and aim they made themselves God. They would make their own will supreme." [2](#)

The day that Adam ate of the fruit he did not die physically but spiritually. His physical death 930 years later came as a result of his spiritual death when he fell and transgressed against God. Immediately Adam and Eve were separated from God. They perceived they were naked and became ashamed. They tried to hide themselves from the presence of God and attempted to cover their sin by sewing fig leaves together. They no longer enjoyed communion with their Creator. They had declared their independence by revolution and the God who had been their friend now was their enemy. They forsook God, his law, and His Word and thus were driven from the Garden of delights.

Proverbs 13:13-15 declares: **"Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded. The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard."** Because of Adam's sin all his descendants are born as transgressors and enemies of God who are condemned by the law which leads us to our next point of consideration; the federal headship of Adam.

ADAM: MAN'S REPRESENTATIVE

A representative is one who represents and acts on the behalf of others. When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden he was acting on the behalf of the entire human race, he was our representative, our federal head. In our democratic system of government sinful people elect other depraved people to represent them by popular vote. God who is holy and just elected to create a perfect and sinless man to represent the human race in the Garden of Eden. Adam was the best representative

that man could have ever hoped for, but he failed miserably in the Garden and as a result of his sin, all men are born with his nature to sin. Adam is the natural father of the human race, so his corrupt and sinful nature is inherited by all men.

Adam's sin was justly charged to all men born after him. Romans 5:12 states: **"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."** Verse 17 states: **"For if by one man's offense death reigned by one..."** Verse 18 declares: **"Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation..."** Verse 19 states; **"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners..."** Adam's sin has been imputed to all his descendants. From these verses we see that every man has been declared by God to be spiritually dead, with a sinful nature, judged and condemned in Adam.

A.A. Hodge wrote:

"The guilt of Adam's public sin, is by a judicial act of God immediately charged to the account of each and every one of his descendants from the moment he begins to exist, and antecedently to any act of his own. Hence all men come into existence deprived of all those influences of the Holy Spirit upon which their moral and spiritual life depends...and with an antecedent prevailing tendency in the natures to sin; which tendency in them is itself of the nature of sin, and worthy of punishment. Human nature since the fall retains its constitutional faculties of reason, conscience, and free agency, and hence man continues to be a responsible moral agent. Yet he is spiritually dead, and totally averse to and incapable of the discharge of any of these duties which spring out of his relation to God, and entirely unable to change his own evil dispositions or innate moral tendencies, or to dispose himself to such a change, or to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in effecting such a change." [3](#)

Man's total depravity is inherent which means that every man inherits the sinful nature of their parents. Psalms 51:5 declares: **"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."** Psalms 58:3 says: **"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."** Job 14:4 states: **"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one."** Unless you understand this truth there are several questions that cannot be answered. If infants are born without a sinful nature, why do they die? The answer of course is found in Romans 6:23: **"For the wages of sin is death..."** If sin is not imputed but taught by example, why do children naturally sin without someone teaching them too? Children sin because they are born with a nature to sin. Men are not sinners because they sin, they sin because they are sinners from the time of birth. Who taught Cain to murder Abel? Who taught Lamech to take more than one wife? Why do people who are blind and deaf sin? They can't see or hear others

sinful conduct. The answer is that all men are born sinners with a nature that opposes God and His law! Until this doctrinal foundation is properly understood you cannot comprehend the doctrines of grace.

God sees all men through two representatives, Adam and Jesus Christ. Adam represents all men, his sin is charged and imputed to every man. Jesus Christ represents only the elect, those who the Father chose before the world began and his righteousness is imputed to them by faith. All men inherit Adam's nature by birth. Only the elect inherit the nature of Jesus Christ in the new birth. All men in Adam are described as; **"...by nature the children of wrath..."** and under the just condemnation of God. Only the elect who come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ are **"accepted in the beloved"** (Eph 1:6), and **"complete in Him"** (Col. 2:10). Who represents you dear reader? The question is of paramount importance for the scripture saith: **"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."** (I Cor. 15:22)

TOTAL DEPRAVITY EXPLAINED

A simple definition of total depravity is that every man is completely ruined and spiritually corrupt. The depravity of man is universal, meaning that it extends to every natural man without exception as Romans 3:23 states: **"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."** Depravity is total in the sense that every faculty of the natural man has been tainted and corrupted by sin as Isaiah 1:5-6 declares: **"Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."**

It is important to distinguish between total and absolute depravity. Every man is spiritually dead and sinful, but that does not mean that every man is as sinful as he could be. All men are sinners with wicked hearts, but not all men are as wicked as Adolf Hitler or Charles Manson. There are degrees of depravity. All men are not the same in the degree or amount of sin they commit. Duane Spencer explains:

" It does not mean absolute depravity. This term means that one expresses the evil of his sin nature as much as possible at all times. Total depravity, does not mean that man is incapable of human good. We all know that the most wicked of mankind have some human good about them, just as the finest among mankind have some human bad about them. We have all read stories of gangsters,

liquor barons, prostitutes, and pimps, along with dope peddlers and the like, who have done deeds of human good. When man measures himself by man he is always able to find some good in himself or in others." [4](#)

However, when man is measured by the holy standard of Jesus Christ, he is weighed in the balance and found altogether wanting of any merit or goodness in the sight of God. In fact, Isaiah 64:6 declares: "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

When you examine the effects of the disease of sin in light of the Scriptures you will find out that man's entire makeup is depraved. The infection of sin runs through all his faculties and renders him helpless and without strength apart from a divine work of sovereign grace. Consider the diagnoses the Bible gives concerning man:

His heart is bad. The first mention of heart in the Bible is in Genesis 6:5 which states: "**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.**" The heart of man is generally considered to be the seat of his affections, his likes and dislikes. Because every man has a "**heart that is deceitful and desperately wicked**" he loves sin and self and hates God. If the reader thinks this assessment is too harsh, consider what Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:19-20: "**And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.**"

Man's mind is bad. He cannot understand or comprehend spiritual things. He is described as being in darkness and ignorance concerning the things of God. This is why Jesus told Nicodemus that unless a man is born again "**he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" Romans 8:7 declares: "**Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.**" I Corinthians 2:14 states: "**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.**"

Man's eyesight is bad. He cannot see himself as God sees him and as the Bible describes him. The natural man thinks he is all right as Proverbs 21:2 states: "**Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts.**" II Corinthians 4:3-4 describes the natural man's true condition: "**But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.**"

Man's hearing is bad as a result of sin. Jesus told the Pharisees the reason why they had a hearing problem in John chapter eight: **"Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word ... He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."**

Perhaps Paul, the apostle, gives the most comprehensive diagnoses of man's depravity in Romans 3:10-18 which states: **"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes."**

The natural man can be likened to a leper in the Old Testament who was considered ceremonially unclean because of the loathsome disease which ran through his body. The leper was an outcast. He was an abomination to look upon because his sores were open and gave a foul odor. Just as the leper was an unclean outcast, so are lost sinners without Jesus Christ who are infected with the disease of sin. Every lost man is corrupt in the sight of a Holy God. In the Old Testament the only thing the leper could do was go to the high priest who could only diagnose the disease. He had no power to heal.

This is a picture of the law showing man what he is in the sight of God, a corrupt sinner. In the New Covenant Jesus Christ has the power to heal the unclean and make them whiter than snow through faith in His blood. In fact, Jesus healed a leper in Mark 1:40-42 by a mere touch of His hand. Dear reader, if you have been convinced of your depravity and sin in the sight of God, your only hope is to flee to Jesus Christ, who alone has the power to say: **"I will; be thou clean."**

The natural man is entirely void of any spiritual life. Because of sin he is totally incapacitated concerning spiritual things. He is wholly unable and unfit to produce any spiritual affections or desires toward God. Apart from a miraculous intervention by the Holy Spirit in the new birth, the natural man is completely helpless. He cannot come to Christ in and of himself because he has no power or desire to come. Such statements in today's religious world would be regarded as repulsive and heretical. Most preachers are proclaiming man as his own savior through his decision making process. However, the truth of the matter lies in the Lord's declaration in John 15:5:11 ... for without me ye can do nothing." Until a person understands this truth they can never subscribe to the theology of Jonah who said: **"Salvation is of the Lord."** From beginning to end God alone must be credited with an individual's salvation.

When Adam fell in the garden he didn't just impair his relationship with God; he totally ruined it. The day that he sinned he was spiritually executed and

separated from God. That is the state that all of Adam's offspring are born into—a state of spiritual death. I Corinthians 15:22 states: "As in Adam all die..." Ephesians 2:1 declares: **"And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins."** Every lost man is a dead man spiritually, according to the Scriptures. The illustration of a dead man picturing the natural man is a striking one in several ways. Dead men can't move, talk, confess, or repent. They are lifeless corpses that can't even participate in their own funerals. They can't appreciate the beauty of the flowers that were sent, or the eulogy that the preacher gave. They can't see and they can't hear. This is precisely the spiritual condition of every lost man unless God intervenes in sovereign grace. He is buried under the weight of his own sins and in bondage to a nature that opposes God. It would be foolish to suppose that a dead man who is buried could somehow stir himself up, push open his casket, and dig through six feet of dirt, freeing himself from the bondage of the grave. Who would deny that such a scenario is entirely impossible? It is just as impossible for a spiritually dead man to stir himself up, rise above the bondage of his nature and call upon Christ for salvation.

This truth is illustrated beautifully in two passages of Scripture. The first is in Luke chapter 10 in the parable of the Good Samaritan. A certain man had fallen among thieves who had stripped him of his raiment, wounded him, and left him half dead. This is a picture of the fall of Adam. He was stripped of his original righteousness and left half dead. He was alive physically but dead spiritually. The man in the parable made no move whatsoever. The priest and the Levite passed by but neither could help him, showing that the law and religion have no power to save. The only hope that the man had was in the fact that the Good Samaritan came to where he was, had compassion on him, healed him and took complete care of his life and welfare. His life was saved entirely by the work of the Good Samaritan, not by his own efforts. The same is true with lost sinners. Salvation rests entirely upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. The second illustration of this truth is in John chapter 11 after Lazarus had died. He had already been in the grave for four days and was stinking. There was a huge stone rolled over his tomb. Lazarus had absolutely no power to roll away the stone and come out of the grave. It was Jesus who came to where Lazarus was, calling him out of the tomb in a voice of great power. Lazarus was completely passive. It was the power of God alone that raised him from the dead. So it is true of dead sinners. It takes the power of God in the effectual call to roll away the stone of depravity when God **"calls us out of darkness, into his marvelous light."**

Another way to prove the total inability of the natural man is to understand what the Scriptures teach concerning the fleshly nature of man. The lost man's fleshly nature is incapable of producing anything remotely spiritual or acceptable to God. John 3:6 says: **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh..."** John 6:63 states: **"It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing..."** Romans 7:18 declares: **"For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing..."** Romans 8:8 states: **"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please**

God." From these Scriptures we learn that the only nature a person is born with is a fleshly nature that cannot please God.

It is foolish to suppose that a lost man who is described as being dead in trespasses and in sins, alienated from the life of God, and unable to please God could rise above his corrupt nature and choose Christ! Job 14:4 asks: **"Who can bring a clean thing (a desire to trust Christ) out of an unclean (man's fleshly nature)? not one."** Can water rise above its own level? Can the will reverse the whole tendency and strain of human nature? Can that which is under the dominion of sin originate that which is pure and holy? The answer to all of these questions is no!

The source of spiritual life is not found in man's flesh or his will, but in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in the new birth. A corrupt nature can never give birth to a single affection which is truly spiritual and the Scriptures bear this truth out in several places. John 1:13 states: **"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."** John 3:6 gives the source of the new birth: **"...and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."** John 6:63 tells us: **"It is the spirit (not the flesh) that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."** The fleshly nature is referred to as the old man in Ephesians 4:22 and described as being **"corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."** The new birth does not stem from corruption, rather from the Word and the Spirit. I Peter 1:23 declares: **"Being born again, not of corruptible seed (fleshly nature), but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever."** It is interesting to note that man's spiritual life begins with the new birth. There is no such thing as a self-birth in the natural realm, neither is there a self-birth in the spiritual realm. In the new birth a new nature is created by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:24: **"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."** The reason why the spiritual nature must be created by the Spirit is because there was nothing spiritual in the natural man to enable him to commune and fellowship with God.

To further prove that man cannot come to Christ in a saving relationship in and of himself, I offer the following plain declarations from the Scriptures themselves: John 3:3,5 declares: **"...Except a man be born again, he CANNOT see the kingdom of God...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he CANNOT enter into the kingdom of God."** John 3:27 says: **"A man CAN RECEIVE NOTHING, except it be given him from heaven."** John 6:44 states: **"NO MAN CAN COME TO ME, except the Father which hath sent me draw him..."** John 8:43-44 says: **"Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye CANNOT hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."** John 14:17 states: **"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world CANNOT RECEIVE, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."** Romans 5:6 says: **"For when we were yet WITHOUT STRENGTH, in due**

time Christ died for the ungodly." I Corinthians 2:14 states: "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." (all emphasis mine).

The most common objection raised against man's total inability is that such a doctrine destroys man's responsibility. It is common for Arminians to try and pit one doctrinal truth against another in order to confuse the issue. It must not be assumed that because of man's moral inability he has no responsibility or accountability to God. God has commanded all men everywhere to repent. Every man is bound to prompt and implicit obedience to the commands of God. Responsibility, however, does not imply moral ability as the Arminians falsely assert. For example, a man goes to the bar and drinks himself drunk to the point of being incapable of driving. While in this incapacitated condition he gets behind the wheel of a car, has a wreck, and kills another man. Will he be able to plead with the judge that he was incapacitated at the time of the accident and therefore not responsible for his actions? Of course not. Even though he was incapable of obeying the laws of the land, he was still accountable and responsible to obey; and because of his accountability he receives a just punishment from the judge. The same is true of every lost sinner who dies without bowing the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith.

The teaching of the natural man's total inability concerning salvation is not only scriptural, but it is a doctrine that gives all the glory to God in the salvation of sinners. It is a doctrine that shows man exactly what he is, a helpless and corrupt sinner who must depend entirely upon the God of all grace to save him from his miserable state. When the elect of all ages are worshipping the Lamb as eternity rolls, all glory and honor will be directed to Him who alone is worthy of praise.

THE FALLACY OF FREE WILL

"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." (John 5:40) "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (Romans 9:16)

The truth presented in these two passages of Scripture is in direct opposition to what most men are preaching in our day of humanistic theology. Preachers in our day have made the free will of man into a god. This supposed free will that man possesses is powerful enough to overcome and thwart the will and purpose of God. Many have been led astray by this devilish doctrine supposing that salvation is a joint effort between man's free will and God. When the Arminian notion of free

will is taken to its logical conclusion, it makes man his own savior and denies the necessary and miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. There is a salvation of self-movement, ours a salvation that rests entirely upon the Lord from beginning to end.

It must be stated at the outset that the writer believes that man's will is directly influenced by his carnal mind and corrupt heart. The will of man is bound by his fleshly carnal nature. If man were left to decide whether or not to trust in the saving work of Christ, his decision would always be an emphatic rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. To put it very plainly, the natural man will not come to Christ apart from the mysterious and powerful work of God in the effectual call. John 6:44 sets forth this truth in striking simplicity: **"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."** Martin Luther once said: "If any man doth ascribe any of salvation even the very least, to the free will of man, he knoweth nothing of grace, and he hath not learnt Jesus Christ aright." [5](#)

THE WILL OF MAN IS INFLUENCED

The will is the faculty of choice, the immediate cause of all action. Choice necessarily implies the refusal of one thing and the acceptance of another. The three faculties of the soul include the mind, heart and will. The mind and heart of man directly influence the choices that a man makes. The will is not a separate entity that acts as its own sovereign. This truth is illustrated in Genesis 3 when Eve was deceived by Satan. W.E. Best said:

" Eve's sin verifies the order of the powers of the soul. She gained knowledge of the forbidden fruit by seeing it. Her affection went out to the fruit of which she had gained knowledge. She then exercised her will by taking the fruit." [6](#)

It is important to understand the condition of the fallen man's mind and heart to see what influence they have upon the natural man's decision making process. Genesis 6:5 states: **"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."** Matthew 15:19 declares: **"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."** Romans 8:7-8 states: **"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."** Ephesians 4:17-18 states: **"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the**

understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."

If man's will is in harmony with his knowledge (mind) and affections (heart) it will always choose that which is contrary to God and inclined to evil. To suppose that a man whose heart is desperately wicked and filled with madness, acting in concert with a mind that is carnal and darkened by spiritual ignorance; can somehow rise above his nature and choose that which is holy and righteous is not only unscriptural, it is illogical.

G. S. Bishop said:

"Man will not because it is not in him to will; he is stunted, and set in a fallen direction; and man cannot, because an evil eye affects the heart, and a deceived heart turns him aside, ever aside, from the mark of the prize of God's calling ... Man can no more originate a right desire than he can create a universe." [7](#)

C.H. Spurgeon once said:

"Man is impotent as to his will. He has no will favorable to God. We may as well expect the river to cease to run into the sea, as to expect the natural man to turn from the current of his sins."

THE FALLEN MAN'S WILL IS IN BONDAGE

Every lost man is a slave to his depraved nature and to the will of Satan, the god of this world. In short, he is in bondage to sin and the devil, unable to free himself from their captivity.

Man's will is free only within the boundaries of his nature. It is free in only one sense; it is free to act according to its sinful nature, but totally free from holiness. Romans 6:19-20 states: **"I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded (willfully submitted to) your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now (now that you are saved) yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were FREE FROM RIGHTEOUSNESS"** (emphasis mine). Jesus taught precisely the same truth in John 8:34: **"...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."** Jeremiah 13:23 states: **"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or**

the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

This truth can be illustrated in several ways.

A.W. Pink wrote:

"I hold in my hand a book. I release it; what happens? It falls. In which direction? Downwards; always downwards. Why? Because, answering the law of gravity, its own weight sinks it. Suppose I desire that book to occupy a position three feet higher; then what? I must lift it; a power outside of that book must raise it. Such is the relationship which fallen man sustains toward God. Whilst Divine power upholds him, he is preserved from plunging still deeper into sin; let that power be withdrawn, and he falls--his own weight of sin drags him down. God does not push him down, anymore than I did that book. Let all the Divine restraint be removed, and every man is capable of becoming, would become, a Cain, a Pharaoh, a Judas. How then is the sinner to move heavenwards? By an act of his own will? Not so. A power outside of himself must grasp hold of him and lift him every inch of the way. The sinner is free, but free in one direction only--free to fall, free to sin ... The sinner is free to do as he pleases, always as he pleases (except as he is restrained by God), but his pleasure is to sin." [8](#)

G.S. Bishop gave the following illustration:

" A man is free to use his hand. The man is free, but the hand is not free; the arm and muscles control it. The hand is the slave of the muscle, and acts as the muscle compels. In like manner, man is free to use his will, and is therefore always a free agent; but the will itself is not free. It is controlled by the affections, which are evil and earthly and sensual, and these again are controlled by the understanding and judgment, which call evil good and which are perverted, blinded, deluded, by the god of this world." [9](#)

If you were to offer a hungry lion a choice between raw flesh and salad, he would choose the flesh every time because his nature dictates his choice. The same is true with the lost sinner, he will always choose to reject Christ because he is bound by his evil nature, unless God makes him **"willing in the day of his power"** in an act of sovereign grace.

The natural man's will is not only bound by a nature that opposes God, it acts in concert with the will of Satan to do evil. Ever since the fall of Adam the strong man armed (Satan, Matt. 12:28-30) has had dominion over the natural man. He is controlled and influenced by the god of this world, the devil. The Scriptures are

very plain in asserting this truth. John 8:43-45 states: "**Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. (Why?) Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father YE WILL DO. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.**" Verse 47 states: "**He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.**"

II Corinthians 4:4-5 says: "**But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: IN WHOM the god of this world (Satan) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.**"

Ephesians 2:2-3 declares: "**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: 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.**"

II Timothy 2:26 says: "**...and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, WHO ARE TAKEN CAPTIVE BY HIM AT HIS WILL.**" From these Scriptures it is plain that the natural man is in bondage to do the will of Satan. The will of Satan never includes repentance of sin, and saving faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the only hope a lost sinner has is for Jesus Christ to come and spoil Satan's goods, and deliver him from captivity through His great power!

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?

I have used only a sampling of verses to prove that man's will is in bondage to his corrupt nature and is in the captivity of the devil. Man's will is free only in the sense that he is free to sin and free from righteousness. Proverbs 21:4 declare: "**An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.**" If left to himself every lost man will despise the gospel of free grace and continue in sin and rebellion to God. This fact is asserted throughout the entire Bible as the following Scriptures attest:

Judges 2:17-19 states: "**And yet they NOT HEARKEN unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them; they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the**

commandments of the Lord; but they did not so ... And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; THEY CEASED NOT FROM THEIR OWN DOINGS, NOR FROM THEIR STUBBORN WAY."

Psalms 10:4 declares: "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, **WILL NOT** seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts ... He hath said in his heart **I SHALL NOT BE MOVED.**" Psalms 58:3-5 states: "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; Which **WILL NOT** to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely."

Proverbs 1:24-30 says: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and **WOULD NONE OF MY REPROOF:** I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and **DID NOT CHOOSE** the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof." Isaiah 65:12 and 66:3 state: "Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and **DID CHOOSE THAT WHEREIN I DELIGHTED NOT...** Yea, they have **CHOSEN THEIR OWN WAYS,** and their soul delighteth in their abominations." Jeremiah 6:16, 7:26, and 8:6 state: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye, in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. **BUT THEY SAID, WE WILL NOT WALK THEREIN ...** Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers... I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? **EVERY ONE TURNED TO HIS COURSE AS THE HORSE RUSHETH INTO THE BATTLE."**

John 3:19-20 states: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and **MEN LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT,** because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, **NEITHER COMETH TO THE LIGHT,** lest his deeds should be reprov'd."

Luke 19:14 says: "But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, **WE WILL NOT HAVE THIS MAN TO REIGN OVER US."**

Romans 3:10-12 states: **"As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, THERE IS NONE THAT SEEKETH AFTER GOD. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one."**

Perhaps the reader is wondering why I have quoted so many passages of Scriptures to prove the point in question. The Word of God is a sword which is able to cut down the prevailing opinions and errors promoted by free-willers. From the Scriptures quoted we can plainly see that the natural man is self-willed, in a condition where he loves his sin more than he has a desire to come to Christ. This condition can only be changed in the new birth when God creates in us a new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:22). James 1:18 states: **"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."** Spiritual life depends on the free will of a holy and sovereign God, not in the corrupt will of fallen man. Psalms 100:3 rings true in salvation: **"Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."**

PROPONENTS OF FREE WILL ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH ROME

It is necessary at this point to prove that Arminian Baptists and Protestants who tenaciously adhere to the doctrinal myth of free will are in complete agreement with the "Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth", the Roman Catholic Church who is the bride of Satan. The Council of Trent in 1563 gave the following decrees:

"If any one shall affirm, that man's free will, moved and excited by God, does not, by consenting, cooperate with God, the mover and exciter, so as to prepare and dispose ITSELF for the attainment of justification; if moreover, anyone shall say that the human will cannot refuse complying, IF IT PLEASES, but that it is inactive, and merely passive; let such an one be accursed. If anyone shall affirm, that since the fall of Adam, man's free will is lost, and extinguished; or that it is a thing titular, yea a man, without a thing, and fiction introduced by Satan into the church; let such an one be accursed." [10](#)

How different is the scriptural language of two Baptist confessions of faith, the London (1689) and the Philadelphia (1742), which state:

"Man by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from good, and dead in sin is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto." [11](#)

(Incidentally, the Westminster Confession of Faith is also in agreement on this point).

Most Baptists and Protestants today agree more with the unscriptural doctrines of Rome, than with their own faithful forefathers who valiantly waged spiritual warfare against the "old whore". It is the height of inconsistency and hypocrisy to falsely profess a Baptist creed with the mouth, and then actually practice the heresies of Rome! Revelation 18:4 says: **"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."**

CONCLUSION

The biggest danger that I see in the popular free-will doctrine is that instead of sinners being at the mercy of a Sovereign God, God is placed at the mercy of a sinner's free will. In free will theology God cannot be immutable and his purposes fixed, because he is dependent upon the decisions and choices of sinners. It is little wonder then why people in modern day Christianity do not take Bible truths seriously, they have been fed the tommyrot of free-willism and self-salvation for nearly a century. Preachers are telling sinners that God has done all that he can do, and now it is up to them to accept Jesus and complete the salvation process. How different was the preaching of Jesus Christ when he said: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3)." "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 (John 6:44)." We need to get back to the kind of preaching where sinners see that Christ is their only hope, and that they are without strength. The kind of preaching where sinners loathe themselves and their sins by abandoning all their self-righteous efforts and sue God for peace and mercy through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

The free will doctrine that is preached today is nothing more than secular humanism in religious garb. It is a product of the social gospel which is based on the supposition that if man's environment is improved, he will be in a more

favorable, savable state. The problem with this thinking is that the problem is not so much what is around man, the real problem lies within man. Free will makes man his own savior and his own god. If every man possesses a free will that is powerful enough to resist the will of God in salvation, what would prevent that same man from choosing to resist the will of God in damnation at the great white throne of judgment?

If man is corrupt, unwilling, and unable to come to Christ, in and of himself, how then can he come and be saved? Only by the sovereign grace of God. He can come only when the Holy Spirit draws him in power, slaying the enmity of his will and leading him to repentance of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. What saith the Scriptures about this mysterious and omnipotent drawing of the Spirit? Psalm 110:3 says: "**Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power...**" Song of Solomon 1:4 states: "**Draw me, and we shall run after thee...**" Philippians 1:6 states: "**Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.**" Philippians 2:13 declares: "**For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.**" Only when these Scriptures are understood can we ascribe all of salvation to the Lord from beginning to end, giving Him all the glory, who alone is worthy of our praise and adoration. Amen.

END NOTES

Click On the Highlighted Area To Return To Your Reading

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11. [Ibid.](#), p. 176

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

By Tom Ross, Pastor

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- DOES GOD HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE?
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DOES GOD HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE?

Romans 9:18-21 states: **"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"**

Paul, in these verses makes some very direct statements concerning the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation. He is describing God's sovereign dealings with Israel, Jacob, Esau, and Pharaoh in chapter nine. Israel and Jacob were the objects of His mercy and favor. Esau and Pharaoh were the objects of His wrath and judgment. Israel and Jacob were the recipients of sovereign grace, Esau and Pharaoh were the recipients of divine reprobation. The thing that distinguished Jacob from Esau was not his works or merits, but God's purpose in electing grace as is stated in verse 11: **"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."** Knowing that the natural man

would charge God with unfairness and injustice, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to answer the objection in verse twenty with the illustration of the Sovereign Potter.

The doctrine of Unconditional Election has always been met with opposition for the simple reason that the natural man wants to be his own sovereign. He does not want to acknowledge that God has the right to choose men unto salvation according to His own good pleasure. However, if the doctrine of man's total depravity is scripturally understood the doctrine of election becomes a necessity if anyone is going to be saved!

Lorraine Boettner said:

"If the doctrine of Total Inability or Original Sin be admitted, the doctrine of unconditional Election follows by the most inescapable logic. If, as the Scriptures and experience tell us, all men are by nature in a state of guilt and depravity from which they are wholly unable to deliver themselves and have no claim whatever on God for deliverance, it follows that if any are saved God must choose out those who shall be the objects of His grace." ¹

Let anyone who has ever had a work of grace done in their heart examine their experience of salvation and they must acknowledge with John the beloved: **"We love him, because he first loved us"** (I John 4:19).

C.H. Spurgeon was once preaching to a crowd of Methodists who were in opposition to the doctrine of Election, he said: "This brings me to the doctrine of election." Expressions of disapproval became evident, whereupon, Mr. Spurgeon told the audience that they did believe the doctrine of election, and that he would make them shout "Hallelujah" over it. He asked his audience if there were any difference between them and the wicked, such as drunkards, harlots, and blasphemers. They all united in saying there was a difference. He then put the question of who made the difference, saying that whoever made the difference, should have the glory of it. "Did you make the difference?" To this question they all said "NO". He then told them that the Lord made the difference, and asked them if they thought it was wrong for Him to make a difference between them and other men? They agreed it was not wrong. Spurgeon then concluded by saying: "Very well then; if it was not wrong for God to make the difference, it was not wrong for Him to purpose to make it, and that is the doctrine of election." Then they cried, "Hallelujah", just as the preacher said they would! ²

GOD IS SOVEREIGN

In order to grasp the doctrine of unconditional Election, you must first understand the Biblical principle of God's Sovereignty over all His creation.

A.W. Pink defined God's Sovereignty in the following way:

"The sovereignty of the God of Scripture is absolute, irresistible, infinite. When we say that God is sovereign we affirm His right to govern the universe, which He has made for His own glory, just as He pleases. We affirm that His right is the right of the Potter over the clay, i.e., that He may mold that clay into whatsoever form He chooses, fashioning out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor. We affirm that He is under no rule or law outside of His own will and nature, that God is a law unto Himself, and that He is under no obligation to give an account of His matters to any." ³

The Scriptures are very plain in stating that God does as He pleases, when He pleases, and how He pleases. He is the creator and owner of all things in the Universe. Psalms 24:1 states: **"The earth is the LORD'S, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."** Revelation 4:11 declares: **"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."** It is the creature who must bow before the Creator. Yet Arminian theology presents God as the one who must bow to the fickle will of man. Arminian theology strips God of his attributes of sovereignty, independence, and power in the following ways: He is stripped of His sovereignty by the teaching that He is not free to choose men unto salvation according to His own good pleasure. He is stripped of His independence by the teaching that He must be dependent upon man's free will concerning salvation. He is stripped of His power by stating that man's will is powerful enough to resist the power of God in the Holy Spirit's effectual call to salvation. What kind of God have they forged? One that is powerless to execute His will without first consulting with sinful man. The Arminian view of God, in reality, dethrones the true God and puts man upon the throne! Such a perversion is a doctrine of the Devil as evidenced by what he told Eve in the Garden of Eden: **"Ye shall be as gods!"**

GOD IS NOT OBLIGATED TO MAN

Perhaps the greatest misconception in the religious world today is the idea that God is obligated in some way to make salvation available to every man. I have often heard the statement: "God gives every person the same amount of grace to decide whether to be saved or not." Such a statement is simply not Biblical. God's grace is distinguishing. He chooses to save some men and to leave others in their sins according to His own sovereign will. This is precisely what Paul was stating in

Romans 9:18: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

It was man who rebelled and disobeyed God by sinning. Man has always been obligated and accountable to God, but God has never been obligated or accountable to sinful man. God would have remained righteous and just in sending all of the human race to Hell for their sins, because that is exactly what we all deserve! To say that God is unfair to elect some and not others is the height of blasphemy in light of what all men justly deserve! It is an act of grace that God would elect any out of Adam's fallen and rebellious race!

Abraham Booth wrote:

"If, then we consider the Almighty as choosing any of the fallen race to life and happiness, we behold him exercising the mercy of a compassionate Father, to his miserable offspring. But if we consider him as choosing this person rather than that, when both were equally wretched; we view him as vested with the character of a sovereign Lord, and as the sole proprietor of His own favours. If, therefore, the question be asked; Why any were chosen to salvation, when all deserved to perish? The answer is; Because our Maker is merciful. But if it be further asked; Why Paul, for instance, was chosen rather than Judas? The answer is; Because he is Lord of all, and has an indisputable right to do what he will with his own. But if this answer will not satisfy the curious inquirer, he is directed by the Spirit of inspiration to ask the potter, what was the reason of his very different procedure with the same lump of clay; and why he formed the vessels into which it was wrought, for such different and opposite uses? The artificer will readily answer, as directed by common sense; 'Not any thing in the clay itself; but my own deliberate and free choice. For it was of the same kind, and possessed the same qualities throughout the whole mass: nor could one part dictate how it would be formed, or for what uses, any more than another.' Thus the most ignorant potter, without hesitation, would assert a kind of sovereignty over his clay. And are not mankind in the hand of God, as clay in the hand of the potter? Or, shall Jehovah's sovereignty over his offending creatures, be inferior to that of a puny mortal over passive matter? Reason and revelation forbid the thought. In election, therefore, we have a striking display of Divine grace in its utmost freeness; and of God's dominion in its highest sovereignty." ⁴

GOD IS EXECUTING HIS PURPOSE

God is the sovereign framer of all events. His purposes are as eternal as He is. Nothing happens in time but what has been decreed by God before time began. In the truest sense, God is the only one in the entire Universe who acts independently and uninfluenced by outside forces. Psalms 115:3 states: **"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."**

The eternal purposes of God are unchangeable, it is impossible for any of His decrees to be altered. Job 23:13-14 declares: **"But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him."** Not only is His purpose fixed, it cannot be thwarted by man. God is the only one in the Universe who has the power to execute all of His sovereign purpose. Isaiah 46:9-11 states: **"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."** The God the Arminians preach is very different from the God who is described in these verses. The Arminian God is frustrated and unable to carry out His will. He is unable to infringe upon the free-will of man, thus He is controlled and dependent upon the decisions of man.

Augustus Toplady, commenting on Arminian doctrine, said:

" That it is a doctrine which represents Omnipotence itself as wishing and trying and striving to no purpose. According to this tenet, God, in endeavoring to convert sinners, may, by sinners, be foiled, defeated, and disappointed; He may lay close and long siege to the soul, and that soul can, from the citadel of impregnable free will, hang out a flag of defiance to God Himself, and by a continued obstinacy of defense, and a few vigorous sallies of free will compel Him to raise the siege. In a word the Holy Spirit, after having for years perhaps, danced attendance on the free will of man, may at length, like a discomfited general, or an unsuccessful politician, be either put to ignominious flight, or contemptuously dismissed, without accomplishing the end for which He was sent." [5](#)

Such a view of God not only dishonors Him, it flies in the face of reason and revelation as Daniel 4:35 states: **"And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou."**

Included in the decrees of God is His purpose to save some of Adam's fallen race through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. His purpose to save

His elect was framed before the world began when He chose a certain number of individuals unto salvation, and gave them to His Son to redeem. This is why we find Jesus Christ praying in John 17: **"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him"** (v. 2). **"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word"** (v. 6). **"I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine "** (v. 9). **"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word "** (v. 20). **"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world"** (v. 24). From these verses it is plain to see that Jesus Christ was referring to the eternal purpose of God concerning the salvation of those He was sent to redeem. Eternal life will only be given to those whom the Father gave the Son, not one more, not one less (v. 3). Also it is plain to see that it is the will of Christ that all the elect be brought to salvation in time through the means of the preached Word (v. 20), and that all the elect will one day behold the glory of the Son and be with Him, where He is (v. 24).

The entire plan, purpose, and application of salvation is of God from beginning to end. Man does nothing to save himself, he merely receives the gift which God bestows upon Him, and then only when God opens his hardened heart (Acts 16:14). II Timothy 1:9 sums it up nicely: **"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."**

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION: WHO? AND WHEN?

Ephesians 1:4-5 states: **"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."**

The doctrine of Unconditional Election, as it is presented in the Holy Scriptures, faces strong opposition from the majority of "professing Christendom" in our day. It is derided as being unfair, repulsive, and not worthy of devout attention or study. This kind of attitude has prevailed for most of the Twentieth Century, which is why there is little reverence for God and His Word in our day. Arminianism is readily accepted without question by those who have heaped to themselves teachers, having itching ears. As a result they have been turned away from the precious truth of election to embrace the heresy and fable of free-willism. The truth of God's

Word has been sold for the cheap price of popularity and the vain praises and acceptance of sinful men.

The fact that a doctrine in scripture is opposed by popular opinion does not render it false. In fact, a true servant of God is not swayed by what pleases men, but rather, that which honors God. Paul stated this in Galatians 1:10: **"For do I now persuade men or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."** The Scriptures must serve as our final authority for faith and practice. If a doctrine is found in the Bible, I am convinced that it is the responsibility of every God-called preacher to declare it (Acts 20:27-28). Believing that **"all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine..."** I consider the doctrine of election to be a profitable and God-honoring truth, which, if properly understood, will serve to strengthen and edify the saints of God. The reason why anyone believes the doctrine of election is because they find it in the Bible. The Bible not only teaches this truth, but makes it prominent, so prominent that you can only get rid of election by getting rid of the Bible.

Election is God's eternal choice of some persons unto everlasting life, not because of foreseen merit in them, but of his mere mercy in Christ, in consequence of which choice they are called and justified.

The Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 states the doctrine thusly:

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace, others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice...These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished...Those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him thereunto." [6](#)

WHO DOES THE ELECTING?

From our text it is clear that God does the electing. **"According as he hath chosen us"**, is the plain declaration of scripture. The antecedent of the pronoun he is found in verse three: **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..."** To

put it very simply, the he in verse four who does the electing is God, the us in verse four are the saints who are merely the objects of God's eternal choice.

The universal testimony of scripture proves that God is the one who chooses, elects, or predestinates specific individuals to be saved. Deuteronomy 7:6 states: **"For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God : the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself..."** Psalms 65:4 declares: **"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causeth to approach unto thee..."** Concerning elect Israel, Jeremiah 50:20 states: **"In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."** Mark 13:20 states: **"And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days."** John 6:37 states: **"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me..."** Paul, using the illustration of God as a Sovereign Potter, states in Romans 9:23: **"And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."** I Corinthians 1:26-27 states: **"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen..."** I Thessalonians 1:4 states that God is the source of election: **"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."** I Thessalonians 5:9 states: **"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."** II Thessalonians 2:13 states: **"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."**

The reader may wonder why so many scriptures have been quoted to prove the point. The answer is simple, where else would you go to prove Bible doctrine? Yet most of "professing Christendom" believe that God is passive, and that man is the one who does the choosing. The theology that God votes for us, the devil votes against us, and that we cast the deciding ballot is ridiculous in light of the Scriptures. As C.D. Cole said: "Self-election is a bad form of self-righteousness." It is clear that the reader must make a choice to either believe the opinions of men or the inspired word of God. Someone may object by saying: "That's just your interpretation!" Yet, the truth of the matter is that I have done nothing more than quote Scripture, which is God's revelation!

The truth that God chooses men ought to fill our hearts with wonder and praise. It is a wonderful thing to be the object of someone else's love and affections. My wife and children love me and it causes my heart to rejoice. How much more should the elect of God rejoice when they realize that the most important person in the Universe has loved them with an everlasting love. What a glorious thought that the Almighty God, who is holy, just, and perfect in all His ways, would choose us as the objects of His sovereign grace. The very thought of God choosing us ought to

drive us to our knees in humility and praise to give thanks unto Him who has made us accepted in the Beloved.

Well did the poet write:

"Tis not that I did choose Thee,
For, Lord, that could not be;
This heart would still refuse Thee,
Hadst Thou not chosen me."

WHEN DID GOD'S ELECTION TAKE PLACE?

Election is God's eternal choice as Ephesians 1:14 clearly states: "**According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world...**" The phrase before the foundation of the world carries with it the idea that it was before creation, before the existence of time. The election of God must be viewed as an eternal act which took place before the world began.

The love of God for His elect is a love that is as eternal as He is. Jeremiah 31:3 says: "**...Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love...**" In the solitude of eternity, before God ever spoke the universe into existence, before man was created from the dust of the earth, God sovereignly chose a multitude from Adam's fallen race to be the objects of His grace. This eternal love that God had for His people is expressed in the prayer of Jesus in John 17:23-24: "**...and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.**"

Jesus instructed the disciples not to rejoice in the fact that they had power over evil spirits, "**...but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.**" Our Arminain brothers immediately will say: "God does write their names down in the Lamb's Book of life, when they believe and are saved." Then they will most heartily break into a rendition of "There's a New Name Written Down in Glory". Yet, the idea that God writes the names down in time is wholly unscriptural. According to Revelation 13:8 and 17:8, the names were written in the Book before the world began: "**And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him (the Antichrist), whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**"

To further determine when the elect were chosen in Christ, the phrase "the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" is significant because it links the time of the names being written down with the appointment of Christ as the Sacrificial Lamb for the sins of His people. Christ, the eternal Son of God, was appointed by His Father to be the Sacrificial Lamb before the foundation of the

world as I Peter 1:19-20 states: **"But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."** The precious blood by which we are redeemed is called: **"...the blood of the everlasting covenant"** in Hebrews 13:20 which indicates that Christ's agreement with the Father to redeem His chosen ones dates back to eternity.

Furthermore, election must be viewed as included in God's eternal decrees which were framed before the world began. God's purpose of grace to save the elect was formed before the world began as II Timothy 1:9 plainly states: **"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."** This eternal purpose to save is directly linked with election in Romans 9:11: **"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."** Certainly no one would deny that salvation is one of God's gracious works in respect to men. Acts 15:18 states: **"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."** To deny that election is an eternal act of God's sovereign counsel is to deny the plain truth of Isaiah 46:9-10: **"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."** Ephesians 1:11 states: **"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."** The very word predestinate means to determine one's destiny beforehand and is linked to God's purpose to save. The very simple fact of the cause of saving faith is traced back to God's eternal ordination in Acts 13:48 which states: **"...and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."** J.I. Packer wrote: "Where the Arminian says 'I owe my election to my faith,' the Calvinist says 'I owe my faith to my election.'"

I conclude this point with a quote from Abraham Booth:

"This truth may be further evinced by considering, that as the inheritance of glory was prepared for its future possessors, before the foundation of the world; so grace and all spiritual blessings that were necessary to fit them for the enjoyment of it, were given them in Christ Jesus; were lodged in his hands, as their federal head, as the appointed Mediator, and for their use, before the world began. Nor can we conceive of any new determinations arising in the Eternal Mind, or any purposes formed by our Maker, that were not from everlasting, without supposing him defective in knowledge, or mutable in his perfections. Suppositions these, which very ill become the character of Him whose name is JEHOVAH." [2](#)

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION: WHY?

Why did God choose some men unto salvation before the world began? Was it because He foresaw that they would repent and believe in time, or was it according to the good pleasure of His own will? These questions have been discussed by theologians for centuries. The answer is stated very simply in Romans 9:11: **"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."** God's election of certain individuals is unconditional and uninfluenced by the works of men. He did not elect men based on their foreseen merits, but elected them simply because it pleased Him to do so.

THE REAL QUESTION

The real question that should be asked is, why did God choose to save any out of Adam's race? All of us were equally repulsive, sinful, and corrupt in the eyes of a Holy God. All of us were high handed rebels who were transgressors against God's perfect law. None of us were holy, rather we were unholy. None of us were friends of God, rather we were His enemies. None of us sought after God, rather we turned to our own sinful and wicked ways. None of us by nature loved God, rather we "loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds were evil." The way in which God saw every man is recorded in Romans 3:10-12: **"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."**

My heart is filled with wonder as I ask myself, why would God choose me as an object of His love and grace, out of all the millions of people in human history? The answer is stated in Deuteronomy 7:7: **"The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you."** This truth is stated again in Ephesians 1:4-5: **"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."** God's own sovereign pleasure alone has determined who would be the objects of His immutable love. If we are to be honest with ourselves we will readily admit that if God had not chosen us we would have never come to Jesus Christ. Paul asked the Corinthians: **"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"** (I Cor. 4:7). The answer to this question is found in I Corinthians 15:10 which states: **"But by the grace of God I am what I am..."**

Paul did not take credit for one ounce of his salvation. All glory, honor, and praise was directed to the **"God of all grace"** . None of us have any merits or goodness to boast of or glory in. The only reason that any person is going to heaven is because God loved them and chose them according to His own good pleasure before the world began.

Abraham Booth wrote:

"Let us attend the believer in his secret retirements: let us behold him on his bended knee, and hear him pouring out his soul to God. In his intercourse with Heaven, at the throne of grace his language will be to the following import. Thou Great Supreme, who art glorious in holiness, and the infinite Sovereign of all worlds; who humblest thyself to behold the things that are in the highest heavens; whose condescension is unspeakably great, in deigning to regard the persons or services of the most holy and exalted creatures; didst thou consider me in my low estate, as a fallen creature and a miserable sinner? Did thy everlasting love fix on me as its object, when I might, with the greatest equity, have been marked out as a victim for eternal justice? Is not my person polluted, and my state by nature damnable? Was not my original depravity as great, and are not my actual transgressions as numerous as any which can be found among the apostate sons of Adam? And hast thou determined to make me an everlasting monument of sparing mercy, while millions are left to suffer the awful desert of their crimes? Nothing in me couldst thou behold, but a shocking compound of impurity and folly, of guilt and wretchedness. Nothing in my conduct couldst thou foresee, but what was adapted to provoke thy abhorrence, rather than to obtain thy regard. O, thou majestic Being! Why such mercy to a hardened rebel? Why such love to an inveterate enemy? Obligated I am, in the court of conscience, to plead guilty to the complicated charge which thy own righteous law exhibits against me. Motive, or cause, of thy tender regards, I can find none in myself. Thy own sovereign will, thy own free pleasure; these are the only cause why mercy is manifested to me, of sinners the vilest. For should a wretch who is now in hell advance a claim on thy favour, grounded on his own worthiness, I must acknowledge it is as well founded as any to which I can pretend." ⁸

Men will often commend other men for what they condemn a Holy God for. For example, if a wealthy man goes to the orphanage and chooses to adopt a child who is fatherless we would consider it an act of charity. If he would choose a child with several known deformities and defects we would consider the man to be saintly and gracious and worthy of praise. After all, he was in no way obligated to choose any of the children. He did not have to share his wealth, his goodness, his name, and his home, he merely did so because it pleased him to do so. Such a man is to

be honored and admired. Yet when you apply the same circumstances to God men will charge Him with unfairness and injustice in saving some and not others. All of us were deformed rebels corrupted by the same lump of sin, with no righteousness or merit before God. Yet as a loving Father, in an act of sovereign grace, He chose some unto salvation. He sent His Son to blot out the eternal debt of sin which we owed to divine justice. He called us and drew us by His power. He took us out from under the condemnation of the law and now deals with us in grace as His sons and daughters. He has promised an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. All of this simply because it pleased Him to love us with an everlasting love. How our hearts should burst forth in praise with the Apostle Paul: **"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!...For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. "** (Rom 11:33,36)

Lorraine Boettner wrote:

"The marvel of marvels is not that God, in His infinite love and justice, has not elected all of this guilty race to be saved, but that He has elected any. When we consider, on the one hand, what a heinous thing sin is, together with its desert of punishment, and on the other, what holiness is, together with God's perfect hatred for sin, the marvel is that God could get the consent of His holy nature to save a single sinner." ⁹

"May not the Sovereign Lord on high Dispense His favors as He will;
Choose some to life, while others die, And yet be just and gracious still?
Shall man reply against the Lord, And call his Maker's ways unjust?
The thunder whose dread word Can crush a thousand worlds to dust.
But, O my soul, if truths so bright Should dazzle and confound thy sight,
Yet still His written will obey, And wait the great decisive day!"

THE ARMINIAN NOTION OF ELECTION REFUTED

Every one ascribes to some kind of election whether it be true or false. The person who contends for sovereign grace believes that God's election is eternal and unconditional. The Arminian will say that he believes in the election of the nation of Israel as well as an election to service. However, the Arminian notion of election is conditioned upon something God saw in man before He elected him. Arminianism teaches that God looked down in the future (prescience) and saw who

would repent and believe in Jesus Christ, and on that basis of foreseen faith, He elected or chose them.

John Wesley, the Prince of Arminianism, put it the following way:

"The Scriptures tell us plainly what predestination is: it is God's foreappointing obedient believers to salvation, not without, but according to His foreknowledge of all their works from the foundation of the world. God, from the foundation of the world foreknew all men's believing or not believing. And according to this, His foreknowledge, He chose or elected all obedient believers, as such to salvation." [10](#)

Such a view is unscriptural and error filled on several counts as follows:

1. Arminianism has a false view of God's foreknowledge. They regard foreknowledge as merely God's ability to know beforehand, which is properly called foresight or prescience which is an aspect of God's attribute of Omniscience. Yet, foreknowledge, strictly speaking, is not an attribute of God, but rather a divine act based upon His own sovereign decree and purpose. When foreknowledge is mentioned in the scriptures it is not limited to mere acquaintance, rather it has reference to either special affection or appointment. A.W. Pink said: "It is individuals God is said to foreknow, not the actions of those persons." In the Scriptures to know or foreknow means to regard with favor, with special affection, to love intimately. It is not mere prescience or cognition, but an act of love on the part of God concerning His elect. The following scripture references will prove the point in question:

Genesis 4:1 states: "**And Adam knew Eve his wife...**" The reference is to Adam having a special love and affection only for his wife.

Jeremiah 1:5 states: "**Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.**" Notice how closely the words knew, sanctified, and ordained are related to one another. God did not know Jeremiah just by mere cognition. He regarded Jeremiah as an object of His sovereign electing love and because of that he set Him apart to serve. Is this not what God does with His elect in light of Ephesians 2:8-10?

Amos 3:2 states: "**You only have I known of all the families of the earth...**" God is here speaking to His chosen people of the Old Testament, the nation of Israel of whom it is said in Deuteronomy 7:7-8: "**The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people: for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you...**" God knew all the other families of the earth by His omniscience, but He regarded the

children of Israel with a special affection and love which went beyond mere cognition to electing, distinguishing grace.

In each of the following scriptures the words know and foreknow are inseparably linked with elect individuals, the objects of God's sovereign love, partakers of Christ's redeeming blood, and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Nahum 1:7 states: **"The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he KNOWETH them that trust in him."** John 10:14; 27 says: **"I am the good shepherd, and KNOW my sheep, and am known of mine...My sheep hear my voice, and I KNOW them, and they follow me."** II Timothy 2:19 states: **"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord KNOWETH them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."** Romans 8:28; 33 says: **"For whom he did FOREKNOW, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren...Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's ELECT?"** Romans 11:2 says: **"God hath not cast away his people which he FOREKNEW..."** I Peter 1:2 states: **"ELECT according to the FOREKNOWLEDGE of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied."**

I would ask my Arminian brethren to contrast the above scriptures with Matthew 7:23 which states: **"And then will I profess unto them I never KNEW you; depart from me ye that work iniquity."** In the context of this verse Jesus Christ is addressing non-elect reprobates who were false professors of religion. He knew them by omniscience as he knows the works and hearts of all men. However, He didn't know them in the sense of the special affection and love which He has for the objects of electing grace. He didn't know them or love them. He didn't call them His sheep, He called them workers of iniquity. He didn't call them unto Himself, rather He tells them to depart from Him and consigns them to eternal torment in the Lake of Fire. You will search the Scriptures in vain trying to find where Jesus Christ ever speaks in such a way to the objects of His special love and electing grace!

2. The second aspect of Arminian error is the teaching that God saw something good in man, i.e., repentance and faith, and on that basis elected Him. This is a denial of total depravity. Before man was ever created God saw each man in a totally corrupt and dead state not possessing repentance and faith toward God, but rather rebellion and hatred, and an unwillingness to seek after God and His ways. Psalms 14:1-4 declares: **"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. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of man, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Have all**

the workers of iniquity no knowledge who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD."

God saw nothing in man that would merit salvation. If the Arminian notion were true, then election and salvation would depend on man's willingness to repent and believe, which in essence is saying that each man is saved based upon something that he does, which is works salvation. The Scriptures are very emphatic concerning the teaching of free grace. Romans 11:5-6 states: **"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace (not foreseen faith!), And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."** II Timothy 1:9 teaches that man's salvation and calling find their source in the sovereign grace and purpose of God, not what God sees in man: **"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus Before the world began."**

3. The third aspect of Arminian error is that they reverse the order of salvation. Repentance and faith are not the causes of election, they are the effects of it. Election is the cause of man's regeneration, repentance, faith, and subsequent holiness. Acts 13:48 states: **"...and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."** Here is the scriptural order. As a result of electing love men are given the grace to believe.

The natural man has no inclination or understanding of spiritual things in his dead state. He possesses no desire to repent, and no saving faith. These graces must be given and wrought in him by the Holy Spirit of God. Spiritually dead men cannot repent. God must quicken them in the new birth, thus enabling them to repent and believe. There must be spiritual life before there can be spiritual actions. Repentance is clearly a gift of God, not something that man possesses naturally. Acts 5:31 states: **"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to GIVE repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."** Acts 11:18 says: **"...Then hath God also to the Gentiles GRANTED repentance unto life."** II Timothy 2:25 states: **"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will GIVE them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."** Saving faith, likewise, is a gift from God, not something that man naturally possesses. Ephesians 2:8 declares: **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is (faith) the gift of God."** Philippians 1:29 states: **"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but to suffer for his sake."** II Peter 1:1 says: **"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have OBTAINED like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."** It is God who begins, sustains, and completes salvation for His elect. Philippians 1:6 declares: **"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."**

4. The fourth error associated with the Arminian notion of election based on foreseen faith and obedience is that it robs God of His attribute of Independency. It would make the decrees of God rest upon what He sees in the creature. Logically, it would cause God to be obligated to save men based on the merits which He foresaw in them, which is unscriptural.

5. The final problem associated with the Arminian notion of election based on foreseen faith is that it displays a glaring contradiction of their own theology. If God elects men unto salvation based on their foreseen repentance and faith, then logically He would send Christ to die only for those who He saw would repent and believe. Why would Christ die for the sins of every man, and shed His precious life's blood for every man if God foresaw who would repent and believe? Thus, the Arminian is forced to abandon his prized doctrine of universal redemption and embrace the much hated scriptural doctrine of particular redemption.

I have offered these refutations of Arminian theology with no malice intended. I would encourage those who would take issue with the above points to search the scriptures. Unconditional election exalts God giving Him all the glory for man's salvation while at the same time abasing and humbling man in the dust. Though my Arminian brethren may not be convinced at this time, there is coming a day when in the glorified state every saint will ascribe to the doctrines of grace. Isaiah 28:24 declares: **"They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine."**

REPROBATION: THE SEVERITY OF GOD

Proverbs 16:4 states: **"The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."**

Ecclesiastes 3:1 states: **"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."**

Romans 11:22 states: **"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God..."**

From the above scriptures it is plain to see that all of God's creation is ordered in such a way as to ultimately bring glory unto Himself. This is the chief design of all of God's decrees and purposes. If there is a time for the execution of every purpose of God (which we heartily affirm, as Ephesians 1:11 states: **"...according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"**) then the damnation of the non-elect must of necessity be included in that eternal purpose. In the doctrine of unconditional election we behold the grace and goodness of a sovereign God toward unworthy sinners. In the doctrine of

unconditional reprobation we behold the severity and justice of God toward the worthy recipients of His wrath.

Lorraine Boettner wisely stated:

"No one with proper ideas of God supposes that He suddenly does something which He had not thought of before. Since His is an eternal purpose, what He does in time is what He purposed from eternity to do. Those whom He saves are those whom He purposed from eternity to save, and those whom He leaves to perish are those whom He purposed from eternity to leave. If it is just for God to do a certain thing in time, it is, by parity of argument, just for Him to resolve upon and decree it from eternity, for the principle of the action is the same in either case. And if we are justified in saying that from all eternity God has intended to display His mercy in pardoning a vast multitude of sinners, why do some people object so strenuously when we say that from all eternity God has intended to display His justice in punishing other sinners?" [11](#)

The doctrine of reprobation is rarely preached upon in our day because it is so offensive to the carnal mind. Men have gone to great lengths to disprove the doctrines of election and reprobation. Even those who believe in unconditional election generally never touch upon the subject of reprobation. Yet, these truths are so intricately linked, you can't have one without the other. If God elected to save some in Christ before the world began, it naturally follows that he rejected others and left them to perish in their sin and unbelief by decree of damnation.

A.W. Pink said:

"Every choice, evidently and necessarily implies a refusal, for where there is no leaving out there can be no choice. If there be some whom God has elected unto salvation (II Thess. 2:13), there must be others who are not elected unto salvation. If there are some that the Father gave to Christ (John 6:37), there must be others whom He did not give unto Christ. If there are some whose names are written in the Lamb's book of Life (Rev. 21:27), there must be others whose names are not written there." [12](#)

Edwin Palmer defines reprobation in the following way:

"Reprobation is God's eternal, sovereign, unconditional, immutable, wise, holy, and mysterious decree whereby, in electing some to eternal life, He passes others by, and then justly condemns them for their own sin--all to His own glory." [13](#)

To deny that God has eternally ordained the non-elect to damnation is to deny the plain testimony of scripture as Jude 4 declares: **"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Though this doctrine is repulsive to the carnal mind, it is profitable to the saint of God because it is contained in the Word of God. II Timothy 3:16 states: **"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine... That the man of God may be perfect (mature), thoroughly furnished unto all good works."** Because of the controversial nature of reprobation I will simply offer scriptures which clearly evidence the fact that the non-elect are eternally marked out by God for damnation by leaving them in their sins according to His own just and perfect will.

Joshua 11:18-20 states: **"Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle. For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses."** The destruction of those kings who were shown no favor is attributed to the sovereign will of God. He had purposed that they would come against Israel, be destroyed, and cast into Hell. Who will deny that this appointment of destruction was formed by God before the world began in light of Isaiah 46:10: **"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure...I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."**

John 12:39-41 states: **"Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."** In very clear terms it is recorded that some, according to the purpose of God be left in their sins to perish blinded, hardened, ignorant and unconverted. Before the reader tries to cast injustice upon God, I ask; is this not what every fallen son of Adam deserves? and **"Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"** (Gen. 18:25) John 13:18 states: **"I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me."** Jesus is speaking to His disciples, one of whom was not chosen to salvation. The one who is non-elect is Judas, who elsewhere is called a devil from the very beginning. Who would deny that the devil is a reprobate by divine appointment?

Romans 9:11-23 is a lengthy passage of scripture which sets forth God's purpose of election and reprobation in no uncertain terms. Verse 11 states: **"For the**

children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." Verse 13 states: **"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."** The question remains, when did God love Jacob and hate Esau? The answer is simple, before they were even born, before they did any works whether good or bad, God had determined to love one and hate the other. Paul then answers the objection of the natural mind which says: **"Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid."**

Paul then gives another example of God showing mercy to one and hardening another according to His own will by citing the example of Pharaoh. In light of verse 17 the hardening and damnation of Pharaoh was according to the purpose of God. By raising Pharaoh up and appointing him to damnation God showed the world the power of His inflexible justice upon the wicked who say as Pharaoh did: **"Who is the LORD that I should obey him?"** Lest any dear saint charge God with unrighteousness, remember that the song of Moses will be the song of glorified saints who viewed the judgment of the wicked as just and true as Revelation 15:3-4 states: **"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."**

Paul then answers the final objection to God's will in election and reprobation with the illustration of the sovereign potter in verses 20-23. It is interesting to note that the same potter is said to "make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour." A vessel of mercy is fitted to enjoy the riches of the glory of God, whereas the vessel of wrath is said to be fitted to destruction. All the verbs used in these verses are used to describe God's sovereign acts; God makes vessels of honor and dishonor, He shews His wrath in time on the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. Robert Haldane comments:

"The sum of the apostle's answer here is, that the grand object of God, both in the election and the reprobation of men, is that which is paramount to all things else in the creation of men, namely, His own glory." [14](#)

There are several other scripture texts where election and reprobation are set forth in the very same passage. Romans 11:5-8 states: **"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (According as it is written, God hath**

given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day."

I Thessalonians 5:9 states: "**For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.**" From the text it is evident that some are appointed to wrath, whereas others are appointed to obtain salvation.

II Thessalonians 2:11-13: "**And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.**" The word but in verse 13 connects it to the previous verses. Those who will be deceived by the Antichrist are distinguished from those who are the elect of God.

I Peter 2:7-9 states: "**Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**" In this passage the elect are contrasted with the reprobate who are said to be disobedient and appointed to destruction. God appointed the elect to salvation before the world began, and in so doing He appointed the non-elect to damnation and eternal destruction at the same time.

II Peter 2:12 states: "**But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption.**" Peter is exposing false teachers, of whom he wrote, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that they were made to be destroyed and to perish in their own corruption. Certainly none can deny that this verse emphatically teaches Divine reprobation. To do so would be to go against the plain sense of Scripture itself.

Though many objections might be raised against the Bible doctrine of reprobation, it is clearly set forth in the scriptures. I will leave others more learned than myself to answer all the objections against reprobation. I choose to humbly accept the plain testimony of the Word of God in spite of what men may say. The writer must confess that the doctrine of reprobation goes against the fleshly reasonings of our minds. Yet, it is not for the believer to pick and choose what to believe or not to believe, rather we must accept the whole council of God as authoritative and final for faith and practice.

Though the writings of men are not to be regarded as authoritative, they are sometimes helpful, so I offer the following quotes by others concerning the doctrine of reprobation.

John Bunyan, the English Baptist of the 1600's, wrote an extensive treatise entitled; "Reprobation Asserted", from which the following excerpt was taken:

"Reprobation is before the person cometh into the world, or hath done good or evil. This is evidenced by Romans 9:11. Here you find twain in their mother's womb, and both receiving their destiny, not only before they had done good or evil, but before they were in a capacity to do it, they being yet unborn--their destiny, I say, the one unto, the other not unto the blessing of eternal life; the one elect, the other reprobate; the one chosen, the other refused." [15](#)

John Gill, the English Baptist of the 1700's, wrote the following in his Body of Divinity:

"If men were chosen from the beginning, that is, from eternity to salvation; then those that were not chosen, or not ordained to eternal life, were foreordained as early to condemnation... And, indeed, there can be no new decree, appointment, or purpose, made by God in time; if the decree of election was from eternity, that of rejection must be so too; since there cannot be one without the other; if some were chosen before the foundation of the world, others must be left, or passed by, as early..." [16](#)

Augustus Toplady, the author of the hymn, 'Rock of Ages', wrote:

"God, from all eternity decreed to leave some of Adam's fallen posterity in their sins, and to exclude them from the participation of Christ and His benefits." [17](#)

George Whitefield, the English evangelist of the 1700's wrote:

"Without doubt, the doctrine of election and reprobation must stand or fall together...I frankly acknowledge I believe the doctrine of Reprobation, that God intends to give saving grace, through Jesus Christ, only to a certain number; and that the rest of mankind, after the fall of Adam, being justly left of God to continue in sin, will at last suffer that eternal death which is its proper wages." [18](#)

J.P. Boyce, the Southern Baptist theologian of the 1800's, wrote:

"...The choice of some so necessarily involves the rejection of others as to require that rejection to accompany the act of choice.

Rejection must, therefore, have accompanied Election. In the very fact that some were chosen, was involved the rejection of others." [19](#)

OBJECTIONS TO UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION ANSWERED

"And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:65-68)

The day before Jesus uttered these words he had miraculously fed five thousand men beside women and children. The multitude continued to follow him because of the miracle he had performed, and probably hoping that he would once again supply their physical needs. Instead, Jesus delivered one of the strongest discourses in all of the Bible concerning the sovereignty of God in salvation. After hearing Jesus present the truths of man's total inability to save himself, unconditional election, and the necessity of God drawing sinners to salvation, the multitude thinned out until there was only the twelve original disciples left. Even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was met with opposition when he preached the doctrines of grace. The multitudes would not receive the word of the Lord, choosing rather to reject the plain testimony of Scripture.

It should not surprise us today, if objections are raised against the doctrine of unconditional election. The servants of the Lord are not greater than their Master. If he faced opposition to this blessed truth, we can be assured that we must endure the same. The key to enduring opposition and answering the objections of men is found in the reply of Peter: **"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."** The word of the Lord is to take preeminence over the opinions and reactions of the multitudes. If a truth is presented in Scripture we must humbly accept it even if it goes against the tide of popular opinion. Romans 3:4 states: **"...yea, let God be true, but every man a liar..."**

I will attempt to answer some of the most common objections that are raised against the doctrine of unconditional election. In so doing my goal is to **"speak the truth in love"**, and to follow the admonition Paul gave to Titus: **"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."** (Titus 1:9)

1. The most common objection raised against the doctrine of election is that it is unfair and unjust for God to choose some unto salvation and leave others in their sins. This objection implies that God is obligated to the natural man which is a serious error. Salvation is a gracious gift which God bestows upon unworthy, guilty sinners. Salvation can in no way be viewed as a debt or an obligation which God owes to man. Such faulty reasoning would strip God of His supremacy and place man upon the throne.

Those who object to election on the basis of the justice of God simply do not understand that election to salvation is an act of grace, not justice. Every one of the fallen sons of Adam are corrupt sinners who deserve nothing more than to be eternally tormented in the Lake of Fire for their high handed rebellion against the Most High. There is not one person who can lay claim to God's salvation on the basis of their worthiness or merits. Ecclesiastes 7:20 states: **"For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."** It is the height of folly and madness for an unjust sinner to charge God with injustice for giving him what he deserves. All men deserve to be condemned, none are worthy to be partakers of God's grace and glory. In fact, God would have been perfectly just in passing by all men, choosing to save none, and leaving them in their sins to perish forever. This would be pure fairness and justice on the part of God.

Election, however, is an act of pure grace. Instead of getting what I justly deserved, God sovereignly chose me in Christ and sent His Son into the world to bear my sins and the penalty which I had merited. Instead of perishing in my sins I can praise God with the Apostle Paul who wrote: **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love..."** (Eph. 1:3-4)

It has always puzzled me why those who charge God with injustice for choosing some to salvation never charge God with injustice for not choosing Satan and the reprobate angels.

Abraham Booth said:

"But why should the objector be so much concerned about the honour of Divine justice, in the conduct of God toward mankind, on supposition that he has chosen some and rejected others? Why should he not be as much concerned lest the glory of his Maker should suffer a stain, by the final rejection of all the angels that sinned and fell from their first estate? Certainly, there is equal, if not superior reason. Why, then, does he not plead the cause of those old apostates, those damned spirits, and quarrel with God because he hath shown more regard to fallen men than to fallen angels? Yet he is under no pain on their account; nor does he suspect that the

Divine character will lose any part of its glory, because they are all, without one exception, the objects of Jehovah's eternal vengeance--but, very likely, he concludes that they deserve to be damned. True: and is it not so with men?...Without admitting this fundamental truth, that men, considered as guilty creatures, deserve to perish forever; we can behold neither equity in the law, nor grace in the gospel...Consequently, the objector has no alternative, but either to give up his point, or blaspheme his Maker." [20](#)

2. The second objection commonly raised against the doctrine of election is that it negates human responsibility and the use of means. This objection is usually voiced by the objector in the form of the following questions:

"If God has elected some men to be saved before the world began what is the profit of preaching the gospel?" The preaching of the gospel is the means by which God has ordained to call the elect unto salvation. II Thessalonians 2:13-14 states: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 1:21 declares: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Romans 10:17 states: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

We are to preach the gospel because it is a command that was issued by the Lord Jesus Christ in Mark 16:15 which states: "**And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.**" Profitable results are not the only desired end in the preaching of the gospel. Glorifying God through obedience should be our chief motive in declaring the gospel to a lost world.

A.W. Pink wrote:

"But do we not create our own difficulty by supposing that the salvation of men is God's sole object, or even His principal design, in the sending forth of the gospel? But what other ends, it may be asked, are accomplished thereby? Many. God's first end in the gospel, as in everything else, is the honor of His own great name and the glory of His Son. In the gospel the character of God and the excellency of Christ are more fully revealed than anywhere else. That a worldwide testimony should be borne thereto is infinitely fitting. That men should have made known to them the ineffable perfections of Him with whom they have to do is certainly most desirable. God, then, is magnified and the matchless worth of His

Son proclaimed, even though not one sinner ever believed and was saved thereby." [21](#)

Another question raised is: "Doesn't the doctrine of election tend to deter missionary activity and zeal?" If election is scripturally understood, it enhances missionary zeal and activity. In fact, it encourages me to know that God has His elect scattered in "...every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" , who are going to respond to the gospel! If I had to depend on the fickle and corrupt free-will of man to respond to the gospel, I would be of all men most miserable and discouraged. When Paul began his ministry in the corrupt city of Corinth the Lord encouraged him in a vision. Acts 19:9-10 states: **"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."** God used the doctrine of election to encourage Paul that his ministry in Corinth would result in many being saved.

Historically, men who have believed the doctrines of grace have had the greatest missionary zeal. William Carey, called by many the father of modern missions, believed strongly in sovereign grace. Adoniram Judson, Baptist missionary to Burma, believed in sovereign grace. David Brainerd, missionary to the American Indians, and George Whitefield, the evangelist, both stood firmly on the doctrine of election. C.H. Spurgeon, J.R. Graves, B.H. Carroll, H.B. Taylor, and C.D. Cole were all missionary Baptist preachers who believed strongly in sovereign grace. In our present day, the Bryan Station Baptist Church of Lexington, Kentucky, and her Pastor Al Gormley have an ardent missionary zeal and a strong belief in election.

One of the motivating factors for Paul's missionary zeal is recorded in II Timothy 2:10 which states: **"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."**

C.D. Cole wrote:

"He who allows his belief of election to dampen his missionary ardour has a perverted view of the doctrine. Election does not determine the extent of missions, but the results of it. The gospel commission does not read, 'to the elect' but 'to every creature'. If it should read 'to the elect', then we could not preach to anybody for the simple reason that the elect cannot be identified until they exercise faith which works by love. And such would already be saved, and hence the gospel would not be the power of God unto salvation. The gospel is for men as lost sinners, and not as elect sinners. God has His elect, but they are not our elect, and His elect cannot be known until they are saved. Witnessing is our business, taking care of the elect is His business. Let us be faithful to our task

and leave the results with Him, remembering that Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but that God must give the increase." ²²

3. The third objection raised against election is that it gives sinners an excuse for their unconcern and even encourages an apathetic attitude about the urgency of salvation. "If what you preach is true, then all the elect are going to be saved, and if I am one of God's elect, I will be saved in time regardless what I do."

I have never met a person who was truly concerned about their soul and convicted of their sins, have a fatalistic or apathetic attitude. The doctrine of election serves to humble the sinner and make him realize he is at the sovereign mercy of God who would be just in damning him. It causes him to realize that his only hope is in Christ and not in himself.

4. The fourth objection raised against election comes in the form of two questions: "What about God so loved the world?" and "What about whosoever will let him come?"

As to the first question, the word world must be interpreted by its context. It is often used in a limited sense. Rarely, does it mean every individual without exception. Much of the New Testament was written by Jews to Jews who were of the opinion that they alone were God's elect. When the writers of the New Testament use the word world, they are often trying to emphasize the fact that salvation in Christ is not limited to Jews, but that Gentiles are also included in the plan of salvation.

John Gill wrote:

"Nothing is more common in Jewish writings than to call the Gentiles the world; and the whole world...and it is easy to observe, that when this phrase is not used of the Gentiles, it is to be understood in a limited and restrained sense." ²³

Even John 3:16, one of the most commonly quoted verses, limits God's love to the world of those who believe on Christ. In John 17:9 we find Christ interceding only for the elect; "**I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.**" I John 5:19 states: "**And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.**" The world in this verse is limited to the unsaved.

Concerning the second question, election has never hindered me from preaching "**whosoever will let him come.**" It has never hindered me from calling upon men to repent and believe the gospel. I know what is behind the offer of whosoever will, namely the power of God to change hearts as Psalms 110:3 states: "**Thy people**

shall be willing in the day of thy power..." Philippians 2:13 says: **"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."**

Though many other objections against election might be raised, I direct the reader to the Bible itself for the answers. Many are misled and confused by the writings and opinions of men who twist the scriptures to fit their perverted theology. The Bible alone is to be our infallible guide. Isaiah 8:20 states: **"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."** Romans 16:17-18 warns: **"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."**

END NOTES

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PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

**By Tom Ross, Pastor
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- PARTICULAR REDEMPTION STATED AND DEFINED.
 - THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S DEATH.
 - DEFINING THE TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE CHRIST'S DEATH.
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Particular Redemption Stated and Defined

There is probably not a more controversial subject among Bible students than the doctrine of particular redemption. Even those who profess to believe the doctrines of grace often shy away from this precious truth. Yet, an individual's view concerning the death of Jesus Christ is the acid test of their theology. As we attempt to study this most ardent subject we must do so with reverential awe and a sense of our own unworthiness.

A.W. Pink wrote:

"To touch the very fringe of the Holy things of God ought to inspire reverential fear, but to take up the innermost secrets of His covenant, to contemplate the eternal counsels of the Blessed Trinity, to endeavor to enter into the meaning of that unique transaction at Calvary, which was veiled with darkness, calls for a special degree of grace, fear, humility, faith and heavenly teaching."

[1](#)

The most significant event in all of human history was the death of Jesus Christ. The entire realm of Scripture revolves around the sacrifice and blood shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of the blood slain on Jewish altars in the Old Testament pointed to a day when the true Lamb of God would come and offer Himself as a spotless and holy sacrifice to bear and take away the sins of His people. All the events recorded in the Gospels center around the Lord Jesus Christ and culminate in His death on Calvary and His glorious resurrection from death and the grave. The Epistles explain the sacrifice of Christ as the foundation for all true worship and service. The Revelation of Jesus Christ points us to the future day of glory when the blood-washed saints of God surround the throne of the Lamb: "And they sung a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth... Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:9-10,12).

Jams Haldane rightly said:

"The Atonement made by the Son of God, is the beginning of the ransomed sinner's hope, and will be the theme of his exultation, when he shall cast his crown before the throne, singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb." [2](#)

In light of these facts it is essential that we entertain scriptural views concerning the death of Jesus Christ.

There are basically two questions which must be answered to determine the intent and extent of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The first is: For whom did Christ die? For every individual without exception? Or only for the elect who would in time believe on Him? The second is: What exactly did Christ's death accomplish? Merely to provide a chance for sinners to be saved? Or to actually purchase and secure the salvation of all that the Father had given Him? The answers to the questions are found in several passages of Scripture, but there are two that stand out in my mind. Matthew 1:21 states: "**And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.**"

Hebrews 10:14 declares: "**For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.**" Matthew 1:21 answers our first question. Jesus was sent to die for His people in order to save them from their sins. Jesus Christ did not die for those who ultimately go to Hell in their sins. Hebrews 10:14 answers our second question. The offering of Jesus Christ was not merely provisional, it actually secured the perfection and glorification of all those whom the Father set apart in sovereign election, and the Spirit set apart in regeneration. The non-elect can claim no interest in the saving work of Christ in light of these passages of Scripture.

Particular redemption, or limited atonement as some call it, simply stated is the truth that when Jesus Christ died on the cross He was acting as substitute and surety only for the elect. He did not die to redeem fallen angels or reprobates who die in unbelief and go to Hell forever. His blood was shed with a specific design and purpose in mind, to actually obtain salvation for those whom the Father had given Him. This truth is taught in Hebrews 9:12 which states: "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

There are basically three views held concerning the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The Arminian view is that Jesus died for the whole world, every individual without exception, including Esau and Judas. This is commonly referred to as the teaching of general atonement. They teach that Christ's death paid for the sins of all men, but didn't actually secure the salvation of any man.

Lorraine Boettner wrote:

"When the atonement is made universal its inherent value is destroyed. If it is applied to all men, and if some are lost, the conclusion is that it makes salvation objectively possible for all but that it does not actually save anybody... If the Arminian theory were true it would follow that millions of those for whom Christ died are finally lost, and that salvation is thus never applied to of those for whom it was earned." ³

Sad to say, the Arminian view is the most popular view in our day of watered down theology. Scores of Catholics, Protestants, and Baptists believe in a general atonement. The second view is broken down into two classes. The first class believes in the other four points of the doctrines of grace but reject particular redemption. They teach that Christ died for all men provisionally. The second class believe that Christ's death was sufficient to save all men but efficient only for the elect. This is called the sufficiency- efficiency view.

T.P. Simmons wrote:

"All of these statements amount to the same thing--a general atonement with a limited application or design. This we believe and

hope to prove is a contradiction of terms, contrary to reason, repugnant to the nature of God, and not according to a consistent interpretation of Scripture...This theory provides no real satisfaction of God's justice, or it involves God in the injustice of punishing those for whom justice has been satisfied. Here is a dilemma, and each advocate of a general atonement may choose which horn he chooses to hang on. One of these propositions must be true." ⁴

Among Baptists, Andrew Fuller, Alvah Hovey and J.M. Pendleton were chiefly responsible for promulgating this view. The inconsistency of this view is that it fails to see the inseparable link between election and particular redemption. Lorraine Boettner rightly said:

It will be seen at once that this doctrine necessarily follows from the doctrine of election. If from eternity God has planned to save one portion of the human race and not another, it seems to be a contradiction to say that His work has equal reference to both portions, or that he sent His Son to die for those whom He had predetermined not to save, as truly as, and in the same sense that He was sent to die for those whom He had chosen for salvation. These two doctrines must stand or fall together. We cannot logically accept one and reject the other. If God has elected some and not others to eternal life, then plainly the primary purpose of Christ's work was to redeem the elect. ⁵

The third view is the one that has already been stated, that Christ's death was for the elect only. This is the scriptural view, which will be taught in the pages that follow. Particular redemption was taught by the Waldenses who were ancient Baptists. In 1120 AD they issued a confession of faith which stated in article 7:

"That Christ is our life, and truth, and peace, and righteousness--our shepherd and advocate, our sacrifice, and priest, who died for the salvation of all who should believe and rose again for their justification." ⁶

The London Baptist Confession of 1644 states in articles 12 and 21:

"Touching his Priesthood, Christ being consecrated, hath appeared once to put away sin by the offering and sacrifice of himself, and to this end hath fully performed and suffered all those things by which God, through the blood of his Cross in an acceptable sacrifice, might reconcile his elect only ... That Christ Jesus by his death did bring forth salvation and reconciliation only for the elect, which were those which God the Father gave him ..." ⁷

John Gill and C.H. Spurgeon also believed in particular redemption as did most Baptists until the mid-1800s. David Benedict wrote:

"The doctrine of the atonement has been differently understood. The old churches pretty uniformly held that it was particular; that is, that Christ died for the elect only, and that in His stupendous suffering no respect was had to, nor any provision made for, any others of Adam's ruined race." ⁸

The Purpose of Christ's Death

John 6:38-39 states: **"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."** From the above Scripture it is clearly evident that Jesus Christ came from the bosom of His Father to earth with a specific purpose and design in mind. He came first and foremost to do the will of the Father, which had sent Him. Secondly, He came to rescue from sin and glorify those whom His Father had given Him before the world began. If either of these designs were not met when Jesus Christ came, then His work must be viewed as a miserable failure. If even one who the Father had given Him to redeem was finally lost, then we can only conclude that Jesus did not finish the work His Father gave Him to do. He would have to forfeit His title as the Good Shepherd if one of His sheep, for whom He laid down His life, perished in their sins. All of these conclusions dishonor God and cast reproach upon the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Yet, these are the logical conclusions that are drawn from a merely provisional or general atonement theory.

Lorraine Boettner correctly said:

"No rational being who has the wisdom and power to carry out his plans intends what he never accomplishes or adopts plans for an end which is never attained. Much less would God, whose wisdom and power are infinite, work in this manner. We may rest assured that if some men are lost God never purposed their salvation, and never devised and put into operation means designed to accomplish that end." ⁹

Those who believe in particular redemption heartily affirm that Jesus Christ actually accomplished the work that His Father gave Him to do. We believe that the life and death of Jesus Christ left nothing undone in God's wondrous plan of

redemption. Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice to satisfy the claims of justice, to reconcile the elect to God, to redeem them from the curse of the law, to appease the Father's wrath against them, and to purchase all spiritual blessings in heavenly places for them. Thus, Jesus was not telling a falsehood on the cross when He exclaimed: "It is finished." It is only in this light that we can understand Hebrews 12:2 which states: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God." There is great joy when a difficult task is carried out in its entirety and completed according to plan. How could Christ have any joy if even one who He had endured the cross for, were finally lost and suffering in Hell for sins which He had supposedly paid for?

The Scriptures are very clear as to the purpose of Christ's death on the cross. Romans 11:36 declares: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things to whom be glory for ever. Amen." This was the chief design in the death of Christ, to exalt and glorify God by carrying out His divinely ordained plan. Jesus prayed in John 17:4: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." His work was to give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him through his death on the cross (John 17:2). If He had done anything short of that we way logically concur that He would not have glorified His Father. Yet, we know that is not the case. God was glorified and satisfied with the covenant blood that was shed on Calvary's tree.

A.W. Pink commented:

"Through Christ's obedience and death God magnified His law: Isaiah 42:21. The law of God was more honored by the Son's subjection to it, than it was dishonored by the disobedience of all of Adam's race. God magnified His love by sending forth the Darling of His bosom to redeem worthless worms of the earth. He magnified His justice, for when sin (by imputation) was found upon His Son, He called for the sword to smite Him: Zechariah 13:7. He magnified His holiness: His hatred of sin was more clearly shown at the Cross than it will be in the lake of fire. He magnified His power by sustaining the Mediator under such a load as was laid upon Him. He magnified His truth by fulfilling His covenant engagements and bringing forth from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep: Hebrews 13:20. He magnified His grace by imputing to the ungodly all the merits of Christ." [10](#)

Another purpose in the death of Christ was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning His sufferings. The promise of a virgin-born Savior was given immediately following the fall of Adam in Genesis 3:15: "**And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.**" It was on the cross that Jesus Christ defeated and spoiled Satan and the hordes of Hell. I John 3:8 states:

"...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Colossians 2:14-15 states: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." The blood shedding of Christ delivered the death knell to the dominion and bondage of Satan on behalf of the elect. It is inconceivable to me, in light of these Scriptures, how Christ could have defeated Satan on the cross, and yet not deliver those who He died for from Satan's bondage. There would be no victory or triumph unless Christ's death actually secured the deliverance of those who He died for. All of the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament were in essence, prophecies that pointed to the day Christ would come to put away sin. Each time an innocent victim was slain it reminded the people that there was a barrier of sin between them and God. It showed them that the only way sinners could approach God was through an acceptable sacrifice. This is what they saw in the slaying of the Passover Lamb, and in the sacrifices and offerings of the priests. The Psalmist spoke plainly of one who would come and suffer in Psalms 22 and 69. The prophet Isaiah gave a detailed description of the sufferings of the Messiah in chapter 53. Zechariah prophesied of the sword of God's justice smiting the Good Shepherd who was to give His life for the sheep. When John the Baptist saw Jesus Christ he cried out: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus told the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: **"...O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"**

The final purpose of God in the death of Jesus Christ was to deliver the elect from the guilt and penalty of their sins. God's purpose in the death of Christ was not to redeem every individual without exception as so many preach today. Christ's precious blood was not shed to merely provide a way for sinners to be saved; it actually secured the salvation of all for whom it was shed.

The following Scriptures attest to this truth:

Galatians 1:4 states: **"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."** According to this verse, whomever Christ gave Himself for shall be delivered from their sins, and this present evil world. Can this be applied to all men? Obviously not, because there are multitudes in Hell who are not delivered.

Galatians 3:13 states: **"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."** According to this verse, redemption has already been accomplished for a particular people through the blood sacrifice of Christ on the cross, whereby He bore their penalty and removed the curse of the law on their behalf. Can this verse be applied to every individual without exception? Obviously not, because there are

multitudes who die under the condemnation of the law and suffer the consequences of their transgressions forever in the Lake of Fire.

Titus 2:14 states: "**Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.**" According to this verse, those who Christ died for are His special treasure (peculiar, cf. Ex. 19:5), who are redeemed from all iniquity, purified, and zealous of good works. Can this verse be applied to all men? Obviously not, because Jesus Himself will pronounce condemnation upon the unredeemed. Matthew 7:23 declares: "**And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**" Revelation 22:11 declares that there are some who will remain impure and filthy throughout eternity: "**He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still...**"

I Peter 3:18 states: "**For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.**" According to this verse, those who Christ suffered and died for in the flesh are in time brought to God. Can this verse be applied to every person without exception? Obviously not, because there are many whom God will cast away from His holy presence, thus denying them the privilege of communion and fellowship with Him because of their sins.

A.W. Pink comments:

"That he might bring us to God; is the most comprehensive expression used in Scripture for stating the design of Christ's Satisfaction. It includes the bringing of His people out of darkness into marvelous light: out of a state of alienation, misery and wrath, into one of grace, peace and eternal communion with God." ¹¹

It is crystal clear to the writer that only those who Christ suffered for will be brought to God in a saving relationship. If a person is not brought to God, Christ did not suffer in their stead. These are simple deductions drawn from a literal interpretation and application of the Scriptures.

J.E. Cobb defined the Golden Rule of Interpretation in the following way:

"When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise." ¹²

If the general atonement theory is true, then Jesus Christ did not accomplish what the fore-going Scriptures declare. His mission was not completed and the will of God was thwarted if He did not in reality save those who He died for. only when

the doctrine of particular redemption is believed can the purpose of God be seen as having been carried out and achieved through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah 46:10-11 remains forever true: **"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: ... yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."**

Defining the Terms Used to Describe Christ's Death

Nehemiah 8:8 states: **"So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. "**

In order to understand the doctrine of particular redemption it is essential to define the terms that are employed by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures to describe what Jesus actually accomplished on the cross. Most people know that Christ died on the cross for sinners, but few realize what that sacrifice actually entailed. Terms such as redemption, ransom, reconciliation, propitiation, substitution, and remission are words used or implied in the Bible to explain the nature and results of the sacrifice of Christ. When these words are defined in their scriptural context the teaching of particular redemption or limited atonement is clearly established.

Redemption and Ransom

Redemption and ransom are words that are intricately linked together in the Scriptures. To redeem simply means to buy back through the payment of an acceptable ransom. A ransom is the price required to effect the deliverance.

Lorraine Boettner wrote:

"The nature of a ransom is such that when paid and accepted it automatically frees the persons for whom it was intended. Otherwise it would not be a true ransom. Justice demands that those for whom it is paid shall be freed from any further obligation. If the suffering and death of Christ was a ransom for all men rather than for the elect only, then the merits of His work must be communicated to all alike and the penalty of eternal punishment cannot be justly inflicted on any. God would be unjust if He

demanded this extreme penalty twice over, first from the substitute and then from the persons themselves." ¹³

In the Scriptures redemption implies captivity and bondage. Every natural man is a slave to sin as John 8:34 states: "...**Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.**" He is under the bondage and condemnation of the inflexible law of God as Galatians 3:10 states: "**For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.**" Romans 3:19 declares: "**Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.**" He is also a captive to the will of Satan as II Timothy 2:26 states: "**And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.**" The only hope for deliverance is in the blood of Jesus Christ which was the ransom required by God to deliver the captives from sin and bondage. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 20:28: "**Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.**" Isaiah 61:1 declares the purpose of the life and death of Jesus Christ: "**The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me: because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.**"

When Jesus died on the cross redemption was actually accomplished on behalf of His people. He purchased them out of the slave market of sin through the merits of His blood. His people are declared to be "bought with a price." Zechariah 9:11 states: "**As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.**" Psalms 111:9 states: "**He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.**" Galatians 3:13 declares: "**Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.**" Hebrews 9:12 states: "**Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.**"

From the definition of the words redeem and ransom and their use in Scripture it is evident that redemption was secured on the cross, and that the ransom of Christ's blood actually freed and delivered those for whom it was shed. The meaning of the words necessitate a conclusion that the extent of Christ's redeeming work is limited to those who actually enjoy the benefits of deliverance from the curse of the law, the slavery of sin, and the captivity of Satan.

John Owen said:

"Redemption is the freeing of a man from misery by the intervention of a ransom. Now, when a ransom is paid for the liberty

of a prisoner, does not justice demand that he should have and enjoy the liberty so purchased for him by a valuable consideration? If I should pay a thousand pounds for a man's deliverance from bondage to him that detains him, who hath power to set him free, and is contented with the price I give, were it not injurious to me and the poor prisoner that his deliverance be not accomplished? Can it possibly be conceived that there should be a redemption of men, and those men not redeemed? That a price should be paid, and the purchase not consummated? Yet all this must be made true, and innumerable other absurdities, if universal redemption be asserted. A price would be paid for all, yet few delivered; the redemption of all consummated, yet few of them redeemed; the judge satisfied, the jailer conquered, and yet the prisoners enthralled." [14](#)

Reconciliation

To reconcile means to bring together again those who are alienated, to reunite those who are at variance, to restore to amity and friendship by removing that which hinders agreement and fellowship.

Robert Morey defines reconciliation thusly:

"Reconciliation is that sovereign work of God the Father in which His alienation from sinners is removed through the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Reconciliation flows out of and is based upon propitiation." [15](#)

Man in his original state was the friend of God. He enjoyed communion with his Creator. Through disobedience and sin man became an enemy of God. He became hostile to the law of God as Romans 8:7 states: "**Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.**" God also became hostile toward the natural man and his sin. Psalms 5:5 states: "**The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.**" John 3:36 states: "...and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Because of the hostility that exists because of man's sin and God's holiness each man is said to be "...**alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.**" (Eph. 4:18) Man's inward thoughts as well as his outward works manifests the enmity and warfare that exists between himself and the Creator. The ultimate end of all those who are not

reconciled to God through the blood of Christ is an eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever. Jesus Christ did not intend to reconcile all men without exception through the shedding of His blood. This fact is evident because there are multitudes among the fallen sons of Adam who have never been restored to the favor of God.

The source of reconciliation is found in the love of God as Romans 5:8-10 states: **"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."**

The means by which reconciliation is brought about is through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as Ephesians 2:13, 16 states: **"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace ... And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."**

The result of reconciliation is a complete restoration to the favor of God, being accepted by Him through His beloved Son. Colossians 2:21-22 declares: **"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouceable in his sight."** There is no sense in which the non-elect enjoy the benefits of reconciliation such as the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and the liberty of fellowship with God. We must therefore concur that Christ did not die and shed His precious blood to reconcile all men.

Reconciliation is presented as an accomplished fact, not a provisional hope. II Corinthians 5:18-19 states: **"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."** The elect were reconciled to God positionally when Jesus Christ died on the cross. The scope of reconciliation is limited and cannot exceed the actual imputation of the elect's sins to Christ, and His righteousness to them.

Again, the definition of reconciliation and its use in the Scriptures necessitates adherence to the doctrine of particular redemption.

Edwin Palmer wrote:

"Did Christ truly, actually, really reconcile Esau to the Father by His death (Rom. 5:10), or didn't He? Did He by His substitutionary death actually remove the enmity so that God is no longer alienated from Esau, or didn't He? It is one or the other. If Christ did reconcile

Esau, if He did become a curse for Judas, if He actually endured the torments of hell for all men--in other words, if He died for all--then no one is lost. All are reconciled and redeemed. But to say that all men are redeemed is contradictory to the Bible." [16](#)

Propitiation

To propitiate means to placate, pacify, or appease. In the Bible propitiation is used in relationship with a sacrificial offering for sin. Propitiation describes that aspect of the saving work of Christ whereby He appeased the Father's wrath against the elect through the merits of His blood. Christ's propitiatory sacrifice is the basis of our acceptance with God.

Propitiation is used exclusively in the New Testament. The Old Testament counterpart for propitiation is the Hebrew word kapher, which is translated atonement. Both words express essentially the same meaning. The only way God's justice and wrath against sin can be appeased is by means of an acceptable sacrifice.

This truth is illustrated in the oldest book of the Bible. Job 42:7-8 states: "**And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.**" According to these verses, in order for God's wrath to be appeased two specific things are set forth. First, a sacrifice appointed by God had to be slain and offered as a burnt offering for sin. Second, the offering was associated with the intercession of righteous Job on behalf of his three friends.

This passage typifies the propitiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's wrath is appeased by the blood of Christ and the sacrifice is associated with His priestly intercession. I John 2:1-2 states essentially the same truth: "**And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world**" (Jewish and Gentile believers). The Bible declares that sinners are saved from God's wrath through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:9).

Romans 3:24-25 states: "**Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.**" This passage declares that the place of propitiation is in the blood of Jesus Christ. According to this passage, propitiation is limited to those who have faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. Believers are limited to those who have been ordained to eternal life by God (Acts 13:48), and given the gift of faith (Eph. 2:8-9).

According to the definition of the word propitiation and its use in scripture, it is impossible to believe that Christ's death appeased the wrath of God for all men without exception. If that were true God could not justly send anyone to Hell to suffer for sin. Either Christ propitiated the Father's wrath for the elect only, or we must conclude that the wrath of God no longer abides on anyone which is unscriptural and dishonoring to God.

Augustus Toplady wrote the following poem which expresses this truth beautifully:

"Payment God cannot twice demand first at my bleeding surety's hand and then again at mine."

"Complete atonement thou hast made, and to the utmost farthing paid what e'er thy people owed."

"How then can wrath on me take place if sheltered in thy righteousness and sprinkled with thy blood?"

"Turn, then, my soul, unto thy rest, the merits of thy great high priest speak peace and liberty."

"Trust in His efficacious blood, nor fear thy banishment from God since Jesus died for thee."

Remission

When Jesus Christ instituted the observance of the Lord's Supper He told His disciples: "**For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.**" In essence He told His disciples that the covenant blood which He was about to shed would insure the remission of sins for many.

A.W. Pink comments:

"Remission is a judicial term, and signifies the annulling of guilt, the removal of all ground of punishment. **"Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"** (Heb. 9:26). Christ has so put away all the sin of His people that they are perfectly and finally acquitted in the high court of God so that no charge can evermore be laid against them (Rom. 8:33). Blessedly and gloriously has the Old Testament type been fulfilled, **"On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord"** (Lev. 16:30). Thus are God's believing children able to say, **"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"** (I John 1:7). This was one of the chief ends of Christ's Satisfaction saintwards: to take upon Him the sins of His people, and so atone for them that an end was made of them." [17](#)

One of the results of Christ's sacrifice was the remission of sins. By His death He put away our sins. Because Jesus bore our sins in His body on the tree he freed us from the guilt and penalty of those sins. Psalms 103:12 states: **"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."** Acts 10:43 states: **"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."**

It is clear from the Scriptures that Jesus Christ did not die to remit the sins of all men without exception. Jesus himself told the scribes and the Pharisees in John 8:21; 24: **"I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he ye shall die in your sins."** It is obvious from these verses that those who do not believe, die in their sins and therefore must pay the penalty for them. He was speaking to a group of people who He did not die for, whose sins would never be remitted or put away. If they must bear the penalty and guilt of their sins then it is obvious that Jesus did not die to remit or put away their sins. Every sin that Jesus died for must of necessity be remitted, put away, blotted out, and forgiven in order to prove that His sacrifice was perfect in all respects. Again, the meaning of the word remission and its use in the Scriptures supports the teaching of particular redemption.

Substitution

Though the term substitution is nowhere used in the Scriptures it is often implied in relation to Christ's redemptive work. A substitute is one who is put in the place of another. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, suffering the wrath of God for our sins, He was acting as our substitute. Instead of God's wrath falling upon me for my sins, it fell upon Jesus Christ who acted as my replacement or substitute. Instead of the sword of God's justice smiting me to Hell it fell upon the head of my blessed Saviour. He was acting in my stead, suffering what I justly deserved, and dying the death and punishment that I had merited.

A.W. Pink defined Christ's substitution in the following way:

"Vicarious suffering is suffering endured not only on behalf of others, but in the stead of others, in the actual place of others. It therefore carries with it the exemption of the party in whose place the suffering is endured. What a substitute does for the person whose place he fills, absolves that person from the need of himself doing or suffering the same thing. Thus, when we affirm that the sufferings of Christ were vicarious we mean that He substituted Himself in the room of sinners and satisfied the law in their behalf, and that, in such a way, the law can now make no claim whatever upon them ... The Scriptures teach that Christ was in a strict and exact sense the Substitute of His people, i.e., that by Divine appointment and of His own free will, He assumed all their liabilities, took their law-place, and bound Himself to do in their stead all that the law demanded, rendering to it that obedience upon which their wellbeing depended, and suffering its penalty which their sins deserved. Christ became their vicarious Sponsor, assuming their obligations and undertaking to satisfy Divine justice on their behalf." [18](#)

The substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ was foreshadowed in Israel's ritual on the Day of Atonement. The High Priest was to select two goats to be presented unto the Lord. One goat was to be slain as a sin offering and his blood sprinkled upon the mercy seat seven times (indicating perfection) to make atonement for the transgressions of the children of Israel for that year. Then Aaron was to place both of his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess the iniquities of the children of Israel. This goat was then led out in to the wilderness by a fit man bearing away the sins of Israel into a land not inhabited. The sins of a specific people were transferred or imputed to the head of an innocent victim who was to bear them away. This is precisely what Jesus Christ did for His people. He was slain in their stead, and He also bore away their sins to a place uninhabited, namely death and the grave. He was our Divine scapegoat appointed by God to act as our substitute. Isaiah 53:6 declares: "**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.**"

Milburn Cockrell wrote:

"The Father laid the sins of all believers on Christ, as the sins of the offerer were laid upon the sacrifice and those of all Israel upon the head of the scapegoat. How comforting this statement should be to us! When the Father took them away from us and put them on Christ, then we no longer have them. The Father can spare us because He **"spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all"** (Rom. 8:32). Nothing can be laid to the charge of God's elect because God the Father has justified us **"freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"** (Rom. 3:24). [19](#)

How the teaching of Christ's substitutionary death ought to humble the hearts of God's people! Everything He suffered was because He was acting on our behalf. He was born in poverty because we are spiritually bankrupt. He was made under the law because we had violated it. He took upon himself a body of flesh in order to be judged for our sins and to **"condemn sin in the flesh"** (Rom. 8:3). He was falsely tried and accused of blasphemy because we were guilty before God of wicked crimes. He was humiliated, beaten, and spat upon in order to endure the shame of our sins. He was nailed to the cursed tree because we were cursed with a curse. He cried, **"I thirst"**, because that would have been our lamentable woe in the Lake of Fire. He was forsaken by His Father because that would have been our eternal fate. He suffered the equivalent of the second death so that we could enjoy the blessedness of eternal life. What love and grace is manifested in the substitutionary death of our Lord! **"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."** (II Cor. 5:21) When the teaching of Christ's substitutionary death is rightly understood, the theory of a universal or provisional atonement must be abandoned as worthless and dishonoring to our blessed Lord. How foolish it is to suppose that Christ would bear the sins of all men and suffer the wrath of God on their behalf and yet not secure the salvation of any. Such an idea casts reproach upon the character of God and His justice.

I conclude this section with a quote from the Prince of Preachers, C.H. Spurgeon:

"They [certain 'divines'] believe that Judas was atoned for just as much as Peter; they believe that the damned in Hell were as much the object of Jesus Christ's satisfaction as the saved in Heaven; and though they do not say it in proper words, yet they must mean it, for it is a fair inference, that in the case of multitudes, Christ died in vain, for He died for them all, they say; and yet so ineffectual was His dying for them, that though he died for them they are damned afterward. Now, such an atonement I despise--I reject it. I may be called Antinomian or Calvinist for preaching a limited atonement; but I had rather believe in a limited atonement that is efficacious for

all men for whom it was intended, than an universal atonement that is not efficacious, except the will of man be joined with it." [20](#)

For Whom Did Christ Die?

Those who believe in the scriptural doctrine of particular redemption contend that Christ died only for the elect. In the previous chapters this point has been proven by examining the purpose, the nature, and the results accomplished in the redemptive work of Christ. We now want to examine the express declarations of Scripture which prove that Jesus died for the sins of specific individuals as opposed to every individual without exception.

Whether a person believes in a particular or a general redemption; both limit the death of Christ in some way. Arminians limit the power or efficacy of the blood; whereas Calvinists limit the extent of Christ's sacrifice.

Steele and Thomas wrote the following observation:

"The Arminians also place a limitation on the atoning work of Christ, but one of a much different nature. They hold that Christ's saving work was designed to make possible the salvation of all men on the condition that they believe, but that Christ's death in itself did not actually secure or guarantee salvation for anyone. Since all men will not be saved as the result of Christ's redeeming work, a limitation must be admitted. Either the atonement was limited in that it was designed to secure salvation for certain sinners but not for others, or it was limited in that it was not intended to secure salvation for any, but was designed only to make it possible for God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe. In other words, one must limit its design either in extent (it was not intended for all) or effectiveness (it did not secure salvation for any)." [21](#)

C.H. Spurgeon stated this truth in the following way:

"We are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ, because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved. Now, our reply to this is, that, on the other hand our opponents limit it: we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, "No, certainly not." We ask them the next question--Did Christ die so as to secure the

salvation of any man in particular? They answer "No." They are obliged to admit this, if they are consistent. They say "No; Christ has died that any man may be saved if"--and then follow certain conditions of salvation. We say, then, we will just go back to the old statement--Christ did not die so as beyond a doubt to secure the salvation of anybody, did he? You must say "No;" you are obliged to say so, for you believe that even after a man has been pardoned, he may yet fall from grace, and perish. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as to infallibly secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ's death; we say, "No, my dear sir, it is you that do it. We say Christ so died that he infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved, but are saved, must be saved, and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement; you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it." ²²

Because Jesus Christ did not die for every individual without exception, but for the elect only we can expect to find statements in the Word of God that would indicate that He died for groups smaller than all mankind. Often we find statements relating to the death of Christ that declare that He died for "many", "His people", "His sheep", and "His friends". These distinctions would not be at all necessary if Christ had died for all men without exception or every individual in the world. The words "all" or "world" would suffice every time.

A.W. Pink stated: "Every assertion that Christ died for 'His people', is a repudiation of the theory that He died for all mankind."

Christ Died for Many

Isaiah 53:11-12 states: **"He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities ... because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."** The Prophet Isaiah is describing the sufferings that the Messiah would endure- and the results of those sufferings. By virtue of Christ's sufferings and death many would be justified and He would bare the sins of many. The use of the word "many" necessitates the interpretation that He did not bear the sins of all men, but many men.

Matthew 20:28 states: "**Even as the Son of man cam not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.**" Jesus Christ himself told His disciples the purpose and the extent of His life-giving sacrifice. He would give His life's blood as a ransom to redeem many from the bondage of sin and the captivity of Satan. Christ paid a particular ransom price in order to set free a particular people. The nature of the word ransom necessitates a deliverance of the person for whom it was paid.

Matthew 26:28 states: "**For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.**" Jesus plainly tells His disciples that His blood was not shed for all, but for many. The results of that blood- shedding would be the putting away of the guilt and penalty of sins for the many He would die for.

Hebrews 9:28 states: "**So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.**" Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice to bear the sins of many. He did not come to bear the sins of all men. The fact is, because Christ bore all my sins I will never have to bear them because He paid the penalty for them and put them away. I Peter 2:24 declares: "**Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.**" It may be inferred that if Christ did not bear your sins, you must bear the quilt and punishment for them throughout all eternity in the Lake of Fire.

To prove that the word "many" does not mean all, I refer the reader to Matthew 7:22-23 which states: "**Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**" Here many false professors are judged and cast out of the presence of Christ. I no more believe in a universal damnation than I do a universal redemption. Many among mankind will be cast into the Lake of Fire, but not all. Christ died for many people, but not all people.

Christ Died For His People.

Isaiah 53:8 states: "**He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people was he stricken.**"

Matthew 1:21 declares: "**And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.**"

Luke 1:68 and 77 state: "**Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people ... to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.**"

In each of these verses Christ's redemptive work is said to be for the people of God specifically. It is interesting that they are called "*His people*" before Christ actually purchased them on the cross. Before Christ ever went to the cross the elect were considered "*His people*" because the Father had given them to Christ in the Covenant of Grace to redeem, before the foundation of the world. Only when this is understood do the following Scriptures make any sense: "**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out ... And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day**" (John 6:37;39). "**As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him ... I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word**" (John 17:2;6). Christ did not come to redeem the entire world, but those whom the Father had given him as Revelation 5:9 affirms: "**And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou was slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood OUT OF every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.**"

Christ Died For His Sheep.

John 10:11, 14-16 state: "**I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep...I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.**" In this passage Jesus narrowly defines who He was laying His life down for--His sheep, those for whom He had a special knowledge of, and those who would most definitely hear His voice and be brought into His fold. Furthermore, by giving Himself the title of the Good Shepherd, He must of necessity save all the sheep that He died for. Not one of them could be finally lost if He truly is the Good Shepherd. In verse 26 He plainly tells His listeners: "**But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.**"

Two conclusions may be drawn from the Scriptures in John 10. First, Christ knew exactly who He was laying His life down for. Second, not all men are His sheep, so He did not lay down His life for all men without exception. His sheep are marked by the ear and the foot according to verses 27 and 28 which state: "**My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.**" Certainly no one would affirm that these verses apply to all men without exception!

The fact that He laid down His life for the sheep (elect) only is further evidenced by the scene at the Judgment of the Nations recorded in Matthew 25:33 and 41 which state: "**And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left ... Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand (goats), Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.**" The sheep enter into the glorious millennial kingdom of the Son of Man, whereas the goats (unbelievers) are cast into everlasting fire. It is interesting to note that the sheep enter into the kingdom because Christ became a curse for them (Gal. 3:13), whereas, the goats are said to be cursed implying that Christ was not made a curse for their sins. They are responsible to bear their transgressions in the eternal fire of Hell.

Christ Died For His Friends.

John 15:13-14 states: "**Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do what- soever I command you.**" In verse 16 He clearly defines who His friends were, namely those whom He had chosen, and called to be fruitful: "**Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.**" Jesus is talking to His disciples that had believed on Him. Jesus did not die for any who die in their sins and remain rebellious enemies in the Lake of Fire throughout eternity.

Christ's friends and enemies are further distinguished in Nahum 1:2 and 7 which state: "**God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies ... The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth (cf. John 10; II Tim. 2:19) them that trust in him.**"

Christ Died For The Elect: The Beloved.

Romans 8:32-33 states: **"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."**

Christ's redeeming work cannot go beyond the extent of God's election. John Gill, the Baptist theologian, expressed the following observations on Romans 8:

"The inspired writers seem to delight in using the pronoun us, when speaking of the death of Christ, and redemption by it; thereby pointing at a particular people ... The objects of election and redemption are the same; Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?--It is Christ that died! Died for the elect: so the same, us all, for whom God delivered up his Son, are those whom he foreknew, and whom he predestinated; and whose calling, justification, and glorification are secured thereby, Rom. 8:30-33, and the same us, who are said to be chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, have redemption in him through his blood, Eph. 1:4,7. Election and redemption are of equal extent; no more are redeemed by Christ than are chosen in him; and these are a special people: what is said of the objects of the one is true of the objects of the other. Are the elect the beloved of the Lord? And does the act of election spring from love? Election presupposes love: so the redeemed are the beloved of God and Christ; and their redemption flows from love. Are the elect a people whom God has chosen for his peculiar treasure? The red are purified by Christ, to be a peculiar people to himself." ²³

Jesus used the word beloved interchangeably with the word elect in Matthew 12:18 which states: **"Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; MY BELOVED, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles."** He was quoting from Isaiah 42:1 which states: **"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; MINE ELECT, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."** Hence, the terms elect and beloved are of equal force. This truth brings much light upon the extent of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice in I John 4:9-11 which states: **"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. BELOVED, if God so loved us we ought also**

to love one another." The pronouns "us", and "we", and "our" in this chapter have reference only to those whom John calls beloved! (See also verses 1; 4; 6; and 7.)

Christ Died For Those He Intercedes For

The redemptive work of Jesus Christ does not extend beyond those for whom He acts as High Priest. John 17:9 states: **"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me (the elect); for they are thine."** Christ in no way intercedes for the world that lies in wickedness (I John 5:19). The fact that He doesn't intercede for the whole world necessitates a conclusion that He did not die for the whole world. He died for and intercedes for those whom the Father had chosen and given Him before the world began (Eph. 1:4-7). Romans 8:33-35 further illustrates this blessed truth: **"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"**

Christ's intercession for the elect insures their safe arrival in Heaven as Hebrews 7:26 declares: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

A.W. Pink comments:

"The success of Christ's intercession is fully assured by the fact that nothing, in, of, from, or by His people can possibly countervail it. If Christ has once taken a person into His prayers, He will never, under any circumstances, cast him out ... How infallibly certain it is, then, that Christ shall **"see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied"** (Isa. 53:11). He sees to it Himself that nothing which He purchased by His obedience unto death shall be lost. He is Himself constantly engaged in maintaining the interest of those for whom He died." [24](#)

It is because of Christ's unfailing intercessory work on behalf of the elect that we can be assured that Jude 24-25 is a reality: **"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."**

Christ Died For The Children of God

John 11:51-52 states: **"And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only (elect Jews), but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."** Here Christ's death is not to extend beyond the adopted members of the family of God. It is stated specifically that He would die for the children of God and gather them together which is precisely what Jesus prayed for in John 17:22 and 24 which states: **"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one ... Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."**

Christ did not come to redeem strangers. He came to redeem and secure the sons of God who were the objects of God's mercy in His eternal decree of adoption. There is an eternal union that exists between Christ and his brethren, the sons of God, that can never be severed. Hebrews 2:10-11; 13 states this truth beautifully: **"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren ... And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me (cf. Eph. 1: 3-7)."**

Christ Died For His Church

Christ not only shed His blood particularly for the elect, He also purchased His kind of church. Acts 20:28 states: **"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."** In this verse the Apostle Paul is exhorting the elders of the local church at Ephesus to feed that particular flock of blood-bought saints. The local, New Testament Baptist church; therefore is a blood-bought institution. This truth is further illustrated in Ephesians 5:25 which states: **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also love the church, and gave himself for it."** Just as Christ loved and died particularly for the members of the family of God, He also died for His particular kind of church.

Though John Gill did not believe in a Baptist Bride, he nevertheless had an interesting observation:

"Of that church of which Christ is the head and husband, he is the Redeemer; thy Maker is thine husband; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel! This cannot be said of all communities and bodies of men: the whore of Babylon is not the spouse of Christ; nor sects under the influence of false teachers." [25](#)

To further prove that there are elect saints for whom Christ died, who are the children of God, yet not members of the kind of church which Jesus purchased and promised perpetuity too, I quote Revelation 18:4 which states: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plaques." Here is a group of God's elect on the earth, who are exhorted to come out of the Roman Harlot, while the Lord's Bride is in Heaven anticipating the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-9).

I realize that I have gone to great lengths to prove that Christ died for and redeemed a particular people. I have offered an abundance of Scriptures to prove this blessed and God-honoring truth. It is the desire of the writer that those who read these pages may be enlightened by the Holy Spirit to the precious truth of particular redemption.

Objections to Particular Redemption Answered

Because particular redemption is a hated doctrine in the religious world, there are many objections raised against this precious truth. Most of the objections raised center around the passages of Scripture relating to the death of Christ where universal terms such as "world", "all", and "every" are used. In order to make any sense of the Bible, every text must of necessity be interpreted in light of its context as well as the general teaching of the Scriptures. It is not the intent of the writer to answer all the objections and philosophical questions that Arminians may pose, but simply to examine the Scriptures and attempt to explain them according to the principles of sound biblical exegesis.

It must be understood at the outset that the writers of the Bible had a Jewish mindset. For thousands of years God's salvation was limited in extent for the most part to God's chosen people, the nation of Israel. Jesus himself told the Samaritan woman in John 4:22: "**salvation is of the Jews**". The Jews did not believe that God's plan of salvation extended beyond their nation to the Gentile nations of the

world. Even the apostles did not fully understand this concept as illustrated by the reaction of Peter in Acts 10 when God commanded him in a vision to go to the house of a Gentile centurion Cornelius to preach the gospel. Verse 17 states: **"Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate."** Peter did not understand why God would command him to go to an unclean Gentile. Verse 28 states: **"And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."** It took the supernatural power of God to convince Peter to preach the Word of God to the Gentiles! Peter acknowledges this in verse 34: **"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."**

When Cornelius and his house heard the gospel of Christ they believed on Him, and the Holy Spirit of God was poured out upon the Gentiles in much the same way He was on the Day of Pentecost upon the Jerusalem church. Acts 11 records that the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had received the Word of God. They proceeded to question Peter and required him to give an account of the incident. He rehearsed the housetop vision, the response of Cornelius, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles. He justified his going in Acts 11:17 by stating: **"Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I that I could withstand God?"** The church at Jerusalem was astounded as verse 18 declares: **"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."** It is interesting to note that after Acts 11 there is increased missionary activity among the early churches.

Tom Wells summarizes the above passages by stating:

"Without the miracles they would have never come to this conclusion on their own! In speaking to Jews, then the emphasis on Christ's love and sacrifice for the world was necessary. In this way the Bible asserts that Christ did not offer Himself for Jews alone, but for men of every nation." [26](#)

It is in this light that John 11:51-52 is to be interpreted which states: **"And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."** Thus, the Holy Spirit inspired the Jewish writers of the Bible to use universal terms in order to show that Christ's redemptive sacrifice was not limited the Jews as a nation, but extended to the Gentile nations of the world as well. They did not use

the phrases to teach that Christ died for all men without exception, but that He died for the world of His elect whether they were Jews or Gentiles.

Passages Where the Word "*World*" is Employed

It would prove to be very instructive and enlightening for the reader to take a concordance and check all the references to the word "world". You would find that it almost always has a limited application and meaning and rarely means every man without exception.

A.W. Pink wrote the following observation:

"Anyone who has examined a concordance and looked up the passages where "world" occurs, soon discovers that this word is used in the New Testament in quite a number of ways and with widely different latitudes, so that nothing can be determined for certain by the occurrence of this term in John 3:16. Sometimes the "world" signifies the unbelieving as in John 15:18, in others it includes none but believers as in Romans 11:12, etc. Sometimes the "world" denotes the material system, created by Christ (John 1:10), in others it is applied to a mere handful of people as in John 7:4 and 12:19. In the great majority of instances it is a general and indefinite expression which has reference to the Gentiles in contradistinction from Israel after the flesh." [27](#)

There are three principal passages used by Arminians to prove their doctrine of universal atonement. The passages most commonly referred to are John 3:16, 11 Corinthians 5:19, and I John 2:2 which we will consider in order.

John 3:16 states: "**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**" Arminians declare that this verse teaches that God loves all men without exception and sent His Son to die for all men indiscriminately. Yet, the context in which the verse is placed is very important to the understanding of this verse. Jesus is talking to Nicodemus, a religious leader among the Jews, who would consider the "world" of the Gentiles to be accursed and hopeless as far as God's salvation was concerned. Jesus corrects the thinking of Nicodemus by stating that God loved and gave His Son for whosoever would believe in Christ, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. It is clearly stated in the context that those who don't believe must perish in their sins in contrast with those who do believe and obtain everlasting life.

There are several questions I would like to ask my Arminian brethren. Does the "world" in this verse include Esau of whom God clearly stated in Romans 9:13: **"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated"**? Does the "world" in this verse include those who were already suffering in Hell when Jesus spoke these words, such as Cain, Nimrod, and Pharaoh? Does the "world" in this verse include those that hate Christ and persecute his disciples as John 15:18 states: **"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you"**? Does the "world" in John 3:16 include "the world" who Jesus did not pray for in John 17:9 which states: **"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine"**? Anyone who is honest in interpreting Scripture must answer these questions with a resounding no! God loves those who believe in His Son. The only reason why anyone believes the gospel is traced back to God's eternal election as Acts 13:48 states: "...as many as were ORDAINED to eternal life BELIEVED."

II Corinthians 5:19 states: **"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."** The "world" in this verse cannot mean every man without exception, because the Scriptures clearly teach that many men die in their sins without ever being reconciled to God. In fact there are a whole host of men and women who will have to face God with their sins at the Great White Throne Judgment. Jesus told some men in John 8:21: **"I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins..."** To believe otherwise would mean you would have to embrace the false teaching of universal salvation.

The "world" in this verse must be determined by the context. It must refer solely to those who died judicially and positionally with Christ on the cross, which is evidenced in time by the fact that those for whom Christ died no longer live unto themselves, **"but unto him which died for them, and rose again."** This is certainly not true of those who die in their sins after living a life of gratifying their fleshly passions! The "world" in this verse refers solely to those whose lives have been changed by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit as verse 17 states: **"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."**

I John 2:2 states: **"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."** This verse teaches that the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ appeased the wrath of God for those whom He acts as an advocate for; namely, believers, or my little children (2:1). It also teaches that this propitiation or appeasing of the wrath of God against sin is not limited to Jews, but has also been extended to the Gentiles, hence the term "whole world" which is elsewhere used in reference specifically to the Gentiles in Romans 11:11-15.

Christ was not offered as a propitiation for any who would ultimately go to Hell and be punished for their sins. If Christ died as a propitiation for the sins of every individual without exception then he appeased the wrath of God for all men, which

logically leads to the acceptance of a universal salvation. If that is true then either Christ's work must be viewed as a colossal failure because from the Scriptures it is obvious that many do go to Hell, or we must assume that the Bible has errors and contradictions. For example, how can the whole world be saved and yet some be judged?

Other examples proving that the use of the word "world" is limited by its context and rarely means every man without exception abound in the Scriptures. Luke 2:1 states: **"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed."** Does this "world" include the American Indians and the Vikings of Greenland? No, the writer is referring to the "world" over which the R Caesar reigned.

Colossians 1:5-6 states: **"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit..."** Paul is referring to the then known world consisting chiefly of the Roman Empire. The continents of North and South Africa had not been evangelized at the time of this writing.

I John 5:19 states: **"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."** This verse does not include believers; the world that lies in wickedness is in contrast to the people of God. God's people are characterized by **"departing from iniquity"** (II Tim. 2:19), not lying in it!

Revelation 13:3 states: **"And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast."** The "world" of this verse does not apply to the raptured saints in Heaven, nor does it refer to those who in the same chapter are said to have been killed for not worshipping and receiving the mark of the beast (13:15-16).

Passages Where the Words "*All*" and "*Every*" are Employed

The second class of passages Arminians enjoy using to prove the general atonement theory involve the words "all" and "every". The same principles that governed the interpretation of the word "world" have equal force when examining the passages where "all" or "every" are used. They often refer to all kinds of men (i.e. race, sex, culture, or status) rather than every man or all men without exception. It is blessedly true that Jesus Christ died for all kinds of men, living at different times, and dwelling in various nations as Revelation 5:9 declares: **"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open**

the seals thereof: for thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

John 12:32 states: "**And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.**" It is obvious from the general teaching of the Scriptures that when Christ died He did not draw all men to himself in a saving relationship. What this verse is teaching is that the power of Christ's saving work will draw all kinds of men from among many nations. To believe otherwise you must deny what happens in Matthew 25:41 when Jesus says to the goats: "**Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.**"

I Timothy 2:4; 6 states: "**Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth ... Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.**" It is obvious from the context that Paul is speaking of all kinds of men. In verse one he exhorts believers to pray for all types of men especially those in authority. If the "all" in verse one means all without exception then we had better order phone books for every major city in the world and begin to pray for "all men"!

A.W. Pink comments:

"What has been said above concerning the signification of the term "world" when used in connection with the objects of God's love or the subjects of Christ's redemption, applies with equal force and pertinency to the word "all". That Christ gave Himself a ransom for "all" without distinction of nationality, social status, age or sex is blessedly true; but to say that He died in the stead of "all" without exception cannot be maintained without involving the most palpable absurdities and contradictions. Nor is there anything elsewhere in Scripture which obliges us to give to "all" in this and similar verses an absolute and unlimited meaning." [28](#)

Hebrews 2:9 states: "**But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.**" The "every man" in verse 9 can be clearly detected from the context. "Every man" includes the adopted members of the family of God, the "many sons" over whom Christ is called the captain of their salvation. "Every man" includes Christ's brethren who are united to Him and consecrated to God by virtue of a divine and inseparable union in verse 11. "Every " includes the children, which God had given Christ before the world began. The context clearly indicates that "every man" in this case is limited to God's elect, Christ's brethren, the many sons who are actually and ultimately brought into a glorified state by the captain of their salvation (v. 10).

II Peter 3:9 states: "**The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness: but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should**

perish, but that all should come to repentance." Arminians are famous for only quoting the last half of this verse. The all that come to repentance are the us-ward who are identified as the beloved in verse 8. The us-ward are the **"elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father"** (I Pet. 1:2). God's will can never be thwarted or overturned according to Job 23:13 and Daniel 4:35. If God had willed that all men without exception would come to repentance, then we can be assured that all men would be saved. But such is not the case, which forces us to limit the "all" in this verse to the elect of whom Jesus said: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

Other passages where the words "all" and "every" are limited in application are abundant. Mark 1:5 states: **"And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."** The "all" in this verse obviously didn't include the Pharisees of whom Jesus spake in Luke 7:30: **"But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."**

Romans 3:23 states: **"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."** The "all" in this verse cannot apply to the Lord Jesus Christ "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Pet. 2:22).

The list could go on and on to prove that the words "world", "all", and "every" often have a limited application according to the laws of interpretation.

One last verse must be examined which is generally considered to be an Arminian strong-hold to teach a general atonement. II Peter 2:1 states: **"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."** The Greek word for "Lord" in the text is one that is seldom used in the New Testament. It is despotes, and always has reference to God the Father not Jesus Christ. All who Christ purchased will ultimately enjoy the glory of eternal life, not one of them shall perish (John 10:27-28). Yet, the false teachers of II Peter 2 perish in their sins. Furthermore, whenever Christ's redemptive work is referred to with the word "bought", there is always a reference to the price of redemption which is the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:20; Eph. 1:7; I Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9; 14:3-4). Yet there is no hint of the price of the supposed redemption in our text or the entire chapter for that matter. The buying of this verse indicates a temporal deliverance rather than a redemptive purchase.

John Gill made the following observations:

"The word buying regards temporal deliverance, and particularly the redemption of the people of Israel out of Egypt; who are therefore called the people the Lord had purchased. The phrase is

borrowed from Deuteronomy 32:6... wherefore Peter makes use of this phrase much in the same manner as Moses had done before him, to aggravate the ingratitude and impiety of these false teachers among the Jews; that they should deny, if not in words, at least in works, that mighty Jehovah, who had of old redeemed their fathers out of Egypt, with a stretched- out arm, and, in successive ages, had distinguished them with peculiar favours; being ungodly men, turning the grace, the doctrine of the grace of God, into lasciviousness. Hence, nothing can be concluded from this passage in favour of Christ's dying for them that perish; since neither Christ, nor the death of Christ, nor redemption by his blood are here once mentioned, nor in the least intended." [29](#)

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EFFECTUAL CALLING DEFINED AND DISTINGUISHED

By Tom Ross, Pastor
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Galatians 1:15-16 declares: "**But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me...**"

EFFECTUAL CALLING DEFINED

The effectual call is an aspect of God's sovereign grace wherein He draws and summons His sheep out of darkness and deadness into light and life by an irresistible power. In the effectual call God causes sinners who were at one time deaf and blind to the gospel and unwilling to come to Christ, come most willingly, gladly receiving Him as Lord and Saviour. The effectual call is discriminate and personal in the sense that it comes only to those who the Father elected and the Son died for.

The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith defined effectual calling in the following way:

"Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, He is pleased, in His appointed, and accepted time, effectually to call by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin, and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds, spiritually, and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his Almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus

Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace. This effectual call is of God's free, and special grace alone not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, co-working with His special grace, the creature being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it; and that by no less power, then that which raised up Christ from the dead." [1](#)

Effectual calling is in complete harmony with the previous three points of the doctrines of grace. In fact, all the doctrines of grace stand or fall together. If every man is totally depraved, corrupt, and naturally unwilling to come to Christ, God must do a powerful inward work to change the sinner's disposition and draw him to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Jesus makes this fact abundantly clear in John 6:44 which states: "**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.**" If "**there is none that seeketh after God**" (Rom. 3:11), then God must seek the elect sinner, enlightening and revealing to him the Lord Jesus Christ as II Corinthians 4:6 states: "**For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**" Because God, according to His own free will and love elected certain individuals unto salvation, it follows that He will not leave them in their sins but draw them to Himself. Election and effectual calling go hand in hand as the Scriptures attest. In fact the effectual call is the consequence of God's eternal election. Psalms 65:4 states: "**Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth (election), and causest to approach unto thee (effectual calling), that he may dwell in thy courts...**" Jeremiah 31:3 states: "**The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an ever lasting love (election): therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee (effectual calling).**" John 6:37 states: "**All that the Father giveth me (election) shall come to me (effectual calling)...**" Romans 8:30 further illustrates this blessed link between election and effectual calling: "**Moreover whom he did predestinate (election), them he also called (effectual calling): and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.**" Because Jesus Christ died to actually purchase and redeem His sheep, thereby finishing the work that His Father gave Him to do, it follows that every one whom He died for must of necessity be brought to salvation through the gospel.

John Gill wrote:

They (the called) are such who are redeemed by Christ; vocation, follows redemption, and is the certain consequence of it; "I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine" (Isa. 43:1). Election, redemption, and vocation, are of the same persons; those whom God has chosen in Christ, are redeemed by Christ; and

who are chosen and redeemed, are sooner or later, called; and the reason of their being called, is because they are redeemed; **"I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them"** (Zech. 10:8) [2](#)

It is only in this light that we can understand what Jesus meant in John 10:16: **"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."** A similar passage is found in Acts 18:9-10 which states: **"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."** Jesus Christ had already died and purchased many out of the city of Corinth, whom God would call through the gospel preaching of the Apostle Paul! It is blessedly true, that those who Christ died for will infallibly be brought to salvation through the effectual call of God as I Peter 3:18 implies: **"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (particular redemption), that he might bring us to God (effectual calling), being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."**

THE EFFECTUAL CALL DISTINGUISHED FROM THE GENERAL CALL

Perhaps you have often wondered why one person responds to the gospel in repentance and faith, while another person under the same circumstances scornfully rejects the gospel of Christ. Have you ever questioned why one person is saved and another is lost? What is it that causes some men to repent and believe, while others, with the same external privileges, reject the gospel and continue in impenitence and unbelief? Why is it that two men sitting in the same pew respond differently when the gospel is preached? One is softened and the other hardened. One is called out of darkness into God's marvelous light, while the other remains blinded in his sin. Who or what is it that makes the difference?

The person who believes in sovereign grace says it is God who makes the difference as Paul told the Corinthians: **"But by the grace of God I am what I am"** (1 Cor. 15:10). The Arminian, on the other hand, will say that man's free-will, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, causes him to be saved. The Arminian operates on the false supposition that God is "trying" to save every body, so He is obligated to give everyone an equal "chance" to be saved. The Calvinist, on the other hand, affirms that the Holy Spirit works only on the elect in a saving way. The difference between the two systems of theology lies in the fact that the Arminian sees no distinction between the general, outward, universal call and the inward, personal,

effectual call. The general call sincerely goes out to all men indiscriminately, whereas the effectual call goes to the elect only.

The general call of God is universal in its scope and is manifested in several ways. Creation is a form of the general call to show man that He is accountable to his Creator. Psalms 19:1-4 states: "**The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.**" All men everywhere are commanded to repent (Acts 17:30) because it is man's duty to worship, love, and obey the Creator.

God's providence in the government of this world is a form of the general call. Every time someone dies it is a reminder that man is a sinner and serves as a warning, that each man must be prepared to meet his Maker. Every time a baby is born it is a testimony that someone is in control of life. Man's conscience acts as a form of the general call as Romans 2:14-15 declares: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

The gospel message, declared through preaching or the written word, is a form of the general call. We are commanded by the Lord: "**Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature**" (Mark 16:15). As obedient believers we ought to exhaust all scriptural means to see that this command is carried out. The changed life of a believer who has been saved by the grace of God is another form of the general call to the lost world of mankind. We are said to be epistles written with the Spirit of God, known and read of all men (II Cor. 3:2-3).

Yet all these forms of the general call go unheeded without the Spirit effectually working in man "**both to will and do of his good pleasure**" (Phil. 2:13). Paul told the believers at Thessalonica: "**Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost...**" The general call of the gospel preached by men in word only will not save. It must be attended by the special power of the Holy Ghost working in the heart, convincing of sin, and drawing the sinner to Christ. Thus the general call is external, whereas the effectual call is internal. The gospel call is given by men through preaching, whereas the effectual call is a mysterious and sovereign work of God in the heart and mind of man.

J.L. Dagg stated:

"Had God bound himself, by rule to give an equal measure of grace to every human being, and to leave the result to the unaided volition of men, the extraordinary success which marked the first period of

Christianity would not have existed. It must be ascribed to the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit, whom the Saviour promised to send after He should go to the Father. To the power of the Spirit, the success of the world in all ages, must be attributed..." [3](#)

The general call is further distinguished from the effectual call by the fact that it is always resisted, whereas the effectual call is never resisted. Proverbs 1:24-25 illustrates the response to the general call: "**Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof.**" Acts 16:14 illustrates the response of the effectual call: "**And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.**" Another passage which vividly illustrates the difference between the general and effectual call is the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13. The same seed, the Word of God, is sown on all four types of soil. Yet the first three types of soil brought forth no fruit unto eternal life. The last type of soil which received the seed was fruitful because the Spirit had previously plowed the ground, effectually planted the seed and saw to it that it brought forth fruit. In the first three types of soil the common call is demonstrated in word only. In the last type of soil the effectual call is demonstrated; it was a saving, fruitful call wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit. Philippians 1:6 corresponds with this interpretation: "**Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.**"

C.D. Cole wrote:

"Bunyan illustrates the difference between the general and the special call by the barnyard hen. She has a general cluck to which little attention is given, and she has a special cluck for her biddies when the hawk is about to swoop down upon them, the cluck that brings them flying to find protection under her wings. So God has a special call that brings His lost sheep to find shelter and safety beneath the spreading wings of Calvary... The general call is like the father calling Johnny to get up early in the morning. He says "okay doke", turns over and goes back to sleep. The call did not bring him out; it had no effect on him. The special call is the father coming in thirty minutes later. He pulls the cover off and puts on the cowhide. This is effectual and brings Johnny out." [4](#)

A failure to see the difference between the general and effectual call brings reproach upon the power and majesty of God. If the two calls are one in the same then God must be likened to Darius the Babylonian king who wanted to deliver Daniel from the lions den, but was powerless to do so. The God the Arminians

preach is vainly trying and hoping for all men to be saved, and decide for Christ. He is defeated and stripped of His sovereignty and omnipotence.

Lorraine Boettner wisely observed:

"If, as Arminians say, God is earnestly trying to convert every person, He is making a great failure of His work; for among the adult population of the world up to the present time, where He is succeeded in saving one He has let perhaps twenty-five fall into hell. Such a view sheds little glory on the Divine Majesty... If God does not effectually call, we may imagine Him saying, "I will that all men should be saved; nevertheless, it must finally be, not as I will but as they will." Furthermore, if God actually stood powerless before the majesty of man's lordly will, there would be but little use to pray for Him to convert any one. It would then be more reasonable for us to direct our petitions to the man himself." 5

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EFFECTUAL CALL

The effectual call of God is one of the most important truths taught in the Holy Scriptures. It is in the effectual call that the eternal purpose of God in election is brought to fruition. It is in the effectual call that Christ's work of redemption is applied to the sheep that He laid down His life for. It is in the effectual call that the power of God is manifested in drawing a sinner from a life of sin, rebellion, and darkness unto a life of holiness, obedience, and light. Were it not for the effectual call of God every man would perish in his sins. Every man would refuse the sweet strains of the gospel in the general call and consider the cross of Christ as foolishness. It is in the effectual call that God miraculously slays the natural enmity of man's will, overcomes his inherent depravity and enables him to flee to Christ for refuge and protection. It is for these reasons we now want to examine the characteristics and properties of the effectual call.

1. First and foremost, the effectual call is of God and not man. God alone has the power to make the gospel effectual in the hearts of dead sinners. As Christians we are responsible to preach the gospel to every creature and pray that God will do a work of grace in the heart. Yet, all our preaching, pleading, and praying cannot and will not save even one soul. "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), and it is for this reason why the effectual call can be attributed to God alone. I Corinthians 3:6-7 illustrates this truth beautifully: **"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave**

the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

Lorraine Boettner wrote:

"Mere human efforts are unavailing. If a crop of wheat is to be raised, man can do only the most external and mechanical things toward that end. It is God who gives the increase through the sovereign control of forces which are entirely outside the sphere of man's influence. Likewise, in regard to the soul it matters not how eloquent the preacher may be, unless God opens the heart there will be no conversion. Here especially man does only the most external and mechanical things and it is the Holy Spirit who imparts the new principle of spiritual life." [6](#)

When a person truly understands that God is responsible for the effectual call, all the gimmicks, gadgets, and psychological trickery that men have resorted to in our day will be regarded as futile. Special days do not bring men to Christ, God does. Long invitations, "altar calls", and emotional appeals do not bring men to Christ, God does. It is for this reason that Paul stated in I Corinthians 2:4-5: **"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."** One of the reasons why false professions are abundant and church memberships are loaded with lost people is because men have resorted to false and unscriptural methods of evangelism attempting to help God out. We are to preach with all our might but we must depend entirely upon God to draw wayward sinners to Christ. By so doing we exalt God's way of salvation and truly understand what Jesus meant in John 6:44 which states: **"No man can care to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."**

There are several passages of Scripture that attribute the effectual call to God. Romans 1:6 states: **"Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ."** I Corinthians 1:9 declares: **"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."** Galatians 1:15 states: **"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace."** I Thessalonians 2:12 declares: **"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory."** Hebrews 3:1 states: **"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."** Finally, I Peter 5:10-11 states: **"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."**

2. The effectual call of God is powerful, invincible, and irresistible. In fact, the same power that was exerted in the resurrection of Christ is displayed in the effectual call as Ephesians 1:18-20 states: "**The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.**"

Arminians falsely assert that the power of man's free will can and does overcome the saving power of God. They preach that God has done all He can do and is now waiting upon man to make the final decision and apply the redemption of Christ. They argue that God will not infringe upon the impenetrable fort of man's free will, that man alone must accept or reject Christ without being compelled or forced by God.

I agree with Augustus Toplady who wrote:

"The person with power to accept or reject as he pleases must say:
"No, thou didst not finish the work of redemption which was given thee to do; thou didst indeed a part of it, but I myself must add something to it or the whole of thy performance will stand for naught." [7](#)

Arminians may teach such foolishness, but the Scriptures do not. In fact the opposite is true. When God comes in great power to save a sinner that He elected and Christ died for, not all the powers of Hell and man combined could prevent the Holy Spirit from drawing him to Christ. Psalms 110:3 affirms this statement: "**Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.**" Daniel 4:35 states: "**And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"**

If God could be resisted in the effectual call by the sinner what would prevent the sinner from resisting God in the Day of Judgment? We could just as well conclude that if God can be resisted in the call to salvation, the sinner could just as easily resist God's summons of wrath and doom at the Great White Throne of Judgment. God's power is equally exerted and manifested in both salvation as well as judgment. Furthermore if man can resist the power of God in salvation we must conclude that men are more powerful than God and have the ability to thwart the purposes of God. Such assertions are utter nonsense in light of Job 23:13-14 which states: "**But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.**"

The fact that God irresistibly and effectually calls to salvation is illustrated in the usage of the word draw. The same word for draw as it relates to the effectual call in John 6:44 is used in John 21:6, 11 where Peter draws 153 fish to shore. Edwin Palmer commented thusly on this passage:

"Such a fishnet cannot resist Peter as he drags it ashore. It is helpless and passive; it cannot fight back. It is the same word that is used of Peter when he draws his sword to cut off the ear of Malchus (John 18:10), or of Paul and Silas being dragged into the market place (Acts 16:19), or of Paul being dragged by a mob out of the temple (Acts 21:30). In each of these cases, the object is drawn irresistibly. The sword cannot resist Peter, nor Paul the mob. Neither can those whom the Father has given to Jesus resist the Father as He draws them. Every single one that the omnipotent Father gives to Jesus will come to Jesus. It is as certain as Jesus' word is certain." [8](#)

C.D. Cole wrote concerning the power of the effectual call:

"This call has the power of God behind it. It is the mighty Spirit of God working in grace to make the sinner see his helpless state and the value of the blood of Christ. To successfully resist this call would mean that the sinner is mightier than God. There was death and corruption in Lazarus to keep him from responding to Christ's command to come forth. But there was power from God that overcame all natural obstacles. There is likewise much in the sinner to resist the Gospel call, but in the effectual call of the Spirit this resistance is overcome. The effectual call is a Divine call that startles the careless sinner into concern; a call that enlightens the sin-darkened understanding; a call that opens the sin-closed heart to receive Christ as Lord and Saviour. Apart from the work of the Spirit the word of the Spirit will be rejected. Unless the Holy Spirit creates light within the soul, the light within the Book will not be seen. The power of conversion is not in the inspiration or perspiration of the preacher, but in the illumination and regeneration of the Spirit." [9](#)

3. The effectual call is special and personal. As stated previously, the general call of the gospel goes out to all men indiscriminately, but the effectual call comes to God's sheep individually and personally. Jesus spoke of the personal nature of the effectual call several times in John 10 when He said: "**To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.. .And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me** (verses 3, 16, 27)."

When we consider the personal nature of the effectual call it ought to humble our hearts to think that out of the multitudes who hear the gospel preached, God called us into the fellow ship of His Son. There was absolutely nothing in us that God saw that moved Him to call us to salvation. We were equally repulsive and rebellious, yet in sovereign grace and power He called us out of darkness into His marvelous light! I Corinthians 1:26-27 states: **"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the thins which are mighty."** Jesus stated the same humbling truth in Matthew 11:25-26: **"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."**

How we need to praise and magnify the name of the Lord for personally calling us to salvation. If we would have been left to ourselves we never would have repented of sin and trusted in Christ. We would still see no beauty in the One who is "Altogether Lovely". We would still consider the preaching of the cross to be foolishness. We would still have the wrath of God abiding on us throughout eternity. It was God who made us to differ from the multitudes of lost men and women, calling us, not in Word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost (I Thess. 1:5). We ought to humbly and grate fully echo the words of the hymn writer, Issac Watts:

“Why was I made to hear thy voice, when others make a wretched choice, and rather starve than care?”

’Twas the same love that spread the feast that sweetly forched us in; else we had still refused to taste and perished in our sins.”

THE RESULTS OF EFFECTUAL CALL ILLUSTRATED

Thus far we have defined effectual calling and distinguished it from the general call. We have examined the characteristics of the effectual call and proved it to be the call of God Him self, inwardly working upon His sheep in a powerful and irresistible way through the means of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is now appropriate for us to examine the results that attend the effectual call as they are illustrated in the Scriptures.

1. The effectual call produces in the sinner a genuine willingness to come to Jesus Christ for salvation, pardon, and cleansing from sin. Prior to this special inward

work of grace the sinner always rejected the gospel message as Psalms 58:3-5 declares: "**The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.**" In the effectual call of God the ears of the sinner are opened, enabling them to hear and hearken to the voice of the Good Shepherd whom they no longer resist but willingly follow (John 10:27). Their eyes are miraculously opened to see their sin and corruption as well as the power and glory of the cross of Christ.

Often when people speak of effectual calling or irresistible grace they have the idea that God saves sinners against their will. What actually happens is that God, in mighty power slays the natural enmity of man's will, enabling him to freely choose Christ and willingly come to Him in repentance and faith. Song of Solomon 1:4 states: "Draw me, we will run after thee." This is precisely what happened to me when God effectually called me to Christ. The day before I was saved, I was unwilling to part with my sins and embrace Christ as my Prophet, Priest, and King. Yet, the day that God effectually drew me in great power I came most freely and willingly, desiring Christ as Lord and Saviour more than anything else in the world.

This truth may be illustrated by the account of the salvation of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. He was threatening and seeking to slaughter the followers of the Lamb which prompted him to obtain authority from the chief priest to apprehend and bind them. As Saul walked on the road to Damascus his heart was filled with hatred and malice for Christ and His disciples. He was bent on persecuting the saints and destroying the religion of Christ as he journeyed. Yet in great power God changed the will of Saul enabling him to hear the voice of the Son of God and cry out: "**Lord, what wilt thou have me to do**" (Acts 9:6). Saul most willingly submitted himself to the Lord Jesus Christ and was greatly used of the Lord!

Edwin Palmer stated this aspect of the effectual call best when he wrote:

"By nature man is like a person who loves to eat rotten, moldy, wormy apples out of the garbage can, or who likes to sit in the dirt and eat ashes. It is possible for God to change such a person's makeup so that he will love filet mignon and artichokes instead of ashes, and so that he will crave for a bowl of fresh fruit instead of a moldy apple. In a similar way, God changes the heart of man from evil to good. By nature man loves sin and everything that is going to bring him unhappiness and eternal punishment. By irresistible grace God does not leave the heart unchanged and thus drag man into heaven against his will. No, God regenerates the man, changes his nature, and radically alters his character so that man now is truly sorry for his sin and loves God. Now, with his heart changed, he abhors the things he used to do. Now Christ is the fairest among ten

thousand. Christianity now becomes exciting. He freely, eagerly seeks God. This is how the irresistible, efficacious grace of God works." [10](#)

2. Another result of the effectual call is that the nature and state of the sinner is changed dramatically. He is changed from dead ness to life, from darkness to light, and from bondage to freedom. Several Scriptures allude to this change. John 5:24 states: "**Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath ever lasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.**" Galatians 5:13 declares: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty..." I Peter 2:9 states: "**But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**"

This resulting new life of liberty and light produced by the effectual call is best illustrated by the account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11. Lazarus had been dead three days. He was bound and wrapped in grave clothes. His body had begun to decay and corrupt giving off a stench. There was a stone rolled over his tomb. He was in a helpless and deplorable condition apart from Christ. The physical condition of Lazarus is a spiritual description of the natural man prior to the effectual call. He is dead in trespasses and sins, corrupt in the sight of God, with a stone of rebellion rolled over his heart and mind. He is in darkness and ignorant of spiritual things. Christ in great power cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth." The result of that effectual call is recorded in John 11:44 which states: "**And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin, Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.**" What a dramatic change was produced in the life of Lazarus because of the call of the Lord! The same change is produced in all of God's sheep who in time hear their Shepherd's voice and enter into the abundant life of light and liberty.

3. Another result of the effectual call is that it inducts us into the glorious fellowship of Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 1:9 states: "**God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.**" Prior to our calling we drank of the bitter streams of a world of sin. We were "**by nature the children of wrath**", following the "**course of this world**" and out of fellowship with God. Our companions were the men of the world who "**loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil**" (John 3:19). But God called us out of the world into communion and fellowship with Christ.

John Gill stated:

"The internal call, is a call of persons from fellowship with the men of the world, to fellowship with Christ;... it is like that of the call of Christ to his church, Cant. 4:8: Come with me from Lebanon, and

a call to forsake the vanities, pleasures, and profits of the world, and the company of the men of it, and go along with him, and enjoy communion with him: as Abraham was called out of his country, from his kindred, and his father's house; so saints are called to forsake their own people, and their father's house; to relinquish the society of their former companions, and to have no fellowship with ungodly men: ...the people of God are called to better company, to communion with God, Father, Son, and Spirit; to fellowship with one another; to converse with saints, the excellent in the earth, in whom is all their delight." [11](#)

This call to fellowship may be illustrated best in the account of the salvation of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:5-7 which states: "**And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house** (a personal, hastening, humbling, necessary call). **And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.**" Formerly Zacchaeus had been a crooked publican, a wealthy man of the world, in fellowship with corruption and sin. Yet Jesus called him, humbled him and fellowshiped with him over dinner. How glorious it is to be called from a life of empty companionship to sup and fellowship with Christ, a fellowship that causes "**our heart to burn within us**" (Luke 24:32) as Jesus opens to us the Scriptures.

4. The effectual call of God also results in a life of peace with God as well as the peace of God. I Corinthians 7:15 states: "... but God hath called us to peace." The peace referred to is both legal as well as experimental. It is legal in the sense that we are justified from all sin and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us when we are drawn to faith in the gospel as Romans 5:1-2 states: "**Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**" It is an experimental peace in the sense that the Spirit inwardly gives to us a peace of mind and conscience which we had never known or experienced before while we were lost and undone.

John Gill described this experimental peace thusly:

"Such as are effectually called by the Spirit and grace of God, are called to peace; to internal peace, to peace of mind and conscience; which men, in a state of nature, are strangers to; for there is not peace to the wicked: but God calls his people to it, and blesses them with it; with a peace which passes all understanding; with mace in the midst of the tribulations of the world; with a peace which the world can neither give nor take away; and which arises from the blood and righteousness of Christ, and is part of that kingdom of

God which is within them, into which they are brought at effectual vocation." [12](#)

The peace to which we are called may best be illustrated in Mark 5 where Jesus called the demoniac of Gadara to salvation. He had an unclean spirit and dwelt among the tombs. He was wild, unruly, and untamed. He was caught in the snare of the devil being tormented day and night. He was without hope, without Christ, and without peace. Such is the spiritual condition of every man to some degree prior to the effectual call of God. Then Jesus came and cast out the demons and called the man who no one thought could ever be tamed to a life of peace, joy and usefulness. Mark 5:15 states: "**And they came to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.**" This man experienced the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7).

5. Another result of the effectual call is that it is a call from uncleanness to holiness. The effectual call of God is the elect's induction to sainthood. I Corinthians 1:2 states: "**Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.**" Arminians often charge those who believe the doctrines of grace with preaching a doctrine that leads to licentiousness. Yet we believe that God calls His elect to a life of holiness and progressive sanctification. Those who do not possess fruits of holiness have never been effectually called of God.

The effectual call is described as a holy calling in II Timothy 1:9 which states: "**Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.**" The effectual call is holy in its source as well as the results that it produces. Several other Scriptures affirm this blessed truth. I Thessalonians 4:7 declares: "**For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.**" I Peter 1:15 states: "**But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.**" II Peter 1:3 states: "**According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.**"

The call to holiness is illustrated in John 8 when the woman who was caught in the act of adultery was brought to Jesus for judgment by the scribes and Pharisees. She was unclean and filled with sin, deserving of God's judgment just as every one of us were before we were drawn to salvation in Christ. After all her accusers departed, not willing to cast the first stone, realizing that they were not without sin, it is recorded: "**When Jesus had lifted up him self, and saw none but the woman, he said into her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.**" What miraculous power is

demonstrated in the effectual call to holiness! A woman whose previous course of life was one of debauchery and uncleanness was called to a life of holiness by the grace of God. **"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"** (I Cor. 6:11).

6. The final result of the effectual call is that it is a call to grace and eternal glory. I Thessalonians 2:12 states: **"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory."** The effectual call ultimately leads to the happiness and bliss of the glorified state in which we will be completely conformed to the image of our blessed Lord. I Thessalonians 5:23-24 affirms this truth: **"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."**

What God began in the effectual call will culminate in a glorious transformation of our body, soul, and spirit at the coming of Jesus Christ. This is the hope and anticipation of every blood-washed saint. This is what we look for and anxiously wait for. Until then we ought to echo the prayer of Paul for the Ephesians: **"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints"**

OBJECTIONS TO EFFECTUAL CALLING ANSWERED

The doctrine of effectual calling has always been met with opposition from the Arminian and Pelagian camps. Most of the objections raised against this blessed truth are more philosophical than scriptural. Many of the objections raised against the effectual call are similar to those raised against the doctrine of election, which objections have already been dealt with in a previous chapter. Nevertheless, it is important to answer some of the more specific charges voiced against the effectual call of God.

It is the opinion of the writer that any objection raised against the sovereignty and power of God in salvation is an attempt to dethrone God and strip Him of His majesty and dominion. The reason why men object to sovereign grace is because of the innate desire of the natural man to share the glory and credit for salvation. Men are still posing the age-old question: **"Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"** (Matt. 19:16) Eternal life is not obtained by

doing good things, it is a wonderful gift bestowed upon unworthy sinners according to the good pleasure of the "God of all grace." (I Pet. 5:10)

1. The most common objection raised against the effectual call questions the sincerity of God in the general call. The line of argument generally followed is: "If God has already purposed who is going to be saved before the world began and determined to call only the elect, then how could the general call of the gospel be sincere? Why would God invite sinners who He already knows will not respond because of their total depravity?"

This objection arises out of a common mistake Arminians and Pelagians often make. They misunderstand statements made in the Scriptures addressing man's responsibility to mean that man has moral ability. Yet, the responsibility of man does not imply the moral ability of those who are "**dead in trespasses and sins**" (Eph. 2:1). Because God is a righteous Judge it is right for Him to call upon men to repent and believe the gospel.

J.L. Dagg answers this objection in the following way:

"It has been asked, for what purpose does God send his outward call to the non-elect, since it will be ineffectual, unless accompanied with His omnipotent grace. We might as well ask for what purpose does God give men His law, when they will not obey it; or why does He institute a moral government over them, when they will not submit to it. In stead of demanding God's reasons for what He does, it becomes every man rather to inquire, what reason he can render to God, for violating His holy law, and rejecting the call of His gospel. We may be sure that God will do right, and will be able to vindicate His ways before the intelligent universe; and we should regard our propensity to call in question the wisdom and righteousness of His procedure, as an alarming evidence of our want of sub mission to His will." [13](#)

The objection calls into question the sincerity of God which in reality is charging God with hypocrisy. It is an attempt to bring God down to the level and inadequacy of man. God Himself answers such blasphemy in Isaiah 55:8-9 which states: "**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.**" Men may certainly be insincere in dealing with one another, but God is never insincere in His dealings with men. The very fact that God has commanded that the gospel be preached to every creature is a demonstration of His common goodness and benevolence toward all men. He does this in spite of the reply of the natural man when confronted with the gospel who says: "**We will not have this man to reign over**

us" (Luke 19:14). It is the height of folly and madness to charge God, who is perfectly holy and just, with insincerity in the general call.

2. The second objection to the doctrine of effectual calling is the idea that God violates the free will of man. Often Arminians will make statements such as: "There is one area in your life that God will never touch your will. He will never cause you to believe. That's your job. Only you can do it. God has done all that He can do, now it's up to you to decide for Christ and make Him Lord of your life."

Such an objection falsely supposes that man's will is free to choose either good or evil. In reality, the will of man was violated and ruined by sin in the fall of Adam. Now man's will is free only in the sense that it is free to follow the natural passions of a heart that is "full of madness", and a mind that is at "carnal enmity against God". Man's will is bound by a fleshly nature that in no way, shape, or form is able to please God or give birth to spiritual affections. Romans 8:8 states: "**So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.**" Man's will is a servant to his sinful nature and therefore is incapable to make right decisions concerning the gospel. Romans 6:20 states: "**For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.**"

In the effectual call God simply slays the natural enmity of man's will enabling him to willingly trust in the finished work of Christ. If God did not effectually call, no one would come! The gospel message would go unheeded and every sinner would rush headlong into Hell. The root of this objection is again the mistake of equating man's responsibility with his moral ability.

Christopher Ness answers this objection best when he states:

"Irresistible grace takes not away that natural liberty which the will hath by creation, but the depravity of it only; knocking off its fetters, but not destroying its nature. We never enjoy our will so much as when God's will over rules ours. If man can determine his own will, and destroy the liberty of it, then much more God who is the maker thereof. To will is from nature, to will well is from grace; spiritual fruit must spring from a spiritual root." [14](#)

"Not all the outward forms on earth, nor rites that God hath given, nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth, can raise a soul to heaven. The sovereign will of God alone, creates us heirs of grace; both in the image of His Son, a new peculiar race. Thus quickened souls awake and rise from the long sleep of death; on heavenly things they fix their eyes, and praise employs their breath."

3. The third objection against effectual calling arises out of the false idea that the Holy Spirit works on all men in the same way, giving sufficient light to believe if only the natural man chooses to do so. You will often hear Arminian preachers

exhorting sinners not to sin away their "day of grace," or to be careful that they don't cross over the imaginary line when God no longer will deal with them or strive with them. The main Scripture for these assertions is John 1:7 which states: **"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."**

The light that God gives to every man is the light of conscience which makes every man accountable to God. It is not some spark of divinity that each man possesses that enables him somehow to choose Christ if the spark is fanned just right. The light spoken of in this verse is not to be restricted solely to spiritual illumination (c.f. Matt. 6:23).

A.W. Pink comments:

"In what sense, then, is Christ as "the life" the "light of men?" We answer, In that which renders men accountable creatures. Every rational man is morally enlightened. All rational men "show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness" (Rom. 2:15). It is this "light", which lightens every man that cometh into the world, that constitutes them responsible human beings... the natural man is a responsible being before God, to Whom he shall give an account of himself; responsible, because the work of God's law is written in his heart, his conscience also bearing witness, and this, we take it is the "light" which is referred to in John 1:4 and the "lighteneth" in John 1:9." [15](#)

When the idea that the Holy Spirit exerts the same amount of spiritual influence upon each man is taken to its logical conclusion then man himself must be the moving cause of salvation. Thus, the new birth necessarily hinges upon the will or the intellect of the natural man which is contrary to John 1:13 which states: **"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."**

4. The fourth objection to effectual calling is the assertion that the Holy Spirit may be resisted as in Acts 7:51 which states: **"Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."** The Arminians loudly assert that this verse teaches that men can and do resist the power of the Holy Spirit in salvation.

Acts 7:51 must be interpreted in light of Nehemiah 9:30 which states: **"Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear..."** It is true that the sinner always resists the external ministry of the Holy Spirit when they reject the Word which He inspired or when they persecute the prophets through whom He spoke. When men reject the gospel they are rejecting the message inspired by the Holy Spirit in the

Word of God. What Stephen was referring to was the rejection of the general call of God to repentance, not the effectual call to salvation.

Andrew Fuller put it best when he stated:

"I conceive there is what may be termed an indirect influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, having inspired the prophets and apostles, testified in and by them, and often without effect.. The message of the prophets being dictated by the Holy Spirit, resistance of them was resistance of Him. It was in this way, I conceive, that the Spirit of God strove with the antediluvians, and that unbelievers are said always to have resisted the Holy Spirit."
[16](#)

C.D. Cole once stated:

"A dear brother once remarked that I did not believe the sinner could resist the Holy Spirit. I replied that I believed that the sinner did nothing but resist the Holy Spirit until his resistance was overcome by the Holy Spirit. The preached Word is the objective ministry and the indirect influence of the Holy Spirit, and this the dead sinner rejects and resists because it is foolishness to him. Our Lord told Nicodemus that except a man be born from above he cannot see or understand the Kingdom of God. The indirect influence of the Spirit in the Word is resisted until overcome by the direct influence of the Spirit in quickening ... The objective ministry of the Spirit is resisted, but not the subjective. When the distinction is made the truth of man's impotence and the Spirit's omnipotence is conserved, otherwise we have the creature mightier than the Creator." [17](#)

END NOTES

Just click on the highlighted word(s) to return to your reading.

1. [Lumpkin, W.L.](#), Baptist Confessions of Faith (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1974) pp. 264-265.
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EFFECTUAL CALLING DEFINED AND DISTINGUISHED

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Galatians 1:15-16 declares: "**But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me...**"

EFFECTUAL CALLING DEFINED

The effectual call is an aspect of God's sovereign grace wherein He draws and summons His sheep out of darkness and deadness into light and life by an irresistible power. In the effectual call God causes sinners who were at one time deaf and blind to the gospel and unwilling to come to Christ, come most willingly, gladly receiving Him as Lord and Saviour. The effectual call is discriminate and personal in the sense that it comes only to those who the Father elected and the Son died for.

The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith defined effectual calling in the following way:

"Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, He is pleased, in His appointed, and accepted time, effectually to call by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin, and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds, spiritually, and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his Almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus

Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace. This effectual call is of God's free, and special grace alone not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, co-working with His special grace, the creature being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it; and that by no less power, then that which raised up Christ from the dead." [1](#)

Effectual calling is in complete harmony with the previous three points of the doctrines of grace. In fact, all the doctrines of grace stand or fall together. If every man is totally depraved, corrupt, and naturally unwilling to come to Christ, God must do a powerful inward work to change the sinner's disposition and draw him to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Jesus makes this fact abundantly clear in John 6:44 which states: "**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.**" If "**there is none that seeketh after God**" (Rom. 3:11), then God must seek the elect sinner, enlightening and revealing to him the Lord Jesus Christ as II Corinthians 4:6 states: "**For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**" Because God, according to His own free will and love elected certain individuals unto salvation, it follows that He will not leave them in their sins but draw them to Himself. Election and effectual calling go hand in hand as the Scriptures attest. In fact the effectual call is the consequence of God's eternal election. Psalms 65:4 states: "**Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth (election), and causest to approach unto thee (effectual calling), that he may dwell in thy courts...**" Jeremiah 31:3 states: "**The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an ever lasting love (election): therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee (effectual calling).**" John 6:37 states: "**All that the Father giveth me (election) shall come to me (effectual calling)...**" Romans 8:30 further illustrates this blessed link between election and effectual calling: "**Moreover whom he did predestinate (election), them he also called (effectual calling): and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.**" Because Jesus Christ died to actually purchase and redeem His sheep, thereby finishing the work that His Father gave Him to do, it follows that every one whom He died for must of necessity be brought to salvation through the gospel.

John Gill wrote:

They (the called) are such who are redeemed by Christ; vocation, follows redemption, and is the certain consequence of it; "I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine" (Isa. 43:1). Election, redemption, and vocation, are of the same persons; those whom God has chosen in Christ, are redeemed by Christ; and

who are chosen and redeemed, are sooner or later, called; and the reason of their being called, is because they are redeemed; **"I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them"** (Zech. 10:8) [2](#)

It is only in this light that we can understand what Jesus meant in John 10:16: **"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."** A similar passage is found in Acts 18:9-10 which states: **"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."** Jesus Christ had already died and purchased many out of the city of Corinth, whom God would call through the gospel preaching of the Apostle Paul! It is blessedly true, that those who Christ died for will infallibly be brought to salvation through the effectual call of God as I Peter 3:18 implies: **"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (particular redemption), that he might bring us to God (effectual calling), being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."**

THE EFFECTUAL CALL DISTINGUISHED FROM THE GENERAL CALL

Perhaps you have often wondered why one person responds to the gospel in repentance and faith, while another person under the same circumstances scornfully rejects the gospel of Christ. Have you ever questioned why one person is saved and another is lost? What is it that causes some men to repent and believe, while others, with the same external privileges, reject the gospel and continue in impenitence and unbelief? Why is it that two men sitting in the same pew respond differently when the gospel is preached? One is softened and the other hardened. One is called out of darkness into God's marvelous light, while the other remains blinded in his sin. Who or what is it that makes the difference?

The person who believes in sovereign grace says it is God who makes the difference as Paul told the Corinthians: **"But by the grace of God I am what I am"** (1 Cor. 15:10). The Arminian, on the other hand, will say that man's free-will, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, causes him to be saved. The Arminian operates on the false supposition that God is "trying" to save every body, so He is obligated to give everyone an equal "chance" to be saved. The Calvinist, on the other hand, affirms that the Holy Spirit works only on the elect in a saving way. The difference between the two systems of theology lies in the fact that the Arminian sees no distinction between the general, outward, universal call and the inward, personal,

effectual call. The general call sincerely goes out to all men indiscriminately, whereas the effectual call goes to the elect only.

The general call of God is universal in its scope and is manifested in several ways. Creation is a form of the general call to show man that He is accountable to his Creator. Psalms 19:1-4 states: "**The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.**" All men everywhere are commanded to repent (Acts 17:30) because it is man's duty to worship, love, and obey the Creator.

God's providence in the government of this world is a form of the general call. Every time someone dies it is a reminder that man is a sinner and serves as a warning, that each man must be prepared to meet his Maker. Every time a baby is born it is a testimony that someone is in control of life. Man's conscience acts as a form of the general call as Romans 2:14-15 declares: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

The gospel message, declared through preaching or the written word, is a form of the general call. We are commanded by the Lord: "**Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature**" (Mark 16:15). As obedient believers we ought to exhaust all scriptural means to see that this command is carried out. The changed life of a believer who has been saved by the grace of God is another form of the general call to the lost world of mankind. We are said to be epistles written with the Spirit of God, known and read of all men (II Cor. 3:2-3).

Yet all these forms of the general call go unheeded without the Spirit effectually working in man "**both to will and do of his good pleasure**" (Phil. 2:13). Paul told the believers at Thessalonica: "**Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost...**" The general call of the gospel preached by men in word only will not save. It must be attended by the special power of the Holy Ghost working in the heart, convincing of sin, and drawing the sinner to Christ. Thus the general call is external, whereas the effectual call is internal. The gospel call is given by men through preaching, whereas the effectual call is a mysterious and sovereign work of God in the heart and mind of man.

J.L. Dagg stated:

"Had God bound himself, by rule to give an equal measure of grace to every human being, and to leave the result to the unaided volition of men, the extraordinary success which marked the first period of

Christianity would not have existed. It must be ascribed to the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit, whom the Saviour promised to send after He should go to the Father. To the power of the Spirit, the success of the world in all ages, must be attributed..." [3](#)

The general call is further distinguished from the effectual call by the fact that it is always resisted, whereas the effectual call is never resisted. Proverbs 1:24-25 illustrates the response to the general call: "**Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof.**" Acts 16:14 illustrates the response of the effectual call: "**And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.**" Another passage which vividly illustrates the difference between the general and effectual call is the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13. The same seed, the Word of God, is sown on all four types of soil. Yet the first three types of soil brought forth no fruit unto eternal life. The last type of soil which received the seed was fruitful because the Spirit had previously plowed the ground, effectually planted the seed and saw to it that it brought forth fruit. In the first three types of soil the common call is demonstrated in word only. In the last type of soil the effectual call is demonstrated; it was a saving, fruitful call wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit. Philippians 1:6 corresponds with this interpretation: "**Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.**"

C.D. Cole wrote:

"Bunyan illustrates the difference between the general and the special call by the barnyard hen. She has a general cluck to which little attention is given, and she has a special cluck for her biddies when the hawk is about to swoop down upon them, the cluck that brings them flying to find protection under her wings. So God has a special call that brings His lost sheep to find shelter and safety beneath the spreading wings of Calvary... The general call is like the father calling Johnny to get up early in the morning. He says "okay doke", turns over and goes back to sleep. The call did not bring him out; it had no effect on him. The special call is the father coming in thirty minutes later. He pulls the cover off and puts on the cowhide. This is effectual and brings Johnny out." [4](#)

A failure to see the difference between the general and effectual call brings reproach upon the power and majesty of God. If the two calls are one in the same then God must be likened to Darius the Babylonian king who wanted to deliver Daniel from the lions den, but was powerless to do so. The God the Arminians

preach is vainly trying and hoping for all men to be saved, and decide for Christ. He is defeated and stripped of His sovereignty and omnipotence.

Lorraine Boettner wisely observed:

"If, as Arminians say, God is earnestly trying to convert every person, He is making a great failure of His work; for among the adult population of the world up to the present time, where He is succeeded in saving one He has let perhaps twenty-five fall into hell. Such a view sheds little glory on the Divine Majesty... If God does not effectually call, we may imagine Him saying, "I will that all men should be saved; nevertheless, it must finally be, not as I will but as they will." Furthermore, if God actually stood powerless before the majesty of man's lordly will, there would be but little use to pray for Him to convert any one. It would then be more reasonable for us to direct our petitions to the man himself." 5

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EFFECTUAL CALL

The effectual call of God is one of the most important truths taught in the Holy Scriptures. It is in the effectual call that the eternal purpose of God in election is brought to fruition. It is in the effectual call that Christ's work of redemption is applied to the sheep that He laid down His life for. It is in the effectual call that the power of God is manifested in drawing a sinner from a life of sin, rebellion, and darkness unto a life of holiness, obedience, and light. Were it not for the effectual call of God every man would perish in his sins. Every man would refuse the sweet strains of the gospel in the general call and consider the cross of Christ as foolishness. It is in the effectual call that God miraculously slays the natural enmity of man's will, overcomes his inherent depravity and enables him to flee to Christ for refuge and protection. It is for these reasons we now want to examine the characteristics and properties of the effectual call.

1. First and foremost, the effectual call is of God and not man. God alone has the power to make the gospel effectual in the hearts of dead sinners. As Christians we are responsible to preach the gospel to every creature and pray that God will do a work of grace in the heart. Yet, all our preaching, pleading, and praying cannot and will not save even one soul. "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), and it is for this reason why the effectual call can be attributed to God alone. I Corinthians 3:6-7 illustrates this truth beautifully: **"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave**

the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

Lorraine Boettner wrote:

"Mere human efforts are unavailing. If a crop of wheat is to be raised, man can do only the most external and mechanical things toward that end. It is God who gives the increase through the sovereign control of forces which are entirely outside the sphere of man's influence. Likewise, in regard to the soul it matters not how eloquent the preacher may be, unless God opens the heart there will be no conversion. Here especially man does only the most external and mechanical things and it is the Holy Spirit who imparts the new principle of spiritual life." [6](#)

When a person truly understands that God is responsible for the effectual call, all the gimmicks, gadgets, and psychological trickery that men have resorted to in our day will be regarded as futile. Special days do not bring men to Christ, God does. Long invitations, "altar calls", and emotional appeals do not bring men to Christ, God does. It is for this reason that Paul stated in I Corinthians 2:4-5: **"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."** One of the reasons why false professions are abundant and church memberships are loaded with lost people is because men have resorted to false and unscriptural methods of evangelism attempting to help God out. We are to preach with all our might but we must depend entirely upon God to draw wayward sinners to Christ. By so doing we exalt God's way of salvation and truly understand what Jesus meant in John 6:44 which states: **"No man can care to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."**

There are several passages of Scripture that attribute the effectual call to God. Romans 1:6 states: **"Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ."** I Corinthians 1:9 declares: **"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."** Galatians 1:15 states: **"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace."** I Thessalonians 2:12 declares: **"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory."** Hebrews 3:1 states: **"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."** Finally, I Peter 5:10-11 states: **"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."**

2. The effectual call of God is powerful, invincible, and irresistible. In fact, the same power that was exerted in the resurrection of Christ is displayed in the effectual call as Ephesians 1:18-20 states: **"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."**

Arminians falsely assert that the power of man's free will can and does overcome the saving power of God. They preach that God has done all He can do and is now waiting upon man to make the final decision and apply the redemption of Christ. They argue that God will not infringe upon the impenetrable fort of man's free will, that man alone must accept or reject Christ without being compelled or forced by God.

I agree with Augustus Toplady who wrote:

"The person with power to accept or reject as he pleases must say: "No, thou didst not finish the work of redemption which was given thee to do; thou didst indeed a part of it, but I myself must add something to it or the whole of thy performance will stand for naught." [7](#)

Arminians may teach such foolishness, but the Scriptures do not. In fact the opposite is true. When God comes in great power to save a sinner that He elected and Christ died for, not all the powers of Hell and man combined could prevent the Holy Spirit from drawing him to Christ. Psalms 110:3 affirms this statement: **"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."** Daniel 4:35 states: **"And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"**

If God could be resisted in the effectual call by the sinner what would prevent the sinner from resisting God in the Day of Judgment? We could just as well conclude that if God can be resisted in the call to salvation, the sinner could just as easily resist God's summons of wrath and doom at the Great White Throne of Judgment. God's power is equally exerted and manifested in both salvation as well as judgment. Furthermore if man can resist the power of God in salvation we must conclude that men are more powerful than God and have the ability to thwart the purposes of God. Such assertions are utter nonsense in light of Job 23:13-14 which states: **"But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him."**

The fact that God irresistibly and effectually calls to salvation is illustrated in the usage of the word draw. The same word for draw as it relates to the effectual call in John 6:44 is used in John 21:6, 11 where Peter draws 153 fish to shore. Edwin Palmer commented thusly on this passage:

"Such a fishnet cannot resist Peter as he drags it ashore. It is helpless and passive; it cannot fight back. It is the same word that is used of Peter when he draws his sword to cut off the ear of Malchus (John 18:10), or of Paul and Silas being dragged into the market place (Acts 16:19), or of Paul being dragged by a mob out of the temple (Acts 21:30). In each of these cases, the object is drawn irresistibly. The sword cannot resist Peter, nor Paul the mob. Neither can those whom the Father has given to Jesus resist the Father as He draws them. Every single one that the omnipotent Father gives to Jesus will come to Jesus. It is as certain as Jesus' word is certain." [8](#)

C.D. Cole wrote concerning the power of the effectual call:

"This call has the power of God behind it. It is the mighty Spirit of God working in grace to make the sinner see his helpless state and the value of the blood of Christ. To successfully resist this call would mean that the sinner is mightier than God. There was death and corruption in Lazarus to keep him from responding to Christ's command to come forth. But there was power from God that overcame all natural obstacles. There is likewise much in the sinner to resist the Gospel call, but in the effectual call of the Spirit this resistance is overcome. The effectual call is a Divine call that startles the careless sinner into concern; a call that enlightens the sin-darkened understanding; a call that opens the sin-closed heart to receive Christ as Lord and Saviour. Apart from the work of the Spirit the word of the Spirit will be rejected. Unless the Holy Spirit creates light within the soul, the light within the Book will not be seen. The power of conversion is not in the inspiration or perspiration of the preacher, but in the illumination and regeneration of the Spirit." [9](#)

3. The effectual call is special and personal. As stated previously, the general call of the gospel goes out to all men indiscriminately, but the effectual call comes to God's sheep individually and personally. Jesus spoke of the personal nature of the effectual call several times in John 10 when He said: "**To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.. .And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me** (verses 3, 16, 27)."

When we consider the personal nature of the effectual call it ought to humble our hearts to think that out of the multitudes who hear the gospel preached, God called us into the fellow ship of His Son. There was absolutely nothing in us that God saw that moved Him to call us to salvation. We were equally repulsive and rebellious, yet in sovereign grace and power He called us out of darkness into His marvelous light! I Corinthians 1:26-27 states: **"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the thins which are mighty."** Jesus stated the same humbling truth in Matthew 11:25-26: **"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."**

How we need to praise and magnify the name of the Lord for personally calling us to salvation. If we would have been left to ourselves we never would have repented of sin and trusted in Christ. We would still see no beauty in the One who is "Altogether Lovely". We would still consider the preaching of the cross to be foolishness. We would still have the wrath of God abiding on us throughout eternity. It was God who made us to differ from the multitudes of lost men and women, calling us, not in Word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost (I Thess. 1:5). We ought to humbly and grate fully echo the words of the hymn writer, Issac Watts:

“Why was I made to hear thy voice, when others make a wretched choice, and rather starve than care?

“Twas the same love that spread the feast that sweetly forched us in; and perished our sins.”

THE RESULTS OF EFFECTUAL CALL ILLUSTRATED

Thus far we have defined effectual calling and distinguished it from the general call. We have examined the characteristics of the effectual call and proved it to be the call of God Him self, inwardly working upon His sheep in a powerful and irresistible way through the means of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is now appropriate for us to examine the results that attend the effectual call as they are illustrated in the Scriptures.

1. The effectual call produces in the sinner a genuine willingness to come to Jesus Christ for salvation, pardon, and cleansing from sin. Prior to this special inward

work of grace the sinner always rejected the gospel message as Psalms 58:3-5 declares: "**The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.**" In the effectual call of God the ears of the sinner are opened, enabling them to hear and hearken to the voice of the Good Shepherd whom they no longer resist but willingly follow (John 10:27). Their eyes are miraculously opened to see their sin and corruption as well as the power and glory of the cross of Christ.

Often when people speak of effectual calling or irresistible grace they have the idea that God saves sinners against their will. What actually happens is that God, in mighty power slays the natural enmity of man's will, enabling him to freely choose Christ and willingly come to Him in repentance and faith. Song of Solomon 1:4 states: "Draw me, we will run after thee." This is precisely what happened to me when God effectually called me to Christ. The day before I was saved, I was unwilling to part with my sins and embrace Christ as my Prophet, Priest, and King. Yet, the day that God effectually drew me in great power I came most freely and willingly, desiring Christ as Lord and Saviour more than anything else in the world.

This truth may be illustrated by the account of the salvation of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. He was threatening and seeking to slaughter the followers of the Lamb which prompted him to obtain authority from the chief priest to apprehend and bind them. As Saul walked on the road to Damascus his heart was filled with hatred and malice for Christ and His disciples. He was bent on persecuting the saints and destroying the religion of Christ as he journeyed. Yet in great power God changed the will of Saul enabling him to hear the voice of the Son of God and cry out: "**Lord, what wilt thou have me to do**" (Acts 9:6). Saul most willingly submitted himself to the Lord Jesus Christ and was greatly used of the Lord!

Edwin Palmer stated this aspect of the effectual call best when he wrote:

"By nature man is like a person who loves to eat rotten, moldy, wormy apples out of the garbage can, or who likes to sit in the dirt and eat ashes. It is possible for God to change such a person's makeup so that he will love filet mignon and artichokes instead of ashes, and so that he will crave for a bowl of fresh fruit instead of a moldy apple. In a similar way, God changes the heart of man from evil to good. By nature man loves sin and everything that is going to bring him unhappiness and eternal punishment. By irresistible grace God does not leave the heart unchanged and thus drag man into heaven against his will. No, God regenerates the man, changes his nature, and radically alters his character so that man now is truly sorry for his sin and loves God. Now, with his heart changed, he abhors the things he used to do. Now Christ is the fairest among ten

thousand. Christianity now becomes exciting. He freely, eagerly seeks God. This is how the irresistible, efficacious grace of God works." [10](#)

2. Another result of the effectual call is that the nature and state of the sinner is changed dramatically. He is changed from dead ness to life, from darkness to light, and from bondage to freedom. Several Scriptures allude to this change. John 5:24 states: "**Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath ever lasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.**" Galatians 5:13 declares: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty..." I Peter 2:9 states: "**But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**"

This resulting new life of liberty and light produced by the effectual call is best illustrated by the account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11. Lazarus had been dead three days. He was bound and wrapped in grave clothes. His body had begun to decay and corrupt giving off a stench. There was a stone rolled over his tomb. He was in a helpless and deplorable condition apart from Christ. The physical condition of Lazarus is a spiritual description of the natural man prior to the effectual call. He is dead in trespasses and sins, corrupt in the sight of God, with a stone of rebellion rolled over his heart and mind. He is in darkness and ignorant of spiritual things. Christ in great power cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth." The result of that effectual call is recorded in John 11:44 which states: "**And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin, Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.**" What a dramatic change was produced in the life of Lazarus because of the call of the Lord! The same change is produced in all of God's sheep who in time hear their Shepherd's voice and enter into the abundant life of light and liberty.

3. Another result of the effectual call is that it inducts us into the glorious fellowship of Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 1:9 states: "**God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.**" Prior to our calling we drank of the bitter streams of a world of sin. We were "**by nature the children of wrath**", following the "**course of this world**" and out of fellowship with God. Our companions were the men of the world who "**loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil**" (John 3:19). But God called us out of the world into communion and fellowship with Christ.

John Gill stated:

"The internal call, is a call of persons from fellowship with the men of the world, to fellowship with Christ;... it is like that of the call of Christ to his church, Cant. 4:8: Come with me from Lebanon, and

a call to forsake the vanities, pleasures, and profits of the world, and the company of the men of it, and go along with him, and enjoy communion with him: as Abraham was called out of his country, from his kindred, and his father's house; so saints are called to forsake their own people, and their father's house; to relinquish the society of their former companions, and to have no fellowship with ungodly men: ...the people of God are called to better company, to communion with God, Father, Son, and Spirit; to fellowship with one another; to converse with saints, the excellent in the earth, in whom is all their delight." [11](#)

This call to fellowship may be illustrated best in the account of the salvation of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:5-7 which states: "**And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house** (a personal, hastening, humbling, necessary call). **And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.**" Formerly Zacchaeus had been a crooked publican, a wealthy man of the world, in fellowship with corruption and sin. Yet Jesus called him, humbled him and fellowshiped with him over dinner. How glorious it is to be called from a life of empty companionship to sup and fellowship with Christ, a fellowship that causes "**our heart to burn within us**" (Luke 24:32) as Jesus opens to us the Scriptures.

4. The effectual call of God also results in a life of peace with God as well as the peace of God. I Corinthians 7:15 states: "... but God hath called us to peace." The peace referred to is both legal as well as experimental. It is legal in the sense that we are justified from all sin and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us when we are drawn to faith in the gospel as Romans 5:1-2 states: "**Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**" It is an experimental peace in the sense that the Spirit inwardly gives to us a peace of mind and conscience which we had never known or experienced before while we were lost and undone.

John Gill described this experimental peace thusly:

"Such as are effectually called by the Spirit and grace of God, are called to peace; to internal peace, to peace of mind and conscience; which men, in a state of nature, are strangers to; for there is not peace to the wicked: but God calls his people to it, and blesses them with it; with a peace which passes all understanding; with mace in the midst of the tribulations of the world; with a peace which the world can neither give nor take away; and which arises from the blood and righteousness of Christ, and is part of that kingdom of

God which is within them, into which they are brought at effectual vocation." [12](#)

The peace to which we are called may best be illustrated in Mark 5 where Jesus called the demoniac of Gadara to salvation. He had an unclean spirit and dwelt among the tombs. He was wild, unruly, and untamed. He was caught in the snare of the devil being tormented day and night. He was without hope, without Christ, and without peace. Such is the spiritual condition of every man to some degree prior to the effectual call of God. Then Jesus came and cast out the demons and called the man who no one thought could ever be tamed to a life of peace, joy and usefulness. Mark 5:15 states: "**And they came to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.**" This man experienced the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7).

5. Another result of the effectual call is that it is a call from uncleanness to holiness. The effectual call of God is the elect's induction to sainthood. I Corinthians 1:2 states: "**Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.**" Arminians often charge those who believe the doctrines of grace with preaching a doctrine that leads to licentiousness. Yet we believe that God calls His elect to a life of holiness and progressive sanctification. Those who do not possess fruits of holiness have never been effectually called of God.

The effectual call is described as a holy calling in II Timothy 1:9 which states: "**Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.**" The effectual call is holy in its source as well as the results that it produces. Several other Scriptures affirm this blessed truth. I Thessalonians 4:7 declares: "**For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.**" I Peter 1:15 states: "**But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.**" II Peter 1:3 states: "**According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.**"

The call to holiness is illustrated in John 8 when the woman who was caught in the act of adultery was brought to Jesus for judgment by the scribes and Pharisees. She was unclean and filled with sin, deserving of God's judgment just as every one of us were before we were drawn to salvation in Christ. After all her accusers departed, not willing to cast the first stone, realizing that they were not without sin, it is recorded: "**When Jesus had lifted up him self, and saw none but the woman, he said into her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.**" What miraculous power is

demonstrated in the effectual call to holiness! A woman whose previous course of life was one of debauchery and uncleanness was called to a life of holiness by the grace of God. **"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"** (I Cor. 6:11).

6. The final result of the effectual call is that it is a call to grace and eternal glory. I Thessalonians 2:12 states: **"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory."** The effectual call ultimately leads to the happiness and bliss of the glorified state in which we will be completely conformed to the image of our blessed Lord. I Thessalonians 5:23-24 affirms this truth: **"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."**

What God began in the effectual call will culminate in a glorious transformation of our body, soul, and spirit at the coming of Jesus Christ. This is the hope and anticipation of every blood-washed saint. This is what we look for and anxiously wait for. Until then we ought to echo the prayer of Paul for the Ephesians: **"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints"**

OBJECTIONS TO EFFECTUAL CALLING ANSWERED

The doctrine of effectual calling has always been met with opposition from the Arminian and Pelagian camps. Most of the objections raised against this blessed truth are more philosophical than scriptural. Many of the objections raised against the effectual call are similar to those raised against the doctrine of election, which objections have already been dealt with in a previous chapter. Nevertheless, it is important to answer some of the more specific charges voiced against the effectual call of God.

It is the opinion of the writer that any objection raised against the sovereignty and power of God in salvation is an attempt to dethrone God and strip Him of His majesty and dominion. The reason why men object to sovereign grace is because of the innate desire of the natural man to share the glory and credit for salvation. Men are still posing the age-old question: **"Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"** (Matt. 19:16) Eternal life is not obtained by

doing good things, it is a wonderful gift bestowed upon unworthy sinners according to the good pleasure of the "God of all grace." (I Pet. 5:10)

1. The most common objection raised against the effectual call questions the sincerity of God in the general call. The line of argument generally followed is: "If God has already purposed who is going to be saved before the world began and determined to call only the elect, then how could the general call of the gospel be sincere? Why would God invite sinners who He already knows will not respond because of their total depravity?"

This objection arises out of a common mistake Arminians and Pelagians often make. They misunderstand statements made in the Scriptures addressing man's responsibility to mean that man has moral ability. Yet, the responsibility of man does not imply the moral ability of those who are "**dead in trespasses and sins**" (Eph. 2:1). Because God is a righteous Judge it is right for Him to call upon men to repent and believe the gospel.

J.L. Dagg answers this objection in the following way:

"It has been asked, for what purpose does God send his outward call to the non-elect, since it will be ineffectual, unless accompanied with His omnipotent grace. We might as well ask for what purpose does God give men His law, when they will not obey it; or why does He institute a moral government over them, when they will not submit to it. In stead of demanding God's reasons for what He does, it becomes every man rather to inquire, what reason he can render to God, for violating His holy law, and rejecting the call of His gospel. We may be sure that God will do right, and will be able to vindicate His ways before the intelligent universe; and we should regard our propensity to call in question the wisdom and righteousness of His procedure, as an alarming evidence of our want of sub mission to His will." [13](#)

The objection calls into question the sincerity of God which in reality is charging God with hypocrisy. It is an attempt to bring God down to the level and inadequacy of man. God Himself answers such blasphemy in Isaiah 55:8-9 which states: "**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.**" Men may certainly be insincere in dealing with one another, but God is never insincere in His dealings with men. The very fact that God has commanded that the gospel be preached to every creature is a demonstration of His common goodness and benevolence toward all men. He does this in spite of the reply of the natural man when confronted with the gospel who says: "**We will not have this man to reign over**

us" (Luke 19:14). It is the height of folly and madness to charge God, who is perfectly holy and just, with insincerity in the general call.

2. The second objection to the doctrine of effectual calling is the idea that God violates the free will of man. Often Arminians will make statements such as: "There is one area in your life that God will never touch your will. He will never cause you to believe. That's your job. Only you can do it. God has done all that He can do, now it's up to you to decide for Christ and make Him Lord of your life."

Such an objection falsely supposes that man's will is free to choose either good or evil. In reality, the will of man was violated and ruined by sin in the fall of Adam. Now man's will is free only in the sense that it is free to follow the natural passions of a heart that is "full of madness", and a mind that is at "carnal enmity against God". Man's will is bound by a fleshly nature that in no way, shape, or form is able to please God or give birth to spiritual affections. Romans 8:8 states: "**So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.**" Man's will is a servant to his sinful nature and therefore is incapable to make right decisions concerning the gospel. Romans 6:20 states: "**For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.**"

In the effectual call God simply slays the natural enmity of man's will enabling him to willingly trust in the finished work of Christ. If God did not effectually call, no one would come! The gospel message would go unheeded and every sinner would rush headlong into Hell. The root of this objection is again the mistake of equating man's responsibility with his moral ability.

Christopher Ness answers this objection best when he states:

"Irresistible grace takes not away that natural liberty which the will hath by creation, but the depravity of it only; knocking off its fetters, but not destroying its nature. We never enjoy our will so much as when God's will over rules ours. If man can determine his own will, and destroy the liberty of it, then much more God who is the maker thereof. To will is from nature, to will well is from grace; spiritual fruit must spring from a spiritual root." [14](#)

"Not all the outward forms on earth, nor rites that God hath given, nor will of many, nor blood, nor birth, can raise a soul to heaven. The sovereign will of God alone, creates us heirs of grace; both in the image of His Son, a new peculiar race. Thus quickened souls awake and rise from the long sleep of death; on heavenly things they fix their eyes, and praise employs their breath."

3. The third objection against effectual calling arises out of the false idea that the Holy Spirit works on all men in the same way, giving sufficient light to believe if only the natural man chooses to do so. You will often hear Arminian preachers

exhorting sinners not to sin away their "day of grace," or to be careful that they don't cross over the imaginary line when God no longer will deal with them or strive with them. The main Scripture for these assertions is John 1:7 which states: **"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."**

The light that God gives to every man is the light of conscience which makes every man accountable to God. It is not some spark of divinity that each man possesses that enables him somehow to choose Christ if the spark is fanned just right. The light spoken of in this verse is not to be restricted solely to spiritual illumination (c.f. Matt. 6:23).

A.W. Pink comments:

"In what sense, then, is Christ as "the life" the "light of men?" We answer, In that which renders men accountable creatures. Every rational man is morally enlightened. All rational men "show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness" (Rom. 2:15). It is this "light", which lightens every man that cometh into the world, that constitutes them responsible human beings... the natural man is a responsible being before God, to Whom he shall give an account of himself; responsible, because the work of God's law is written in his heart, his conscience also bearing witness, and this, we take it is the "light" which is referred to in John 1:4 and the "lighteneth" in John 1:9." [15](#)

When the idea that the Holy Spirit exerts the same amount of spiritual influence upon each man is taken to its logical conclusion then man himself must be the moving cause of salvation. Thus, the new birth necessarily hinges upon the will or the intellect of the natural man which is contrary to John 1:13 which states: **"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."**

4. The fourth objection to effectual calling is the assertion that the Holy Spirit may be resisted as in Acts 7:51 which states: **"Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."** The Arminians loudly assert that this verse teaches that men can and do resist the power of the Holy Spirit in salvation.

Acts 7:51 must be interpreted in light of Nehemiah 9:30 which states: **"Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear..."** It is true that the sinner always resists the external ministry of the Holy Spirit when they reject the Word which He inspired or when they persecute the prophets through whom He spoke. When men reject the gospel they are rejecting the message inspired by the Holy Spirit in the

Word of God. What Stephen was referring to was the rejection of the general call of God to repentance, not the effectual call to salvation.

Andrew Fuller put it best when he stated:

"I conceive there is what may be termed an indirect influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, having inspired the prophets and apostles, testified in and by them, and often without effect.. The message of the prophets being dictated by the Holy Spirit, resistance of them was resistance of Him. It was in this way, I conceive, that the Spirit of God strove with the antediluvians, and that unbelievers are said always to have resisted the Holy Spirit."
[16](#)

C.D. Cole once stated:

"A dear brother once remarked that I did not believe the sinner could resist the Holy Spirit. I replied that I believed that the sinner did nothing but resist the Holy Spirit until his resistance was overcome by the Holy Spirit. The preached Word is the objective ministry and the indirect influence of the Holy Spirit, and this the dead sinner rejects and resists because it is foolishness to him. Our Lord told Nicodemus that except a man be born from above he cannot see or understand the Kingdom of God. The indirect influence of the Spirit in the Word is resisted until overcome by the direct influence of the Spirit in quickening ... The objective ministry of the Spirit is resisted, but not the subjective. When the distinction is made the truth of man's impotence and the Spirit's omnipotence is conserved, otherwise we have the creature mightier than the Creator." [17](#)

END NOTES

Just click on the highlighted word(s) to return to your reading.

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PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS DEFINED

By Tom Ross, Pastor

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- PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS DEFINED
 - PRESERVATION AND PERSEVERANCE ARE BOTH NECESSARY
 - PROVING PERSEVERANCE FROM SCRIPTURE
 - THE PURPOSE OF GOD
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Perseverance of the Saints Defined

The fifth and final point of the doctrines of grace is commonly referred to as the perseverance of the saints. Other phrases that are used interchangeably to express the same truth are "eternal security", "preservation of the saints", and "once saved, always saved". Simply stated, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints means that those who have been genuinely saved by the power of God are also preserved by that power, enabling them to persevere in holiness unto the end. This truth implies that it is impossible for a genuine saint of God to lose the Lord's salvation and finally perish in his sins.

The Second London Baptist Confession of 1677 expressed this truth in the following way:

"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." [1](#)

The New Hampshire Confession of Faith of 1833, to which most American Baptists ascribe to, states:

"We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from mere professors; that a special providence watches over their welfare; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." [2](#)

Preservation And Perseverance Are Both Necessary

It is important to understand that the doctrine of the saints final perseverance is like a coin with two sides, each side necessary to the other in order to be genuine. If we would look at a penny and see the likeness of Abraham Lincoln on both sides we would at once recognize it as a counterfeit. In like manner the preservation of God's elect and the saint's perseverance are inseparable; they go together like a hand in glove. If perseverance is taught without the power of God's preservation behind it, Arminianism raises its ugly head and declares that a saint can lose his salvation which is heresy. On the other hand, if preservation is taught apart from the responsibility of perseverance in holiness, Antinomianism and loose living abounds thus: **"turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness"** (Jude 4).

Milburn Cockrell wrote:

"As I see it, perseverance involves two elements: on the one hand, God's agency in preserving; on the other hand, the saint's agency in persevering. Neither one of these by itself is the doctrine, but both together constitute the doctrine as set forth in Holy Scripture. The operation of Divine grace upon the believer will cause him to persevere unto the end, but this perseverance is not without the believer's own continual activity." [3](#)

"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13) is just as true as: **"having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end"** (John 13:1). The first Scripture is emphasizing the need for the saints endurance whereas the second is emphasizing the immutable love that Christ has for His elect.

To illustrate how these two truths are necessary to one another you will often find exhortations to the saints' perseverance in holiness and God's power of preservation in the same context of Scripture.

Jeremiah 32:40 states: "**And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them** (preservation), **to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me**" (perseverance). In one verse of Scripture it is clearly stated that God will not turn away from His elect on the basis of His covenant love and that His elect will not depart from Him, because He has put His fear in their hearts. Thus we see that God preserves His people by insuring and enabling them to persevere in holiness.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 states: "**A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.**" In the new birth God gives a new heart which delights in the commands of God and desires to obey them.

God not only preserves His children, but He has also put His Spirit within them to enable them to walk in His statutes.

John 10:27-29 declares: "**My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.**" True sheep not only hear the voice of the Good Shepherd in the effectual call, they also follow Him in perseverance. They have been given the gift of eternal life and are secure in the finished work of Jesus Christ and the eternal love of their Heavenly Father. They persevere by following and at the same time they are preserved in the hand of the Father and the Son who are one. To say that one of God's sheep, whom Christ died for, who has been given eternal life, can be finally lost is not only absurd but blasphemous in light of this passage of Scripture. To affirm the apostasy of God's elect sheep is to call Jesus Christ a liar and at the same time declare that the Father's hand is not a safe place to abide. Those who teach you can be saved, then lost must either deny this Scripture or "**wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction**" (II Pet. 3:16).

Philippians 2:12-13 states: "**Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now such more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.**" Paul is exhorting believers to persevere in salvation on the one hand, and then explaining the power behind their ability to persevere on the other. Both elements must be operating in order to have a proper and balanced view of the perseverance of the saints.

I Peter 1:5; 14-15 states: **"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last...As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."** If a professing saint does not manifest some fruits of holiness in his behavior he can have no assurance that God is keeping him by his power. Baptists do not believe in the perseverance of sinners in sin, but we do believe in the perseverance of the saints in holiness!

Jude 20-21; 24 declares: **"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life...Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."** Here the saints are exhorted to "keep themselves in the love of God", yet realizing that God is keeping them and preserving them from falling out of a state of grace.

It is sad, but true, that many Baptists have forsaken the twin doctrines of perseverance and preservation stressing only God's work of preserving at the expense of the saint's responsibility to persevere. By so doing, many preachers have given as false security to people who have never had a genuine work of grace done in their heart. While visiting, I often meet people who tell me they made a religious profession when they were younger and are now just "backslidden", yet "eternally secure". At the expense of sounding harsh and critical I believe many professors of religion are not "backslidden", but lost. When I meet people who profess with their lips, but lie with their life, I stand in doubt of them and exhort them to: **"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates"** (II Cor. 13:5)? It is not the responsibility of any preacher to give assurance of salvation to those who are persevering in sin and wickedness, regardless of how loud a religious profession they might make.

Milburn Cockrell hits the nail on the head when he writes:

"The reason that some deny perseverance is because their converts do not persevere. They often depart from Christ and the church and return to a life of sin and wickedness. The reason for this is because they made a false profession under easy believism and decisional regeneration. Modern evangelism produces stony-ground hearers **"which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away"** (Luke 8:13). Arminian Baptist preachers are quick to say that such rebels against God are Heaven-bound because they are preserved in Christ. Their eternal security is in fact a security in sin and wickedness. It is the teaching that you can do any thing you want to

and go to Heaven at last. To teach preservation of the saints without perseverance is a wretched and fatal perversion of the Scriptures! [4](#)

PROVING OF THE SAINTS FROM SCRIPTURE

Every doctrine must have its foundation in the infallible Word of God. The reason why such a statement is necessary may be traced to the current trend of "professing Christendom" to exalt experience over Scripture. The opponents of the final perseverance of the saints usually point to the lives of false professors, who have never experienced a genuine work of grace in the heart, to establish their unscriptural teaching of apostasy. The idea that a true child of God who has been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, sealed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, can somehow lose the lord's salvation, become a child of the devil and finally perish in Hell is foreign to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. In fact, such an assertion is blasphemous as it casts reproach upon the unfailing purpose and promises of a Holy God. Christians must ever be governed by the admonition in Isaiah 8:20 which states: "**To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.**" The Holy Scriptures are literally filled with assertions that prove the saints final perseverance by the preserving power of our gracious God, of whom it is said: "**For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off**" (Psa. 37:28).

THE PURPOSE OF GOD

Romans 8:28 states: "**And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.**" Ephesians 1:11 states: "**In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.**" II Timothy 1:9 declares: "**Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.**"

From these passages of Scripture it is clear that the entire machinery of salvation was carefully ordered by God before the world began. By His own wise decree and sovereign good pleasure He determined to save a multitude of sinners out of

Adam's fallen race. His purpose included their election, redemption, regeneration, preservation, and final glorification. This fact is established by the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:29-39 where he emphatically states that God's elect will infallibly be saved. Verses 38-39 state: "**For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our lord.**" The reason why the apostle could speak with such confidence is because he understood that the purpose of God in salvation is impossible to thwart or be overthrown by men or devils. All of God's purposes will surely come to fruition.

Those who teach that a man can be genuinely saved and then lose the lord's salvation must either affirm that God has no fixed purpose or that His original design was not carried out and had to be altered. Regardless which horn of the dilemma the Arminian finds himself on, he must acknowledge that he believes the purpose and will of God to be fickle and dependent upon the actions of men. Such an assertion is false in light of Job 23:13 which states: "**But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.**" Daniel 4:35 expresses the same truth by stating: "**And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?**"

If God's purpose to save and preserve His elect could be overthrown we could just as well suppose that God Himself could be overthrown. If the purpose and will of God can be defeated, then God Himself could be defeated. Such are the logical conclusions drawn from the devilish doctrine of the saints' apostasy. It strikes right at the heart of the government, majesty, and dominion of God. Regardless what the Arminian may falsely assert we must believe the words of Jesus when He affirmed that all the elect will be preserved according to the unchangeable will of His Father in John 6:39-40 which declares: "**And this is the Father's WILL which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I SHOULD LOSE NOTHING, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the WILL of him that sent me, THAT EVERY ONE WHICH SEETH THE SON, AND BELIEVETH ON HIM, MAY HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE: and I will raise him up at the last day.**"

John Gill wrote:

"The final perseverance of the saints may be concluded from the purposes and decrees of God; which are infrustratable, and are always accomplished "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" or make it void, and of no effect: and "His hand is stretched out", to execute His purposes, and "who shall turn it back" from doing the thing He is resolved on? as He has "thought, so shall it cane to pass"; and as He has "purposed, it shall stand"

(Isa. 14:24; 27), though there may be a thousand devices in the hearts of men and devils, they can never counteract, nor undermine the decrees of God." [5](#)

THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD

All of the perfections and attributes of God are magnificently displayed in the perseverance of the saints. The very nature of God Himself demands that He keep His covenant engagements on behalf of His elect. We will examine only a few of God's attributes to prove the point in question.

The power of God insures that not one of the saints will finally perish. Does God have enough power to carry out His purpose of grace and protect His children from final apostasy? I Peter 1:5 answers the question: "**Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**" Paul the apostle expressed great confidence in the lord's power to save and preserve in II Timothy 1:12 and 4:18 which state: "**For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day... And the lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.**"

How can anyone deny that the God who "**upholds all things by the word of his power**" (Heb. 1:3) not have enough power to preserve His children from Hell? Such a denial questions the omnipotence of God and is dishonoring to His character. Jude did not doubt for a moment the lord's ability and power to uphold His children when he wrote: "**Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.**" How could God have exceeding joy if even one whom He had saved be finally lost?

The immutability of God assures that those whom God loved "**with an everlasting love**" (Jer. 31:3) shall never perish in their sins. God is unchangeable and His love for His elect has been fixed and unalterable through all eternity. Malachi 3:6 states: "**For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.**" James 1:17 states: "**Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.**"

To say that God could fix His affections upon an individual by saving them and giving to them all the benefits that flow from Christ's redeeming work, then reverse

that love, turn it into wrath and cast that person into the Lake of Fire is to charge God with schizophrenia. The true God never changes, but the God of Arminianism is forced to change in accordance with the actions of men. We could just as well suppose that a baby could be "unborn" as to believe that God would reverse the "new birth" and its benefits! Romans 11:2 and 29 state: **"God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew... For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."** Salvation is definitely a gift that God bestows. God is not an Indian giver who one day gives salvation and then decides to take it away.

The faithfulness of God insures that those He has promised eternal life too will never perish in Hell for their sins. I Corinthians 1:8-9 states: **"Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."** I Thessalonians 5:23-24 declares: **"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."** II Thessalonians 3:13 states: **"But the lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil."**

Abraham Booth wrote:

"The faithfulness and inviolable veracity of God give further assurance of the saints's perseverance. The rocks, though of adamant, shall melt away; the everlasting mountains shall be removed; yea, the whole terraqueous globe itself shall disappear; but the faithfulness of God in executing his covenant, and the veracity of God in performing His promises, are unchangeable and eternal...Yea, He hath sworn by His holiness, by the glory of all His perfections, that He will be faithful to His covenant and promises, respecting Christ and His chosen seed. So that if there be immutability in the purpose of God, if any stability in His covenant, if any fidelity in His promises, the true believer shall certainly persevere. Rejoice, then, ye feeble followers of the Lamb. The basis of your confidence is firm and strong." [6](#)

Well did King David write on his deathbed concerning the faithfulness of God in spite of his own shortcomings: **"Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow"** (II Sam. 23:5).

Finally, the wisdom and foreknowledge of God insures that the saints will never perish. Acts 15:18 declares: **"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."** God wisely ordained the means both to save and preserve all His elect from perishing. A wise man makes sure that he has sufficient means to finish when he sets out to build a house. In like manner, God in wisdom has

already arranged that all the members of His family arrive in Heaven. In fact, He has already reserved their arrival!

How would the wisdom of God be displayed if He saved an individual who He knew beforehand would not persevere and fall away? The devil himself would be able to charge God with folly if one of God's children could be saved and then perish.

John Gill wrote:

"But where would be His wisdom to appoint men to salvation, and not save them at last? To send His Son to redeem them, and they be never the better for it, and to send His Spirit into them, to begin a good work of grace, and not finish it?" [7](#)

THE PROMISES OF GOD

II Corinthians 1:20 states: "For all the promises of God in him (Christ) are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Every child of God who is united to Christ by faith has access to all the promises of God. God has promised eternal life to all who will repent of their sins and believe on His Son. John 3:16 states: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have (present tense) everlasting life." John 5:24 states: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath (present tense) everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Both of these verses state very plainly that God has promised eternal life as a present possession to all who believe on Christ. Eternal life is received the moment a person believes on Christ. Eternal means forever, or never ending. Also taught in these verses is the promise of God that a believer will never be judged or condemned for his sins. Believers have a positive promise of "everlasting life", as well as a negative promise "and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." All these promises have been secured by the blood shedding of Jesus Christ as Hebrews 9:12 and 15 state: "**Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. . . And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.**"

Are we to suppose that God is a liar, or that He didn't mean what He said? There is no way God could promise eternal life to anyone if there was the slightest hint

that they would be able to fall away and lose the Lord's salvation. Again, Arminians find themselves on two horns of a dilemma, they must either charge God with lying, or they must deny the Scriptures that promise eternal life to as many as believe. Either way their doctrine is found to be false and heretical.

Arminians must cringe when the following Scriptures are quoted or read to them: **"And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life"** (1 John 2:25). **"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life (a present possession); and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God"** (1 John 5:11-13).

We can be sure that if the Lord promises eternal life to believers, He is worthy of our trust because it is impossible for God to lie as Titus 1:2 states: **"In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began."** If Jesus said of His sheep: **"And I give unto them eternal life; AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand"** (John 10:29), we can be assured that he was speaking the truth regardless of what sane slick-talking Arminian may say.

THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

Some of the strongest arguments for the saints' final perseverance are drawn from an examination of the believer's union and relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The finished work of Jesus Christ serves as a solid foundation for the saints' final perseverance. He is the rock upon which our profession securely rests (Matt. 7:24-25), thus enabling us to endure to the end. The rains of affliction may come, floods of doubt may arise, and the winds of temptation may blow against us, but our position in Christ remains sure and steadfast. Matthew 7:25 declares: "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." The true believer who is depending entirely upon the Lord Jesus Christ is safe and secure in Him as Proverbs 18:10 declares:

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." The songwriter Edward Mote expressed this truth beautifully in the hymn The Solid Rock:

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. When darkness seems to

hide His face, I rest on His unchanging grace; in every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the vale. His oath, His covenant, His blood, support me in the whelming flood; when all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay. When he shall cane with trumpet sound, oh, may I then in Him be found; dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne. On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.”

There is a divine, indissolvable union that exists between the believer and the Lord Jesus Christ. The saints are said to be "in Christ", thus deriving their spiritual life and protection from Him. Jesus told His disciples: **"because I live, ye shall live also"** (John 14:19). Our preservation is not dependent upon what we do, but what Christ has already done and is now doing. We can be assured that as long as Christ lives, we shall live also because of our union to Him. Hebrews 7:25 states: **"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that cane unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."** The only way our position in Christ could be severed is if Christ himself would be defeated by death, which is an impossibility. He has the keys of Hell and death and is said to be "alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:18). **"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory"** (Col 3:3-4). From this verse it is clear that the union between Christ and the believer affords protection and assurance of final perseverance and glorification. Paul did not say "if you hold on, you might appear with him in glory", but rather, "ye shall appear with him in glory". In light of this divine union that exists between Christ and the believer, I would like to ask the Arminians the same question Paul posed in Romans 8:35: **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"**

Abraham Booth wrote the following concerning this sacred union:

"As it is written, Christ is our life. Your life is hid with Christ in God. Your life is hid, like the most valuable treasure in a secret place. With Christ; committed to His guardianship, and lodged under his care, who is able to keep that which is entrusted to his hands. In God; the bosom of the Almighty is the sacred repository in which the jewel is safely kept. Cheering thought! For Jesus, the Guardian, will never be bribed to deliver up His charge to the power of an enemy; nor shall any sacrilegious hand ever be able, by secret fraud or open violence, to rifle the casket where Jehovah lays up His jewels. The life of believers is bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord their God; and the bond of that union shall never be dissolved. For he that is joined to the lord is one Spirit with Him, and, therefore, absolutely inseparable." [8](#)

Another way in which to prove the saints' final perseverance as it relates to the person of Christ is to understand what Christ accomplished on the cross. The Calvinist believes that Christ secured the salvation of all His elect by bearing their

sins and paying the penalty of their sins in full, thus discharging and blotting out the debt of sin they owed. The ransom price He paid was His own precious blood, which satisfied the requirements of the law and propitiated the wrath of the Father. The finished work of a crucified and risen Christ is all that is needed to save a sinner. No human merit or goodness needs to be added in order to make the sacrifice of Christ effectual. When Jesus Christ cried: "**It is finished,**" the work of redemption was accomplished once and for all. Based on what Christ did, believers are said to be "complete in Him" (Col. 2:10). His sacrifice on the cross insured the salvation of all the elect as Hebrews 10:14 declares: "**For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.**" The Arminian would have us believe that a system of legalistic requirements and works are necessary to insure our final salvation, thus logically denying the sufficiency of the finished work of Christ. I would like to ask the Arminian some questions. What could anyone possibly add to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ to make them acceptable to God? Exactly what must be added to Christ's sacrifice in order to be assured of salvation? If Christ "**appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself**" (Heb. 9:26), and "**the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin**" (I John 1:9), then precisely what sin or sins could possibly separate the believer from Christ, seeing how that Christ put away and cleansed all sins that were past, present, and future? Finally, isn't the finished work of Jesus Christ enough to save a sinner? These questions should be answered in light of Romans 8:31-34 which states: "**What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.**"

Believers are said to be the purchased possession of Jesus Christ in I Corinthians 7:20: "**For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.**" As the Good Shepherd, Jesus laid down His life for His sheep, thus insuring their salvation and everlasting life. Are we to suppose that it is possible for Jesus Christ to lose one of His precious possessions that He purchased with His own life's blood? How could He possibly call Himself the "Good Shepherd" if even one sheep that He died for and promised to keep would finally be lost? Are we to believe that the devil, who Christ defeated on the cross, could somehow overcome the Good Shepherd by rending one of His sheep out of the safety of the fold? These questions are the logical conclusions drawn from the Arminian doctrine of apostasy. Thank God that we have the promise of the Good Shepherd who confidently said: "**And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one**" (John 10:28-30).

The final proof of the perseverance of the saints as it relates to the person of Christ is the intercessory office He occupies as our Great High Priest. When Christ

ascended into Heaven to the right hand of the Father, it was to plead the cause of God's elect and intercede for them. We can be absolutely sure that the prayers of our Righteous Advocate are always heard and never denied by His Heavenly Father. He prayed in John 17 (verses 11 and 24) thusly: **"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are...Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."**

Abraham Booth expressed this truth best when he wrote:

"The intercession of Christ for His people, in the heavenly sanctuary, affords another evidence of this glorious truth. This intercession is founded on His perfect atonement for all their sins: and it is a firm foundation for that purpose. So that, notwithstanding all the accusations of Satan lodged against them, not withstanding all their weakness and all their unworthiness, the intercession of Jesus the Son of God, of Jesus Christ the righteous, must afford them the highest security. For their Redeemer is strong, the lord of hosts is His name, He shall thoroughly plead their cause. And as every believer is interested in this intercession, so Jesus, the Advocate, is never denied in his suit. His plea is always valid, and always effectual to the end intended: which is, as he expressly informs us, that their faith fail not; and, that they may be preserved from destructive evil. Our ascended Redeemer is not, in this part of His mediatorial undertaking, like a mere petitioner, who may or may not succeed; for, to all the blessings He solicits on their behalf He has a previous right. He can claim them, in virtue of the promise made to Him and His spiritual seed, having, as their substitute, fully performed the conditions of the everlasting covenant. Yes, believer, the compassion of Him who bled on the cross, and the power of Him who pleads on the throne, ascertain your final felicity." [9](#)

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Philippians 1:6 states: **"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."** The Holy Spirit of God is the one who begins the work of salvation by quickening the dead sinner to spiritual life in the new birth. At the point of regeneration the Spirit of God begins to indwell the believer to continue His work of progressive sanctification. This work is faithfully carried out by the Holy Spirit until the

redemption of the body as Romans 8:11; 23 state: **"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.. . And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."** The believer can be assured of final glorification because it is the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit to seal them until that day as Ephesians 4:30 states: **"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."** Thus, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is active and responsible in the believer's regeneration, sanctification, and ultimately, their glorification. God has gone to great lengths to insure that His "workmanship" does not end up in the refuse pile of depraved mankind, which is the Lake of Fire. The reason why Paul could write "being confident of this very thing", is because he knew that God is a wise master builder who always finishes a work in which He begins. The Arminian notion of apostasy would lead us to believe that the work begun by the Holy Spirit must be finished by the believer. Paul soundly rebuked the Galatians for believing such heresy when he wrote: **"Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh"** (Gal. 3:3)? If the Arminian theory of apostasy is true then we can logically conclude that God does not have the sufficient means or power to carry out what He started in the new birth. That His "workmanship" can be overcome and overthrown by sin and the devil. Such an idea is repulsive to the Divine character of Jehovah of whom it is written: **"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure... I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it"** (Isa. 46:10-11).

It is also important to understand that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not temporary or fleeting. He does not come to dwell one day and leave the believer to fend for himself the next. Once the Spirit of Christ takes up residence in the believer He never leaves, but remains with the believer forever as Hebrews 13:5 teaches: **"For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."** This eternal union and indwelling of the Comforter to guide and teach the believer was promised by Jesus Christ in John 14:16-17 which states: **"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may ABIDE WITH YOU FOR EVER: Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."**

Milburn Cockrell wrote:

Those who deny the perseverance of the saints teach that a Christian can lose the Holy Spirit. This is contrary to the words of Christ in John 14:16. They teach that Satan is greater than the Holy Spirit, seeing that Satan is able to evict the Spirit from the believer's body...Those of us who believe in perseverance do not deny that a saint may have many struggles with Satan, but we maintain the saint

will persevere in the main in holiness and righteousness and, at last, win the final victory over Satan because of the influence of the ever-abiding Spirit! [10](#)

Finally, perseverance of the saints, as it relates to the work of the Holy Spirit, may be proven from the teaching that the Holy Spirit is the earnest of the believer's inheritance. Ephesians 1:13-14 states: "**In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.**" The earnest of the Spirit is a pledge or a down payment and a foretaste of the glory yet to be revealed. The earnest of the Spirit is the promise that insures the saint's final perseverance.

Ron Crisp wrote:

"An earnest is a token payment that gives us a foundation for confidence in the intentions of the giver. An earnest is part of the whole. Our Saviour died to purchase for us all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). By faith we receive the Holy Spirit which as a gracious gift comes to us through the work of Christ (Acts 2:32-33; John 7:39). An earnest is a promise of the future. An earnest acts as a pledge that the rest of the purchase or purchase price is forthcoming. Our Saviour has purchased a wonderful inheritance for us (I Pet. 1:3-4). This includes a glorified body and a home in heaven. We may be assured that because we have the earnest of the Spirit that the rest of our inheritance is sure to come to us. Once the earnest is given the giver cannot back out. In calling the Spirit an earnest God offers us full assurance of His intention to glorify every one of His people." [11](#)

Thus far we have proven that God the Father is for us in His purpose of grace, His promises, and His perfections. God the Son is for us in redemption and intercession. God the Spirit is for us in regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. Thus, the basis for the saints' final perseverance is God Himself. As long as God perseveres in holiness, we can be assured that those who are united to Him by faith and abide in Him will also persevere. To teach otherwise would cast reproach upon the greatness and the glory of Almighty Jehovah.

John Gill wrote:

"In a word, the glory of the three divine Persons is concerned in the final perseverance of the saints; for should they or any of them perish, where would be the glory of the Father in choosing them to salvation? And the glory of the Son in redeeming them? And the glory of the Spirit in the sanctification of them? Respecting them,

their glory would be lost, should they come short of heaven and happiness; but since the doctrine of the saints final perseverance is bound together with this threefold cord, which cannot be broken, the certainty of it may be depended upon." [12](#)

SALVATION BY GRACE

The Bible clearly teaches that "**Salvation is of the lord**" (Jonah 2:9). From beginning to end salvation is a work of God on the behalf of unworthy and helpless sinners. Salvation is a gift that God freely gives to His elect through faith in the only begotten Son of God, the lord Jesus Christ. In no way is salvation dependent upon the works or merits of men. Salvation is a gift for the guilty, not a reward for the righteous.

Arminians are very inconsistent in their false teaching of salvation by grace. They will readily pay lip service to the idea that a sinner is saved by grace through faith in Christ. Yet they believe that a person is kept in grace by the virtue and power of their own good works, faithfulness and their ability to "hang on". Such an idea is completely foreign to the scriptural teaching of salvation by grace, as it teaches a mixture of grace and works which is contrary to Romans 11:5-6 which states: "**Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. but if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.**" The teaching is plain and simple; either salvation is entirely of grace or it is entirely of works.

The Jews in apostolic times and the Arminians of our day have one thing in common: they both believe that they must somehow make themselves partially worthy of salvation by the works of the law. Romans 11:3 describes their condition thusly: "**For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.**" The entire book of Galatians was written to refute the idea that a man is saved partially by the gospel of Christ and partially by the works of the law. This idea is a perversion of the true gospel of Christ and is to be rejected as false and heretical. Galatians 1:8 declares: "**But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.**" Galatians 2:16;20 state: "**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... I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness**

came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." In spite of such crystal clear teaching from the word of God Arminians insist on trying to mix grace with the works of the law.

Other Scriptures which clearly teach salvation by grace apart from the works of men are abundant. The following are only a sample of the many that could be produced from the sacred Scriptures.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:..Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom.3:24;27-28).

"For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:2-8).

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES: it is the gift of God: NOT OF WORKS, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7).

The religion of Arminianism logically leads to self-reliance rather than total dependence upon the merits of Christ. It is the religion of Cain, who thought he would be accepted by God through the works of his own hands rather than by an acceptable sacrifice offered in faith. God rejected Cain's notion of works salvation just as he rejects the false teachings of Arminianism. The Arminian idea of apostasy denies that salvation is all of grace and therefore is to be regarded as anti-Christian and unscriptural. **"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed"** (II John 10).

J.L. Dagg commented on the harmful teaching of Arminianism in the following way:

"To reject the doctrine of final perseverance, tends to fix the hope of salvation on human effort, and not on the purpose and grace of God. If, in God's method of salvation, no provision has been made, which secures the safe keeping of the regenerate, and their perseverance in holiness, their salvation is left dependent on their own efforts, and their trust must be in that on which success depends. All that God has done for them, will fail to bring them through, if this effort, originating in themselves, be not superaided; and the eye of hope is necessarily directed to this human effort, as that on which the momentous issue depends. Thus the denial of the doctrine draws of the heart from simple trust in God, and therefore tends to produce apostasy. The just shall live by faith. Simple trust in God, is necessary to preserve the spiritual life; and to trust in man, and make flesh our arm, is to fall under the curse, and draw back to perdition. In our first coming to Christ, we renounce all confidence in self, and put our entire trust in the mercy and power of God: and in the same faith with which we began, we must persevere to the end of our course. Worldly wisdom may encourage self-reliance, and regard it as necessary to success: but the wisdom that is from above teaches us to renounce and avoid it as ruinous to the soul." [13](#)

OBJECTIONS TO THE SAINTS FINAL PERSEVERANCE ANSWERED

Arminian assaults upon the treasured doctrine of the saint's final perseverance are numerous. Several of the objections have already been addressed and refuted by Scripture in preceding chapters. Many of the objections raised by Arminians are not worthy of serious consideration because they rest upon the false foundation of salvation by self-effort and good works rather than the free grace of God. Regardless of what theological garb Arminians may dress their doctrines in, the true nature of their system of faith denies salvation by grace.

Because the nature of the present volume is not intended to answer all the objections that Arminians may raise, I will simply answer some of the more common objections raised against the doctrine of the saint's final perseverance. Should the reader desire to go into more depth and detail the following works are heartily recommended: Cause of God and Truth, by John Gill; An Antidote Against Arminianism, by Christopher Ness; A Systematic Study of Bible Doctrine, by T .

P. Simmons; Eternal Security, by A.W. Pink; and The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, by Lorraine Boettner.

1. The most common objection raised against the saint's final perseverance is based upon experience rather than Scripture. Arminians loudly assert that they have been eye witnesses to the salvation of those who have eventually denied the faith, repudiated Christianity, and finally apostatized. They argue that they know of people who were saved and then after a period of time, they lost their salvation. "I saw Brother so-and-so go to the altar, pray the sinner's prayer, join the church, teach Sunday School, and live for the lord for a time. But sin and the devil crept in and they lost their salvation."

The answer to this objection is simple to explain from the Bible. All that glitters is not gold and every one who outwardly professes faith in Christ have not been genuinely saved. The person described above may have had an exciting "religious experience", without ever being born of God. I am convinced from the Scriptures that many professors of Christianity have never had a work of grace done in their heart. Titus 1:16 declares: "**They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.**" II Timothy 3:5 states: "**Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.**"

Jesus himself is going to condemn a multitude of false professors of religion who even called Him Lord and did works in His name. Matthew 7:21-23 states: "**Not every one that saith unto me, lord, lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, lord, lord, have we not prophesied in thy name: and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**" I fear that many who believe that salvation is partially by works will be weighed in the balances and found wanting because they have been trusting in themselves rather than the Lord Jesus Christ.

The fact is, someone who has been genuinely born of God, been given the gifts of repentance and saving faith will persevere and continue to abide in Christ. A true believer will overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil through the gift of faith given in conjunction with the new birth as I John 5:4-5 declares: "**For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?**" The righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to the believer can never be abolished or taken away as Isaiah 51:6 states: "**Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.**" Because the believer has been declared righteous through faith in the blood of Christ he can be

absolutely assured that he will persevere. Job 17:9 states: "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

If a person literally denies the faith that they supposedly embraced, it is a sure evidence that they were never saved to begin with. I John 2:19 is very clear in supporting this conclusion: "**They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.**" False professors of religion may experience a moral reformation of character for a time, but because a new nature was not implanted within them, they often return to the slop and vomit of their old sinful ways. Peter exposed the false teachers and professors of his day in II Peter 2:20-22 by stating: "**For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.**" Knowing all there is to know intellectually about the person and work of Jesus Christ is to no avail unless you have been given spiritual life by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. The empty orthodoxy and ritualism of most modern day professors of religion is described in Matthew 12:43-45, which states:

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." False professors of religion may endure in their profession for a time, but eventually they will wither and die as the Parable of the Sower so graphically illustrates in Luke 8:13: "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." How different are false professors from true believers! Luke 8:15 states: "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

Because the objection under consideration is raised so often, it behooves the true believers to "be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8) and follow the admonition of II Timothy 2:19 which states: "**Nevertheless the foundation of God**

standeth sure, having this seal, The lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

2. The second objection that is often raised by Arminianism against the saint's final perseverance reveals the true corruption of their legalistic religious system. Arminians will often say: "If I believe I was eternally secure, I would go out an sin all I want without restraint or fear of punishment." I would expect a lost person void of spiritual discernment to make such a statement, but never a man who professes to be saved by the grace of God. God's grace teaches the believer to deny ungodly lusts and enables him to hate sin and fight against it. Titus 2:11-12 states: **"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."** A True child of God who has had the **"love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost"** (Rom. 5:5) will desire to honor God by a pious life rather than look at his security as an excuse for sin. Paul answered this objection in Romans 6:1-2 by stating: **"What shall we say then? Shall we continue to sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"**

True believers are constrained to serve the Lord from a principle of love rather than a slavish fear of punishment. I John 4:16-19 declares: **"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us."** Arminians must abide in a system of standards and requirements forged by men in order to feel as though they are serving God. In reality they are serving men out of a principle of fear and bondage. If a person has been genuinely saved he gladly puts on the yoke of Jesus Christ and serves the lord because his heart has been changed and the ability to love the Lord has been implanted internally. II Corinthians 5:17 states this truth beautifully: **"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."** Even though I am secure and complete in Christ it does not give me liberty to sin, rather Christ gives me the liberty to serve and the ability to love. It is the innermost desire of the soul of a saved man to please the Lord in all things, not to dishonor Him by sinning.

If the Arminian is sincere in offering this objection it is a sure evidence that he has not learned what free grace and salvation in Christ is all about. Salvation is not merely a deliverance from the penalty of sin. Christ is not merely a fire escape from Hell. Salvation is also a progressive deliverance from the power of sin, which ultimately results in deliverance from the presence of sin in the glorified state. The true believer longs to be transformed daily to the image of Christ and looks forward to the day when sin and the flesh will be forever banished from his life. Romans 7:22-25 states: **"For I delight in the love of God after the inward man: But I**

see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

3. The third objection raised by Arminianism is that perseverance of the saints leads to unfaithfulness and neutralizes the exhortations aimed at the responsibility to persevere. This is an illogical objection based on an attempt to pit one doctrine of Scripture against another. No person who truly believes the doctrines of grace will deny that the saint is responsible to obey the commands of Scriptures and the exhortations to persevere in holiness.

A.W. Pink soundly refuted this objection by stating:

"What strange logic is this: because I am persuaded that God loves me with an unchanging and unquenchable love therefore I feel free to trample upon His revealed will, and have no concern whether my conduct pleases or displeases Him. Because I am assured that Christ, at the cost of unparalleled shame and suffering, purchased for me eternal redemption, an inalienable inheritance, therefore I am encouraged to forsake instead of to follow Him, vilify rather than glorify Him. That might be the theology of devils, and those they possess, but it would be repudiated and abhorred by any one renewed by the Holy Spirit. How preposterous to argue that because a person believes he shall persevere to the end, that he will therefore despise and neglect everything that promotes such perseverance. Such an argument as the above is tantamount to saying that because God has regenerated a soul He now requires no obedience from him, whereas one of the chief ends for which he is renewed is to capacitate him for obedience, that he may conformed to the image of His Son." [14](#)

Some of the most godly and faithful people ever to "**adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things**" (Titus 2:10) firmly believed the blessed truth of the saint's final perseverance. It was the grace of God that led the Apostle Paul to faithfully labor and endure hardship for His lord as I Corinthians 15:10 states: "**But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.**"

4. The fourth objection that is most commonly raised is: "What about all the Scriptures that address our human responsibility to persevere?" Scriptures like: "**If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed**" (John 8:31); "**But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. For we are made**

partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:6,14); **"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, with out which no man shall see the lord"** (Heb. 12:14).

The answer to this objection is very simple, we believe exactly what these verses teach! Obedience and faithfulness to Christ are conditions of discipleship that give evidence that a person has been genuinely saved. A holy life gives evidence that we have been chosen in Christ (Eph. 1:4), and called by His grace (I Thess. 4:7). If a person possesses no fruits of righteousness and holiness it is a sure evidence that they have never been born again!

5. Finally, Arminians often point to the Scriptural examples of David, Peter, and Judas in an attempt to establish the doctrine of apostasy and overthrow the doctrine of the saint 's final perseverance.

David was "a man after God's own heart", who had been quickened by the Word of God, and had the assurance that he would "dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psa. 23:6). Arminians argue that David lost his salvation when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and orchestrated the murder of Uriah the Hittite. None will deny that these were wicked sins committed by a man who was backslidden and out of fellowship with God. David's joy and fellowship were taken away but his position as a child of God was unaltered. This fact is evident by observing that David was the recipient of Divine chastisement for his sins. If David had lost his salvation he would never have been chastened by his Heavenly Father. Hebrews 12:6 states: **"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth , and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."** David did not pray for God to restore salvation unto him, rather he prayed: "Restore unto me the JOY of thy salvation" (Psa. 51:12). If David had really lost the lord's salvation it would have been impossible for him to be restored and saved again according to Hebrews 6:4-6 which is a hypothetical passage which states: **"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted (cf. Heb 2:9) of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh."**

It is true that Peter denied the Lord three times in a moment of weakness and cowardice. Yet the lord had previously interceded for Peter so that his faith would not fail. Peter did not fall out of grace, he fell into sin but was graciously restored to the lord and greatly used of God. Peter never denied the lord again after this.

T.T. Eaton comments on the passage in Luke 22:31-32 thusly:

Peter's denial and Christ's words to him, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," we find cited to establish the doctrine of apostasy. But it must be borne in mind that conversion is not the same as regeneration. Conversion is a turning round, so that a man

may be said to be converted as often as he goes wrong, while regeneration gives him a new nature, and this can take place but once. That Peter did not fall from grace is evident from Jesus; saying to him, "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." . . . Since the Father hears Christ always, he heard him when He prayed for Peter, and so his faith did not fail; and as a proof that it did not, after the denial, he "went out and wept bitterly." And that same Saviour who prayed for Peter, prays to day for all true Christians that their faith fail not and therefore in no case will it fail. [15](#)

The example of Judas poses no difficulty at all. Judas was never saved by the grace of **God**. He was a companion of Christ but never a partaker of Christ. John 6:70-71 states: "**Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.**" It is obvious that Judas was not included in the Covenant of Grace from John 17:12 which states: "**While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.**" Judas fell from his office as an apostle, but he never fell from salvation. It is impossible to fall from something that you don't have! Judas never experienced the grace of God in the new birth. He was a lost church member!

To conclude this section, I would like to pose sane questions to the Arminian who believes that a true saint of God can apostatize and be lost forever. I have asked these questions several times but I have never received a concrete, scriptural answer. How many sins does a child of God have to commit before he loses his salvation? Specifically what kind of sins does he have to commit in order to lose his salvation? Is there a list of the sins of apostasy clearly posted somewhere? Finally, which brother or sister in the denomination is responsible to judge that a person has truly apostatized? If apostasy was taught in the Scriptures then the Scriptures would give clear answers to these questions! Isaiah 8:20 declares: "**To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.**"

“Not as the world, the savior gives: He is no fickle friend; whom once He loves, he never leaves, but loves him to the end. Though thousand snares enclose his feet, not one shall hold him fast; whatever dangers he may meet, he shall get safe at last. The spirit that would this truth withstand would pull God’s temple down, wrest Jesus’ scepter from His hand and spoil Him of His crown. Satan might then full victory boast, the family might wholly fall; if one believer may be lost, it follows, so may all. But Christ, in every age, has proved, his purchase firm and true; if this foundation be removed what shall the righteous do?”

INCONSISTENCIES OF MODERN DAY BAPTISTS

After having gone to great lengths to prove the perseverance and preservation of the saints from the Scriptures, it is now necessary to point out some glaring inconsistencies that are currently running rampant in various Baptist circles.

Many Baptists would give their hearty assent to what has been written thus far concerning the perseverance of the saints. Yet, it is illogical as well as unscriptural to believe in the final perseverance of the saints while denying and rejecting the other four points of the doctrines of grace. The saint's final perseverance has for its source and foundation God's eternal decree of unconditional election. The saint's final perseverance was secured by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on behalf of the elect. The saint's ability to persevere comes as a result of the effectual call of God and the implantation of a new nature which is a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit apart from the corrupt free will of man. Hebrews 12:2 states: "**looking unto Jesus the AUTHOR AND FINISHER of our faith...**" Many Baptists believe that Christ is the finisher of our faith but not the author. Those Baptists who preach eternal security and free-willism at the same time are speaking out of both sides of their mouth in a most inconsistent manner. If the free will of man is instrumental in getting a sinner into Christ then it logically follows that the same free will can get the sinner out of Christ.

A.W. Pink wrote:

"Moreover, they who so hotly deny unconditional election, particular redemption, and effectual calling, must in order to be consistent, deny the eternal security of the Christian... If I have by an act of my own volition brought myself into a state of grace, then it clearly follows that I am capable of forsaking the same. If the "free will" of the sinner first inclines him to exercise repentance and faith, then obviously he may relapse into a state of confirmed impenitence and unbelief." [16](#)

Thus, Arminian Baptists find themselves on two horns of a dilemma. If they deny total depravity, unconditional election, particular redemption, and effectual calling, they must of necessity also deny the saint's final perseverance. All of the doctrines of grace form a harmonious whole. They stand or fall together. It is inconsistent to embrace one of the five points and not all. In order for Arminian Baptists to be consistent they should at once deny their treasured doctrine of eternal security and embrace the heretical teaching of the possibility of falling from grace.

Arminian Baptists in our day have more in common with Catholics, Methodists, Charismatics, and Campbellites than they do with their Baptist forefathers. I challenge the reader to carefully examine the theology of Baptists from the past.

They will be surprised to find that Spurgeon, Graves, Booth, and Gill were thoroughly Calvinistic in their soteriology.

Another inconsistency among Baptists is teaching eternal security apart from the saint's responsibility to persevere in holy living. Many Baptist churches have literally hundreds of members on their church rolls who are unfaithful and lost, yet are never disciplined or excluded by the church. I often wonder why Baptists who believe in the truth of the perpetuity of the Lord's church do not also believe in the saint's perpetuity in holiness. I am in full agreement with those who say: "If you're saved you must live it and endure to the end." This is precisely what the Scriptures teach. In fact, the entire book of Hebrews is an exhortation for believers to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (Heb. 10:23). Hebrews 10:38-39 declares: **"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."** If a person draws back from his profession it is sure evidence that they have never been born of God! A true child of God will not "draw back unto perdition." It is freely admitted by the author that the saints of God are prone to wander and fall into sin. Yet, this is not the settled condition of a true saint of God as Micah 7:8 states: **"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness the LORD shall be a light unto me."** Proverbs 24:16 states: **For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief."** There should be a progression in holiness in the life of the saint of God as Proverbs 4:18 declares: **"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."**

Because few Baptists believe that good works and holy living are the evidences of saving faith, churches are being filled with false professors. As a result, the sinners in the pew must have their fleshly natures entertained by worldly music, exciting stories, and silly jokes in order to keep them caning back so they will keep putting money in the offering plates. I am convinced if Baptists would go back to the "old paths" of the Book, and preach the flesh withering doctrines of total depravity and God's sovereignty there would be a spiritual revival. Much of the present day foolishness would be replaced by the power and presence of God in our worship services. In II Timothy 4:2-3, Paul told Timothy what the spiritual atmosphere of Christianity would degenerate into: **"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."** That day has arrived! Men have cast off the doctrines of grace and replaced them with the fables of free-willism and easy-believism.

C.B. Spurgeon saw the changing spiritual atmosphere in the last century which caused him to write:

"Compared with what it used to be, it is hard to win attention to the Word of God. I used to think that we had only to preach the gospel, and the people would throng to hear it. I fear I must correct my belief under this need...We all feel that a hardening process is going on among the masses." [17](#)

Another inconsistency that has subtly crept into Sovereign Grace Baptist churches is the increasing use of Arminian methodology in evangelism. Many hold to a Calvinistic creed, yet are practicing Arminians. Gimmicks are used to entice people to come to church. Entertainment has replaced solid doctrinal preaching. The invitation system has degenerated into emotional and psychological appeals in order to get outward results. The terms of the Great Commission have been reversed by placing the emphasis of evangelism in the church service rather than in the world. A Charismatic type of excitement and frenzy is encouraged to the point that it would be hard to determine the Baptists from the Charismatics in some churches. Baptists today have more in common with the methods of C.G. Finney, a rank heretic of the last century, than they do with the apostles who simply called upon men to repent and believe the gospel!

C.H. Spurgeon commented in 1890 on the new style of exhortation being used by preachers seeking a response from their hearers in the following statement:

"The gospel is, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."** If we think we shall do more good by substituting another exhortation for the gospel command, we shall find ourselves landed in serious difficulties. If, for a moment, our improvements seem to produce a larger result than the old gospel, it will be the growth of mushrooms, it may even be the growth of toadstools; but it is not the growth of the trees of the Lord." [18](#)

Baptists need to return to the old path of relying upon the power of the gospel and the sovereign work of the Spirit to make the truth effectual in the heart! I Corinthians 2:2-5 states: **"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."**

I realize that some may disagree with what has been written. I offer no apologies for what I perceive to be glaring inconsistencies among the people who call themselves Baptists. If the current trends continue it will produce disastrous results in our churches. May God give us grace to follow the admonition of Proverbs 22:28: **"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set."** It has always been the trademark of true Baptists not only to preach the truth in love, but also to expose error and heresy. Romans 16:17-18 declares: **"Now I beseech you,**

brethren, mark them which cause divisions and of fences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

END NOTES

Click On the Highlighted Area To Return To Your Reading.

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THE NECESSITY OF GOSPEL PREACHING

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After having gone to great lengths to prove the scriptural basis of the doctrines of grace, it is now necessary to answer one of the most prominent accusations hurled at those holding to this teaching. The opponents of the doctrines of grace will often accuse us of not believing that gospel preaching is necessary for souls to be converted to Christ and will label us as hard-shells or hyper-Calvinists. Nothing could be further from the truth. I Corinthians 9:16 states: "**For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!**" It is the firm conviction of the writer that gospel preaching is necessary for souls to be saved. In fact, as much as I despise the Arminian system of theology, I have just as much hatred for hardshellism. The man who says that souls can be saved apart from the gospel is the worst sort of heretic. This man's thoughts fly in the face of all Scripture and reason.

A true saint of God, who has been taught by the Spirit to understand the doctrines of grace, will also understand that God uses the means of the gospel to save the elect. Some say that a belief in election will naturally lead a person to believe that they don't need to witness and that God will save whom He will save, whether we witness or not. It is true that God will save whom He will, but it is equally true that He uses the preaching of the gospel as a means to save them. I Corinthians 1:21 states: "**For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.**" A proper understanding of the doctrine of election will cause a person to be a fervent and zealous witness of the gospel's power to save. A belief in election motivated the Apostle Paul to do extensive mission work as

II Timothy 2:10 states: "**Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.**"

The fact that God sovereignly elects and saves sinners according to His own good pleasure does not in any way dismiss the believer of his responsibility to witness and preach the gospel to every creature. We are to do all that is within our power to be faithful witnesses of the power of the gospel. Our labors and concerns should be unceasing in trying to persuade and lead men and women to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Our hearts should be filled to overflowing with compassion for those on the "broad road" that leads to destruction-the same road we were once on.

MOTIVES FOR GOSPEL PREACHING

The first and foremost motivating factor for preaching the gospel and persuading men to trust Christ is to glorify God through obedience to the command of Christ. Jesus Christ clearly commanded His church to preach the gospel to every creature in Mark 16:15 which states: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." A genuine love for Jesus Christ is proven by obedience to His commands as John 14:15 states: "**If ye love me, keep my commandments.**" The command to preach the gospel is not optional for the true believer. It is our duty, debt, and privilege to obey this command of Jesus Christ. If our hearts were filled with a burning desire to glorify God through obedience, we would not find it hard to: "**Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people**" (Psa. 96:2-3). The first church took this command so seriously and literally that they first filled the city of Jerusalem with their doctrine (Acts 5:28) and later turned the whole world upside down (Acts 17:6). I think it is safe to say that there were no Hardshell or Primitive Baptists in the first churches in light of these Scriptures.

The second motivating factor for gospel preaching is the realization that it is the ordained means God uses to save sinners. This is a fact that is repeatedly emphasized in the Scriptures. Romans 10:17 states: "**So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**" That the gospel is clearly the means God uses to call the elect is evidenced by II Thessalonians 2:13-14 which states: "**But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**" If God could save sinners apart from gospel preaching then why did He lead Philip out of Samaria into the desert so that he could preach Christ to the Ethiopian Eunuch? Why did God command Peter to go to the house of Cornelius in Caesarea if he could have been saved apart from gospel preaching? The answer is found in Peter's words to the house of Cornelius: "**And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins**"

(Acts 10:42-43). Paul the apostle certainly was no Hardshell in light of I Corinthians 4:15 which states: "**For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.**"

The third motivating factor for preaching the gospel is found in I Corinthians 5:14 which states: "For the love of Christ constraineth us..." The Greek word for constrain is *sunecho* which carries with it the idea to arrest, compel, press and preoccupy. Because of Christ's great sacrificial love for us, we are to be pressed, compelled, and preoccupied with telling others of His power to save. Because we have tasted that the Lord is gracious there should be an urgency in our lives to break the bread of life with others so that they may know and experience the love of Christ which is beyond measure. If Christ has made a difference in our lives we should be constrained to show and tell others of the power of the gospel to change ruined sinners into saints. Like the Psalmist of old we should declare unashamedly: "**He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. Blessed is the man that maketh the LORD his trust...**" (Psa. 40:2-4).

The fourth motivating factor for gospel preaching is found in II Corinthians 5:11 which states: "**Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...**" God has been gracious to open our eyes to the truth of His holiness, justice, and wrath. We know that God's wrath is going to be revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness. We know that Hell is a place of burning fire and irreparable ruin for those who die in unbelief. The knowledge that men will suffer an eternity in a burning lake of fire, should motivate us to point them to the only way of escape and refuge--faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Some Calvinists may object and say that we should not operate upon emotion in reference to the unregenerate. But such an objection is overridden by the example of Paul who said: "**Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men**", and elsewhere: "**To the weak became I as weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you**" (I Cor. 9:22-23). Jesus Christ was moved with compassion when He saw the plight of lost souls during His earthly ministry. Have our hearts grown so cold and calculated that we no longer follow the example of our blessed Lord in compassion for the lost? May God deliver us from the apathy and coldness in our attitude toward sinners. May He give us grace to follow the directions of the Psalmist who said: "**They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him**" (Psa. 127:5-6).

THE MEANS OF GOSPEL PREACHING

The early churches preached the simple message of Christ crucified and risen again as the power of God unto salvation. Their method was equally simple; they preached the Word of God zealously, depending upon God to save sinners. They boldly pointed men to Christ alone as the way of salvation. Peter declared: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). When the church at Jerusalem was persecuted by Saul they didn't give up or quit. Rather, the Scriptures state: **"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the Word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them"** (Acts 8:4-5). When Philip was called away from Samaria by the angel of the Lord to minister to the Ethiopian eunuch, it is recorded: **"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus"** (Acts 8:35). After Saul had been converted on the road to Damascus and went into Arabia (Gal. 1:17) **"he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God"** (Acts 9:20). Later, Paul on his first missionary journey preached Christ at Antioch: **"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses"** (Acts 13:38-39). When Paul came to the city of Thessalonica, he went into the synagogue: **"Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead: and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you is Christ"** (Acts 17:3). It has always pleased God to use the simple means of gospel preaching to call and convert the elect. The Spirit of God is pleased to use the Word in the mysterious work of regeneration and conversion. It is according to the sovereign will of God that the simple preaching of the Word be used in the work of conversion as stated in James 1:18: **"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."**

The power of a changed and sanctified life is also a means of persuading men to believe the gospel. Acts 4:13 states: **"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."** This is the kind of testimony that every born-again believer should strive for, to show men and warn that they have been with Jesus.

From the human side of salvation, a lost world will never believe our message if our way of life does not evidence the joy of the Lord and obedience to Christ. We cannot live like the world and expect them to believe our message. One only has to look at the recent damage done to the testimony of Christianity through the fall of prominent false teachers who professed the name of Christ, yet denied Him by their way of life. Our testimony is probably the single most important thing in the eyes of lost men. They don't know and often don't care what the Bible says because

they never read it. But they read the testimony of professing Christians every day! That is why there are so many exhortations to holy, separated living in the Bible. II Timothy 2:9 states: "**Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.**"

When worldly Lot tried to persuade his sons-in-law to flee from the wrath that was about to be poured out on Sodom they thought he was just joking because his testimony had been ruined. Their reaction is recorded in Genesis 19:14: ". . . **But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.**" Let us never underestimate the power of a changed life and a sanctified testimony to affirm the gospel we preach!

When you recognize the Biblical means for persuading men to believe the gospel as the preached Word, backed up by a changed life, the psychology and emotional trickery used by many in our day will seem as foolishness. In all of our preaching and godly living we must never forget that it takes the power of God to quicken dead sinners. Emotional appeals, long invitations, psychology, and worldly gimmicks can never be used as substitutes for the power of God. Listen carefully to the inspired record of the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians: "**For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man' s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of the power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God**" (I Cor. 2:2-5). "**I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour**" (I Cor. 3:6-8).

THE COST OF GOSPEL PREACHING

There are costs involved in gospel preaching. A sacrifice of self denial is associated with gospel preaching. It is necessary to put a bridle on our lusts and passions if we are to be effective witnesses of the gospel of Christ. Mark 8:34-35 states: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."

There are afflictions and persecutions associated with gospel preaching as II Timothy 1:8 implies: "Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." All one has to do is read the book of Acts to see that genuine

gospel preaching brings persecution and affliction. The apostles were threatened (Acts 4:13-20) and later beaten for gospel preaching (Acts 5:40-42). Stephen was stoned by an angry mob of Jews for preaching the gospel in Acts 7. The entire church at Jerusalem was persecuted and scattered because of their testimony for Christ in Acts 8. James lost his head for preaching the gospel in Acts 12. Paul and Barnabas were expelled from Antioch by the Jews for preaching the gospel (Acts 13:49-52). Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned at Philippi for gospel preaching (Acts 16:20-24).

When we take the command to preach the gospel to every creature seriously and literally as a necessity and our bound duty, there will be a cost of time, money, effort, reputation and status. The question we must ask ourselves is:

Am I willing to pay the price and suffer reproach for preaching the gospel? If the answer is yes, we will be numbered among the holy band in Hebrews 11:36-40 of whom it is said: **"And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."**

Just as there is a cost associated with gospel preaching there is also a greater cost for not preaching the gospel to every creature. If we fail to preach the gospel it will mean the loss of blessings in this life and the satisfaction of knowing that we are doing what Christ has commanded. For a church, a failure to preach the gospel will bring upon them the loss of the Lord's presence and power. It will also mean the loss of rewards for the believer at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Paul plainly told the church at Corinth: "Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel..." (I Cor. 9:16).

It is the height of folly to presume that God does not see and hold us accountable for not witnessing. Proverbs 24:11-12 states: **"If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"** God charged the prophet Ezekiel with the solemn responsibility of warning the wicked as a faithful watchman. If he failed to give them warning their blood would be required at his hand (Ezek. 3:17-19). Could this also be applied to Christians who are responsible to witness? Perhaps this is one reason why the early disciples had it said of them: **"and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine..."** (Acts 5:28). **"And daily in the temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ"** (Acts 5:42). If we would faithfully witness, the Lord will reward us with a crown of rejoicing as Paul said: **"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even**

ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (I Thess. 2:19).

We are living in a day when there seems to be a growing imbalance in Sovereign Grace Baptist churches. We must not only hold firmly to the truth of the doctrines of grace, but we must also see the necessity of publishing the gospel of grace to every creature. We must return to a solid balance of strong doctrinal preaching as well as a zeal and fervency in witnessing. Historically, Baptists have maintained this scriptural balance as they carried out the great commission. May God grant us the same grace in our day.

How thankful I am that eleven years ago, a man who was concerned about my soul, began to witness to me at work. In spite of my ungodliness and rebellion, he faithfully preached the gospel and lived a consistent Christian life before me. He was used of God to direct me to Christ and the free forgiveness of sins. May God stir us to witness for Christ and persuade men to repent and believe the gospel.