

**LEAVES,
WORMS,
BUTTERFLIES, &
T.U.L.I.P.S.**

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A Parable of Leaves, Worms, Butterflies, and T.U.L.I.P.S.

Truth and Error met one day by the side of a beautiful, placid lake in a land called Eden's Garden. They spied a bed of tulips nearby, and as they watched the worms, chewing away on the greenery while butterflies harmlessly sipped away at the nectar in the blooms of the tulips, they began discussing an extremely difficult subject. Why do Caterpillars eat and destroy the leaves of the tulips while Butterflies seem to enjoy only the nectar from the bloom? Truth began to explain the subject of Transformation. This confused Error to such an extent that he changed the subject and suggested that they go for a swim. Truth took off his beautiful robe and jumped into the water. Deceitful Error grabbed Truth's robe, put it on and ran away wearing the beautiful robe of Truth. When Truth disrobed that Error had fled wearing his beautiful robe, he decided that Error's treachery must be exposed. Having nothing to put on but Error's dirty garments, Truth decided to remain "The Naked Truth". As it turned out, this was a "blessing in disguise" so to speak. Truth needs no cover of any sort.

Truth knew that he had nothing to conceal or hide and is perfectly willing to be looked upon as he is. This is not so with Error. He knows that, to be accepted, he must at least be partially covered with the Robe of Truth. Since that fateful day at the water's edge, Error has been "passing himself off" as Truth. Nowhere in all the world has been so readily accepted as in the realm of religion. Error continues to wear Truth's robe. However, Naked Truth and Bare Facts are twins. They pursue Error wherever he goes. They are constantly being weighed in the balances of human judgement.

Christians should never accept a doctrine blindly nor simply on the word of some man. Every doctrine should be weighed by the Infallible Word of God. Truth will not object because it has nothing to hide. Use the Bible to strip the ROBE from Error and you will be forever grateful to the one who encouraged you to do so (**II John 1-4, III John 1-4**).

Error continues his relentless efforts under numerous and sundry titles; but he always wears the ROBE of Truth. He convinces his hearers that WORMS, some worms at least, love nectar from the flowers of God. Truth, on the other hand, tells another story. He called a group of Butterflies together one day and requested that they explain how they came to be butterflies. The Butterflies consulted with each other for quite some time and elected one to be their Spokes-butterfly.

The Spokes-butterfly began to speak. He said: "Here are the Bare Facts. I was eating leaves one day as I had done all my conscious life. As I was eating, something happened INSIDE of me. It had never happened before. It has never happened since. I began to yawn. A webbing began coming out of my mouth. I cannot explain it. It must have been something our Great Creator did inside of me. I passed through a dark and awesome experience. The next thing I remember is that I was hungry. There was a desire in me that I had never known. I was wet and helpless. A gentle breeze (I believe you call it wind) began to dry me out and before I knew what was happening to me; I discovered I was a different creature and something was drawing me to the nectar of the tulips. You asked me to explain it. I cannot." The other Butterflies said "amen" and began to sing Amazing Grace (**John 3:1-13**). Not even one of them could remember wanting to sip nectar before they were transformed.

This book has something for everyone – even those who love to criticize.

You will find it disorganized, unliterary and in some places such as my writings, extremely unscholarly. But precious Truth will stand erect and uncovered on every page.

Someone has said, “There are none so blind as those who will not to see.” We add, “There are none so ignorant as those who are afraid to learn”, and I say that kindly.

You will find in this book precious doctrines that caused the Apostle Paul to say: “I must go to Rome”. Judson to say: “I must go to Burma.” Harold Morris to say: “There are lost sheep in Brazil. I go to find them”. Harold Brunson to say: “I must go to the Evangelistic field”. And it was these and other truths that caused B.H. Carroll to found the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The neglect of these and other ancient principles by all Baptists caused a great old Southern Baptist preacher to say, “I am knocking on the Back Doors of Baptists while Southern Baptists sleep”.

This book is our way of knocking on your back door” because doors of churches and homes are being closed against these truths. Doctrines that exalt God on a Sovereign Throne and place man in the gutter of sin and in need of mercy have no place in the average modern religious institution. Neither are they welcomed and taught in many so-called Christian homes. But they are needed nevertheless.

May you read us prayerfully.

V.C. Mayes.

FLYING WORMS

In a little book entitled “Flying Worms”, the late Dr. Harry Rimmer explained what happens in the metamorphic process common to certain kinds of worms. His example was the caterpillar. This writer believes the parable is a good one and I suggest that you read the booklet or any reputable biologist’s account of the caterpillar’s being born again. This lowly worm can teach us that a change can and does take place but no one knows exactly how it is done. “So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (**John 3:8**).

The caterpillar, as soon as his desires are awakened in him, loves to eat leaves. Human beings, as soon as they are born, love sin (**Psalm 58:3**) (see also **John 3:19**). The caterpillar spends all of his wormly life eating leaves and loves every minute of it. He does it because it is his nature to do so. Because natural-born, undegenerated man is shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. (**Psalm 51:5**), his inclinations are only to love the bitter leaves of sin. He cannot naturally know the things of God (**I Corinthians 2:14**). He, too, is a worm of a different kind (**Job 17:14; 25:6; Isaiah 41:14**). And even the son of man, Jesus, who because sin for us (**II Corinthians 5:21**) is represented as a worm (**Psalm 22:6**).

But the caterpillar can, with God-given ability, become something better and more useful. God has built into the caterpillar a trigger of some sort that causes this worm, at a designated time in his life, to become what we will call sleepy. One day, while eating leaves and enjoying every bit, he opens his mouth and yawns. He begins to spin out of his mouth a thread like material which we call webbing. He spins out enough to build himself a house, seals himself in, and goes to sleep. When he wakes up, he discovers he is cramped and confined – almost helpless. He discovers he is no longer only a worm and cannot crawl and eat leaves which only a few days ago he loved so well. He can only nod his head up and down (like we say “yes”). The desire to nod his head becomes irresistible, and so he does. There is a saw-like horn on top of his head, and as he says “yes” with the up and down motion of his head, he cuts himself free. He discovers he is a new creature – a butterfly. He is something better and far more useful. He no longer mars and destroys the things he touches but has the potential of doing a work which butterflies can do but caterpillars cannot. In that newborn state, he is wet and almost helpless, but the means to dry him out has already been provided by God, and very shortly he is flying. Can you believe it? What only a few days ago was a worm is now a butterfly flying around sipping nectar from the tulips and at the same time beautifying the landscape. He had not reborn himself. But, in God’s own wonderful and inexplicable way, the worm has been changed into a butterfly.

I am thinking of another worm who had spent many years eating the bitter leaves of sin. He ignored the invitations of the born-again ones who were saying, “God can change your life”. And “You, too, can soar to greater heights of life and enjoy the nectar of God’s wonderful flowers of grace”. Then one day after being exposed to some very special leaves from the pages of God’s book, a change took place in him, and he discovered he, too, was helpless and hopeless. The power of God flooded his soul as the sword of the Spirit but into his innermost being. His blinded eyes were made to see. His deaf ears were made to hear. The grace of God was unfolded, and he began to hear and see the things of God (**John 3:1-5; I Corinthians 2:14**). That which before had been foolishness to him had now been recognized as the power of God (**Romans 1:16; I Corinthians 1:21**). He began to say “yes” to that to which his response had always

before been “no”. His new eyes of faith could now see the sinless Jesus hanging on a cross suffering untold agony in the behalf of sinners. Permit me to say here that the worm of which I speak is this writer. I had really learned that the question put forth in song “Would He Devote His Sacred Head for Such a Worm as I” could be answered positively. “He loved me and gave himself for me” (**Galatians 2:20**). Regeneration had taken place and “life and mortality” had been “brought to light through the gospel” (**II Timothy 1:10**). The gospel shows the regenerated sinner what Jesus accomplished for him and the Holy Spirit “bears witness with his spirit” that he is a son of God (**Romans 8:16**). The gospel brings to light the new birth.

The scenes before me and the message which the Holy Spirit communicated to me made God’s love and mercy so unexplainably glorious that His grace was irresistible. It was to me what water is to a thirsty man, what bread is to a hungry man, what a lifeguard is to a drowning child, what a fireman’s net is to a mother with a baby in her arms on the ledge of a burning building, what the coal of fire was to Isaiah’s lips (**Isaiah 6:7**). As God made Eve to appear in the eyes of the lonely Adam, as the offer of a hypodermic injection to alleviate the pain of a suffering victim, oh yes, and much more, so did the grace of God appear to this helpless, hopeless worm when the Spirit of God convicted me and made me aware of what it means to have the wrath of God abiding on me (**John 3:36**). I, needed, like any other creature of God facing the same situation, found His grace irresistible. God dried me out and otherwise helped me. I then discovered that I, too, could nod my head and immediately found myself sipping the satisfying nectar of God’s flowers of grace.

We do not know when God placed the spinning machine in the caterpillar nor what exactly caused his drowsiness that caused him to yawn and begin to spin the web. Maybe it was a special ingredient in the leaves. Who knows? We can be sure, however, that a caterpillar is changed to a butterfly, and in the process, there must be the eating of leaves. That is God’s way of making butterflies.

Romans 10:17 – *Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God*

James 1:18 – *Of His own will begat he us with the word of truth*

I Peter 1:23 – *Being born again – by the word of God*

John 1:13 – *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*

Dear reader, you can no more will yourself to be born again that you can will yourself to be born the first time. However, you can expose yourself to the leaves of the word of God. They will seem bitter to you in your wormlike condition. The Bible pays no compliments to us in our unregenerate state. (**Romans 3:23** – *All have sinned*). “*There is none* (not even one who is righteous, not one who understands, not one who is searching after God. They have all gone astray; they have one and all become unprofitable, worthless-depraved) *righteous, no not one*” (**Romans 3:10**). But God can change that by planting an incorruptible seed (**I Peter 1:23**) in your which will germinate and bring about a change which can truly be called born again. When this is done, you will have no trouble believing that Jesus died for you and arose the third day –

believing that He is Christ. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ IS (already) born of God.” Please read **I John 5:1-5**.

When once the regenerating power of the Spirit of God, and the preaching of the Word of God, or any other means which he may sovereignly choose, has removed the scales from your eyes, unstopped your deaf ears, and circumcised your heart (**Ephesians 1:18; John 8:43 & 47; compare Colossians 2:11 with Acts 7:51**) you will no longer enjoy the bitter leaves of sin and be repulsed by the nectar from the flowers of God’s grace, but the order will be reversed. The nectar from Biblical tulips will become palatable and precious to your taste.

T.U.L.I.P.S.

T – U – L – I – P is a system of doctrine commonly known as “The Five Points of Calvinism”. The first letter in each point of doctrine stands for a particular point of doctrine in the Bible. They are: Total Depravity (spiritual inability), Unconditional Election to Salvation, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance – Preservation of the Saints. (See also Prevenient Grace).

I will add an “S” which will bring us to TULIPS. The “S” will stand for Sovereignty of God. Although the first five points were emphasized by John Calvin and bear his name, they were proclaimed to the world long before Calvin was born. These are Bible Truths and should be studied in that light.

The profundity of these doctrines cannot be fathomed by the sounding device of human reason. Nor have they ever been completely understood by the godly men who have proclaimed them. Complete understanding will only come when every vestige of Adam’s sinful, prideful nature has been eliminated. However, it has been the experience of this writer that as the Holy Spirit speaks through the holy men who wrote the Bible, and he believes, without requiring the “Potter” to explain to the clay “what” he is doing and “why” (**Romans 9:20-24**), the easier it is for him to accept them although he does not completely understand the “whys” and the “wherefores” in every detail.

These are not milk-diet doctrines. Milk-fed Christians will find them unpalatable when they are first exposed to them.

Isaiah 28:9 – *Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts*

This writer knows that comparatively few believers have ever studied the so-called TULIP doctrines. Others who have begun a study became so bogged down in theological double talk and lost in a foggy atmosphere loaded with terms such as supralapsarianism, sublaparianism, infralapsarianism, hyper-calvinism, antinominanism, arminianism, latitudinarianism and oh, so many others, that they lost their appetite and returned to the mild of the word. It is not my intention to discredit those who use the above-mentioned terms; nor do I disallow the importance of knowing what they mean. However, for those of us who have had little or no exposure to them, they are too cumbersome to carry along as we read.

I claim no literary skills but I trust that my readers will not think I am like the fellow who said, “I ain’t got no education and bless God, I don’t need one”. I am capable of writing so as to be understood and this I shall do as we consider the six points of doctrine which we designate T-U-L-I-P-S.

T – TOTAL DEPRAVITY

No student of the Bible can rightly divide the word of truth, as we are admonished to do in **II Timothy 2:15**, until he has come to grips with this doctrine and found that in his worm-like (unregenerated) condition, he is Totally Depraved – alienated from the life of God (**Ephesians 4:18**); dead in sin (**Ephesians 2:1**); spiritually blind and deaf (**Ephesians 4:18**); **John 8:43-44**); and cannot please God (**Romans 8:8**), hopeless and helpless. Let me plead with all who read these lines – prove or disprove these statements by reading the scripture references and look in your dictionary for an exact definition of “total” and “depravity”. Take time to be thorough (**Acts 17:11**).

At the close of this writing, I will suggest a few books and booklets which you would do well to read. Your book-store salesperson may tell you they are “out of print or unavailable”, but don’t you believe them. They may have had instructions not to stock those so-called Hyper-Calvinistic books.

As we examine further the doctrine of total depravity, it is wise to remember that those who deny that man is totally depraved in his natural self will build “straw men” and then proceed to tear them down. You will be told that total depravity means that “the unregenerate man is as bad as he can be and getting worse every day”. These individuals are deliberately trying to deceive or they are inexcusably ignorant. In a few words, total depravity simply means that because of our sinful nature which we inherit from Adam, we are incapable of doing any righteous deeds acceptable to God (**Romans 3:10-12**). If you can avail yourself of a Naves’ Topical Bible, look under “Depravity of Man”, and read what is said in the Bible on this subject.

As we pursue our “worm-butterfly” parable we discover that there are some parallels to the born-again experience but it does not present the whole picture. While it is true that an unexplainable change takes place when worms are changed into butterflies, and an unexplainable change takes place when children of wrath (**Ephesians 2:4**) are transformed and become children of God (**Galatians 3:26**; **Romans 8:16**), it does not hold true that the process is the same. The designer of the process is God but the difference is this: (1) something in the physical nature of the worm triggers the action which causes the worm to become sleepy, yawn and spin out the webbing, etc. (2) The worm initiates the action that causes the change. With an unregenerate man, it is different. There is no Bible evidence that natural man (**I Corinthians 2:14**) has any physical or natural ability to initiate an action which would result in life from God. It is conceded by everyone that being born again is good. Whoever initiates an action and consummates an action that results in the new birth has done a good deed. The natural man cannot do good until after he has been born again.

Jeremiah 13:23 – *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots: Then may ye (natural men) also do good, that are accustomed to do evil*

One segment of the Christian world known as Baptists have stated it well in Article VII of their confession of Faith under heading “Grace in Regeneration”. It reads as follows: “We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or ‘born from above’; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected (action initiated

and consummated) in a manner above man's comprehension (an unexplainable change) by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth, so as to secure his voluntary obedience to the gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith and newness of life (parenthesis mine)."

Surely no one would deny that the above statement, if scripturally correct, teaches the following: (1) The Holy Spirit regenerates – which equals “born from above” (**Titus 3:3-5**). (2) This act is initiated, not by man but by God (**John 1:13**). (3) The fruit (resulting product) of that action is Repentance, Faith, and Newness of Life. All of these came from outside the natural abilities of man. He did not possess any of them prior to the renewing act of God. The Ephesians Letter states that grace and faith come as a gift from God which results in good works, “which God has before ordained that we should walk in them” (**Ephesians 2:8-10**). The believers in these passages are said to be created in Christ Jesus (**II Corinthians 5:17**). Creatures do not create themselves. Only God can create. It is God's new creation that is capable of repentance, faith, and a new life of good works.

Our worm in the parable is changed into a butterfly through a process called “metamorphosis”, (from *metamorphomai*), which the Great Designer placed in him through nature. Before his change, he loves nectar from tulips and other flowers. Man, in his natural state, before he is born again, loves darkness (**John 3:19**) – loves sin (**Job 15:16**). After he is born from above, regenerated, quickened by the Holy Spirit, (although his old nature is yet in the physical body) the new man loves the things of God (**Romans 7:14-25**, esp., verses **22-23**).

As Ishmael, the first-born son, created a problem in Abraham's household when Isaac, the second son, was born, so it is in our “physical house”, our body. The warfare begins when we are born again (**Romans 7**). This is illustrated in Adam's first two sons. Cain, the first, loved the works of his hands – the fruit of his natural labor. This was rejected of God. Abel, the second son, offered “of the firstlings of his flock” – by faith looking toward the time when “the Lamb of God” would fulfill the type (**John 1:29; Hebrews 11:4**). The best evidence that you can have of the second birth is the inner conflict between the Cain and Abel natures. Cain pictures the “outward”, physical, natural man. Abel represents the “inner”, born again, regenerated man (**II Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 3:16**). Both were natural born sinners but Abel worshiped by faith while Cain acted according to his depraved will and was rejected. If you, dear reader, are depending on what you have done of your own depraved will, you will perish. Rely on the offering of the Lamb of God “*who loved you and gave himself for you*” (**Galatians 2:20**).

It cannot be over-emphasized that neither man's natural will nor anything else within his unregenerate self can produce repentance, faith or anything that God will accept. He *cannot repent* savingly – he *cannot believe* savingly (**Hebrews 11:6**) because he must be regenerated before these holy fruits can be manifest. These holy fruits follow regeneration and result in salvation.

*O, change the wretched hearts of men,
And give them life divine;
Then shall their passions and their powers,
Almighty Lord, be thine.*

Because it is so extremely important that we understand the totality of our human depravity and to establish the fact of hereditary depravity, we turn again to the parable of the worm and the butterfly. Although it is true that a worm becomes a butterfly and it seems that his nature has been changed which is evidence by his appearance and what he loves to do and eat, he cannot produce an offspring whose appetite, actions and appearance even remotely resembles that of a butterfly. His offspring (coming into through the process which we call generation, procreation) turns out to be a worm. If he ever soars to the pleasant heights of butterfly serenity and enjoys the nectar of the tulips, he must be transformed, metamorphosticized, (pardon my home-made jawbreaker – it means changed), “born again”, so to speak.

Christian parents may desire for their offspring better things than they had in infancy and youth and would, if it were possible, prevent their wormlike existence, but they discover as soon as they take an honest inventory that they have a natural born sinner on their hands. He begins to lie before he can speak a word. How? By crying like someone had pinched him when there is nothing wrong except that he wants to have his way. He wants you to pet him. “The wicked are estranged from the womb: They go astray as soon as they are born speaking lies” (**Psalm 58:3; Psalm 51:5**). This inborn depravity expresses itself more and more as months and years go by. At age three his selfishness becomes very evident as he grabs, snatches, bites, kicks, screams, etc., to get for himself what belongs to his brother, sister or whomsoever.

His youthful desires continue in the same direction but may be held in check by parental discipline, instructive and corrective, or legal restraint and many other contributing factors; but they will not be eradicated until sin has paid its wages (**Romans 6:23**). “*When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*” (**James 1:15**). This is the product of human generation. If man is ever privileged to soar above his wormly environment, escape the wrath of God and enjoy the nectar of God’s wonderful flowers of grace, he must be regenerated – born again (**John 3:5-7**). “*Freewillism*”, “*easy-decisionism*”, “*say yes to Jesusism*” and other man-made schemes can never accomplish that which God has reserved to himself. “Ye must be born again – born from above – born of God” is God’s immutable edict.

One concluding reference to our parable must be made as we close our section on Heredity and Total Depravity. Should our worm in the lesson desire (we doubt that he does) to become a butterfly, his Maker would tell him “You are on your way to butterflyhood. Just continue eating leaves – doing what comes naturally – you will soon become a butterfly”. Should any man desire (which, naturally, he will not “*There is none that seeketh after God*” **Romans 3:11**) to become a Christian, he would be instructed to repent – do the opposite of “what comes naturally”. This he cannot do of his own so-called “*free*” will. Peter told his hearers to “*repent and be converted*” (**Acts 3:19**). Paul said that his humble and tearful message to his hearers was “*repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*” (**Acts 20:21**). Dead men (**Ephesians 2:1**) can do none of these (**Ephesians 2:1-2**).

We have established that these two gifts, repentance and faith, are holy fruits of regeneration and cannot be exercised by a *Dead Sinner* (depraved and incapable of holy fruit). It holds true to Biblical Theology – “*Ye must be born again*”. The *One* who made the original worm or butterfly and also the original man said that. If we continue “doing what comes naturally” – depending on our own depraved will to bring about a change, we shall perish (**Luke 13:3**).

The fact is well put in the Church Covenant that: “Having been led, (Son of God are led **Romans 8:14**) as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to *receive* the Lord Jesus Christ, Etc. (Led before we receive). Spiritually *dead* sinners (**Ephesians 2:1**) are *quickened* (made alive) by the goodness of God (**Romans 2:4**) which reveals to the *New Born* one what God has done for him (**John 3:16**). There are *led* by the Spirit of God to *receive* the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. In his *quickened* condition, the person has *nodded* his head – said “yes” to Jesus, and has been saved *by grace and through faith*. Blessed is the man whom God has *chosen* and *caused* to approach unto him – that he may dwell in God’s courts and be satisfied with the goodness of his house even his temple (**Psalms 65:4**).

The following pages will deal with God’s *choice* and those blessed ones whom God has *chosen*.

May I introduce that section by making an observation. I shall never cease to be amazed at preachers who, with jugular veins standing out, their faces showing great concern and in vociferous tones will proclaim: “We trace our Doctrinal Linage back through the Particular Baptists of early America, the Ana-Baptists of England and on back through the Waldens, etc.” And in the same sermon these will condemn what those Christians believed in words almost too harsh to repeat. They condemn what they call “Those damnable doctrines of Unconditional Election and Predestination”. Reminds me of a sign in front of the wrought Iron Shop which read, “All Kinds of Fancy Twisting and Turning Done Here.”

Before we tackle this subject, let us read what those Waldensian brethren believed: “God saves from corruption and damnation those whom he has *chosen* from the foundation of the world, *not* from any disposition, faith, or holiness that He *foresaw in them*, but His mere mercy in Christ Jesus His Son, passing by all the rest according to the irreprehensible reason of His own free will and justice”. (Waldensian Confession, 1120 A.D.).

The Philadelphia Confession of Faith (First Baptist Confession published in America) was taken from the Ana-Baptist Confession which was almost a reprint of the Westminster Confession. It reads as follows:

Chapter III Of God’s Decrees

1. God hath (**Isaiah 46:10; Ephesians 1:11; Hebrews 6:17; Romans 9:15, 18**) decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeable, all this whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin (**James 1:13; I John 1:5**) nor fellowship with any therein; nor is violence

offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather (**Acts 4:27, 28; John 19:11**) established; and in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness (**Numbers 28:19; Ephesians 1:3-5**) in accomplishing his decree.

2. Although God knoweth whatsoever may or can come to pass, upon all (**Acts 15:18**) supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything, (**Romans 9:11, 13, 16, 18**) because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.
3. By decrees of God, for the manifestation of his glory, (**I Timothy 5:21; Matthew 24:34**) some men and angels are predestinated or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ to the (**Ephesians 1:5-6**) praise of his glorious grace, others being left to act in their sin to their (**Romans 9:22-23; Jude 4**) just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice.
4. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained are particularly and unchangeable designed, and their (**II Timothy 2:19; John 13:18**) number so certain and definite that cannot be either increased or diminished.
5. Those of mankind (**Ephesians 1:4, 9, 11; Romans 8:30; II Timothy 1:9; I Thessalonians 5:9**) 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, (**Romans 9:13, 16; Ephesians 2:5, 12**) without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him thereunto.
6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so he hath, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained (**I Peter 1:2; II Thessalonians 2:13**) all the means thereunto; wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam (**I Thessalonians 5:9, 10**) are redeemed by Christ, are effectually (**Romans 8:30; II Thessalonians 2:13**) called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season are justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect (**John 10:26; 17:9; 6:64**) only.
7. The doctrine of the high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in his word, and yielding obedience thereunto may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their (**I Thessalonians 1:4-5; II Peter 1:10**) eternal election; so shall this doctrine afford matter (**Ephesians 1:6; Romans 11:33**) of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and (**Romans 11:5-6, 20**) of humility, diligence, and abundant (**Luke 10:20**) consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel. \

Wrapped up in the one Article of Faith are all the TULIPS Doctrines. Those of us today who hold to the Biblical Truths humbly take our stand with those ancient Baptists whose martyr's blood has stained the road back to Golgotha's rugged brow. They disallowed the *anathemas* of the Popes, and millions of them paid with their life's blood – the price of total commitment.

Read the following pages prayerfully, believe only that which is substantiated by “Thus saith the Lord”. Some Worms are transformed into Butterflies according to the sovereign choice of their Creator. Others are left to spend their wormly lives eating bitter green leaves and at last be destroyed by the fires of the forest or be consumed by a predator who spends his life “seeking those whom he may devour”. The butterfly owes his continuance to his Creator. The Worm dare not charge him with injustice or say “*what doest thou?*” (**Romans 9:14-33**).

U – UNCONDITIONAL CHOICE

So many scholarly treatments of this subject have, in past centuries, been sent forth that one doubts that anything new could be introduced. However, inasmuch as these have been written in such “*theological fashion*” and seemingly written to other Theological Scholars, those of us whose academic exposure is limited have difficulty in understanding what they have written. It is my prayer therefore that my “unscholarly” treatment of the subject will be helpful to those who appreciate such efforts as mine.

We should make one point clear before we proceed. Man *does have a choice*. The argument is often put forth that *Calvinists* teach that men have no choice. Then they will proceed to prejudice the minds of their readers by telling us that John Calvin was a tyrant, a persecutor, a murderer, etc. Then they will ask, “Are you a Calvinist?” This, of course, is their way of saying that if you admit to believing the TULIP doctrines you are a Calvinist and by virtue of that, you place your stamp of approval on everything that John Calvin did, as well as what he believed. Such rubbish, of course, is foreign to the truth.

Following on the heels of the above prejudicial arguments you will read statements like, “Calvinism was brought to America by Presbyterians, *some Baptists* (emphasis mine) and others”. Then you are told that the Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith reflects a *tinge* of Calvinism, etc. The “tinge” of Calvinism statement is used deceitfully to convince those who do not know better that Calvinism was a passing thing among Baptists at that time. It is suggested that you read that Confession of Faith and see for yourself if only a *tinge* of Calvinism was reflected in it or that it was a passing thing.

In one of the books on the Doctrine of Divine Election (one among many), an effort is made to minimize the influence of Dr. John Gill’s writings on early American Baptists because, he, too, held Calvinistic views. The author stated that there was only a *tinge* of such views in the Philadelphia Confession, but he “forgot” to mention that in the minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association of 1807 the Association recommended that each church of the Association subscribe for a copy of Gill’s “Exposition” of the Old and New Testament for their ministers and urged other Associations to do likewise (see Hassell’s Church History). (Gill’s Commentaries are back in print and are available).

I have written the foregoing four paragraphs in order to clear away any prejudice which my readers may have developed against some murderous, fatalistic, anti-missionary, straw man called Calvinist. I admit to holding so-called Calvinistic views such as Total Depravity, etc. But I also believe that all men *have a choice* which I will later explain.

However, in this section we are not discussing a choice which men may or may not make. This section under “U” deals with a choice God has made. This is the point of doctrine that some blow out of proportion and say, “Well, what you are saying is that man has no choice”. Unconditional Choice deals with a choice God made before the foundation of the world (**Ephesians 1:4**). So now, let’s dismiss, at least for the present, any thoughts of Calvinism, Gillism, Hardshellism, Anti-missionism, etc., and look into God’s Book to see if it mentions a choice which God has made.

God chose Abraham out of an idolatry-ridden family and designated him as the head of a *chosen* race (**Genesis 12; Joshua 24:2-3; Acts 7:1-2**). God “picked out” (chose) Abraham from among many other men. It is said “God appeared unto Abraham”. And in **Isaiah 52:2**, God said, “I called him alone”. Abraham was God’s choice. Abraham did some choosing with respect to the things of God but it was *after* he had been chosen of God. God required nothing of Abraham prior to his choosing. There is no mention of a condition – it was an Unconditional Choice.

God *chose* to give the Israelites the land they were to possess, *not* because they measured up to some standard of righteousness or met a certain condition (**Deuteronomy 9:6**). They were a “stiffnecked people”. He gave it to them because he had *unconditionally* promised to do so. This unconditional promise was made in **Genesis 14:16** and reaffirmed in many other scriptures. God was simply asserting his right to do according to his own will and make choices which were not conditioned on what Abraham nor his decedents would do.

A good question to consider at this point is this: If we admit that God reserved to himself the right to choose from among men those who would serve a purpose in *time*, why do some rebel when we mention his choosing *according to his eternal purpose*? God does have an eternal purpose (**Ephesians 3:11**). His *choices* are made according to that purpose. We reserve the right to choose our friends. We reserve to ourselves the right to choose those who come to our dining table, those who attend our wedding, etc. Why doesn’t God have the same right? He has his house. He is preparing a feast. He is giving gifts. Does he have the right to choose the recipients? If his choice of those who receive his gifts is conditioned on what they *do*, then it is not a gift at all. It is a reward. To *do* is to *work*. If our being *chosen* is because of what we *do* then it is of *works* and not of grace (**Romans 4:4**).

So far, I have only used the words *chosen*, *choice*, etc. I did this because when we employ the other words used by the inspired writers of the Bible, some who are unwilling to face the truth close their minds. *Election* and *elect* are dirty words to them. Some will not accept the fact that Unconditional Election and Unconditional Choice have one and the same meaning. There is no difference. One reason for this is the fact that they believe *election* and *salvation* have the same meaning. The Bible teaches that *election* is to *salvation* but they are no one and the same. Election, the choice that God made, was before the foundation of the world. Salvation takes place in *time*. Paul said of himself and of the saints to whom he was writing, “*According as he (God) hath chosen (elected) us in him (in Christ) before the foundation of the world*” (**Ephesians 1:4**). He said to the *brethren* (his brothers in Christ) at Thessalonica, “... *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation...*” (**II Thessalonians 2:13**). Salvation takes place in *time*. Let us not deny what the word of God plainly says. It is God who chooses. Those who are chosen are called “an apostle of Jesus Christ, saints and brethren”. Please do not despair. We will consider *our choice* but first let us look for scripture confirmation that God chooses – elects men from among men. Let us also remember that *elect*, *election*, *chosen*, etc., are sometimes used in noun form and sometimes in verb form.

Scriptures teaching election:

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God” (I Peter 1:2).

“The faith of God’s elect” (Titus 1:1).

“God hath chosen you” (II Thessalonians 2:13).

“Shall not God avenge his elect” (Luke 18:7).

“Knowing brethren beloved, your election of God” (I Thessalonians 1:4).

As I have looked for scriptures using these words I was reminded that we should notice the original words from which they came. One of the most widely used Greek-Hebrew Concordances by Robert L. Young, LL.D. He renders them as follows: Eklektos, Elect – Laid out, chosen; Ekloge, Election – Choice, a laying out; Eklegomai, To make a choice – To lay out for oneself, etc. We can see by these that the words are interchangeable. Under these and with those already cited he lists other scriptures.

“For the elect’s sake” (Matthew 24:22).

“If possible...deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24).

“Gather...his elect” (Matthew 24:31).

“Put on therefore as the elect of God” (Colossians 3:12).

“Paul said, “I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (II Timothy 2:10).

Dozens of references could be given, but it is hoped that these will suffice.

Let us now consider Election with Foreknowledge and Predestination. Young’s Concordance cites *foreknow* as being used only once in our English Bible (**Romans 11:2**). *Foreknow* is used once (**Romans 8:29**). *Foreknowledge* is used twice (**Acts 2:23**; **I Peter 1:2**). *Predestinate* is cited as being used four times (**Romans 8:29**; **8:30**; **Ephesians 1:5**; **1:11**). This is the point over which Baptists, and others, have wrangled for centuries. One extreme will lead to fatalism or to Two-Seedism. The other extreme will lead to Salvation by Works.

The view that leads to Salvation by Works is this: In *eternity*, before we were born, God *foreknew* that some of us would become disposed to repent and have faith which would result in our obedience to the gospel, acceptance of Jesus as Saviour and this would cause us to be born again. This view presents it this way: God saw us in eternity hearing the gospel, believing in Jesus, repenting of our sins, etc. And because he *foreknew* this about us, he elected and predestinated us to salvation. This view hinges around *what* God *foreknew about* us. This would force us to rewrite **Romans 8:29** and make it read “For *what* he did *foreknow* (about us) caused him to *predestinate* us to be conformed to the image of his son, etc.” But it was not *what* he

foreknew. It reads “For *whom* he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, etc.” *Whom* is a consideration of persons. *What* is a consideration of things.

There are others who oppose Unconditional Election and hold that God elects us at the point of faith or when we believe. This would not be an election at all on God’s part. It is difficult for some of us to see how one can accept the fact that we *elect* a Presidential candidate several months *before* he becomes President and then reject or reverse the order when God is *electing*. They would have man electing himself to the office of sonship and then asking God to ratify his action. Dr. A.N. Martin, in his lectures on “Union with Christ” makes a strong point on this and observes that “the average third grader knows the difference between ratifying and electing”. If God elected us because he foresaw us doing the good works of repentance and faith then his choice was based on works and it was not of free grace.

Put off Old Man

Let us suppose that a totally depraved man, unregenerated man, designated in the Bible as the *natural* man, and the “Old Man”, not yet *born again*, did repent and believe in Christ thereby bringing about the New Birth. Paul said that the Colossian Christians had “***put off the old man with his deeds***” (Colossians 3:9). Can you imagine Paul saying that Christians would “*put off*” repentance and faith? No, never! He tells what deeds the *Old Man* is capable of in verse five and verse eight. They are: “fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence (lust for sinful pleasure), covetousness, which is idolatry, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications” etc. Faith and repentance are not mentioned among the above because they are not *deeds* of the Old Man. They are gifts from God and are exercised by the new man whom we have “put on” (V. 10) as new creatures in Christ (**II Corinthians 5:17**).

Have you ever noticed the *anger* and *wrath* displayed by some when they are reminded that their *human nature* is depraved. They should know, as you do, and as Jeremiah knew, “*O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*” (**Jeremiah 10:23**). “*The heart (of natural man) is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...*” (**Jeremiah 17:9**). “*There is none that seeketh after God... There is none that doeth good, no, not one*” (**Romans 3:11-12**). Could it be that the reason proud man will not admit to Hereditary and Total Depravity is because it strips him of his claim of the *good works* of *repenting* and *believing* (of himself) and forces him to admit that the *only* choice he could make in a *totally* depraved condition would be a bad one? Thus he is thereby compelled to admit that if he is *elected to salvation*, God did it and *predestinated* him to be conformed to the image of his Son (**Romans 8:29**). Do you see that once we admit the “T” in the Biblical Flowers; the U-L-I-P-S inevitability must be accepted?

But What About Man’s Choice?

Does not the Bible teach that man has a choice? Are not *all* men *free* to choose salvation if they want to be saved – free to choose the things of God? Certainly, *yes*. There is no doubt about it. He is free to choose any time he desires to so do. When he *desires* to repent and believe (savingly) that Jesus died for him and that he was raised for our justification (**Romans 4:25**), he

is free to do it if he wants to choose God. But we have a problem. Something *prevents* such *desires* as mentioned above. What is it?

We have mentioned a book written in opposition to the Tulip Doctrines. The author states that a “*tinge*” of Calvinism was seen in the Philadelphia Confession of Faith (if you read it, you noted that “*tinged*” was putting it mildly). Be that as it may, note another statement from the same writer. “We know of no associational group of Baptists today setting forth a declaration of faith that contains the *slightest coloring* of Calvinism”. He states that the New Hampshire Declaration of Faith is “*free*” of Calvinism. *Now let us see about that.*

NEW HAMPSHIRE CONFESSION OF FAITH

Article VI Salvation Free

The emphasis will be mine to help you see if there was or was not “the slightest coloring of Calvinism” in that confession.

“We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith; and that nothing *prevents* the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, *but his own inherent* (hereditary) *depravity and voluntary* rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation”. What is it that prevents cordial, penitent, and obedient faith? The answer is – “*Inherent Depravity*” of course. This is why he *rejects* the gospel. Notice: it is “voluntary rejection”.

What is it that causes him to cease “*Voluntary Rejection*” and secures “*Voluntary Obedience*” of the gospel? The answer is in Articles VII and VIII: “...in order to be saved, sinners must be *regenerated*...it is effected...by the Holy Spirit...secures voluntary obedience, etc.” “...repentance and faith...*wrought* (worked into shape, fashioned, formed, etc.” The above are only partial quotes but sufficient.

Once again, does *man have a choice*? The is yes. He is as free to choose the things of God as a caterpillar is free to sip nectar from the tulips. But don’t you see – something *inherent* in the *worm* prevents his seeking the nectar. “There is none (among the caterpillars) that seeketh after tulip nectar – no, not one”. There is something inherent (infixing, indwelling) in the unregenerated *sinner*, every natural man, that *prevents* his seeking after the things of God. (**I Corinthians 2:14**). “*There is none (among natural man) that seeketh after God, no, not one*” (**Romans 3:10-12**). Yes, man has a choice, but he will only choose to bow to God in repentance and faith when his nature has been changed so as to incline him toward God. Dear Reader, do you not see that none of Adam’s offspring would ever come to God unless God intervenes. Man, whose nature *inclines* him away from God, has no desire to become a son of God, to be *born again*. Therefore, he has no desire to meet any *condition* (even if conditional election were true) which would merit his being elected to obtain salvation. Thus, Unconditional Election is the only solution.

This doctrine of unconditional choice is so evident in the Bible. God unconditionally chose to reveal Himself to us and *in* us as He did Saul of Tarsus (**Galatians 1:15-16**). Who

among us would contend that Saul was knowingly seeking God or trying to be born again (**Acts 9:1**). And this unconditional choice was made before we were born because it was made from the beginning (**II Thessalonians 2:13**). Or as He said of the Ephesians believers – “*chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world*” (**Ephesians 1:4**). This choice was made, and the revelation of it, because of nothing in those who were *chosen* in Christ but “*according to his (God’s) good pleasure*” (**Ephesians 1:9**).

We cannot afford to close this section without trying to help those who say, “Those doctrines dampen the Mission of the Spirit of a church and will lead to Hardshellism – Anti-Missionism.”

Some of the first things I remember about my pastor when I was a babe in Christ is the fact that he would often say, “When we consider Predestination, Foreordination and Election, I believe it just like the Hardshells.” “Where I disagree with them is in the field of missions. They believe in doing nothing, I believe in going into all the world – preaching the gospel”. Who was he? D.L. Wadley, Pastor of Lemmon Ave. Baptist Church. He led that church for almost thirty years and it was then and is today one of the leading churches among B.M.A.A. Baptists in missions. This example is not the *exception*, but rather I believe it to be the *rule*.

The church of which this writer is the unworthy pastor, Providence Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, is a young church in a run-down section of Houston, comparatively speaking, with fifty-two members. We gave to outside causes last year \$43.51 *per member* compared with another church in the same association with a membership of three hundred ninety-four members and twenty-five years old giving \$11.46 *per member* to outside causes. It is my understanding that the TULIPS Doctrines are believed but not emphasized in that good church. This is not harsh criticism. They are to be commended for giving what they gave. I only mention this to emphasize the truth. The Bible doctrines set forth in this book encourages Christians to believe that the Father gave certain number to the Son to redeem (**John 6:37**) and it is such a joy to have a part in bringing or taking that message to them. But say some, “your scripture reference does not say a certain number. It says ‘all the Father giveth’”. True, and can you imagine the Father giving some to the Son and not knowing how many? This “many” is the same number as the “many” for whom the Son “*gave his life to ransom*” (**Matthew 20:28**). The same certain number included in **Isaiah 53:10**. This is the number that the Righteous Servant justified. The “many” is mentioned in **verse 12**. He justified “many”. He bore their inquiries (**v. 11**), their sins (**v. 12**) and makes intercession for that same certain number. Did he say *justify*? Yes! And that is a legal term meaning that the *justified* on “stands in the eyes of the court as though he had never been charged with a crime”. And this is *forever* (**Hebrews 10:12-14**). Oh, no, these doctrines do not discourage our *going* and *giving* that others may *go*. They encourage us. Those who believe that Jesus is the Christ are *born of God* (**I John 5:1**). God gives the new birth. We preach the gospel. The born-again ones (born of God) hear and believe. We know they will hear and believe because Jesus, the Good Shepherd, said they would. He said, “They *shall* come”. No ifs, ands, nor buts. “They shall come”. We go. The “many” that the Father gave him *shall* come. It is the same “shall” as we find in (**John 10:28**) “*they shall never perish*”. Did he say *never* perish? Yes, emphatically *never*. That is an emphatic negative – *not at any time nor under any condition* (imagined or otherwise). But that comes under the “P” Preservation and Perseverance. We will deal with that later. But it is hallelujah ground. Isn’t it?

Maybe some do not really know what “Hardshellism” is. There are no “Hardshells”, as it is used generally, among those who believe the Doctrines of Grace. These Butterflies know that there are still those of whom Jesus spoke out there somewhere. He said, “*Them I must bring*” (**John 10:16**). They will be hungering for the nectar in the blooms of God’s Flowers of Grace. “*They shall be filled*” (**Matthew 5:6**). “*The Love of Christ constraineth us*” to go (**II Corinthians 5:14**). And, too, “He hath given us the “*ministry of reconciliation*” (v. 18) and the “*word of reconciliation*” (v. 18). As his ambassadors of Christ we must go (v. 20). Butterflies cannot make other butterflies but they must do God’s bidding by pollenating the TULIPS. God will deal with the Worms and do “*according to his own good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself*” (**Ephesians 1:9**).

FOREKNOWLEDGE and UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

When we look to Webster’s Dictionary for definitions of Bible words and use that definition in arriving at conclusions, we sometimes miss the point altogether. Such is the case with regard to “know”, “foreknow”, “foreknew”, “foreknown”, etc. Let us examine the words “know” and “known” as they are employed in Bible usage. Mary said I have not “known” a man – or as it stated in **Luke 1:34**: “*How shall this be, seeing I know not a man.*” She was not stating that she had no knowledge of a man. This “know” was the same usage as in **Genesis 4:16-17**. Some want to believe that Cain “found” his wife in the Land of Nod. But it reads, “*And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, etc.*” Know and knew in both passages indicate sexual intimacy. It has no relation to cognition or, as we say, head knowledge. When the homosexuals in Sodom learned that two strangers (men) were in Lot’s house, they wanted to “know” them. Lot offered to send out his two *virgin daughters* instead (**Genesis 19:5-8**). Again, “know” here is used to denote sexual intimacy.

Another usage of know is set forth in **Amos 3:2**. “*you only have I known of all the families of the earth*”. God is not saying in this passage that he does not “know about” other families of the earth, but that he regards Israel with special favor. “Known” here simply signifies that God loves Israel in a very special way. Jesus said of the professors in **Matthew 7:23**, “*I never knew you.*” Knowing all things, as Jesus certainly did, he did not mean that he had no knowledge of them. He was saying that he did not regard them with *special favor* as he did his sheep. “*I know my sheep and am known of mine*” (**John 10:14**). See also **I Corinthians 8:3**.

Foreknowledge, in its several forms, is another word that is often confined to only one meaning. When such is the case, false conclusions will of necessity follow. To confine “foreknowledge” to only one meaning, (namely pre-science, pre-cognition or to know an event before it happens) has been the basis for *whole systems of false theology*. One such false idea is that since God *foreknew* that some of Adam’s fallen decedents would repent and believe in Jesus; he (God) on the basis of what these fallen creatures would do, elected them to be saved. This is called *unconditional election*.

Conditional Election and Total Depravity cannot consistently be embraced in the same system of doctrine. The two ideas are opposed to each other and are irreconcilable. Total Depravity declares that unregenerate man is incapable of pleasing God. “*In the flesh we cannot*

please God” (**Romans 8:8**). Repentance and faith pleases God. These gifts come with regeneration, not before regeneration. Conditional Election declares that God “foresaw” faith and repentance in some and because he foreknew that they would repent and believe, he *elects*, chose them, to be saved. If the above is true, then it would be true that God “foresaw” a depraved creature doing that which is *good* (repenting and exercising faith) thereby earning God’s favor. But again – the Bible is clear on this point. “*There is none (no unregenerate man) that doeth good, no, not one*”. This is repetitious, I know, but it must be emphasized. Man cannot *earn* God’s favor. God foresaw no Ethiopian changing his skin. He foresaw no leopard changing his spots. Neither did he foresee any of us *doing good* who were accustomed to doing evil (**Jeremiah 13:23**). Our *election*, or being *chosen in Christ*, was an election of Grace – unmerited, underserved favor (**Romans 11:5**). Those of us who are united to Christ in the *election of grace* have also “*Believed through grace*” (**Acts 18:27**).

Arthur W. Pink states it correctly when he declares that God’s *foreknowledge* has to do with *persons* and not *their* works. He also states that God’s foreknowledge is not the cause of his choice of those he has chosen in Christ (**Ephesians 1:4, 9**). When we believe that God “foresaw” us *doing* something and that this *caused* him to choose us to salvation, we are believing that which is *not* taught in the Bible. There is no scripture teaching that because God “foreknew” or “foresaw” what we would do he was *caused* to choose us. Peter’s statement in **I Peter 1:2** is often quoted to prove the above idea but a close examination of this passage will reveal that these believing Jews were “elect according to the foreknowledge (previous intimate, loving relationship with them in Christ) of God”. The *elect* (persons) were *foreknown* (foreknowledge) *not* their works – they being yet unregenerated as a matter of fact.

I mentioned before that Conditional Election results in Whole Systems of False Theology. An example of this is found in a statement made by Noel Smith a few years ago in Defender Magazine. He wrote, “What is hell – 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 could not save them! He did all he could. He failed.” (Copied from Five Points of Calvinism – Beck) Do you see it? This man’s theory of a Conditional Election results in a theory of a god of impunity. If he fails, he is *not* almighty. Unconditional Election on the other hand, declares that a God who has limitless power, limitless wisdom and knowledge *cannot* fail. Omniscience, omnipotence and failure *cannot* exist in the same God and should not be mentioned in the same system of doctrine. The truth is – God is not trying to save each and every individual of Adam’s race without exception. He is too wise to *try* to do something which he knows he will not do. After all, it is God who saves.

Conditional Election causes its advocates to make ridiculous statements such as – “God is *trying* to save you, but you will not *let* him” or “God has done all he can to save you, now you must do the rest” or “Please do not *disappoint* God”. An Almighty and Allwise God who tries and fails! One whose acts of benevolent grace must be let or allowed by the desires and acts of unregenerate men! A God who is *disappointed* because men will not cooperate with him is a contradiction! It cannot be so.

EXCERPTS from REGENERATION & CONVERSION

W.E. Best

“The religious world is staggering under the influence of a depraved intellectualism which denies God His right to operate, among the peoples of the world, as He pleases. No one can believe in free will and free grace at the same time. These subjects are as diametrically opposed as light and darkness, heaven and hell, or a holy God and an unholy man. To believe in free will dethrones the sovereign God; to believe in free grace dethrones depraved man. Who is on the throne in your concept of salvation?”

The most familiar chapter in the Bible on the new birth is John, chapter three. Christ uncompromisingly asserted the need of regeneration. ***The new birth is absolutely necessary because: (1) God is holy.*** His holiness gives beauty and honor to all His other attributes. God is essentially holy; therefore, He is immutably holy. If man is to have intercourse with the holy God; he must be regenerated, by the Holy Spirit, and thus become holy in the imputed and imparted righteousness of Jesus Christ. ***(2) Man is unholy.*** He is corrupt and sinful throughout. Natural man is totally unable to do anything spiritually good. He is dead in sin and his will is enslaved to his evil nature. Man, by nature, can no more live in the presence of God than he can live on the moon, Mercury, or Neptune. I purposely referred to the moon. Someone may say, ‘The astronauts lived on the moon’. Yes, but they were unable to live without the atmosphere of earth to sustain them; even so, men cannot live in God’s presence without possessing the holy atmosphere of heaven. ***(3) Jesus Christ died on the cross to save His people.*** He did not die in vain. The transgressions He bore were those of His people; the wounds and death He suffered were His. Therefore, Jesus Christ suffered vicariously for unregenerate people the Father had given Him. His substitutionary suffering provided redemption to be applied by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. ***(4) The Word of God constantly affirms it.*** Unregenerate people are spiritually blind, deaf, dumb, and dead (page 3)”.

“The magicians who withstood Moses are named by Paul. ‘Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith’ (**II Timothy 8:8**). A counterfeit miracle is a ‘lying wonder and sign’ (**II Thessalonians 2:9**). Its object is to teach and accredit a lie. Thus, Jannes and Jambres imitated, as far as possible, the miracles of Moses. Just as these deceivers withstood Moses, so do the self-loving and pleasure-seeking professors of Christianity resist the truth. They would not think of being without a form of godliness because this is the best way to cover their deception. Paul warns against such false apostles. ‘For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light’ (**II Corinthians 11:13-14**). Depraved man must look, not to miracles but to the grace of God for saving faith. ‘For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God’ (**Ephesians 2:8**).”

“The mere fact that a teacher works wonders and signs is no proof that he is come from God. The commendation by Nicodemus was not so complimentary after all, since lying wonders and signs were performed by false teachers.”

“There is great danger of one being misled by the sound of certain Biblical expressions, without understanding their true meaning. I shall give several examples: (1) The Scriptures represent God as omnipotent, yet there are some things He cannot do. He cannot lie, be deceived, or go back on His promise. Omnipotence, therefore, does not mean that God can do everything; but He can do all that does not involve self-contradiction. (2) The Word of God states that Jesus Christ, in dying for His people, took their infirmities, and bare their sicknesses (**Matthew 8:17**). All that some sincere, but deceived, souls see in this verse is that Jesus Christ carried all the physical infirmities of people into His Calvary experience. Thus, their concept of physical healing is a faulty as their view of spiritual healing. If Jesus Christ stood in the place of the sick, as He stood in the place of the sinner, our sicknesses would be far removed from us as our sins. Christ’s atoning work is absolutely perfect and finished – Godward – so that He is the propitiation for our sins, but its application to our bodies remains yet to be accomplished (**II Corinthians 4:16; Romans 8:23; Philippians 3:21**). (3) The Bible says that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (**II Corinthians 5:19**), while the same Book declares there are many appointed to eternal destruction. Thus, all men of the world are not reconciled to God. Only believers are reconciled to God. (4) God’s Word says that Christ died for all; it also states that He died for only some – His church, His people, His sheep. That all men have received some benefit from the death of Christ cannot be denied. His death has served as a dam, or barrier, but it is salvation to those for whom Christ died (**II Peter 3:9, 15**). (5) The Word of God invited men to come to Jesus Christ; but the Bible nowhere implies that natural man, unaided and undrawn, can come to Christ. These are only a few examples of Scriptures often misunderstood (Page 8)”.

Regeneration Presupposes Depravity

“Man’s inability to recover himself is vividly portrayed in **Ezekiel 16**. The helpless infant, exposed in the field would die without help from some other source. Israel is represented under the figure of a woman, who was taken when she was a forsaken and helpless baby, made vulnerable to the vultures of the world. The Lord found her in her own blood – her natural, lost condition. He entered into covenant for Israel, and made her His own.”

“The covenant preceded Israel’s deliverance, just as God’s choice of His own in Christ Jesus precedes the provision and application of redemption. The reason religionists frown upon this fact is because it dethrones them as gods. The statement, ‘We need to let God be God in our lives’ is ridiculous. What is man? Is he a god greater than the God of creation, providence, and redemption? Christians should be afraid of anyone who thinks unworthy thoughts about God. David said, ‘What is man, that thou art mindful of him?...’ (**Psalms 8:4**). It has been said that man is nothing more than a little air and dust tempered together, a pile of dust and puff of wind with no solidity in either”.

“God’s eternal purpose is ridiculed by uninformed people. Some advocate, with fleshy fervor, that calling precedes God’s eternal election. This is as logical as a contractor building a house before he has the plans drawn (page 13)”.

“There was a debate some years ago between a liberal preacher and an evangelical minister. The liberal’s subject was entitled, ‘Fanning the spark into a flame.’ He taught that there is, in every person, a Divine spark which only needs fanning by good influence and education.

‘If the spark is given proper attention’ he said, ‘it will burn into a blazing fire of good influence and works’. The evangelical minister took the position that there is no Divine spark in natural man. Therefore, his rebuttal was ‘There is no spark to fan’. At the conclusion of the rebuttal address, the liberal preacher stood up and said, ‘I commend you on your reply, but I have a question to ask you. Do you believe that man has the ability, in himself, to either accept or reject the gospel? The evangelical minister, without a moment’s hesitation, replied, ‘Yes, I surely do’. The liberal then asked, ‘What is this ability in man?’. The evangelical replied, ‘That ability is man’s free will’. Then the liberal smiled and said, ‘You call it free will, and I call it a spark of goodness’. Actually, there was no difference between these men when it came to the subject of man’s condition by nature. They both denied depravity, which is essential to the proper concept of regeneration and conversation and conversion (page 15)”.

Regeneration Precedes the Sanctifying – Influence of the Gospel

“All men are, by nature, spiritually blind; but if men had their just punishment, they would all be physically blind. Only an act of mercy prevents all from being born physically blind. The complaint should not be why this man was born blind, but why were any of us born with physical sight? It has been said that sentences of providence are very long, and we must read a great way before we shall understand”.

“It is vain to say that men are regenerated by the power of the gospel. The brightness of the noonday sun has no effect on a blind man any more that the flickering of a match. Nicodemus stood in the presence of not only *Incarinate* but *spoken* truth. He saw neither the Person of Jesus Christ, nor the truth of what He was saying. ‘But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God’ (**I Corinthians 2:7-10**) (page 21)”.

Regeneration is a Necessity

“Some important distinctions between regeneration and conversion are:

1. Regeneration is the *immediate act of God*, in imparting the principle of life; conversion is the *act of man*, by the power of the indwelling Spirit, in repenting and believing. ‘... *turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented, and after that I was instructed...*’ (**Jeremiah 31:18-19**). ‘...*helped them much which had believed through grace*’ (**Acts 18:27**). Since regeneration is presented as the act of the sovereign God, it is never presented as a duty of the sinner. The demands of the gospel, upon sinners, are limited to the terms of repentances and faith ‘*Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*’ (**Acts 20:21**)”.

2. “Regeneration is a *single act of God*, and is never repeated; conversion is the beginning of a holy life, but there are *many conversion experiences* throughout one’s earthly pilgrimage. The *position* of the believer in Jesus Christ, by virtue of regeneration, can be neither increased nor decreased by anything in the recipient. (**Hebrews 10:10, 14; Colossians 3:1-4**). *Condition* of the Christian life, however, will vary according to one’s conversion experiences. (**Luke 22:31-34**).”
3. “Regeneration is not in itself an experience; conversion is a series of Christian experiences. As there is no consciousness at the time of conception in the womb, so regeneration is not a matter of consciousness to its recipient. A person knows nothing of the beginning of his existence. Conversion, however, is always an awareness of what is taking place; therefore, it is experimental. Repentance and faith are experiences known to the person born of God”.
4. “Regeneration is the cause of an individual turning to the Lord; conversion is the regenerate person actually turning. God does not repent and believe for man, but He enables man to do what he could not do by nature”.
5. “Regeneration is the Lord opening the heart; conversion is the person, whose heart has been opened, turning to Jesus Christ in faith and following the Lord in baptism (**Acts 16:14-15**)”.
6. “Regeneration is a once for all cleansing; conversion is the continuation of the renewal which began in regeneration. (**John 13:10; I Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5**)”.
7. “In regeneration we have God’s power, the power of the indwelling Spirit; in conversion the power is not of us but in us by God’s sovereign choice. An understanding of this Biblical fact will remove all pride and boasting from preachers and other Christians about their successes (page 34)”.

Regeneration is the Creative Act of God

“Satan is the author of confusion. Confusion, however, must exist that the approved may be made manifest. *‘For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you’* (**I Corinthians 11:19**). God has been pleased to make known a method in which His presence is brought into the souls of men. How is His presence to be brought into should of those chosen in Jesus Christ, that is, those for whom the Son of God died? God’s initial presence is affected by being born of the Spirit. As the ordinances of God are nothing more than empty sepulchers, apart from order; so, the series of acts, in redemption’s application are devoid of God’s presence unless they are performed in proper sequence. Now, so you see the serious error of placing repentance, faith, baptism, and works before the beginning of life? This would be as foolish as placing a five-course meal before a dead man (page 35)”.

(“From *Regeneration and Conversion* by W.E. Best. Copyright 1975 by Baker Book House and used by permission.”)

L – LIMITED ATONEMENT

The doctrine of the limited atonement has many adversaries, but it is my opinion that when one rightly understands the true definition of atonement he will understand that it must be limited. Atonement means satisfaction given for wrong doing – expiation. In simple terms it means that when the atonement for sin is made, it brings to oneness the two who were separated by sin. Atonement, broken up, is spelled at-one-ment. It also carries with it the idea of a cover for sin.

This atonement (covering for sin – reconciliation) comes to believers “*through Christ*” and “*by Christ*” and abounds unto *many*” (**Romans 5:11, 15**). Whomsoever’s sins were *atoned for* by the work of Christ will be covered in the day of judgement and forever (**Hebrews 9:12**). Because, you see, Limited Atonement is also called Particular Redemption. Redemption is precious doctrine. To redeem is to *buy back*, to *pay the redemption price*, etc. We must either accept the idea of a Limited Atonement or believe that Gods power is limited. The idea of an impotent God should be repugnant to anyone who has been born again, and so it is. The omnipotence and omniscience of God are so evident as we read the Bible that no further argument needs to be made here. So, God, being omnipotent, will see to it that Christ is not shortchanged in the end. All for whom he paid the price – redeemed, whose sins He covered in His blood, whom he reconciled to God by His death (**Romans 5:10**), will be included in those represented by those whiterobed ones who sing his praises in Heaven (**Revelation 5:9**), and no others, angels or men, are included in his redemptive work. At this point some will vociferously proclaim “All men have faith and can believe in the atoning work of Christ.” The apostle Paul dogmatically proclaimed “*All men have not faith*” (**II Thessalonians 3:2**). If you have faith to believe God’s word it was imputed to you as a gift from the merciful God of heaven (**Ephesians 2:8-10**), Jesus said that some cannot understand – cannot hear his message (**John 8:43**). “*Ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep*” (**John 10:26**). You see – the atoning, reconciling, sin covering blood of Jesus was given for all his *sheep* (**John 10:11, 15**). Do you *hear* what the Good Shepherd said? His sheep *hear* what he says – and they believe what he says (**John 10:27**). It may sound repugnant to one who is a *lost sheep*, whose ears have not yet been circumcised by the knife of the Spirit, and who has not yet passed through the metamorphic change spoken of in our butterfly parable. And it may be repulsive to that one who is not a sheep in any sense of the word. But to those of us who have been *caused* to approach unto him, drawn by the cords of love (**Romans 2:4**), *granted* repentance (**Acts 11:18**), quickened by the spirit (**Ephesians 2:8**), and by faith have reckoned ourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God by Jesus Christ (**Romans 6:11**), the “L” for Limited Atonement is sweet nectar from a beautiful flower, the tulip.

Limited Atonement is the point of doctrine concerning Gods amazing grace that has plagued me most. On many occasions, I, like so many others, wanted to say that if Christ did not make atonement for all of Adams fallen race, he acted unfairly toward some. This, of course, could not be the case. Such reasoning would indicate that we must believe that God owes man something. But, do you not see, that if God owed man something, saving him would not be “of grace”. To pay a person what you owe him is not an act of grace but of debt. God owes no man anything. His acts of mercy proceed from his benevolent heart not because of a deserving man.

MAY WE LOOK AT A PARABLE

A certain man had three sons. All of the four men were rational, responsible men living in the same country. They were subject to the same laws. One day they were discussing their displeasure concerning the President and entered into a conspiracy to assassinate the President. Before the plot was carried out, they were apprehended, brought to trial, found guilty of conspiring to assassinate the President, and sentenced to life terms in prison. The President decides because of reasons known only to himself, or for no reason at all, (he, of course had reasons but was not compelled by any law to explain what his reasons were) to pardon the father and one of the sons. He showed mercy upon two of the four men who were equally guilty and under the same sentence. Can you imagine the wife of the father and mother of the pardoned son accusing the President of acting unfairly in showing mercy upon her husband and her son? Do the two guilty sons who were passed by have any reason to complain? The President did them no injustice. He simply showed mercy upon whom he would and passed by the others, leaving them to their just reward inflicted upon them because of their guilt. The mother and wife nor the two sons who were passed by have any just cause to accuse the President of unfairness. He acted "*according to his own good will and pleasure*" – showing mercy on whom he would (**Romans 9:18**).

THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF THE PARABLE

The Bible reveals to us a guilty human race equally depraved, guilty and justly condemned. Dare anyone say God was unjust if he chose to redeem some from among the equally undeserving? Or shall we on the other hand praise him for his mercy toward some? I choose to do the latter.

I – IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

Please do not allow anyone to pour vinegar into your nectar by talking of *resisting the spirit of God*. We are not discussing an Irresistible Spirit. We know that the *uncircumcised at heart* always resist the Spirit (**Acts 7:51**). We are dealing with God's grace. You know that whereas you had always before resisted the Spirit of God; "*But after that the kindness (grace) and love of God appeared*" (**Titus 3:4-7**), it was presented in such a lovely and loving way and pointed out as your only hope and "*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*" (**II Corinthians 5:6**) shined upon you, it was irresistible. Amen. His call in grace is effectual. By Irresistible Grace we do not mean that God *forces* us, as some say, to be saved against our will. Nor do we mean that he changes us into *puppets on a string*. Neither do we mean that we become mechanical *robots*. What we do mean is that in our quickened and convicted condition we are made *willing* in the day of his power (**Psalms 110:3**). And if we are "*ordained to eternal life*" (**Acts 13:48**), we are His people covered by the atoning work of the *Lamb of God* and our names written in his book of life from the foundation of the world (**Revelation 17:8; 13:8**). "*He calleth his sheep by name (John 10:3), they hear his voice (John 10:27), and he gives them eternal life*" (**v. 28**). No force is applied. No arm twisting. No brow beating. The Shepherd effectually calls, and the sheep, hearing His loving voice, obediently follow.

I can think of two things which would cause a *butterfly* to sip nectar from the tulips. (1) His nature compels him to desire it. (2) He, it seems to me, knows he would perish without it. This being true, the butterfly is not forced, against his will, to do so but willingly and **voluntarily** drinks of that which his *nature* causes him to desire.

As one reflects on what he knows to be a fact, the Total Depravity of mankind as taught in the Word of God, he can visualize a cold and hungry man lost in a frozen forest. In the darkness of the forest, he thinks he sees a light. Moving closer, he sees a house. A door opens. The figure of a man stands in the lighted doorway. Behind him is a warm fire in the fireplace. A warm meal is prepared and the table is set. The man in the doorway bids him come in to dine and be warmed. What would the cold and hungry man do? It is foolish to ask. Isn't it? Certainly, he would obey the call to come in. What he sees is *irresistible*, "So it is with everyone that is born of the Spirit." In his *depraved and helpless* condition, he is awakened, quickened by God's Spirit, *effectually called and joyfully* receives Jesus Christ as His Saviour and Lord. Such was the case with each of us who by God's grace have been saved. In our lost and depraved condition, we were that cold and hungry man, and the world in which we live, the frozen forest. The light we saw was the light given us through the power of God, and the figure in the lighted doorway, Jesus Christ hanging on the Cross and dying for our sins. Having been saved by His grace, we now enter that warm house and have fellowship with him now and eternally. Brother, sister, isn't this the way it was when God quickened you and drew you by his grace?

P – PRESERVATION and PERSEVERANCE

Jude 1:1 describes those who have been sanctified by God the Father as being *preserved in Jesus Christ*. When something has been preserved, it has gone through a process that changes it from a perishable and perishing condition to a nonperishable condition. It is indeed preserved, it will never perish. Those who have been born of the Spirit and given repentance and faith in Jesus Christ shall never perish (**John 3:14-18; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 20:21**). Never! What a word – *not at any time nor under any condition perish – preserved, saved eternally* (**Hebrews 10:14; John 10:28**). It should be clear to anyone that the thing being preserved is acted upon – it is the receiver of the action.

We pluck our vegetables from the vine, wash them and begin the *preserving* process (left to themselves, they would perish). We cook them, sometimes under pressure, place them in a container and seal them. Because they are what they are, they cannot do this for themselves. If the *seal* is good, they are preserved. No external contaminant can harm it so long as the seal is intact. “So is everyone that is born of the Spirit”. The seal of God’s spirit is a good seal (**Ephesians 1:13**).

We preserve flesh of animals by a process known as curing it. This is done by several different methods. Sometimes we “salt” it. Or we may “smoke” it. There is a process by which the blood is removed and a preservative is injected. Much depends on what we plan to do with that which we have *preserved*.

In the Book of **Ephesians, Chapter 3, Verse 11**, the inspired writer speaks of God’s *eternal purpose* – which he purposed in Christ. In **Chapter 1, Verses 4 and 9**, he speaks of some who were chosen in Christ “*before the foundation of the world*”. He elected, chose them. He set them apart – sanctified them. He *knew* (had a special relationship with) them in Christ. (Please take time to read **Romans 8:29; II Thessalonians 2:13**).

God, in working out his eternal purpose, has chosen us in eternity (**Ephesians 1:4**), given us to Christ to redeem (**John 6:37; Isaiah 53:10-12**), provided a ransom (**Matthew 20:28**), effectually called and regenerated us in time (**Ephesians 3:7; I Thessalonians 2:13; II Timothy 1:9; II Peter 1:10; Titus 3:5**), quickened us and given us faith (**Ephesians 2:1-10**) and repentance (**Acts 11:18; II Timothy 2:25**), saved us by grace and through faith, and preserved us to fit into his purpose.

S – SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Either the God of the Bible is Sovereign, or he is no God worthy of our adoration and worship. By sovereign we mean independent and unlimited; accountable to no other; governed only by himself and doing as it pleases him. Avail yourself of a Young's Analytical Concordance and look under *please* and *pleasure*. You will find scriptures cited such as "when it pleased God," and "it pleased God to do this or that" (read **Galatians 1:15-16**; **Psalm 115:3**; **Psalm 135:6**; **Daniel 4:35**). When you understand that God is sovereign, you will not object to the fact that he has "*predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*" (**Ephesians 1:5**). Or that he predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his son (**Romans 8:29**). Nor will you object to having been created (an act of God's sovereign will) in Christ Jesus and before ordained, foreordained, ordained beforehand, to walk in good works (**Ephesians 2:10**).

Born again ones know that God's sovereignty chose to create Adam and his descendants to populate this earth. Should we question his right to sovereignly choose to create in Jesus those who dwell with him eternally? David mentions the blessedness of the man whom God *chooseth* (elects) and *causeth* (that which determines a change from one form to another without which the result would not have been) to approach unto God that he may dwell in God's courts, etc. (**Psalm 65:4**). Should the clay say to the potter, "*Why hast thou made me thus?*" (read **Romans 9:14-24**). Does not the Bible say that God loved one of Isaac's children and hated the other? And that was the case even before they were born? Was not that his sovereign prerogative? (**Romans 9:13**). Those who refuse to study these truths will tell you that God loves every one, but the Psalmist believed otherwise. "*Thou hatest all workers of iniquity*" (**Psalm 5:5**). No! No! It doesn't say he hates their works but loves the workers, now. Does it?

Oh, dear Reader, the flowers of God's grace are obnoxious to the Adam in us all. But to those who have been born of God, tulips should suit their nature very well because these flowers present a *sovereign God* on his throne extending a hand that is mighty to save, revealing himself through the pages of the Bible and his Son, Jesus Christ, to sinful man who is unworthy of any consideration from him. A careful consideration of which will cause us to sing:

"Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room;
When thousands made the wretched choice
And rather starve than come?"

'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced us in,
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."

Or as Anna Steel (1760) said it:

"How helpless guilty nature lies,
Unconscious of its load;

The heart, unchanged, can never rise
To happiness and God.

Can ought beneath a power divine
The stubborn will subdue?
'Tis thine, eternal Spirit, thine
To form the heart anew.

'Tis thine the passions to recall,
And upward bid them rise,
And make the scales of error fall
From reason's darkened eyes.

To chase the shades of death away,
And bid the sinner live;
A beam of heaven, a vital ray,
'Tis thine alone to give.

O, change the wretched hearts of men,
And give them life divine;
Then shall their passions and their powers,
Almighty Lord, be thine."

God Sovereignly chose to make a worm. He devised a plan by which that worm could be transformed into a butterfly. Otherwise the worm, left to actions controlled by his wormly nature, would have eventually been destroyed by some carnivorous creature, consumed by fire or crushed beneath the foot of another of God's creatures. He could never have soared above and away from those destructive forces. Neither could he have learned a way by which he could extract the nectar from the blooms of God's providing goodness. But God arranged and appointed it all. He Sovereignly chose to make, by transformation, worms into butterflies.

God Sovereignly chose to make Adam, knowing that he would fall. He Sovereignly devised a *way* by which Adam (man) could be born again. Left to himself, controlled only by his fallen nature, man would have been destroyed by the wages of sin and consumed by the fires of hell eternally. God Sovereignly devised a place, and elected some, in Christ, before the foundation of the world. He quickens and regenerates them in time, and calls them by his Grace. These were, or will be, *born again*, saved by grace through faith, enabled by divine nature to persevere till death, and by the Spirit that "raised up Jesus from the dead," be resurrected to eternally flit from flower to flower sipping nectar from the Flowers of God's Amazing Grace on the "Hillsides of Heaven."

Amen

LOOKING BACK

As we come to the end of our writing, some will say: “If I believed that, I would close my Bible and never preach again.” Others will make similar statements, like for example: “Well, then, let’s just close our schools, call home our missionaries, fold our hands and do nothing. God will save them anyway. Why preach at all?” My answer is, some say the same things about those who preach the “security of the saved.” “Just ‘get saved’ and do as you please,” they say. On each point they miss the mark. Those who really believe the doctrines taught in this book know the One who chose, predestinated, called, saved, justified and keeps them – the One who foreknew them “in Christ” before the world was made (**Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4**), and foreordained that they should be “*conformed to the image of His Son*” and “*walk in good works*” (**Ephesians 2:10**). It was He, incarnate, who said “go”. We can do no less.

Like Jeremiah of old who said; “*his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, (to abstain or desist from, to refrain from going, folding my hands and doing nothing) and I could not stay*” (**Jeremiah 20:9**). Did not Paul say, “*...for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel*” (**I Corinthians 9:16**)? Paul learned early in his dealings with that One that, “*It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*” (**Acts 9:5**).

It is with us as it was with Isaiah whom God had chosen and to whom God sent his mighty messengers. God sovereignly purged Isaiah’s lips and gave him a vision of the Lord of Hosts, the King of glory...a vision of himself...undone, depraved...a vision of a people who were without understanding, who could see but could not perceive, who were unconverted and unhealed. Isaiah could not forebear. He said, “*Here am I; send me*” (**Isaiah 6:8**). How long? (v. 11).

With Ezekiel, it was even worse... “dead bones very dry”. He did not understand how it would help nor how many would hear, but he said, because God said go, “*O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord*” (**Ezekiel 37:4**). Ezekiel knew he was only an instrument in the hands of the mighty God. Yes, God could have spoken to the “very dry bones” and said “live” and it would have been so; but he gave Ezekiel that task. Ezekiel preached and left the transforming act in the hands of God. And so, we go. We preach. God transforms “children of wrath” (worms), and calls them “cons of God”, (butterflies) (**Ephesians 1:1-3; I John 3:1**). It is the prior transforming act of God that enables men to hear the gospel savingly.

Those who say, “Well, if I believed that, etc.,” may be among those who believe that God uses man out of necessity, and that God’s purpose would be thwarted if man refused to “Let God have his way”. This is not the truth, however, because God will “have his way” as Nebuchadnezzar discovered after he had been “*driven from among men, dwelt with the beasts of the field, had eaten grass like oxen, his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers; and his nails like bird’s claws*” (**Daniel 4:32-33**). Then he said, as all who claim to know God should say “*He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand,*” etc. (v. 35).

Man should know that God does not “need” him. Neither does God “need” anything from man. It is man, like the helpless worm, who needs God.

When God clothed Adam and Eve, he did not consult either of them. He could have reached down into 1978, lifted an expensive garment from the racks of the Finest Men’s Clothing Store, and taken his choice from the The Finest Ladies Fashion Shop, but he did not. Neither did he ask either of them to make a selection. He sovereignly chose the garments (skins), and clothed them. He did not even ask their permission, nor did he plead with them to put on what he offered. Let it be forever settled. God did what he did simply because he chose to do it. God did it all. The outline of Ephesians chapter one will help the serious reader to come to the right conclusions concerning God’s grace. See **Ephesians 1:1-14**. Paul was what he was “by the will of God,” not by his own will.

- v. 2. Grace and peace was “from God”.
- v. 3. God the Father “blessed us with spiritual blessings in Christ”.
- v. 4. It was God who “hath chosen us”.
- v. 5. It was “according to his good pleasure”. God “predestinated” us.
- v. 6. “His grace” and “he made us accepted”.
- v. 7. “Redemption through his blood”.
- v. 8. “He hath abounded toward us”.
- v. 9. What we know of his will was “according to his good pleasure,” and it was he who purposed it in himself”.
- v. 10. It is God who will “gather us”.
- v. 11. Our inheritance is “according to the purpose of him” and the “counsel of his own will”.
- v. 12. It is for “his glory”.
- v. 13. It is God who seals us.
- v. 14. It is for the “praise of his glory”.

Do you see it? It is all of God. Notice that the blessings of God’s grace come to us “in and through Christ”. This chapter is loaded with “in Christ Jesus...from the Lord Jesus Christ...in Christ...in him...by Jesus Christ...his grace...his glory...his calling...his inheritance...his power...his mighty power...his own right hand...his body...him that filleth all”.

How humbling are the doctrines of grace! We dare not boast, but with Isaac Watts, we take our place and “survey the wonderous cross on which the Price of Glory died – our richest gain we count but loss and pour contempt on all our pride”.

Grace, grace, God’s grace. How amazing! How glorious! How humbling!

Amen