

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What the Bible Teaches About

PREDESTINATION

Revised Edition, 2026

GORDON LYONS

ESV Edition

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Predestination

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I must acknowledge a genuine debt of gratitude to the work of Dr. Charles Hodge. The writings of this theologian from a previous generation have helped considerably in preparing this work. On a number of occasions—as will be seen when reading these studies—I have cited or alluded to Dr. Hodge's remarks in his three-volume *Systematic Theology*. These references have been acknowledged in the footnotes to the study text.

Predestination

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PART 1

Synopsis: Predestination of the Elect

Predestination of the elect (otherwise known as election) is the unalterable purpose of God—decreed from before the creation of the world—in choosing out of fallen mankind certain individuals to inherit salvation through faith in Christ. In this way, God would deliver these individuals from the bondage of sin, and from his just and holy wrath and curse on sinful mankind. Election is not founded on God’s foreknowledge, but on his own sovereign will and pleasure. All those whom God has elected from eternity, are—in process of time—effectually called or drawn to Christ, from whom they receive all the benefits of salvation. This salvation, together with the ability to repent and believe of one’s own free will, is freely bestowed upon them as a gift of God’s grace. None, except the elect, can inherit the kingdom of God. However, since God will gather his elect from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation, the gospel is to be preached to all mankind without distinction of persons.

Note 1: Mercy and Justice

God elects some people to salvation in Christ, while he leaves others to the just punishment of their sin. Those whom God elects are not more deserving than those whom he leaves. Election to salvation is entirely of God’s free grace and mercy. *He owes it to none*, but he gives it to some. For many are called, but few are chosen.

Scripture References (ESV)

Mercy and Justice

Matthew 22:11-14

¹¹“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹²And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.” (See vv.1-10; cf. Luke 14:16-24)

Romans 9:14-16

¹⁴What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!
¹⁵For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” {*Exodus 33:19*} ¹⁶So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. (See vv.6-24)

Ephesians 1:4-6

⁴even as he [God] chose us in him [Jesus] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he

predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (See vv.7-14)

Note 2: Regenerated Believers are God's Elect

All those whom the Holy Spirit brings to Christ in true repentance and genuine faith, and whom God's Spirit has regenerated or has brought to the new birth,¹ belong to God's elect people. This applies also to all those believers who lived before the redemptive work of Christ had been accomplished. By his grace, God justified these Old Testament believers through faith. They, too, therefore belong to God's elect people. Such was the patriarch Abraham and his wife Sarah; and such were all others in that economy to whom God granted a like faith.

Scripture References (ESV)

Regenerated Believers are God's Elect

Hebrews 11:1

¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (See vv.2-5)

Hebrews 11:8

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. (See vv.7-12)

Hebrews 11:13

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (See vv.14-15)

Hebrews 11:16

¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

¹ *brought to the new birth*: That is, *regenerated*, or *born again* (from above), or *born of God*. New (spiritual) birth is the work of the Holy Spirit in a person's soul, creating spiritual life, awakening, awareness and understanding of spiritual truths in that person's mind.

Hebrews 11:39-40

³⁹And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (See vv.17-38)

1 John 3:1

¹ See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. (See vv.2-3)

1 John 5:1

¹ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. (See vv.2-4)

Note 3: God's Compassion and Justice

There is no injustice on God's part in that he elects some to salvation, but does not elect others. All mankind has sinned; and, without exception, all alike deserve to perish. If he had permitted everyone to suffer the due penalty of their sin, God would have been acting with absolute justice, fairness, and righteousness. However, in his sovereign grace and mercy—and out of his infinite love—he chose to redeem a countless multitude of undeserving sinners.

Scripture References (ESV)

God's Compassion and Justice

Isaiah 45:9-10

⁹ "Woe to him who strives with him who formed him,
a pot among earthen pots!
Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?'
or 'Your work has no handles?'
¹⁰ Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?'
or to a woman, 'With what are you in labour?'" (See vv.5-8)

Isaiah 45:11-12

¹¹ Thus says the LORD,
the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him:
"Ask me of things to come;
will you command me concerning my children and the work of my
hands?
¹² I made the earth
and created man on it;

it was my hands that stretched out the heavens,
and I commanded all their host. (See vv.13-25)

Nahum 1:2-3

² The LORD is a jealous and avenging God;
the LORD is avenging and wrathful;
the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries
and keeps wrath for his enemies.
³ The LORD is slow to anger and great in power,
and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty.
His way is in whirlwind and storm,
and the clouds are the dust of his feet.
(See vv.4-6)

Nahum 1:7-8

⁷ The LORD is good,
a stronghold in the day of trouble;
he knows those who take refuge in him.
⁸ But with an overflowing flood
he will make a complete end of the adversaries,
and will pursue his enemies into darkness.
(See vv.9-15)

Romans 9:18

¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. (See vv.9-17)

Romans 9:19-21

¹⁹ You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” ²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is moulded say to its moulder, “Why have you made me like this?” {*Isaiah 29:16; 45:9*} ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honourable use and another for dishonourable use?

Romans 9:22-24

²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— ²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? (See vv.25-29)

2 Peter 3:9-10

⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.² (See vv.1-13)

Note 4: Christ Never Rejects Any Who Come

Those whom God elected to salvation, were chosen by the Father from before the creation of the world, and given to the Son. All those whom the Father has given to the Son will certainly come to the Son; and whoever comes to Christ, he will never drive away. This is the invariable teaching of the Bible. God is a God of justice, holiness, and righteousness. However, he is also a God of love, mercy, and compassion. In his infinite and unmerited grace, God has deemed to have mercy on all those who call upon the name of his Son for salvation. No one whom the Holy Spirit thus brings to a deep sense of their need, and to repentance and faith in Christ, will ever be refused or turned away.

Scripture References (ESV)

Christ Never Rejects Any Who Come

John 6:37

³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. (See vv.35-45)

John 17:2

²since you [God] have given him [Jesus] authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. (See v.3)

John 17:6

⁶“I have manifested ³ your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. (See vv.7,9,11)

² *exposed*: [2 Peter 3:10](#) Greek *found*; some manuscripts *will be burned up*. (ESV footnote)

³ *manifested*: [John 17:6](#); Greek, φανερώ **phaneroō**, to reveal, make known, or disclose.

John 17:12

¹²While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction,⁴ that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

John 17:24

²⁴Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1:4

⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love. (See vv.5,11)

Note 5: Elect and Fallen Angels

Predestination applies to angels as well as to men and women. Those angels, whom God has elected, maintain their holy position in the presence of God. Others—having fallen into sin—have been expelled from God’s presence. We refer to those angels whom God has expelled as the *fallen angels*. The fallen angels include Satan and the demons. There is no salvation for any of the fallen angels. All alike are destined to perish eternally in the hell which God has prepared for the devil and his angels.

Scripture References (ESV)

Elect and Fallen Angels

1 Timothy 5:21

²¹In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

2 Peter 2:4

⁴For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell⁵ and committed them to chains⁶ of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgement;

⁴ *son of destruction (or perdition):* [John 17:12](#); That is, *Judas Iscariot*, who was never a genuine believer and who betrayed the Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

⁵ *hell:* [2 Peter 2:4](#) Greek *Tartarus*. (ESV footnote)

⁶ *chains:* [2 Peter 2:4](#) Some manuscripts *pits*. (ESV footnote)

Revelation 20:10

¹⁰and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Related Bible Truths

The doctrine of *Predestination* is inseparably linked to the doctrine of the *Sovereignty of God*. Both doctrines form part of the doctrine of *Divine Decrees*; i.e. God decrees or foreordains from eternity everything that will happen in time. This does not, however, make God the author or approver of sin.

In setting his love upon a countless number of selected individuals world-wide, called from every tongue, tribe, people and nation, and providing for them a full atonement in Christ Jesus, God is exercising his sovereign choice, according to his own will and pleasure.⁷

⁷ See *Bible Truths Explained: The Sovereignty of God*.

PART 2

Augustinian Scheme of Redemption

The Augustinian teaching regarding the scheme of redemption, or plan of salvation, may be summarised as follows:

1. That the glory of God, or the manifestations of his perfections, is the highest and ultimate end of all things.
2. To achieve this end, God purposed the creation of the universe, and the whole plan of providence and redemption.
3. God then created man; placed him in a state of probation, and made Adam the head and representative of the entire human race.
4. The fall of Adam brought all his posterity into a state of condemnation, sin and misery, from which they are utterly unable to deliver themselves.
5. From the mass of fallen mankind, God elected a countless number to eternal life, and left the rest of mankind to the just recompense of their sin.
6. That the ground of this election is not the foresight of anything in the one class to distinguish them favourably from the members of the other class, but the good pleasure of God.
7. That, for the salvation of those thus chosen to eternal life, God gave his own Son to become man. God's Son obeyed and suffered for his people: thereby making a full satisfaction for sin; bringing in everlasting righteousness, and rendering the ultimate salvation of the elect absolutely certain.
8. That, while the Holy Spirit—in his common operations—is present with every man so long as he lives, restraining evil and exciting good—yet, the certainly efficacious⁸ and saving power of the Spirit is exercised only on behalf of the elect.
9. That all those whom God has thus chosen to eternal life, and for whom Christ specifically gave himself in the covenant of redemption, shall certainly be brought to the knowledge of the truth, to the exercise of faith, and to perseverance in holy living unto the end.⁹

⁸ *efficacious*: i.e. *effective or absolutely certain of accomplishment*.

⁹ From C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1871, 1977 reprint], p.333.

PART 3

What The Bible Teaches About Salvation

For God So Loved The World

The Bible teaches that the love of God is without limit, boundless and free; and that it extends to men and women of every tribe, people and nation in all parts of the world. God's boundless love for fallen mankind was fully demonstrated when he yielded up his one and only Son to the cross. By his voluntary and substitutionary death, the Lord Jesus secured an atonement for sin, and purchased the redemption of all his people. To this end, the Bible says:

John 3:16

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (See vv.14-18)

Such is the extent of God's love. '*For God so loved the world that he gave...*' God gave the One who was closest to his heart—his own Son—and he gave him for everyone who believed. He gave his own Son for every single person who believes on him, anywhere in the world. God has promised irrevocably that Christ will accept all who come to him, and that he will grant to all who believe on him a full and a perfect salvation.

God Forgives the Vilest Sinner

All whom God calls are sinners to whom he shows mercy. Included in these are some of the worst or vilest of sinners. Therefore, no one is beyond God's willingness or ability to save and forgive. This applies no matter how deeply involved in sin a person may have become, or what kind of sins that person may have committed. If he or she comes to Christ, the Lord Jesus will never reject them because of what they are or were. He will receive them *just as they are*, and will forgive, cleanse and sanctify them. Through their heartfelt and genuine repentance toward God, and through their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will become the children of God. To God, they will be honoured and precious in his sight. He will never despise them for their former manner of life.

No-one is Ever Turned Away

The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, will never turn away anyone who comes to him in faith. (John 6:37) This is what the Scriptures teach, and this is the assurance which God's Word gives to everyone who believes. The Scriptures say:

John 3:16b

^{16b} ...that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:36a

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son **has** eternal life... (*bold emphasis added*)

All those whom the Holy Spirit brings to faith in Christ are accepted wholeheartedly by Christ and by the Father. The Holy Spirit has regenerated them, and God has adopted them into his family as his children and heirs. They are now joint-heirs with Christ Jesus—God’s eternal Son. Thus, God’s Word says:

Romans 8:14-17

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons¹⁰ of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba!¹¹ Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (See vv.18-23)

All Whom God Gives, The Son Receives

However, while it is true that God never rejects anyone who comes to his Son, it is also true that—because he or she is spiritually dead and morally incapacitated—no-one desires to come to Christ. To experience the necessary desire (or spiritual thirst), that person must be drawn to the Son by the Holy Spirit. God’s Word makes it abundantly plain that only those whom the Father has given to his Son, and whom the Holy Spirit draws to the Son, can and do come to Christ.

To this end, the Scripture says:

John 17:2

² since you have given him authority over all flesh,¹² to give eternal life **to all whom you have given him**. (See v.6) (*bold emphasis added*)

John 17:9

⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world **but for those whom you have given me**, for they are yours. (See vv.11-12,24) (*bold emphasis added*)

¹⁰ sons (of God): Romans 8:14; i.e. *children* (of God). ‘Sons’ is often used inclusively—as here—to mean both sons and daughters. The meaning here is made clear in Rom. 8:16 above, where the word ‘*children*’ (of God) is used expressly.

¹¹ *Abba*: Romans 8:15; Aramaic for ‘*Father*’.

¹² *flesh*: John 17:2; Greek, σάρξ *sarx*. In this context ‘*flesh*’ (‘*sarx*’) means ‘*people*’.

In case it should be objected that the Lord is here speaking only of his disciples, Jesus adds:

John 17:20

²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,

Again, it is taught in God's Word:

John 6:37a

^{37a} All that the Father gives me will come to me...

That is, all those whom God has given to the Son will come to the Son. However, no one can come who has not been given to the Son from before the creation of the world; i.e. predestined from eternity. (Eph. 1:4-5,11)

The Scripture continues:

John 6:37b

^{37b} ...and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

This confirms that God will never reject anyone whom he has given to his Son, and who comes to his Son in repentance and faith.

Not All are Given to The Son

Not everyone can come to the Son of God for salvation, for the Father has not given everyone to his Son. Therefore, the Holy Spirit does not draw everyone to Christ. To this end, the Scripture says:

John 6:44

⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. (See v.45)

John 6:65

⁶⁵ And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." (See v.66)

Again, concerning the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, it is recorded:

Matthew 11:25-26

²⁵ At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. (Cf. Luke 10:21)

Matthew 11:27

²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son **and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.** (Cf. Luke 10:22)
(bold emphasis added)

Luke 10:23-24

²³Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! ²⁴For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." (Cf. Matt. 13:16,17)

'I Will Give You Rest'

Concerning all those to whom the Father had revealed his Son, and who now were seeking spiritual refuge in him, the Lord Jesus says:

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (See esp. vv.25-27; cf. Isa. 55:1-3)

This is the Lord's invitation to all who sense their need of him, and who desire deliverance from their heavy burdens. Jesus most solemnly assures everyone who comes to him that—in him—they will find rest. They will find peace with God through the forgiveness of their sins. From this peace that passes all understanding will flow true and enduring rest for their souls.

No-one who thus comes to the Lord Jesus in response to this invitation will ever be turned away.

PART 4

'Whoever Will May Come'

A common objection against the doctrine of election is that—in some passages—God's Word appears to teach that *'whoever will may come'*. For instance, the Scriptures say:

John 12:32

³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."
(See vv.27-33; cf. Rom. 5:18; Heb. 2:9)

Romans 10:11

¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." {*Isaiah 28:16*} (See Rom. 10:8-10; cf. 9:33)

Romans 10:13

¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." {*Joel 2:32*} (See Rom. 10:12-17; cf. Acts 2:21)

Joel 2:32

³² And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls. (Cf. Isa. 11:11; Rom. 9:27; 11:5,7; John 10:16; Acts 13:46-48)

Revelation 22:17

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. (See vv.13-16; cf. Isa. 55:1; John 7:37-39; Rev. 21:6)

Necessary Qualifications

The writer of these studies believes that the Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of election. To reach a correct interpretation of God's Word, however, we must qualify the verses quoted above by examining the context in which they appear, and by comparing these verses with other similar and related passages of God's Word.

For instance, in John 12:32 above—and frequently elsewhere in Scripture—the word ‘all’ does not necessarily indicate ‘all (people) without exception’ or ‘everyone’. We must determine the exact meaning of a particular verse or passage by considering its context, and by comparing it with other related passages of God’s Word (the analogy of Scripture). Following these rules, it becomes evident, that—in this verse—the word ‘all’ does not indicate ‘all without exception’, but ‘all *without distinction*’ whom God calls from among all nations. This is the meaning that it is intended to have in many other passages of God’s Word.

This is paralleled by such passages as those where ‘*all the land of Judea*’ is said to have been baptised by John, whereas it was clear that the Pharisees and many others were not baptised. Clearly, then, the meaning here is not ‘all without exception’ but rather ‘all (kinds of people) *without distinction*’. (Matt. 3:5-6; Mark 1:5)

In other places too, the word ‘whoever’ (or ‘whosoever’) occurs frequently. In each of these places, however, we must remember that the ‘whoever’ refers only to those people whom God has given to his Son. In other words, the elect. Whoever of those whom God has given to his Son, will indeed come to the Son—and will never be turned away. No one else, however, *can* come; and, in his or her sinful, spiritually dead and unregenerate state, no one else has the spiritual desire to come. That this is true, can be seen from a careful reading of the following Scripture passages:

Romans 10:9-10

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Romans 10:11-13

¹¹ For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” {Isaiah 28:16} ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” {Joel 2:32}

The word, ‘*everyone*’ in verses 11-13 above, refer only to those who confess with their mouth Jesus as Lord, and who believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead (vv.9-10). However, no one can confess Christ as Lord, *except* by the Spirit of God working within him. As the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 12:3

³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

No one can believe in his heart that God raised his Son from the dead, *unless* saving faith has been given to that person by God. If given by God, however, then he or she is one of God’s elect. If God’s elect, then ‘whoever will’ will indeed come, and will indeed believe—*freely and willingly*.

To this end, the Scripture says:

John 6:44-45

⁴⁴No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' {*Isaiah 54:13*} Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—

All Whom the Father Gives to the Son Will Come to the Son

As has been shown, the Bible teaches the following primary truths regarding the plan of salvation:

1. No one can come to Christ unless a genuine spiritual hunger and thirst (spiritual desire) has been given to him or her by the Father. (John 6:44,65). This intense spiritual desire is created by the Holy Spirit in effectual calling and regeneration.
2. No one can come to Christ unless the Father has given that person to the Son. (John 17:2,6,9,11,12,24)
3. All that the Father gives to the Son will come to the Son; and whoever comes to him, Christ will never turn away. (John 6:37,45; 10:26-28)

Only the Elect can be Saved

Thus, from the teaching of God's Word, we can see that only the elect receive salvation and eternal life. In other words, only those whom God has chosen or predestined to eternal life, and to whom he gives the gifts of repentance and faith, are able to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation, therefore, does not depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. (Rom. 9:16)

It is possible, for a time, that other men and women may exhibit some of the common graces or operations of the Spirit. Yet, they cannot exercise saving faith in God's Son, if God does not grant saving faith to them. However, all whom God has elected or ordained to salvation will certainly inherit that salvation.

Not one of the elect will be missing from the kingdom of God. Once saved by God's grace, none of God's redeemed children can ever lose their salvation. Election guarantees that their redemption cannot fail of completion in glory. To this end, God's Holy Spirit indwells each believer to act as the guarantor of his or her personal inheritance, and to seal the believer unto the day of final redemption. Thus, the Scripture says:

Ephesians 1:13-14

¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (See vv.11-12; cf. 2 Cor. 1:20-22; 5:4-5)

1 Peter 1:3-5

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (See vv.2-9)

Those whom God has called, however, have been called unto holiness of life. There is no such thing as a person being called and justified in the sight of God if his calling and justification is not followed immediately by ongoing sanctification and holiness of life.

Ephesians 1:4-5

⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

PART 5

No-one Seeks After God

Left to their own inclinations, and to the exercise of their own free will, no one would turn to God in repentance and faith. Because of the Fall, everyone's heart has become thoroughly corrupted by the deceitfulness of sin. Their innate tendency toward sin and evil so pervades their soul, that they have no lasting desire for that which is holy and good. (Isa. 64:6-7; Jer. 17:9)

Jesus said that men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. The Lord also added that they would not come to the light for fear that the light would expose their evil deeds. Thus, God's Word says:

John 3:18-20

¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgement: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. (See v.21)

Unless God creates in each of his elect people a new and right spirit that seeks after righteousness, then no one would seek the Lord or call upon his name. Salvation, therefore, is all of grace and none of self. Therefore, concerning the grace of God, the Scripture says:

Colossians 1:12-14

¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Salvation is by Grace

Salvation is a gift of God's sovereign grace, bestowed at his pleasure on whom he will. From this, it follows that the foresight of repentance and faith cannot possibly be the ground of election. In other words, God does not choose an individual because he foreknows that he will repent and believe. In his fallen and unrenewed condition, man is unable and unwilling to repent and believe. Those who repent and believe do so only because God has elected them. He has given them to his Son, drawn them by his Spirit, and granted to them as a gift the ability and the desire to repent and believe. At this stage, however, the Holy Spirit enables the sinner to call upon the name of the Lord *freely and willingly*.

The elect, therefore, are drawn to Christ by the sovereign grace of God. Their salvation is entirely of grace from beginning to end. Man's works of merit play no part in God's plan of redemption. The only meritorious work that is of any—and of infinite—value in God's sight, is the work of Christ as Redeemer and Mediator.

The Exercise of Faith

God's salvation is not dependent on the merits of a person's good works. Neither is it dependent on the exercise of faith. This is because no one can exercise saving faith of his own free will. A person may have the *desire* to believe, but he does not have the *ability*. God must grant him the gift of saving faith, together with repentance.

To this end, the Scripture says:

Ephesians 2:3-5

³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— (See vv.1-2)

Those who are spiritually dead cannot exercise saving faith. They must first be made alive unto God by the working of the Holy Spirit (in effectual calling); and this is a work of God's sovereign grace. Again, those who are the objects of God's wrath (v.3) cannot commend themselves to God by repentance and faith. This is because their sin totally alienates them from God, and results in their being at constant enmity with God. No amount of repentance or faith on the part of one who is God's enemy, can make them acceptable to God or make atonement for that person's sin. Only by the Lord's work on the cross, can God's wrath be propitiated and a now-redeemed sinner be reconciled to God. All this, however, is a work of God's sovereign grace and mercy.

Faith is God's Gift

The Scripture says:

Ephesians 2:8

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (See vv.9-10)

Faith is as much a gift of God as is every other aspect of our salvation.

Again, the Scripture says:

2 Timothy 1:9

⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, (See v.10; see also Titus 3:3-7)

Our salvation—including the gift of [saving] faith—was given to us in Christ Jesus, before God created the world. God commands people everywhere to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. However, those who repent and exercise saving faith, are those to whom God has given that kind of faith. In other words, the elect. Thus, God's Word says:

Matthew 11:27

²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (See vv.20-26)

John 17:6-8

⁶“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. (See vv.2-3,9)

The Gospel is for All Humanity

No one knows who are the elect of God, and who are not. This is known to God alone, and to his Son. From this, it follows that the gospel must be preached—without discrimination of persons—to all mankind. For, out of every tongue, tribe, people, and nation, God effectually calls forth his elect.

Thus, God’s Word says:

Matthew 24:31

³¹And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (See vv.29-30)

Matthew 24:40-41

⁴⁰Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. (See vv.36-44)

Revelation 5:9

⁹And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation, (See vv.5-10)

Concerning the importance of preaching the Gospel to all mankind, the Scripture says:

Romans 10:17

¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
(See vv.13-16)

Generally, the Holy Spirit calls forth God's elect through the preaching of the Word. It is therefore essential that God's Word be preached in all its fullness and power. For that Word is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. (Rom. 1:16 ¹³) By the work of the Holy Spirit, God's Word becomes effectual unto the salvation of everyone who believes the message and calls upon the name of the Lord.

But how can they call upon him of whom they have never heard? And how can they be saved if they do not hear the gospel? As the Scripture says:

Romans 10:13-15

¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" {*Isaiah 52:7; Nahum 1:15*}

¹³ *Romans 1:16 (cross reference)*: In the cross reference to Romans 1:16, the apostle Paul is speaking about the preaching of the gospel (Greek, εὐαγγέλιον **euangelion**, *evangel*). This gospel or evangel is contained in the preaching or teaching of the gospel by the Lord Jesus Christ, or by his appointed servants (apostles, evangelists, and other ministers of the Word.) The gospel is referred to in Romans 1:17 as the '*word of Christ*'. ('Word' in this instance is the Greek word, ῥῆμα **rhēma**, meaning '*message*' or '*sayings*'.)

PART 6

Election is Not by Merit

The foundation for election to salvation, is the sovereign will and pleasure of almighty God, which he exercises according to his own wise purposes. God decreed these eternal purposes in Christ Jesus, before he created the world. Therefore, God's Word says:

Ephesians 1:4-5

⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

Ephesians 1:11

¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

Ephesians 3:9-11

⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

God does not choose a person because of any good in them—for there is nothing good in them. The Lord does not choose them because they are more righteous than others—for they are not more righteous than others. God does not choose them because he foreknows that they will accept his Son as their Saviour. Because, of their own free will, sinful men and women are incapable of accepting God's Son as their Saviour. Firstly—and by the grace and mercy of God—the Holy Spirit must draw them to God's Son, and open the sinners' eyes to the truths of the gospel.

Concerning those whom God calls, the Scripture says:

Deuteronomy 7:6-8a

⁶“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but it is because the LORD loves you....” (See vv.8b-10)

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

¹³ But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits¹⁴ to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴ To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See vv.9-12)

1 Peter 2:9-10

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (See vv.6-8)

Election, therefore, is not based on anything meritorious or worthy in the elect. There is absolutely nothing in them to commend them to God in preference to others. God may choose anyone—even the vilest offender—and number that person among the elect, so that he or she may be brought to eternal salvation through repentance and faith in Christ. Thus, God's Word says:

Romans 9:14-16

¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!
¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." {*Exodus 33:19*} ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. (Cf. Isa. 45:9-12; Jer. 18:1-10)

Predestination, therefore, is not founded on the merit of the person chosen, but on the sovereign grace of God and in his never-ending love and compassion toward fallen and sinful humanity. Thus, concerning those whom he has redeemed, God's Word says:

Titus 3:3-7

³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (See vv.1-2)

¹⁴ God chose you as the firstfruits... [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#) Some manuscripts *chose you from the beginning*. (ESV footnote)

Election is by Grace

As has been shown, election to salvation is entirely a gift of God. A sinner cannot merit it, either by good works or by the exercise of faith. We may illustrate further the gratuitous nature of election by considering the following points outlined by Dr. Charles Hodge:

- It was a matter of grace that salvation was provided for fallen mankind, and not for fallen angels.
- It was a matter of grace that the plan of salvation was revealed to some portions of our race, and not to others.
- The acceptance, or justification, of every individual heir of salvation, is entirely a matter of grace.
- The work of sanctification is a work of grace; i.e. a work carried on by the unmerited, supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.
- It is a matter of grace, that—of those who hear the Gospel—some accept the offered mercy, while others reject it.¹⁵

Election is to Holiness

Those whom the Lord calls, he calls unto holiness of life. God has set his love upon us, and chosen us, that we should live—not for ourselves—but for the praise of his glory. (Eph. 1:12; 4:1) The Scripture says:

1 Peter 2:9-10

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (See vv.1-8)

1 Peter 2:11-12

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

¹⁵ From C. Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp.342,343.

Again, God's Word says:

Ephesians 1:4-6

⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

In the passage from Ephesians chapter 1 above—and again with reference to Dr. Hodge's remarks—the apostle Paul teaches the following points:

- That the end or design of the whole scheme of redemption, is the praise of the glory of the grace of God.
- To this end, and of his mere good pleasure, he predestined those who were the objects of his love to the high dignity of being the children of God.
- That, to prepare them for this exalted state, he chose them from before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame before him in love.
- That, in consequence of his choice—or in execution of this purpose—he confers upon them all spiritual blessings: repentance, faith, regeneration, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶

¹⁶ From C. Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp.341,342.

PART 7

Individuals Who are Unable to Respond to God's Call

Infants Dying Before Birth, or in Early Childhood

As a rule, the Holy Spirit calls or draws the elect to Christ through hearing and reading the Word of God. However, certain exceptions to this rule exist. Such exceptions apply to those of God's elect who die before being able to respond to the Word, or who are not capable of making a response. For example, should a child die before birth, or in infancy, that child will nevertheless benefit from the full redemption already provided for him or her by Christ Jesus. Granted, they have not been able to respond personally to the call of the gospel. Yet, because of their election from before the creation of the world, the Holy Spirit regenerates every such child, thus ensuring their certain and eternal salvation. This applies not only to children who die in infancy or early childhood, but also to those who die at any stage of development before birth.

Regarding children, the Scripture says:

Matthew 18:10-11

¹⁰ "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 18:12-14

¹² What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³ And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴ So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Luke 18:15-16

¹⁵ Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. (See v.17; cf. Matt. 19:13-15)

Acts 2:39

³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." (See vv.37-38)

1 Corinthians 7:13-14

¹³ If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. (Cf. v.14 with Mal. 2:15)

Psalms 103:17-18

¹⁷ But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,
¹⁸ to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments.

Learning Disabilities

The same principle applies to any other elect person, of any age, who—because of some infirmity—is incapable of responding to the call of the gospel. This includes those who suffer from some forms of cerebral (brain) injury, disease, or certain other neurological conditions. This includes those people with certain forms of learning disabilities or other similar disabilities that make it virtually impossible for them to understand and believe the gospel. Although they cannot personally respond by faith, their election guarantees their full and final salvation.

Objection

It may be objected that God saves *only* his elect people—of whatever age. This is true. However, none of us can presume to be wiser than God. In the case of infants or young children, and in the case of people suffering from specific mental, psychological or neurological conditions, why cannot God deem to elect all such children and disabled people without exception? Is it not true that the Lord knew from eternity *that these particular people* would never be in a position to respond to the gracious call of the gospel? If such a child dies in infancy or before birth, therefore, or if such an adult can never understand the gospel, is God not at liberty to elect these individuals *en masse*? This should present absolutely no problems for the general truth of election or for the integrity of God. Indeed, it would serve to enhance God's glory, honour, and power.

In the absence of clear Scriptural guidelines to the contrary, it may be wiser in such cases not to insist on the strictest principles of election. God is a God of justice, holiness, and truth. He is also a God of grace, mercy, and compassion. Let us exalt, praise, and magnify his holy name that he will never—and can never—do that which is wrong, unjust, or unfair. In virtue of his own unchangeable nature, God can only do that which is right, holy, and just.

Thus, let us be content to rest our hope, confidence and assurance in God. For, in this respect as in all other respects, our Father in heaven will never prove unfaithful to his Word or to his character.

PART 8

The Believer's Certain Assurance

For the people of God, the doctrine of predestination is one of the most reassuring doctrines of the Bible. It embodies in its teaching the absolute certainty of the final perseverance of all the saints. Even the weakest believer may be assured of their final redemption. For, since God did not choose them because of any merit in them—but because he loved them—then their salvation does not depend on them. Rather, it depends on the unfailing promises and the almighty power of God and on his never-ending love and mercy toward them in Christ Jesus.

All those whom the Father has given to his Son, and whom God's Spirit has called to faith in Christ, are being kept by God's sovereign and almighty power. Through faith, the Lord is keeping them secure for their glorious inheritance in the last day. God's people remain forever secure; for the Spirit of grace and of glory seals them permanently as belonging to God. In Christ Jesus, they are safe—now, and for all eternity. To this end, God's Word says:

Ephesians 1:13-14

¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,
¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (See vv.11-12; cf. 2 Cor. 1:20-22; 5:4-5)

1 Peter 1:1-2

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²[*elect/chosen*] ¹⁷ according to the foreknowledge ¹⁸ of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

1 Peter 1:3-5

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is

¹⁷ [*elect/chosen*]: 1 Peter 1:2; These words are not included in the ESV text of v.2, but are supplied to clarify and complete the sentence by several other translations.

¹⁸ *foreknowledge*: 1 Peter 1:2; Not merely 'to know beforehand who would accept Christ', but 'to set one's love upon from the eternal ages, with a view to effecting their salvation'. To know = to set apart or to choose. To foreknow = to set apart or to choose beforehand. (Cf. Rom. 11:2 with ch. 8:29 and with Jer. 1:5; see also Isa. 49:1-6)

imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (See vv.6-9)

The purposes of God in election are immutable or unchangeable. Moreover, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Therefore, God's purposes in Christ must forever remain the same. In Christ, God has purposed to bring to everlasting glory all who believe on the name of his one and only Son. On the day of final redemption, not one of the saints in light shall be accounted missing from the blessed presence of the Lord. Without exception, the Lord will gather every one home. As God's Word says:

Psalms 94:14

¹⁴ For the LORD will not forsake his people;
he will not abandon his heritage;
(Cf. 1 Sam. 12:22; Rom. 11:1-2)

John 14:1-3

¹ "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.
² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Jude 1:24-25

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.

Therefore, since God has given us this assurance of salvation, let us press on—by God's grace—to demonstrate the reality of our calling and election. Let us show by our growth in grace, by our progress in sanctification, by our holy and godly manner of life, and by our love toward God and others, that we are indeed the regenerated and adopted sons and daughters of our Father in heaven.

