

Election for Dummies



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It all began with “Dos for Dummies” (1991) and now we have a “dummies” series for just about anything and everything – Gardening for Dummies, Fishing for Dummies, Electric for Dummies, Wallpapering for Dummies” and so on. Well, why not a brief study on “Election for Dummies!” Of course, the title is not designed to insult you but enable you to lighten up and perhaps see some wonderful truth about God’s elective and saving program which you have not considered before. The teaching of God’s sovereign election should always align itself with the rest of the revelation of truth that is found in the Bible, such as man’s choices, which in some mysterious and yet marvelous way occur within the parameters of God’s eternal decrees (Isa. 14:24, 27).

Although brilliant men over the years have come to different conclusions on this subject, we must remember the old adage: “Brilliant men confuse things brilliantly.” We must allow God (not Augustine or Calvin) to work out His sovereign program in the way He has designed it and determined to bring it to pass.

Isaiah 14:24 says:

“The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.”

Psalms 115:3 adds:

“But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

I. God's sovereign plan begins with foreknowledge.

1 Peter 1:2

“Elect (God's choice) according to the foreknowledge (God's foreknown - ordained purpose) of God the Father ...”

This means that God's elective choice regarding salvation was based upon His foreknowledge.

Acts 2:23

“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel (ordained will – God's choice) and foreknowledge of God (God's foreknown - ordained purpose), ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

Romans 8:29

“For whom he did foreknow (God's foreknown - ordained purpose), he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

Romans 11:2

“God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew” (God's foreknown - ordained purpose).

What did God know that caused His election or selection of people? Was it something He knew that people would do within His plan of salvation (their choice of Him?) or something that He knew He would accomplish with His plan of salvation (God's choice of them?). Some people teach that God looked down through the corridors of time and chose people on the basis of their choice of Christ and His plan of salvation. But this is not what these verses mean. If foreknowledge did mean this, then election would be more of a divine *reaction* instead of a divine *selection* in past eternity. God elected on the basis of His choice – not the choice of others.

Since the word “foreknowledge” is linked to God's election or His choice in 1 Peter 1:2 and elsewhere (Acts 2:23), it would suggest that the word foreknowledge in salvation contexts has to do with God's eternal purpose (Rom. 8:28-30) to love and save a specific group of people that He foreknew to be part of His ordained saving plan – those that “are known of God” (Gal. 4:9) in view of His past elective purpose

(Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9). Election (God's choice) and foreknowledge (the basis of election) have to do with what God has willed and determined - not what man has chosen or determined to do within God's purpose. In short, God chose us (John 15:13) so we could choose Him (John 7:37); we did not choose Him so He could choose us! The general teaching about election is that God in eternity past did not choose anyone on the basis of anything that they would do (Rom. 9:11; 2 Tim. 1:9), but God chooses according to His own purpose (Romans 8:28-30).

Questions:

- ◆ Are you an election dummy?
- ◆ What do the words "foreknowledge" "foreknow" and "foreknew" mean?
- ◆ Did God choose people on the basis of their choice of Him?
- ◆ Could we choose God without Him first choosing us?

II. God's sovereign plan results in election (1 Pet. 1:2).

Election means that God makes a choice to save people and allows them to be part of a great salvation plan that was devised in eternity past.

1 Peter 1:2

"Elect (God's choice to save us) according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..."

1 Thessalonians 1:4

"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God" (God's choice to save us).

The Bible teaches that God chose a group of people to be saved in eternity past and this selection was based upon His foreknown purpose to save this elect body. God's choice is centered upon His will and purpose and not the will and determination of others.

Ephesians 1:4

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

2 Timothy 1:9

"Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

2 Thessalonians 2:13

“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”

Titus 1:1-2

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”

The expressions “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), “before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2), and “from the beginning” (2 Thess. 2:13) all point to God’s past purpose to elect a group of people to salvation.

Romans 8:29-30 adds further light:

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

These verses are also referencing something that occurred in eternity past. Before the earth and universe was ever created God foreknew a group of people that He intended to save and purposed to predestinate them, call them, justify them and glorify them. All of this was planned and sealed by God’s sovereign will in eternity past.

“He called me long before I heard,
before my sinful heart was stirred,
but when I took Him at His word,
forgiven, He lifted me.”

Some teach that Christ was the only one elected (not people) and that people only become elected in Christ at the time of their salvation (1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 3:17). But this conclusion does not align itself with the clearly revealed facts and statements of Scripture. We were actually chosen “In Christ” (Eph. 1:4) before the creation of the earth and universe as we know it, in the eternal ages of time. This was all “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:11).

When studying election, we must always remember that the Bible never speaks of any person being “non-elect.” There is not one reference in the Bible to “non-elect” people. God only speaks of choosing a redeemed group of lost people but He never speaks of choosing to damn to hell a lost group of people. God always chooses people to salvation but does not choose to damn them to hell.

2 Peter 3:9

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Questions:

- ◆ Does the Bible speak of an elective purpose?
- ◆ When does God choose people to salvation?
- ◆ Are there any non-elect people?
- ◆ Is it God’s desire and choice that a specific group of people should be damned to hell?

III. God’s sovereign plan has the goal of predestination.

Ephesians 1:11

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

Election pictures God’s choice of people to salvation. But predestination (“to decide beforehand”) is an advance on the salvation of the elect body. It means that God determined ahead of time that all who would be saved (a corporate body of believers) would receive a glorious inheritance of salvation which includes Heaven, Christlikeness, and all the glories that He has planned for this people.

God prearranged or preplanned the glorious inheritance of His elect body of believers. When we come to faith in Christ and enter the elect body, which was chosen before the foundation of the world, we can be absolutely sure that we will

never lose our salvation, since we were predestined to possess the blessings of salvation from eternity past (Rom. 8:28-30)!

Ephesians 1:5 declares:

“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”

This means that God determined ahead of time that all who would be saved (the corporate body) would also be adopted into His family as sons (Rom. 8:15). He could have saved us without making us His sons, but He chose to do both!

We must remember that nowhere in the Bible does it state that some people are predestined to hell and damnation. The Bible never once teaches this. Double predestination (some are predestinated to hell) is the assumption of some Calvinists but it is not taught in the Bible. The Bible teaches that God prepared hell for the devil and his angels – not people.

Matthew 25:41

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

God foreknows the elect body, chooses the elect body (1 Pet. 1:2), predestines them to a glorious inheritance (Eph. 1:11. Rom. 8:29) and apparently places their names in the book of life (Rev. 17:8). All of this was done in eternity past but none of this overrides the human freedom or choice man has regarding his eternal destiny (John 3:15-16). This is because God has interwoven together both His choice and man’s choice in this magnificence saving plan (Rom. 11:33) of the ages!

When a person places their faith in Christ, they become part of the elect body, or community of believers that God has chosen to save, and can therefore know that God planned, purposed, and prerecorded their name in the book of life in eternity past. What an amazing plan. What amazing grace!

Questions:

- ◆ What does the word predestination mean?
- ◆ What future did God determine or decide for His elect people?
- ◆ Has God predestinated any people to hell?
- ◆ For what purpose was hell created?

IV. God's sovereign plan reveals that God elects people on a corporate basis.

The Bible teaches that God elected in the past, but it was on a corporate or community basis. Corporate election flows out of past election. Paul and Peter stress the thought of election when viewing the church as a corporate entity (Eph. 1:4-5, 11; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; 2:9; 5:13). God has chosen "us" (a collective group of people – the body of Christ or Church) to be saved in the past and then brings the fulfillment of His purpose to pass in the present as people come to faith in Christ. Election pertains to a community of people that are called a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9).

Election is primarily a corporate concept ("the elect's sakes" – 2 Tim. 2:10 and "elected together with you" – 1 Pet. 5:13). This was the same concept revealed in the Old Testament ("Israel mine elect" - Isa. 45:4). Any passages that may suggest *individual* election (2 John 1; 2 John 13; John 6:37) naturally find their fulfillment in the greater context of the election of a community of believers. Individual believers are simply part of the elect body ("holy nation" – 1 Pet. 2:9) God chose to save. We should view individual election through the lens of corporate election.

Election is always portrayed as an open and growing body of people that God wants to save. Election is on a corporate basis (all can enter God's elective program by faith) and only this view of election provides a correct understanding and alignment with God's love for all people (John 3:16), unlimited atonement (Christ's death extends to everybody – John 1:29), and human freedom of choice (Rev. 22:17).

Jesus was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), but it's equally true that a corporate group of people were chosen to salvation "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9) and were given the promise of eternal life, as God's elect, before the world began (Titus 1:1-2). These subjects of sovereignty, or group of people that God has chosen to save (Rom. 8:28-30), can never override God's other sovereign purpose, which was to include a man's freedom of choice and response to God's initiatives (Rev. 22:17).

An honest assessment of Scripture will verify this to be true, since God pleads with all men to express faith in His Son Jesus Christ (Romans 10:13; John 1:12; 3:16). God has allowed human choices in some way to enter His elective plan and purpose. Although God's eternal saving plan was decreed upon God's choice (John 15:13; Rom. 11:2; Eph. 1:4) this does not mean the implementation of this plan has

nothing to do with man's choice. God can in a remarkable way interweave man's volitional responses into His general elective purpose which was to save a group of elect people for His glory. What God has determined and chose to do in eternity past (save an elect body) comes to pass in eternity present as people are given opportunity to decide their eternal destiny.

In summary, the corporate group of people ("God's elect" - Rom. 8:33) that God foreknew ("whom he did foreknow" - Rom. 8:29) to save and be His children was according to His own predetermined choice and elective plan that was from the very beginning (2 Thess. 2:14) or which occurred in *eternity past*. This same collective group of people are then given the privilege to respond to His offer of salvation (John 3:16) in *eternity present* and become part of the elect body which He determined to save in eternity past (Rom. 8:29-30). It's these people (the corporate body) that were actually predestinated in eternity past to be like His Son Jesus Christ, called, justified (declared legally righteous in God's sight), and then given a glorified body in God's reckoning of things who "calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17).

The important thing to remember is that God has not chosen to save some people at the expense of others. He did not arbitrarily select some to salvation while bypassing or consigning the rest to hell (1 Tim. 2:4). The Bible never teaches that certain people are elected to damnation. Instead, it teaches that God loves everyone (John 3:16), wants to save everyone (John 1:29), and does not want to judge anyone in hell ("God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" - 2 Pet. 3:9).

Again, God's purpose was to prepare hell for the devil and his angels – not people (Matt. 25:41). We can conclude that God's corporate purpose in election (electing a body and community of saints to salvation – John 6:37, 39; 17:2, 9, 11-12, 24), which occurred in eternity past, does not override His other purposes in bringing people to salvation (free will, choice, reason). Corporate election aligns itself perfectly with God's entire plan in bringing sinners to Christ.

The fulfillment or coming to pass of God's elective program should be viewed as something that is open – not closed (Rev. 22:17). It's not the dreadful decree invented by Augustine and Calvin. All people can join God's chosen or elective body through faith in Christ. Election is God's plan and way of saving the nations (Mark 16:15). What God planned in the past comes to pass in eternity present as He saves

the elect body, which is a growing body that people join, when they place faith in Christ (“the faith of God’s elect” – Titus 1:1).

Questions:

- ◆ How does God elect people?
- ◆ Can any person become part of the elect body?
- ◆ Does God arbitrarily choose one person over another?
- ◆ Does God elect people to damnation?
- ◆ Is the fulfillment of God’s elective program closed or open?

V. God’s sovereign plan does not contradict the whole counsel of God’s truth (Acts 20:27).

This further explains why election should be viewed from a corporate perspective and why election is open to a growing community of people that respond to God’s initiative or offer of salvation.

- ⇒ God’s corporate elective program aligns with the Biblical truth that God loves everybody (John 3:16).
- ⇒ God’s corporate elective program aligns with the Biblical truth that Jesus died for everybody (Hebrews 2:9).
- ⇒ God’s corporate elective program aligns with the Biblical truth that God wants everybody to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9).
- ⇒ God’s corporate elective program aligns with the Biblical truth that God calls all men to salvation (Matt. 11:28; Rev. 22:17).
- ⇒ God’s corporate elective program aligns with the Biblical truth that the Spirit convicts all men without exception (John 16:8).
- ⇒ God’s corporate elective program aligns with the Biblical truth that the Father wants to draw all men to Christ without exception (John 12:32).
- ⇒ God’s corporate elective program aligns with the Biblical truth that man has freedom of choice (“whosoever will may come” - Rev. 22:17).
- ⇒ God’s corporate elective program aligns with the Biblical truth that man can resist God’s saving call upon his life (Acts 7:51; John 5:40).
- ⇒ God’s corporate elective program aligns with the Biblical truth that man can exercise his own faith: “your faith” (Luke 7:50), “his faith” (Rom. 4:5), and “their faith” (Matt. 9:2) with the aid of the Spirit’s work upon his heart (2 Thess. 2:13).

⇒ God's corporate elective program aligns itself with the Biblical truth that God is a God of order (1 Cor. 14:40) – not disorder. He never lies (Titus 1:2), His Word is true, and without any contradiction (John 17:17). Since God loves everyone, wants to save everyone, and sent His son to die for everyone; He created a general and collective program for electing people, which everyone can enter, as they respond to His initiatives upon their hearts.

Some four point Calvinists who reject limited atonement (Christ died for only the elect) conclude that Christ loves everyone (John 3:16), died for everyone (Heb. 2:9) and wants all to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9). At the same time, they deny that God has provided an open, elective program for all of lost humanity, in order to save the nations (Matt. 28:19). This kind of reasoning results in a theological contradiction but it is a manmade theological tension that the Bible does not create or support.

God allows a large class of people (“whosoever will” – Rev. 22:17) to enter His elective program today and become part of a collective community of people He has chosen to bless. Someone simplified it by saying: “The whosoever will’s are the elect.” The “whosoever wills” (Rev. 22:17) are the very ones who become part of God’s corporate elective program and the “whosoever wons” (John 5:40; Luke 13:34) are the many that are called (Matt. 22:14), but who refuse to respond to God’s universal offer of salvation (Matt. 11:28) and call upon their souls (Acts 7:51).

In short, God brings His elective purposes to pass in eternity present as people come to faith in Christ. Those who express faith in Christ become part of the elect body and are called “the elect” (Titus 1:1; Rom. 8:33), which takes us back to eternity past, when God chose to save this corporate body of believers by His grace (2 Tim. 1:9).

We read elsewhere (Rom. 9:22-23) that God prepares or fits the elect group of people for Heaven during this life, prior to their death, while at the same time He fits or prepares the unsaved (those who reject His elective purposes) to hell by confirming these people in their own choice, unbelief, and sin (Rom. 1:26, 28). This will be dealt with in our next point.

Questions

- ◆ Is there a manmade contradiction or tension between election and free will?
- ◆ How does God bring about His elective purpose?

- ◆ In what ways does corporate election fit into the rest of God's saving plan?
- ◆ Who are the "whosoever wills?"

VI. God's sovereign plan does not create people for hell.

We begin with Romans 9:13 and 20-21 which reference what takes place on earth. They speak of EARTHLY destinies.

God declares in Romans 9:13:

"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Paul is quoting from the book of (Malachi 1:1-4). This is a statement in relation to God's choice regarding Jacob's placements and the birthright blessings that he inherited from God. This is NOT talking about God choosing to be merciful to some lost sinners and saving them, while not showing mercy to other sinners, and bypassing them in order to consign them to hell. This is because God wants to shower His saving mercy upon all people (Rom. 11:32; 9:22).

God's "hatred" for Esau was seen in His rejecting Esau for the line of promise through which the Messiah would come with all the Abrahamic Covenant blessings. Hatred in this sense is not an ethical hatred but relative to a higher or priority choice (Matt. 6:24; John 12:25). This is speaking about God's choice between Jacob and Esau to bring about His covenant blessings upon the Jewish race. It has nothing to do with the matter of their individual salvation, but which son would be in the promised line of blessing, through which the Messiah and covenant blessings would come. God did not hate Esau as a person, nor did he hate Esau's soul, and predetermine to damn him to hell, as some hyper Calvinists assume. God loves people; He does not hate people (John 3:16). God did NOT hate Esau in a damnation sense, but a priority sense, choosing Jacob to be in the line of Christ.

Romans 9:20-21 continues to speak of EARTHLY destinies: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour (representative of Moses and the children of Israel), and another unto dishonour? (representative of Pharaoh and the Egyptians).

Here we discover that God, like a potter, can and does direct the events and outward circumstances of people's lives (Prov. 21:1) to bring about His sovereign

purposes regarding the earthly vocations and destinies of people during their lifespan or allotted time on earth. Of course, God is not some kind of great puppet master in the sky who arbitrarily creates people to a place of honor or dishonor without interacting with the lives and hearts of people (Isa. 55:6). Furthermore, people are always directly responsible for their choices and actions – not God (Acts 2:23). Nevertheless, God brings about His overall *earthly* purpose and plan (Isa. 24:14), which is connected with the lives of people, by interacting with their choices.

Romans 9:22-23 now turns to ETERNAL destinies:

“What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.”

Paul now moves from earthly destinies to eternal destinies. But there is no change in the way God brings about His saving purpose with people who are living on earth. He chooses to intersect and interact with human choices (Matt. 11:28). In verses 22-23 Paul now applies God’s election or choice to the eternal destinies of people. He transitions from the earthly experiences of people to the eternal destinies of people.

The previous Potter illustration (Rom. 9:21) is now applied to God’s sovereignty in the salvation of people. The entire potter illustration is teaching that God has the authority to choose and shape *where* people should be placed in life (earthly vocations), *when* people should be saved (during this life), *why* people should be saved (to fit them for Heaven) and *what* happens to people who reject His saving call (prepared for judgment).

Tying Romans 9:21-23 together, Paul contrasts the “vessel of honor” (vs. 21) or “vessels of mercy” (vs. 23), those who are saved, with the “vessel of dishonor” (vs. 21) or “vessels of wrath” (vs. 23) which do not receive God’s saving mercy (the unsaved). In fact, Paul teaches that God in His sovereignty, as the divine Potter, has prepared some vessels for wrath or destruction in hell, while He prepared other vessels to receive His mercy and enter Heaven upon their death. This is what the expression “afore prepared” means (to prepare in advance).

Of course, strict Calvinism teaches that individual people are prepared in advance for salvation and hell in eternity past by the sovereign decree of God. It's true that God in eternity past has prepared and put a *plan* (decree) into motion whereby an elect or general group or community of people are destined to be saved (Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:29-30). At the same time, God also made preparations in this same general *plan* (decree) for an unsaved group to experience His eternal wrath and judgment whose "names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). This was God's general design, or His all-encompassing sovereign script, which He purposed even before the world was ever created. God has purposed a general *plan* to save and damn people *but He nowhere states He has arbitrarily purposed to save some people and damn other people to hell* (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4). This is not what Paul is talking about in Romans chapter nine.

The expression "afore prepared" (preparing in advance) is not teaching the same thing as being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). A community of people are *chosen* to be saved before the foundation of the world (2 Thess. 2:13), but they are not in any specific way *prepared* or made ready to enter Heaven until they are actually saved, which takes place during their earthly existence through "belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13). *The Calvinistic notion that people are actually saved and prepared to enter Heaven in eternity past is not Scriptural.* God's plan and goal was to CONFIRM the salvation of an elect, corporate, body in the past (Rom. 8:29-30); however, the bringing to pass of this plan takes place in the present, as people come to faith in Christ (Rom. 10:13; Rev. 22:17).

The flow of the context in Roman 9 has been dealing with God bringing about His purpose with the earthly lives of people (Esau, Jacob, Moses, children of Israel, Pharaoh, Egyptians). Since the previous verses have been dealing with earthly vocations and placements in life, the preparation for hell and Heaven is also dealing with people, while they are still living out their lives on earth. We must allow God to be the Potter, instead of John Calvin or John Owen. God, as the Potter, arranges the eternal destinies of individual people, only after they receive or reject His repeated offers of grace and mercy. This was certainly illustrated in the life of Pharaoh.

What Paul is teaching in Romans 9:22-23 is that God prepares or arranges the eternal destinies of people to either Heaven or hell before they pass from this life into the next. The expression "afore prepared" (Rom. 9:23) speaks of God preparing in advance the destinies of people (hell or Heaven) in relation to their response to

His saving initiatives and advancements while they are still living on earth. The elect group of people that God chose to salvation (Eph. 1:4) are prepared in advance to enter Heaven when they come to simple faith in Christ (John 3:15-16; 6:37-47).

One again, these verses in Roman 9 do not speak of God preparing individual people for Heaven or hell in past eternity. How could this be? No person can be prepared to enter Heaven until they are first saved which is something that occurs during their lifespan on earth (Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:13). Furthermore, no person could be actually *prepared* to spend eternity in hell before he or she has rejected God's offer of free grace and salvation in this life (Luke 13:3, 5; John 3:36). No person can be *prepared* to enter an eternity without Christ until they first reject the light which God gave them (John 12:36) during their lifetime on earth (Rom. 2:11-12). This is the clear and unmistakable teaching of Scripture (Luke 13:3, 5; John 3:36).

First, God prepares the unsaved for hell ("the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction") before they die. He does this by confirming unsaved people in their choice to remain in unbelief (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28; 2; Thess. 2:10-12) and blindness (2 Cor. 4:4). Pharaoh is a perfect illustration of this type of person. As a result, God condemns (John 3:18) and consigns these people to an endless eternity without Christ and Heaven (Matt. 23:33; 25:46; 2 Pet. 2:3; Psalm 9:17).

The expression "vessels of wrath" (looking back to the potter and clay illustration) are those people whose sins make them subject to God's wrath. They are prepared for destruction by their own sin, disobedience, and rebellion, and not by some arbitrary decree of God. Those who oppose God and refuse to believe the Gospel message are "prepared" for condemnation by God's decree in this life ("condemned already" - John 3:18; "the wrath of God abideth on them - John 3:36) and not by His decree in eternity past.

God's decree in Romans 2:5 declares: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Of course, God does not declare this in eternity past but only after a person rejects the light of revelation and grace during their life on this earth. It has been said that Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people (John 14:1-3) but hell is also a prepared place for prepared people who have rejected Jesus Christ as Savior ("reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" - 2 Pet. 2:9).

Second, God prepares “the vessels of mercy” for “glory” (an expression for Heaven and future spiritual blessings) before they die. This official preparation occurs when they come to faith in Christ (Rom. 8:1, 33-34). In other words, God prepares or fits people for Heaven by saving them out of their state of unbelief (Eph. 2:1-3) and providing them with eternal forgiveness and acceptance before God (“we shall be saved from wrath through him” - Rom. 5:9). The preparation occurs when a person places faith in Christ as Savior (Acts 16:31; 2 Tim. 2:10; Heb. 10:39).

The Potter illustration teaches one primary truth. It reminds us that God has created, arranged or molded a general script and all-encompassing plan together, regarding the earthly and eternal destinies of people. If people reject God’s saving plan, they are prepared for God’s wrath and judgment (“vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” - Rom. 9:23), *while they are still living on earth*, like Pharaoh and the Egyptians. However, if they embrace this saving plan, they are prepared for Heaven (“vessels of mercy” - Rom. 9:24), *while they are still alive on earth*, even as Moses and the Israelites were seen to be vessels of God’s mercy.

Within the immediate context, the illustration of clay (Rom. 9:21) and elsewhere the picture of spiritual death (Eph. 2:1-2) are not designed to teach that man cannot respond to God’s initiatives. Nor does the potter and clay illustration mean that God as the Potter creates some people to be damned to hell (the nonelect). These types of illustrations convey the simple truth that God is sovereign over the placements, power, and personal timing of one’s salvation (John 1:13; 3:8). However, God’s sovereignty does not override a person’s freedom of choice (John 6:37; 2 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:12). We are chosen but also free agents responsible for our decisions.

The sovereignty of God and free will of man are like two train tracks that intersect one another, or two ropes moving on a pulley system, which together bring about God’s glorious plan of salvation. God is directing the events of history and the lives of people, allowing for human interaction, but ultimately bringing about His eternal purpose to pass (Isa. 14:24; Eph. 1:11).

The “clay” and “dead” illustrations should not be overstressed since people are living and rational beings that possess personality, a human spirit, and are capable of making valid choices (“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD” - Isaiah 1:18). We must remember that the Bible teaches dead people can actually hear (John 5:25) and that clay can become a stumbling block in relation to what the potter wants to do with it (Jer. 18:4).

One thing is certain; the Bible nowhere states that God has a “non-elect” group of people that He decided to damn to hell from eternity past. The Bible teaches that God only knew an elect group of people that He has chosen to save, a group which all people can enter, as they are convicted by the Spirit (John 16:8; 2 Thess. 2:13) and drawn to salvation (John 6:44; 12:32). The fact that God draws people is a *saving* statement – not a *selective* statement which involves God bypassing some people and consigning them to hell without giving them opportunity to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9). God has never decided or willed in His past elective purpose that certain people would be hated, bypassed, and damned to hell.

Romans 9:22 confirms this to be true: “*What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.*” In this verse, Paul is responding to an imaginary objector who opposes God’s ways with people (Rom. 9:19). It’s someone who claims that God is some kind of sadistic being that creates people a certain way and then condemns them for living the way they do. Of course, God is not like this. Yes, God is willing to demonstrate His wrath by damning people to hell and in doing so His absolute power and sovereignty will be visibly displayed and known (Rev. 20:11-15). But Paul declares in this verse that God actually demonstrates patience toward those who are unsaved and going to hell. He states that God demonstrates longsuffering (patience) toward those who are bound to experience damnation and the wrath of God (Matt. 7:13). God is not unfair, unreasonable, or unloving!

Some Calvinists will tell you that the longsuffering of God and the extension of mercy toward the unsaved (the nonelect?) are only temporal blessings in this life but not the mercy that is related to salvation and the next life. Of course, this is not the case, since Paul is clearly talking about the eternal destinies of the saved and unsaved. He is actually conveying the wideness of God’s mercy in reaching out to those who are going to hell (vs. 22) and those who have been actually saved by God’ mercy (vs. 23).

“There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice,
which is more than liberty.
There is welcome for the sinner,
and more graces for the good;
there is mercy with the Savior;
there is healing in his blood.”

It's very obvious that the longsuffering or patience of God relates to man's salvation and God's desire that all people might escape hell and judgment. 2 Peter 3:9 once again reminds us: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God has always shown compassion and mercy toward those who are headed toward judgment (Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:41).

God's past dealings with Pharaoh prove that God is longsuffering toward the lost. God lovingly, graciously, and patiently waited for Pharaoh to repent of His sinful ways before God. God was "longsuffering" or patient toward Pharaoh. He gave Pharaoh many chances to repent of his wicked ways and stubbornness. God would be just and right in exercising immediate judgment over the unsaved, but He deals with these vessels, not as mere lifeless clay, but as creatures with a free will.

Here is an important question the hyper Calvinist cannot answer. Why would God extend patience and even mercy toward those who are lost, if they were already elected to be damned to hell before the foundation of the earth? This makes no logical or Biblical sense. If God would extend patience toward those who were already predestined to go to hell, this would mean God wants to save people He cannot save. God does not contradict Himself and His ways. He has never purposed to damn people to hell by selecting them to damnation over others. God loves all humanity (John 3:16) and reaches out to all sinners (1 Tim. 1:15; Luke 19:10).

How could God say that He loved the entire world if He showed favoritism to a select few? This does not make any sense at all! Choosing some to be saved and others to go to Hell would also leave man hopeless. A person could conclude, "If the Lord won't elect me to salvation, there is nothing else I can do to go to Heaven." But the Gospel is a message of hope for all sinners (Rom. 5:6) - not hopelessness. We get enough hopelessness and despair from this world already. We should not include it in God's elective decrees, the Gospel, and the Great Commission ("Go ye into all the world" - Mark 16:15).

Questions:

- ◆ What are two illustrations that teach the harmony between free will and God's election or sovereignty?
- ◆ Are people responsible for their choices?
- ◆ What does the illustration of the Potter and clay teach?

- ◆ When are people prepared for hell and Heaven?
- ◆ Does God extend mercy to those who are going to hell?

VII. God's sovereign plan comes to pass when saving His elect body.

The way God implements His past elective purpose is by bringing people to faith in Christ during their present lives on earth. This is called "the faith of God's elect" (1 Tim. 1:1) which is a faith generated and made possible by God working in connection with the heart of people (Acts 16:14). However, it is also a faith that is based upon a free volitional response of every individual person. *The Bible teaches that God enables us to have faith while at the same time makes us responsible for it* (Luke 7:50; Rom. 4:5). A combination of verses will clearly reveal this to us.

2 Thessalonians 2:13

"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation (God's choice to save people in eternity past) through sanctification of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit's illumination and conviction upon our hearts today which brings us to Christ) and belief of the truth (free will response of man in deciding His destiny).

John 6:37

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me (election); and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (free will or man).

1 Peter 1:2

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father (God's choice in eternity past), through sanctification of the Spirit (the Spirit's illumination and conviction in bringing us to Christ), unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (obeying the Gospel message by placing faith in the blood of Christ for one's salvation)."

Ephesians 1:11-13 also declares:

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (God's choice and action in eternity past to save people and endure them of their eternal salvation and destiny) That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ (free will). In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth,

the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed (personal choice), ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”

The Bible repeatedly joins together the sovereignty of God and human freedom. In fact, human choices were not bypassed when God created His saving and elective program in eternity past. This means that God has devised a wondrous salvation plan in eternity past that does not overlook human choice regarding a person’s eternal destiny.

Although God in eternity past elected and chose to love and save a body of believers based upon His own foreknown purpose for them (1 Pet. 1:2; Rom. 8:29; 11:2), not on the basis of what others would choose to do, this does not override human response to God’s elective plan in eternity present (Matt. 13:5; John 5:40; Acts 16:31; Rev. 22:17). This is because as people believe in the Gospel message today, they can become part of the elect body, which God chose to save in eternity past.

Matthew 22:14 reveals:

“For many are called, but few *are* chosen.”

God calls people to salvation through His inner conviction and drawing power and this is how the elect body becomes saved (2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Cor. 1:2). This means that God brings to fruition His past elective choice (Eph. 1:4) as people are called and become part of the elect body. The fact that God only chooses a few (Matt. 22:14) is not an indication that He does not want others to be saved and enter the elect body. The Calvinistic twist on this verse and another similar verse (Matt. 20:16) claims that God chooses some people to salvation and leaves the rest to be judged in hell. However, if God calls people, then why wouldn’t He intend to save them? This cannot be satisfactorily answered by Calvinism.

In addition, the Calvinist, when looking at this verse, must concede that the word “many” is not used in a restrictive sense but in a universal sense. This passage does not teach Calvinism. Jesus said, “many are called but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:14). Why were many Jews not chosen to enter the earthly marriage feast or kingdom? Was it because God refused to choose them in eternity past? No! It’s because they refused the invitation of the Messiah (Matt. 22:3 – “they would not come”) and were not spiritually prepared to enter. In fact, others who were invited came but were not wearing the appropriate wedding gown of God’s righteousness and were refused (Matt. 22:12). For this reason, they were not chosen to enter the feast.

As we have stressed, election is not closed but open to all mankind (John 3:16). All can become part of the elect body (Eph. 1:4) that God chose to save. God's elective purpose occurred in the timeless past, before the creation of the universe, but it is being fulfilled in eternity present or the day in which we are now living.

VIII. God's sovereign plan does not support the TULIP theory of hyper Calvinism.

The familiar Tulip acrostic as interpreted by extreme Calvinism is not the true analogy and way that God has chosen to portray and implement His saving program.

Total depravity or spiritual corruption does not result in the total *inability* of individuals to respond in faith to God's salvation plan since the Spirit convicts and convinces people of their lost estate and need for salvation, giving them opportunity to respond to the Gospel invitation (John 16:8; Romans 4:3; 10:13; Rev. 22:17). Total depravity does not mean that a person must be regenerated or saved before he can believe since this defies the clear order of salvation (Romans 10:13). An individual must believe in order to be saved - not be saved in order to believe ("Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" - Acts 16:31).

Unconditional election should not be construed to mean that man has no say in his eternal destiny. It's true that God chose us unconditionally in eternity past without any condition on man's part (faith or works). God's elective plan in eternity past is unconditional (Rom. 8:28-30; 9:11; 11:2; Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; 2 Thess. 2:13) but the bringing to pass of His eternal plan of corporate election in the present is conditioned upon a person's response to God's plea upon his own heart and life (John 5:40; 12:36; Rom. 10:13). Personal faith is a **CONDITION** for salvation (Eph. 2:8; Gal. 3:26; Acts 16:31). Unconditional election in eternity past does not overrule *conditional* faith in eternity present. Unconditional election of the Church (the corporate body of Christ) is fulfilled through the universal offer of salvation to a person's faculty of faith or the opportunity/ability/privilege God gives them to express faith in Christ ("Come unto me, all ye the labour and are heavy laden" - Matt. 11:28; John 7:37).

Limited atonement is an erroneous teaching not based on the clear revelation of Scripture (John 3:15-16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 1 John 2:2; Heb. 2:9). Christ died for His sheep (John 10:11, 15) and the Church (Eph. 5:25), but He also died for

everyone. The fact that Christ loved and died for some people (the church) does not mean that Christ did not love and die for everyone in the world and pay the purchasing price for all mankind (John 1:29; 2 Pet. 2:1). Both are true. Christ loves the elect body and He loves all sinners. This means Christ's death is *sufficient* to save everyone (He died for all) but only *efficient* to save those who place their faith in Him or those who become part of His elect body (the sheep or Church). Christ's death is NOT limited in its *extent* or scope (He died for all); it's only limited in its *application* to those who believe, or those who become part of the growing, elect body of people, identified here as the Church or sheep. Christ's death is *universal* in that it paid the necessary price for all mankind's salvation (1 John 2:2) but it is *limited* in its appropriation to only those who believe (John 1:12).

Irrresistible grace is not taught in the Bible (Acts 7:51; John 3:36; 5:40). The fact that man can resist God's call of salvation does not destroy the sovereignty of God but allows God to implement His plan of election in the way He has designed and purposed to bring it to pass (Ps. 115:3). God often limits the display of His absolute power or sovereignty (Matt. 26:53) and allows man to interact with His purposes (Acts 2:23). The same is true regarding salvation (Rev. 22:17). In bringing the plan of salvation to fruition by including people's decisions does not destroy God's sovereignty (His power and control) but actually displays His infinite wisdom, knowledge, and unsearchable ways as the sovereign God (Rom. 11:33).

Perseverance of the saints does not mean that one's *primary* assurance of salvation is based upon transformation and the performance of good works in order to prove whether or not they are the elect and that their faith was genuine at the time of salvation. Our assurance is based upon our faith in Christ alone and the sure promise of God's Word (John 3:16; 6:47; 1 John 5:13). Furthermore, the saints can become carnal in their living and even act as unsaved people at times within their Christian life (1 Cor. 3:1-3) but still be part of God's chosen race. However, it's equally true that all born again saints will persevere in the basic truths of Christianity and express some fruit of transformation in their life as God works through them (1 John 3:6-9; 5:18; Heb. 3:6, 14; 10:38-39). It is also true that one's transformation or change of life can be viewed as a *secondary* road marker that points to one's salvation and provides additional assurance (2 Pet. 1:10; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10; Tit. 1:16).

IX. God's sovereign plan interacts with the choices of people.

God never brings about His earthly or salvation goals with the lives of people by overlooking or bypassing their personal decisions and choices. God's earthly purposes for people (Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:13-17; Acts 9:15; Romans 9 – Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Esau, Moses, Pharaoh, Egyptians) are brought about through His interaction with the choices that these same people make.

For instance, God chose Saul as king (1 Sam. 10:24) but because of Saul's sins, God rejected his kingship (1 Sam. 13:13-14; 15:10-11, 23, 26-29). Judas was also chosen but rejected his appointed ministry and betrayed the Lord: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). God delivered Israel from Egypt and told the people He wanted to put them into their inheritance, the land of Canaan. But at Kadesh-Barnea all except Moses, Joshua, and Caleb rebelled against God and refused to enter the land (Num. 13–14).

God also called John the Baptist to a task that He wanted him to accomplish (Luke 1:13-17). All that is described is God's choice of John and the task that God wanted him to perform. However, John didn't have to obey this call. John was given the responsibility, not only to believe in the Messiah, but also follow His mission. The fact that God *called* John does not mean that God *caused* him to do His will.

Herb Vander Lugt stated:

"Certain Bible passages lead us to believe that God in some mysterious way lets our choices be a factor in the shaping of history."

This is also true regarding to God's elective and saving program. God wants man to *reason* with Him (Isa. 1:18) and *receive* Him (John 1:12). God, in the process of reaching His predetermined outcome or goal (2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 9:11), gives people genuine freedom of choice to receive or reject His ways (John 5:40; 6:47; Acts 17:4-5; 28:24), without preprogramming and predetermining their choices, pulling their puppet strings, or placing faith in them without any individual human choice. God in some remarkable way allows our choices (free will) to be a factor in the shaping of history or His story as it relates to earthly purposes and the salvation of souls (Acts 2:23).

Several truths must always be taken into consideration. First, God chose us (John 15:3) so we could choose Him (John 1:12). Without God's choice we would have no opportunity to be saved. God does not elect people in eternity past on the basis of their choice of Him (John 1:13; Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:28-29 - "whom he foreknew") but He does allow people in eternity present to choose Him and their eternal destiny (John 3:15-16; 5:24; 6:47; 7:37)

Second, God seeks us (Luke 19:10) so we can seek Him ("Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" – Isaiah 55:6). Left to ourselves we would never seek God (Rom. 3:11). Third, God's convicting grace upon our heart (Acts 18:27) enables us to express faith and be personally responsible for our eternal destiny (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; John 16:8).

Fourth, God never arbitrarily selects one person over another in relation to salvation (Rev. 22:17). God does not play favorites when it comes to salvation (2 Pet. 3:9). Fifth, the corporate elect body of people that God chose will experience salvation and great future blessings ("I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" - 2 Tim. 2:10).

Sixth, the expression "the many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48) are the many that God chose to be part of His collective body of people (the Church). They are not the "some" that God chose over others but the "many" (Gentiles) that were chosen in eternity past to be part of the elect body (Eph. 1:4). This election verse among others (John 6:37) is often set in the context of free will ("seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life" – Acts 13:46). Acts 2:47 similarly states "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

One again, these were not the many people God chose over other people to be saved, but the many people He called to fulfill His corporate plan for salvation and election. It's these same people that were being saved and added to the corporate body of the Church ("added to the church daily" - vs. 47). This election text is also set in the context of free will ("Then they that gladly received his word" – Acts 2:47).

The context of these election verses teach that people are not individually and arbitrarily chosen for salvation or damnation. This past corporate ordaining to

salvation (2 Tim. 1:9) points to God's purpose in bringing to fruition His plan to build the Church. People needed to be saved to carry out God's plan of election for the corporate body the Church (Matt. 16:18).

Seventh, God's elective purpose comes to pass without overriding man's freedom of choice (Matt. 11:28; John 3:15-16). Think of it this way. A goldfish has the freedom to swim about in its bowl even though the owner of the fish may be carrying the fishbowl to the specific table or location that he wants the fishbowl to rest. In a similar way, God takes people to His intended goal without violating their free choices.

A prisoner behind bars, if given the chance or opportunity to leave the prison cell, can choose to respond favorably to the opportunity. In a similar way, those who are imprisoned by sin and Satan, can respond favorably to God's enlightening (2 Cor. 4:4), illuminating (Heb. 6:4-5), and convicting call (John 16:8), and make a valid choice regarding Christ and their eternal destiny ("And many believed on him there" – John 4:42).

To conclude that the human will is only subject to the sin nature and has no freedom to exercise itself otherwise, even *with God's aid and assistance*, goes beyond the teaching of Scripture. People can refuse salvation's offer (John 5:40). Furthermore, when Jesus said people could not believe since they were not of the sheep (John 10:26), He did not mean that were preconditioned to not believe in eternity past. Jesus was making a simple statement that the Jews did not believe on Him as the Messiah since they were not saved and part of the sheepfold.

Similarly, when Jesus said that the Jews could not believe in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (John 12:39-40), He was not teaching that they were predetermined by God to not believe and become one of the elect. The fact that they could not believe (vs. 38) was stated in light of the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 53:1-12) where it was predicted that most Jews would not believe in him. The people in Jesus' day, like those in Isaiah's day, refused to believe ("yet they believed not on him" - vs. 37). As a result of their own rejection, God confirmed them in their own choice, so they could not believe (v. 39). Similar illustrations of God punishing persistent and defiant sin by hardening a person's heart is common (Ex. 9:12; Rom. 1:24, 26, 28; 2 Thess. 2:8-12).

We can be sure of one thing; that election and predestination is neither the door that leads to Heaven nor is it the padlock that keeps you out of Heaven, dooming your soul to an eternal hell. It is your personal belief or unbelief that seals your eternal destiny.

John 3:36

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Many other verses clearly reveal that man has the responsibility to personally believe on Christ (“If thou believest with all thine heart” – Acts 8:37; “let him take the water of life freely” - Rev. 22:17; “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” – John 7:37; “thy faith has saved thee” – Luke 7:50; “his faith is counted for righteousness – Rom. 4:5). Christ is not mocking people. He says a person can express faith in His beloved Son.

A man approached me one day and said that he was doomed to hell forever since he knew that he was not one of God’s elect. I shared with him that election does not stand in the way of his salvation and that God loves him and Christ’s died for him (John 3:16). Election does not keep anyone from coming to faith in Christ and becoming part of His corporate, elect body. Only the stubborn will of a person who rejects God’s offer of grace will keep that individual from becoming part of the elect body (John 3:36; 5:40; Acts 17:4-5; 28:24).

Eight, the Biblical fact that a person can express personal repentance and faith in Christ does not destroy or override the working of God’s grace and sovereignty in a person’s heart and life in the matter of their salvation. God *helps* us to have faith (John 6:44) but at the same time makes us *responsible* for it (John 6:37 – “him that cometh unto me”). Man with God’s assistance (John 1:13) can decide to use his own volition to express faith in Christ (John 1:12). Again some might argue that this overrides God’s grace and sovereignty in salvation. However, this conclusion is faulty and philosophical - not Biblical (Isa. 1:18).

Salvation is by grace (God working to save sinners through Christ’s death and drawing power), but at the same time a person’s faith or individual choice regarding his eternal destiny is not considered a human work, since faith is actually contrasted with works in many Bible passages (Rom. 4:5; Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 5; Eph. 2:8-9; James 2:14, 18).

Faith is reaching out to God in order to receive God's free gift of grace and mercy (Rom. 3:24). To assume that the man's responsibility to express personal repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 26:20) and faith (Luke 7:50; John 3:16; Rom. 4:5) in Christ overrides God's working of grace in an individual's heart in bringing him to salvation (Acts 18:27; 2 Pet. 1:1; Acts 16:14; Rom. 2:4), imposes a philosophical teaching on the Bible, instead of allowing the Bible to speak for itself.

Grace *awakens* a sinner to his need of Christ ("The eyes of your understanding being enlightened" - Eph. 1:18) but does not *override* his will ("ye will not come to me, that you might have life" - John 5:40; Acts 28:24; Rev. 22:17) in the conversion response ("ye do always resist the Holy Ghost" - Acts 7:51).

Robert Gromacki states:

"He (God) has graciously worked in and through the human will to gain the assent of that will without violating human responsibility."

The question must be asked once again. Is the human will of a person really free to express faith or make a personal choice regarding his eternal destiny? The answer is very simple. The human will is bound to sin (Eph. 2:1-3) but the Spirit's work in bringing a person to saving faith in Christ allows a person to respond favorably to God's calling upon his heart and life. Those who are imprisoned by sin and Satan, can respond favorably to God's enlightening (2 Cor. 4:4), illuminating (Heb. 6:4-5), and convicting call (John 16:8), and make a valid choice regarding Christ and their eternal destiny ("And many believed on him there" - John 4:42).

To conclude that the human will is only subject to the sin nature and has no freedom to exercise itself otherwise, even with God's aid and help, goes beyond the teaching of Scripture. Man, being free, has chosen to sin. No honest theologian would deny this (Rom. 3:10-20). However, this does not mean that man's will is bound to sin forever, since through inner conviction, God enables a man's will to respond favorably to salvation. Calvinists call this synergism but it actually is Biblicism!

We must conclude by remembering that physical deadness (John 11:14) is not the same as spiritual deadness (John 5:25; Isa. 1:18). Man is created as an autonomous being and with God's aid is given the responsibility to believe ("he that believeth not" - John 3:18, 36; "if ye believe not" - John 8:24; "ye believe me not" - John 8:45; "why do ye not believe me" - John 8:46; "yet they believed not on him" - John 12:37; "ye believed not" - John 10:26; "ye believe not me" - John 10:38; "if any

man hear my words, and believe not” – John 12:47; “them which believe not” – 2 Cor. 4:4; “They received not” – 2 Thess. 2:10; “their eyes have they closed” – Matthew 13:15.).

Questions:

- ◆ Does election override human choices?
- ◆ Does God preprogram the choices of people?
- ◆ What are some examples of people interacting with God’s purpose?
- ◆ Are we puppets and is God a puppet master?
- ◆ Did we choose God or did God choose us?
- ◆ Can we seek God without Him seeking us?
- ◆ Does God play favorites when it comes to the salvation of people?
- ◆ Why can’t some people believe?
- ◆ Does election and predestination keep you out of Heaven?
- ◆ Does man’s individual response to God in his salvation experience override the sovereignty of God and the working of God’s grace in his life?
- ◆ Is the human will so bound to sin that it can never respond favorably to God?

Isaiah 55:8 summarizes God’s elective purposes and ways:

“For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”

We need to remember this when studying the subject of election and not become lost in the endless arguments, speculations, and philosophies that Calvinism presents to support its unscriptural theories and conclusions.

We can conclude that God’s ways do not necessarily support our ways or ideas concerning election and predestination (Isa. 55:8), nor are they Augustine’s or Calvin’s ways! We must allow God to be sovereign in His own way and implement His saving program based upon the clear revelation of Scripture and not the philosophical speculations and conclusions of men (1 Tim. 6:20), who are attempting to adhere to a one-sided theological system, which is built upon human speculation and reason instead of clear Biblical revelation.

Dr. M.R. DeHaan, from “Our Daily Bread,” wrote this many years ago: “Would you really like to know that you are one of God's elect? Then come as a poor sinner and accept His invitation; for He says, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy

laden' (Matt. 11:28). If you do that, you are one of God's elect. Remember election is God's business, leave it with Him! Believing is YOUR business; do it, and God will not fail! Jesus puts the two together in one verse: 'All that the Father giveth Me shall come to me.' That's GOD'S part. But now notice the rest of the verse: 'And him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37). That's YOUR part! If you will come, you can rest assured that it was the work of God Himself which motivated you."

Jesus said in Luke 19:10:

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

"I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him—seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Saviour true;
No, I was found of Thee."