



# REASON WITH ME

---

ON THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

---

FOR THOSE TERRIFIED,  
FLABBERGASTED, HORRIFIED,  
DISTRESSED OR DISTURBED  
BY GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY  
OVER SALVATION

JD HALL



# REASON WITH ME

ON THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION, FOR THOSE  
TERRIFIED, FLABBERGASTED, HORRIFIED,  
DISTRESSED OR DISTURBED BY GOD'S  
SOVEREIGNTY OVER SALVATION

BY JD HALL

## PREFACE

This short treatise has been written for those who are the committed and sincere faithful, who have heard – perhaps for the first time – the doctrine of God’s election from the Holy Bible. I am writing this from a pastoral perspective for the sheep of God’s pasture, those who believe in the inerrancy, sufficiency, and inspiration of God’s Word. This treatise is irrelevant to anyone who does not hold to this belief.

Over the years, as my pastoral duties have put me in the position of overseer of a preaching ministry, I have felt the weight of my ordination and the laying on of hands of good and godly men who commissioned me to do just what Paul commissioned Timothy to do – to preach the word in both good season and bad, to reprove, rebuke and exhort and to do so with great *patience* and *careful* instruction (2 Timothy 4:2). In “good season and bad” contextually means “when it’s easy and when it’s difficult.” The reason my ordination to accomplish this task looms large over me is due to the fact that I have seen countless numbers (not in quantity simply because I have lost count over the sundry years) do precisely what the multitudes did to Jesus in John 6 when preached to regarding the Doctrine of Election...*leave*. Oh, how easy it would have been to forget this doctrine! How easy it would have been proclaim God’s sovereignty only in whispered tones, quiet hints, and gentle nods in Bible studies or dark hallways. This approach would have saved this man many tears and

heartbreak, and no doubt, our pews would be fuller accordingly.

But, I cannot. I have a charge to preach Truth. This treatise is written for those who are inclined to disappear like the multitudes on the seashore by Capernaum when hearing of the doctrine of election. So, I ask you, please reason with us.

*Reason* may not be the best word, granted. Reason is commonly defined as the power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments by a process of logic. In that sense, *reason* is an inadequate term to describe what I am asking you to do, which is to think, understand, and form judgments, but not by an appeal to logic in and of itself but by studying the Holy Scriptures. I am asking you to reason with me in the same sense that Isaiah pleads with Israel to reason with him in Isaiah 1:18 as he says,

*“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken”*  
(ESV)

The word is יָכַח (yakach) and means, “to prove, decide, judge, rebuke, reprove, correct, be right.” This is the definition of reason that I ask you to pursue.

I’m going to warn you, this entire conversation is emotionally volatile. It is loaded with presuppositions

on both sides. Years of bad, inaccurate and sinfully dishonest characterization – on both sides – make for a hard conversation. That aside, will you reason with me?

Is it worth reasoning over the Holy Bible to determine truth? Is it worth taking a survey of the Bible to ground your beliefs, rather than relying on tradition, presupposition, emotion, or mischaracterization? My friends, we have been given the very oracles of God in the 66 Books of the Bible. As stated, I am writing this to the very sincere among those who profess faith in Jesus. I believe you *do* care about what God's Word says. Will you reason with me?

I am asking you to read the contents of this treatise. And while I am already presuming upon that kindness, I will ask you to do one other thing. I am challenging you to make a choice. I am requesting you to (A) refute what I present to you as the Bible's teaching of God's sovereignty over salvation or (B) submit yourself to this teaching. The refusal to refute my reasoning, yet submitting to the teaching of that which you cannot refute, results in a heart of idolatry.

As I pastor and minister, my greatest fear is that a good many who worship on Sunday mornings are idolaters, in that they have crafted a God of their own imaginations. The perceived image of God varies from person to person, as each desires to envision Him. If our understanding of God is not intrinsically tied to Scripture alone, it is tied to something outside of Scripture, and chiefly, that is our personal preferences. A god crafted by personal preference is an idol, and not the thrice-holy God of Heaven.

If you can put down this treatise and say, “The exegesis provided here is wrong, the doctrine presented is invalid, and the perspective is “untrue,” if you can do this, with an appeal to Scripture and without a dismissal of other Scriptures, I will rejoice in your conviction even while I mourn that I believe it to be in error. Yet, I will rejoice that you are devoted to the Bible in its fullness, interpretation aside. If you reject the doctrines presented herein for any reason other than the pure evidence of Scripture, I will mourn on all counts.

Please, will you reason with me?

Finally, I am asking you to allow me to speak bluntly. I have strove in this treatise to follow the command of Paul to young Timothy to reprove, rebuke and exhort *with much patience and careful instruction*. I must instruct carefully and precisely. The surgeon must be precise, because his trade requires him to hold life and death in his hands. The theologian-pastor must be all-the-more precise in his Scriptural instruction, for his trade requires him to hold in his hands the Scripture, which can bring both eternal life and eternal death depending upon how it is handled. Since I must be precise, there is not much room for dialogue infinitely concerned with tone (although I have done my very best to season my statements with love and charity). You wish your surgeon to slice and cut with precision, and are not altogether concerned, in that moment, with bedside manner. Please give me the liberty to speak freely without taking offense.

I do not know you, the reader, but I love you.

Will you reason with me?

## **“I DO NOT BELIEVE IN PREDESTINATION”**

The statement represented in the title of this section is one I have heard many times. There is little that breaks my heart more than this bold, matter-of-fact statement. First, it *could* reveal a lack of knowledge of the Bible. Secondly, if the statement does not reveal ignorance of the Scripture, it *does* reveal rebellion toward the Holy Bible.

## **A CHOICE BETWEEN IGNORANCE AND DEFIANCE**

As I present the choice between ignorance and defiance when it comes to this word, I do not use the term *ignorance* as a pejorative. I use the term in its classical sense as a lack of knowledge. There are some who genuinely do not know this term is in the Scripture and are under the impression it is a theological or academic invention. If that is you, if you are unaware the Holy Spirit gave us the term, would you please consider that you need to gain knowledge in this area before making a judgment on what the Scripture teaches?

The truth is, I did not make up the term *predestination*. Neither did any other theologian, ancient or modern-day. The term was used by the Holy Spirit, as He inspired it in the Scripture.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly*

*places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:3-6 ESV)*

*For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29 ESV)*

These are two examples of the word *predestined*, and the word and its various forms are used elsewhere as well as in the scripture above, to include 1 Corinthians 2:7. I could list for you, beloved, all the passages where the word is used, but since is a short treatise and written to sincere followers of Christ who utilize Bible helps, I am asking you to use a Bible concordance to do a word study.

The fact, that the Scripture speaks of predestination explicitly- in the two previously mentioned verses – as in choosing us before the foundations of the world, to be adopted as sons, and to be conformed to the Jesus’ image (all phrases that cannot be divorced from authentic salvation), should, alone, be enough to prevent anyone from saying, “I do not believe in predestination.”

I implore you, if you have said “I do not believe in predestination” to say it no more. To do so would be

as unreasonable as saying, “I do not believe in justification” or “I do not believe in sanctification” or “I do not believe in propitiation.” These are Biblical terms. It’s one thing to reject the philosophy of men or even extra-biblical theological terms that were crafted by seminarians or the theologians of old. But to say that you don’t believe in something that the Holy Spirit inspired to be written, if indeed you are aware it has been written, suggests a rebellious attitude toward God and might reveal that you have crafted an idol who objects the Scripture.

What many people may mean, of course, is that they don’t believe predestination means what others *say* it means. If that’s the case, again, I beseech you to change your phraseology so it does not appear that you take exception to a word God chose to use in His Scripture. So then, what does the word *predestination* mean?

The word is προορίζω (*proorizō*)<sup>1</sup> and it means, “To predetermine, or decide beforehand, to foreordain or appoint beforehand.”<sup>2</sup> There is no alternative definition of the word. Again, I would entreat you to become a Berean and test my words. I will say it again to demonstrate sureness; there is no alternative definition of the word *predetermine*.

To say, “I don’t believe in predestination” – having been apprised of the definition - is to either deny the word’s existence in the Bible or to deny the inerrancy of the Holy Bible. I am asking you to

---

<sup>1</sup> Strong’s G4309

<sup>2</sup> Vines Expository Dictionary

*reason with me*, and determine if you can wholeheartedly say (even if you would at this point disagree on what you think others mean by the term) that you do, indeed, believe in predestination.

If you cannot agree that this word and its contextual definition exist, you have demonstrated rebel defiance toward the Holy Bible, and by doing so, toward its Author.

### **I DO NOT BELIEVE IN ELECTION**

As with predestination, some might argue that they do not believe in election. As with predestination, that statement is made in ignorance or defiance of the Holy Bible. Again, with palms open toward you and hands of peace extended, I am not arguing in this stage of the treatise that because the words exist, I am correct for holding to traditional and orthodox views as to what they mean. I am simply trying to clear the slate and put you into a position to admit ignorance or defiance as to the existence of these Biblical terms.

The words *elect* and/or *election* are used quite frequently in the Scripture. Election is ἐκλογή (eklogē)<sup>3</sup> and means “the act of picking out or choosing.”<sup>4</sup> This word, or one of its different forms, is used throughout the Scripture to refer to those saved by Jesus or, in some cases, the reason for one’s salvation. We see this in Scriptures, not limited to but including, Ephesians 1:3-4, Romans

---

<sup>3</sup> G1589

<sup>4</sup> Thayer’s Greek Lexicon

9:10-13, Romans 11:5, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:2.

Again, please be a Berean and search these verses for yourself. Look at your own concordance. But please, do the work necessary of a Bible student (which all Christians should be) and see that there is no escape from the acknowledgment that the Holy Spirit spoke of both predestination and election. Yet again, I am not asking you to acknowledge a specific teaching about predestination and election is correct. At this point, I'm asking you to stop saying you do not believe in the terms the Holy Spirit wrote about as a reality.

### **SYSTEMATIC DOWNGRADE**

Charles Spurgeon<sup>5</sup>, the great Reformed Baptist preacher who is probably to this day the most well-read and often-quoted preacher of the protestant church post-Reformation, was embroiled in a situation called The Downgrade Controversy. In a series of article written in his monthly magazine, Spurgeon's friend, Robert Schindler, laid out what

---

<sup>5</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-92) was England's best-known preacher for most of the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1854, just four years after his conversion, Spurgeon, then only 20, became pastor of London's famed New Park Street Church (formerly pastored by the famous Baptist theologian John Gill). – The Spurgeon Archive

he believed to be the general dumbing-down of doctrinal teaching. Without persecution from the Church of England, the Non-Conformists (the word referring to Baptists and others) simply grew apathetic toward studying Scripture and it became very watered-down and shallow, or so was Schindler's argument. Being published by Spurgeon, the controversy soon surrounded him and he was none too shy entering the fray in spite of his desire for peace. The state of Christianity in England today bears witness that Spurgeon's concerns were not irrational, but were rather almost prophetic.

Many of us<sup>6</sup> are convinced from a preponderance of evidence that American evangelicalism is suffering from a crippling Downgrade of our own. This being a short treatise, I won't beleaguer the point with statistical data, but nearly all signs point to our current generation being among the most Scripturally ignorant and doctrinally inept generation since the Dark Ages. Unfortunately, this cannot entirely be blamed upon the restriction of Bible instruction in the public school classroom or the removal of Gideon Bibles from motel rooms. No, this is a pandemic problem, even and especially, among the visible Church.

Pastors have traded expositional sermons for an analysis of object lessons from movies. Preachers have forsaken exegesis of the Text for the story-telling model of preaching. Bible teaching has been replaced with personal anecdotes, jokes, captivating

---

<sup>6</sup> By "us" I mean myself, my church, and a great, great many who hold to this conviction.

stories and mythology. A peruse Christian bookstores will give you a better picture of this than any claim I could make. As I write this, nine of the ten Christian best-sellers for 2014 cannot rightly be classified as *Christian* at all. The bookshelves of Christian stores provide not only unsound materials but those which are downright treasonous to sound doctrine. These books, which are hostile to sound doctrine, are precisely those most popular among the Christian demographic, and this should indicate to us that both typical Christians in America and their churches/teachers have a problem understanding the difference between solid doctrinal teaching and myths or fables. Once more, I am writing this to sincere followers of Jesus, and I pray you have observed and are aware of this dumbing-down of modern Christianity so that it is not necessary for me to demonstrate it for you, in its fullness, within this short treatise.

As our nation becomes increasingly secular and indeed even hostile to Christianity, people are leaving churches in record numbers. Nationwide, the number of people calling themselves Christians is going downhill at breakneck speed. Pastors and churches have responded to this crisis by selecting material, teaching topics, and methodology directed toward the lost and unregenerate while neglecting the church members who are likely to leave at any moment.

This propensity to placate the unappeasable has gutted doctrinal teaching in Western Christianity and reduced it to its lowest common denominator. Many churches that do not teach gross error are often guilty of teaching very little, and one is not

much better than the other. The problem of doctrinal downgrade has become so severe that many mainline protestant churches – which were at one time seen as very distinct from one another along doctrinal lines but have blurred together from widening their theological tent and making shallower the Biblical stream – are almost indistinguishable from one another. This is demonstrated by the common and frequent occurrence by which people can change from a Lutheran church to a Baptist church to a Methodist church to a Pentecostal church with little to no reservation and often remarking, “I see little difference.” This phenomenon was unheard of a half century ago, and nearly absent a century or longer ago. There is an ecumenist tendency today that sees the ability to hop from diverse religious teaching to diverse religious teaching as a positive move, as the universal church of God blends into one. In reality, this demonstrates that many churches have abandoned their distinctive teachings and, consequently, most Biblical teaching.

The church growth movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought the notion that bigger is better. And if bigger is better, people argued, then the goal of the church is to keep as many people within the pews as possible. And historically, the greatest cause for a church member’s exit was a disagreement over essential doctrine. Therefore, the logic that followed led to teaching the very basics of a mere Christianity, avoiding doctrinal teaching altogether (which can’t be done without abandoning key and foundational Scriptural doctrines), and an effort to make no one angry. Teaching can be controversial. In the last century, a lack of teaching has not been

as controversial. Consequently, a lack of teaching has become the norm in America's teaching.

---

I write all of this, beloved, because I want you to understand that you should not be alarmed if you have not previously heard about election or predestination. I want you to understand that it doesn't speak ill of the doctrines because your clearest instruction on these doctrines may have come from a Wikipedia article. Sometimes a red flag is raised because, "I haven't heard this before!"

But at the risk of offending you, I would highly doubt you have heard a sermon on propitiation (a Biblical word and one of quintessential importance, used in 1 John 4:10 and 1 John 2:2 and other locations. I would highly doubt, if you have come from the typical evangelical church, I would highly doubt that you can accurately define terms like *justification*, *sanctification*, or *glorification* (and again, these are Biblical words inspired of the Holy Spirit and speak to essential Christian doctrines). Many evangelicals cannot accurately define the word *Gospel*. Many cannot define the word *atonement*. These are all terms that properly catechized children several hundred years ago could define, explain, and exegete. Today, rarely can adults who have been in evangelical churches their entire lives explain these terms or ideas. I emphasize that these are not terms or ideas made by man, but inspired of the Holy Spirit and found in Scripture.

Paul Washer tells the story of being disinvented from the next night's revival service in a Southern Baptist Church because he preached that it was God the Father who brought about the crucifixion of God the

Son and it was His will that Christ be crucified. The church members thought what he preached was heresy due to never having heard it prior to that day.

I once taught that Christ has maintained his glorified body in Heaven and to this day, even at the right hand of the father, is both God and Man, giving them doctrine at the very heart of orthodoxy. This doctrine, which should be rejected by no one other than most heretically extreme persons, resulted in some in attendance walking out of the sermon.

Of American evangelicals, according to recent studies, 42% believe that the Holy Spirit is an “it” and not a “him,” denying the personhood of the Holy Spirit. Nearly a quarter of professed Christian evangelicals in America believe that God the Father is more divine than God the Son. Clearly, there is a deficit of basic Biblical instruction.<sup>7</sup>

From the study cited above, two out of three evangelicals believe that man initiates salvation and must make “the first move.” Two thirds of evangelicals, therefore, would deny the statement that begins the next section of this short treatise.

## **SALVATION IS OF THE LORD**

Salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9). Oh, how we all want to affirm this! Who would deny it?

---

<sup>7</sup> All stats are from a Lifeway study done for Ligonier Ministries

As Spurgeon is credited with saying, “Discernment is not telling the difference between right and wrong, but between right and almost right.” It has been said that “The Devil is in the details.” That idiom doesn’t quite fit here, but that is all right since that idiom derives from an earlier one printed in the New York Times by German architect, Ludwig Miles van der Rohe, “God is in the details.” God truly is to be found in the details of what we mean by, “Salvation is of the Lord.”

What we mean by “Salvation of the Lord” must mean that salvation is *all* by the Lord. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that salvation is by both grace and good works.<sup>8</sup> Catholic church apologists might argue (and often do) that they believe in salvation by grace. But this assertion must be rejected by Christians due to the fact that it commits deception by omission. They believe in a salvation, *in part*, that is merited outside of Jesus’s life, death and resurrection. Likewise, the Synergist<sup>9</sup> might argue that salvation is of the Lord, but it must be rejected because it also commits deception by

---

<sup>8</sup> Council of Trent, Canons on Justification, Canon 9

<sup>9</sup> Synergism is the teaching that we cooperate with God in our efforts of salvation. This is opposed to monergism which is the teaching that God is the sole agent involved in salvation. Cults are synergistic in that they teach that God's grace, combined with our efforts, is what makes forgiveness of sins possible. – Matt Slick, CARM

omission. The Synergist means that Salvation is *mostly* by the Lord.

## **SALVATION BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH**

*For **by grace you have been saved through faith.** And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV)

If your Christian background is in any way orthodox<sup>10</sup>, you have probably heard this verse and have clung to it tightly – as well you should. This verse, and others that espouse the same, demonstrate that we are saved apart from works of the law. As I have said many times in pulpit ministry, over the years, there are really only two religions on Earth – a religion of works and a religion of grace. Grace is given in salvation through faith (which as you’ll see in a moment, is also a gift of grace).

*For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.* (Romans 3:28 ESV)

*Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the Law of Moses.* (Acts 13:38-39 ESV)

---

<sup>10</sup> The term *orthodox* means “right-thinking,” and refers to Christian views not traditionally viewed as heretical.

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1 ESV)*

Hopefully, the concept of being justified by faith *alone* does not strike you in the least as controversial or new. Indeed, this is a universal benchmark of orthodox Christianity and a dividing line between truth and heresy. Those who believe we are saved by faith alone in Jesus' works (both his fulfillment of the Law on our behalf and His payment for our sins through the crucifixion and His subsequent resurrection) are to be considered Christians. Those who deny that we are saved by faith alone need to be thoroughly evangelized, convinced that they have not merited God's favor by their own righteous deeds (which is a miracle made possible by God alone) and brought to a saving faith in Jesus. I believe that sincere and authentic Christians would find no disagreement here, regardless of their position on predestination.

## **FAITH AS A GIFT OF GOD**

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; **it is the gift of God**, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV)*

Where does faith come from? This is where disagreement lies.

Does faith come from the sinner? Is faith the sinner's contribution to salvation? Some Christian traditions certainly make it seem that this is the

case. Evangelists are sometimes heard saying to presumed lost men, "You need to exercise faith in Jesus!" This expression makes a notable presumption. The presumption is that faith is present, but not exercised, innate within the unbeliever. The presumption, however faulty, is that the lost sinner somehow has faith, but it is unused. To be saved, then, the sinner must "place faith in Jesus."

It is a fine line of contention, but it *is* contentious chiefly because the presumption is erroneous. Please understand the following points in order to see the origin and Originator of faith.

### **First, the lost man has no faith.**

The lost man has no faith. The Scripture is very clear on this. As I have often stated, "We are not born on an assembly line to Heaven, but on a collision course with hell." We are not born as faithful creatures, let alone as creatures with an innate (or *inborn*) faith.

The Bible describes men who will one day be judged and cast into hell as being "faithless." (Revelation 21:8) Jesus called the unbelieving masses a faithless generation (Mark 9:19). Jesus said, "That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of spirit is spirit," indicating that the unconverted man of fleshly nature cannot believe, lest he be born again of spirit.

The Bible tells us that the unconverted man has no faith to exercise and cannot even understand things of God because they are spiritually discerned (1

Corinthians 2:14) unless they become born again in the Spirit (John 3:6). In other words, they cannot even perceive or understand what to have faith *in*. Even from the womb, the wicked are at odds with God (Psalm 58:3).

At no point does the Scripture speak in terms of “exercise faith” or “use faith” or “demonstrate faith” to the lost or unconverted. This is tantamount to telling a blind man to exercise sight, a deaf man to use hearing, or a man with no tongue to demonstrate taste.

Simply put, there is no such thing as unused faith. There is no such thing as undemonstrated faith. There is no such thing as unexercised faith. The blind man is blind, not because he is not using sight but because he has no sight. The deaf man is deaf, not because he is choosing not to demonstrate hearing, but because he has no hearing. The lost man is lost, not because he is not using faith but because he is faithless; he has none of his own to offer. This is an apt illustration, since Jesus described the unconverted multitudes as those who were “seeing but never perceiving, hearing but never understanding.” (Mark 4:12)

The illustrative evangelist above might more accurately cry out the command, “Believe!” The blind really can be given sight. The deaf really can hear. God is capable of working miracles, and He especially delights in doing so in the realm of salvation. Dead, dry bones really can rise up and live. (Ezekiel 37) But the miracles of spiritual sight, hearing, and life are given through a proclamation command that they should live. Like Jesus in Luke

5:23, the paralyzed man is commanded to rise up and walk; he is not exhorted to reach down inside himself and find the strength to walk. He had none; his spinal cord was malfunctioning – he was paralyzed. As Jesus healed the paralyzed man, he was not at a decision point. He was at an intersection with a divine miracle and God, who could raise the lame as well as the dead. Likewise, the faithless man does not find it within himself to have faith; it must come from somewhere else.

### **Faith is received, not conjured up.**

The Scripture is abundantly clear that faith is a gift of God, as the cited text from Ephesians 2, above, demonstrates. In the Greek language in which the Holy Spirit inspired that Text, salvation, grace and faith are all revealed to be gifts. Salvation is a gift. Grace is a gift. Faith is a gift.

Thankfully, we have far more than one Text to demonstrate that faith is a gift of God.

Paul tells the Philippians that it has been given to them that they believe. (Philippians 1:29) Paul tells the Romans that grace was given to Him and along with it, faith to believe. (Romans 12:3) We are told that it is through grace that we believe. (Acts 18:27) Peter says that he has received faith, given as though a gift. (2 Peter 2:11) We are told that faith comes from God, and not from man. (Acts 3:16)

In the clearest possible sense, man is not born with faith and must receive it. Man does not receive faith from created things, from his own good character,

or from some other source, but God alone. Faith is a gift, given purely in God's grace.

### **Repentance, like faith, is a gift.**

Is repentance<sup>11</sup> necessary for salvation? Being clear-cut, repentance is a consequence of God's work in salvation. Where there is faith, there is genuine repentance. Where there is genuine repentance, there is faith. Faith is the fire, repentance the smoke. The fire does the work (heating, lighting, and cooking). The smoke is a result of the fire but can actually be seen many more miles away than the fire itself. Likewise, faith is what justifies. Faith is what makes us right with God. Faith, however, is rather internal. Only those closest to us can perceive that something is taking place. Repentance, on the other hand, is the result of saving faith and like with fire and smoke, always accompanies its counterpart. Whereas faith is what justifies, repentance is the response to true faith. We see this as the converts on Pentecost, having been already to cut to the heart in faith, are told to

---

<sup>11</sup> Repentance means, "a change of mind." Specifically, repentance is a change of mind concerning sin. The unregenerate man has no problem with sin, and repentance is his changing his mind toward sin so that he comes to despise it. Contextually, however, we see that repentance is not just any kind of a change of mind, but rather, it is a change of mind that leads to demonstrable action. That action, or changed behavior, is seen externally, whereas faith is often hard to perceive.

repent and be baptized because of the forgiveness of sins (contextually, the forgiveness they had already been given – Acts 2:38).

And so I include repentance in this treatise because it is a part of the overall salvation of a man, albeit not, like faith, justifying. As a response to saving faith, repentance is always present. So is repentance an act of man, or gift of God?

Acts 5:31 speaks of God giving repentance to Israel. Acts 11:18 speaks of God giving repentance to the Gentiles. Paul prays that God will give repentance to the lost in 2 Timothy 2:24-25. Peter says in 2 Peter 1:3 that all things pertaining to life and godliness have been given to us.

### **The Spirit Works in to Desire and Act**

Well, you might ask, “Don’t *I* repent? God doesn’t repent for me, does he?”

Remember, repentance is a consequence and result of saving grace. Having been justified by faith, the sinner is now given the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). The Holy Spirit performs a very important function in us, and that is working to change and conform our will or desire, and thereby causing a change in our actions.

*...for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*  
(Philippians 2:13 ESV)

It is the Holy Spirit, therefore that works *in* us to change our desires or will and to do works, deeds or

actions. The Holy Spirit does this, in part, by giving us both spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-10) and spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22-23). As Paul teaches the Corinthians, it is the Holy Spirit which transforms our will to God's will and inclines our heart toward works. Repentance – and a lifestyle of repentance that we call discipleship or sanctification – is a work of God. It is a work of God done in us and in a limited sense, by us, but motivated and enabled by God.

The only ingredient of justification, which is faith, is given to us by God. A pivotal response to salvation, which is repentance, is given to us by God. The desire to be saved, have faith, or repent, is given to us by God.

This is why we proclaim, "Salvation is of the Lord."

### **THE NATURE OF GRACE**

*But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Ephesians 4:7  
ESV)*

We know that we are saved through faith and not works. But we are saved *through* faith, *by* grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). In other words, faith is how we are justified (declared right with God), but that we have faith or can be saved by faith is an act of God's grace.

Error stands on both sides of Ephesians 2:8-9. If one believes that we are saved by God's grace apart

from faith, he subscribes to Universalism<sup>12</sup> – he believes that God saves all, regardless of whether or not he/she has faith. If one believes that we are saved by faith apart from grace, he subscribes to Pelagianism<sup>13</sup>. Both are dangerous heresies.

A Christian must affirm that he/she is saved, as Paul said, by grace and through faith. Faith is the means God provides for us. Grace is why and how God provides the means. In other words, the fact that God gives you faith is, in and of itself, a gift of grace.

But what *is* grace, exactly? The word most often used is  $\chi\alpha\rho\omega$  (chairō)<sup>14</sup> and contextually means

---

<sup>12</sup> Universalism teaches that everyone will be saved. Christian Universalists, in particular, teach that Jesus saves people through his atonement whether or not they believe the Gospel. Universalism, particularly the brand advocated by Origen, was condemned at the Fifth General Council and firmly rejected by orthodox Christianity.

<sup>13</sup> Pelagianism is a heresy that began in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and was named after Pelagius, who taught that people had the ability to fulfill the commands of God by exercising human freedom apart from the grace of God. Pelagius denied Original Sin, and therefore believed and taught that man – without grace – can be made right with God by his own effort. Pelagianism was condemned as a heresy by a number of early church councils, including the councils of Carthage, Ephesus and Orange.

<sup>14</sup> Strong's G5463

*unmerited favor.* Grace is intrinsically undeserved. Therefore, this is the first thing one needs to know about grace – it is not deserved.

A general confusion exists between this and other terms, like justice and mercy. Justice is getting what you *do* deserve. Mercy is *not* getting what you do deserve. Grace is getting what you do *not* deserve. Justice is a man being put in jail to answer for his crimes. Mercy is not giving a man jail when he deserves it. Grace is giving a man a gift when he deserves to be in jail.

If your child deserves punishment, and you punish him/her, you are giving justice. If your child deserves punishment and you do not punish him/her, you are giving mercy. If your child deserves punishment but you give kindness, you are giving unmerited favor – IE, grace.

## **GRACE IS FREELY RECEIVED AND FREELY GIVEN**

*...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. (Romans 3:22-25 ESV)*

Because grace is unmerited favor, grace is free – at least to the recipient. You cannot earn grace. If you earn it, it is justice. What this means is that there is nothing you can do to earn, achieve, merit or warrant grace. Again, this is hardly controversial among orthodox Christians, and most of us champion this readily. Your good deeds, good work, accomplishment or effort does not cause God to

give you grace. God's grace is without requirement. Grace is freely given, and this is what makes salvation a gift.

Likewise, to believe that grace is merited or earned, not only contradicts the very definition of grace itself, but places someone outside the camp of Biblical Christianity. Some cults will honestly argue for a salvation apart from grace. Some, more deceptively, will profess belief in a salvation by grace, but the grace they preached is received by their work and effort. That is not grace, regardless of being called that. If one's salvation hinges on receiving grace by good works, why do you need grace at all since you believe you have the good works by which the grace is merited?

Because grace is a gift and not a wage (which is justice), one is not entitled. One is entitled to a wage that he/she has earned (which happens to be death – Romans 6:23). One is *not* entitled to a gift.

If grace is a gift and it cannot be expected and you are not entitled, then the giving of it cannot be forced. If someone is forced to give grace, it is not grace, just as the gift given under coercion or force is not really a gift – it is robbery. God's grace cannot be demanded.

Please, beloved, understand these truths:

1. You do not deserve God's grace.
2. You are not entitled to grace.
3. God does not have to give you grace.
4. If God did not give you grace, it would not be wrong.

## EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

God does not save everyone.

This is the most controversial statement in the entire treatise. God does not save everyone.

It does not land lightly upon the ears or smoothly upon your heart, does it? It's a hard saying, who can take it? (John 6:60). Please, let us reason.

Although Universalists believe Hell is empty, the fact is not all people are saved or will be saved. Not everyone is saved. Can you agree with that? Matthew 7:13 tells us that wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many people thereon. It's a sad reality, but it's still a reality. Hell will not be empty, and some will be condemned on the Day of Judgment.

If you can agree that not all are saved (as you surely can), will you also agree with me that God saves? Isn't salvation of the Lord? Is it not Christ who justifies? (Romans 5:1) So then, does God save all? Does Christ save all? The answer, if you are reasoning with me, is a clear and emphatic *no*.

We might prefer to think that God *tries* to save all people. After all, he certainly wants us to preach the Gospel to all people (Mark 16:15). God offers all people salvation (Revelation 22:17). But let us reason together.

Faith is a gift of God. Have all been given faith?  
Repentance is a gift of God. Have all been given  
repentance? Salvation is of God. Have all been given  
salvation?

Again the answer to all three of those questions is  
an emphatic *no*. Faith comes from God, but some do  
not have it. Repentance comes from God, but some  
do not have it. Grace comes from God, but some  
have not been given it. Salvation is of God, but not  
all have been saved.

Here's what I would ask you to consider, Beloved.  
You may very well hate what I've said in this brief  
section. You may even despise what I've said. Can  
you find fault with it? Does man have faith of his  
own? (No) Does man receive faith only as a gift  
from God? (Yes) Does everyone have faith? (No) So  
then, has God given all faith (no)? Does God save  
all? (No)

You may loathe all of that. But I will ask you again.  
Can you find fault? Better yet, here's another  
question – do you really find it controversial that  
God does not save all? Do you admit that salvation  
is of God alone and also admit that not all are  
saved?

It is here that we receive charges of unfairness. How  
could God not save all? And yet I would ask you to  
explain God saving all. For the fact is, He does not.  
This question could just as easily be asked of you:  
Why does God not save all?

Again, you could answer that by saying that he tries  
his best but unfortunately fails. Having written this

short treatise to sincere and serious followers of Christ, I know that you would not want to limit the omnipotence of God or challenge his divine competency.

So then, the charge of unfairness arises. Some desire to accuse God of being unfair if He freely chooses to give grace to some and not to all, or faith to some and not to all, or repentance to some and not to all. How could God do that! That is unfair! It's just not right!

Let me ask you, sinner, what are you demanding from God? Must God give you compassion because he gives another man compassion? Must God give you unmerited favor because he gives another man unmerited favor? If a Governor so chooses to pardon a criminal at the state penitentiary, must he pardon them all? If you choose not to punish your child (justice) today and give grace instead, are you obligated to give him grace forever more? Or if you give grace to one child in regard to his/her disobedience, must you give grace to his/her siblings in regard to their disobedience lest you be accused of wrongdoing?

The child who received punishment rather than grace could not bring a charge against the parent for unfairness, so long as the child committed the crime that earns the punishment. Did you do the crime? As the proverbial expression continues, "Do the time." There is nothing unfair or unjust about that.

Several years ago I was under the employ of a drug and alcohol treatment center, and our business

contracted with the state to provide court-appointed substance abuse counseling for those successfully prosecuted for drinking-and-driving. Clients would sometimes talk in the foyer and discuss how they came to be in the position they found themselves, and controversy would often erupt. The controversy was typically because one offender would find out that another offender had received a reduced sentence and far fewer penalties due to having hired an attorney. As they would come into my office, they would speak of how “unfair” it was that another man committed the same crime, but was able to plea down the charge to reckless driving and did not receive jail time or extreme fines. My response to the infuriated offenders was always the same “Were you drinking and driving?” As they responded in the affirmative, I would explain that the sentence for the crime was incredibly just and fair, given what the crime committed. That the other offender had a legal advocate and was shown mercy had nothing to do with whether or not their own punishment was fair. They did the crime. They will have to do the time. That’s justice.

Our notion of fairness has fallen with our own sinful natures. We perceive God not saving all (even though surely you agree he does not) as being unfair. I would ask if there has ever been a person sent to his eternal punishment who did not deserve it. Will there be anyone in hell that does not deserve to be there? Then what each has received – if indeed he has sinned against a Holy God – is infinitely fair and just.

On the other hand, the redeemed believer should not cry out for justice. Justice, for the sinner, is hell. What the redeemed believer should cry out for is grace. It saddens me to see sincere followers of Jesus cry out for “fairness” in terms of salvation. Dear beloved, I assure you that you do not want fairness. What you want is grace, for which God, on your behalf, gave justice to Jesus. I’m afraid that in complaining about fairness, the sincere believer illustrates he doesn’t grasp the concept of grace. What would be fair is for God to send the entire world to hell as each and every one of us deserves. Is that what you want, Beloved?

We see this fleshed out so very well in Romans 9. God loved Jacob but hated Esau. (Romans 9:13) It was before either one was born or either one had done anything good or bad. (Romans 9:11) And it was not because of what either would go on to do, good or bad.

*...though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” (Romans 9:11-13 ESV)*

It was not because of their works or labor, but due to God’s choice.

I know, you abhor that (at least most people do). I will ask you, dear friend, does God have the right to make a choice? Does God have a free will? Can God

choose to give mercy to whom he wants to give mercy and give compassion to whom he wants to give compassion? (Romans 9:15) Can God choose to give mercy to some and harden the hearts of others? (Romans 9:18) Of course, these are all answered in the affirmative in the very verses I have cited. I don't expect you to like God's freedom, at least *yet*. I don't expect you to enjoy hearing about God's ability to make choices. But because this treatise is written to the spiritually sincere and committed, I *do* expect you to acknowledge that God isn't obligated to save someone. I *do* expect you to acknowledge that God has a free will, and God is entitled to make choices. I *do* expect you to acknowledge that if a sinner is sent to hell, it's not unjust or unfair for God to give him the due penalty for their error.

Please reason with me. Does God have to save someone? Is he unjust if He doesn't?

### **WHAT ABOUT FREE WILL?**

Free will is among the most popular doctrines in the Bible. It's really quite strange, in fact, that it seems to be the most well-known doctrine among the lost, or at least to those who appear to be lost. Many people who cannot name a single other doctrine know "free will" is an important Christian doctrine. It is ironic that "free will" is not a term found in the Bible, but the terms *election* or *predestination* are spoken many times, and yet most people are familiar with the former and not the latter.

Let me be very, very clear. **You have a will. You have the ability to make choices and decisions. Of that, there is absolutely no doubt.**

Some suggest that if God gives grace and gives faith and gives repentance, then he makes us into robots and puppets that have no will, no choice, and can make no real decisions. Such is the heart of misunderstanding election.

Let me say it again. **You have a will. You have the ability to make choices and decisions. Of that, there is absolutely no doubt.**

Saved or unsaved, every person can make choices, make decisions, or exercise their will. This has never been a point of contention among those who accurately understand the doctrine of election.

This is the point of contention: Your will, your choices and your decisions are *tied intrinsically to your nature*. In this respect, your will, choices and decisions are a product of your heart, your nature, and who you really are.

The example I've given for many years is that of a big, dumb dog named, "Molly." Molly is a Saint Bernard. Molly likes hotdogs. Molly *loves* hotdogs. If I leave the grill for a moment or two, Molly will eat the hotdogs. I don't mean that Molly *may* eat the hotdogs. I mean that Molly *will* eat the hotdogs. There's no question. There will never be a time that Molly doesn't eat the hotdogs. Do you know why? It's not because Molly doesn't have a choice. Molly definitely has a choice. She doesn't have to eat the

hotdogs. She looks like the 'cat that ate the canary' afterward and slinks off with her tail between her legs, ashamed of herself. She knows better. But guilt aside, she's going to eat the hotdogs. It's not because she's under coercion, but because she's a big, dumb dog. And big, dumb dogs like Molly are going to eat the hotdogs. It's in her nature.

*For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. – Romans 8:7*

The lost man is going to sin. That's what sinners do. The man who's yet to be born again, who's still "of flesh," is hostile to God and he does not submit to God because he *cannot* submit to God (Romans 8:7). God does not make the lost person lost. God does not make the sinner sin. The sinner sins because he is a sinner.

Jesus told us that those who by nature are sinners and continue to sin are *slaves* to sin (Romans 8:34). Slaves are not free. Paul says in Titus 3:3 that lost people are slaves to various passions and pleasures, pre-conversion. Again, slaves are not free. Paul says the same in Romans 6; unbelievers are slaves to sin.

In Romans 1:24-27, Paul speaks of God giving people over to their lusts and passions as a result of the fall of man. Proverbs 21:10 says that the heart of the unjustified is wicked. Jesus says that the unjustified love darkness, rather than light. (John 3:19)

As He speaks of the unjustified in John 8:44, Jesus says that their will is to do Satan's desires.

What all of this demonstrates is that a lost man is free to make decisions. He can make whatever decisions he wants. But *his decisions are held captive by his desires*. The point of being born again is to be given a *new* nature, a *new* heart, and *new* desires. His already-existing will then does what his heart desires him to do, which is good instead of evil. His already-existing will then does what his heart desires him to do, which is to call out for salvation rather than to blaspheme God. His already-existing will then does what his heart desires him to do, which is to worship God instead of run from God.

To repeat, the lost man has a will. The saved man has a will. Each uses his will to act according to his nature (his heart). The question of “what about free will” is really an irrelevant one. It’s not about will. It’s about nature. Without God’s intervention, the lost man will use his will and decisions and choices to rebel against God. With God’s grace, the lost man will use his will and decisions and choices to embrace God and worship him.

Does God make people worship Him? No. He opens their spiritual eyes so they can see him. He opens their spiritual ears so they can hear him. He opens their hearts so they can receive faith from him.

God opened Lydia’s heart to receive and believe what was preached to her (Acts 16:14). God doesn’t make us worship him, receive him, or turn us into some kind of puppet or robot. God opens our hearts, our eyes and our ears. That’s all God needs to do. Once HE changes the heart of the lost man, the lost man receives Christ by faith and *chooses* to worship God and commits himself to Christ, exercising his

will to do so. Without God's intervention, the lost man will happily exercise his will to do what his heart desires, which is most certainly *not* to worship and commit himself to Christ, but continue in sin and rebellion.

### **DOES ELECTION HURT EVANGELISM?**

Does the doctrine of election hurt evangelism? Do you believe a doctrine taught in Scripture would hurt a command given us in Scripture? God forbid.

First, let's reason together.

My own church, for example, is the only orthodox Christian church in my county that has an active ministry at the local jail. My own church is the only church in the county to have a food pantry, and with that aid, also give away a Bible, tract, and often a Gospel presentation. My own church is the only church (that I am aware of) in the area that gives away Gospel tracts in bulletins for members to give away during the week (and any quantity of free tracts to anyone who would like to distribute them. Men often preach and evangelize in public places like parks or community events and provide special training to teach evangelism to our members. We support missionaries financially to the point that it hurts, have gone on short-term mission trips, and members regularly go on mission to serve with various mission boards or agencies. We faithfully baptize believers and see new conversions on a regular basis. We have planted churches and evangelized on the nearby Indian Reservation as

well. We encourage single young men, in particular, to give their lives to missions. And yet, we believe in election as the Bible teaches it. On a personal note, I would ask for anyone to look at my congregation and ask if our belief in election has in anyway hindered our evangelistic zeal.

Could it be, Beloved, that you are under the notion that election hurts evangelism because you have heard so from those who stand opposed to the Bible's teachings?

A quick survey of history, in fact, will soundly reject the notion that a belief in God's sovereignty over salvation hurts or hinders missionary endeavor.

William Carey – the father of modern missions– was convinced of God's sovereignty over salvation.

David Brainerd, the famed missionary to the Indians in Puritan New England, was convinced of God's sovereignty over salvation.

Jonathan Edwards, the great colonial preacher that God used to bring forth the Great Awakening through his epic preaching, was convinced of God's sovereignty over salvation.

George Whitefield, perhaps the greatest outdoor evangelist of all history and a contemporary of Edwards, was convinced of God's sovereignty over salvation.

David Livingstone, the most famous missionary ever to the continent of Africa, was convinced of God's sovereignty over salvation.

Charles Spurgeon, the most-quoted preacher in the world post-Reformation (even until this day), was convinced of God's sovereignty over salvation.

Adrian Judson, the renowned missionary to Burma, was convinced of God's sovereignty over salvation.

Charles Simeon, the great British preacher who founded the wide-reaching Church Mission Society, was convinced of God's sovereignty over salvation.

Robert Morrison, the first missionary to China, was convinced of God's sovereignty over salvation.

Lottie Moon, the namesake of the International Mission Board Christmas offering who starved herself to death to feed the hungry in China, was convinced of God's sovereignty over salvation.

In modern day, we have seen men like John Stott (who founded Lausanne Trust, a global evangelism effort, Francis Shaeffer, D. James Kennedy (who founded "Evangelism Explosion") who have firmly taught and believed the historic and biblical doctrine of God's sovereignty over salvation and yet have contributed greatly to world missions.

Also, we have leaders still alive and still leading, like John MacArthur whose ministry *Grace to You* has touched countless millions of lives, whose Master's Seminary and College have trained thousands of ministers and missionaries, and whose church has planted churches across the world.

RC Sproul, John Piper, Albert Mohler, Alistair Begg, and many, many others have inspired, trained and sent out a countless numbers of missionaries and evangelists to share the Gospel.

Of course, we have the Reformers, for instance, John Knox who saw the greatest national revival in the history of the world while he presided over Scotland. We have John Calvin, who has influenced more men and women to enter into global missions than arguably any other single man in the world, post-Apostolic age.

Some of these men may call themselves *Reformed*. Some may call themselves *Calvinist*. Some may just call themselves *Monergists*. Some of these men are Baptists. Some are Presbyterian. Some were Puritans. Some were Anglicans. Some are without explicit affiliation. And obviously, no one could possibly agree with every teaching of each of these men – but they all have one thing in common. All of them believe/d in God’s sovereignty over salvation, have affirmed predestination and election, and have led the way when it comes to evangelism and world missions.

Presbyterians and many Baptists (and certain other affiliations) have traditionally been Reformed or Monergistic. The Southern Baptist Convention, of which our church is currently a part, was founded almost exclusively by men who held tightly to these doctrines. And quite frankly, Southern Baptists have led the way regarding evangelism and missions in this country for more than one hundred years before succumbing to the downgrade and forgetting most of our doctrine. Would someone look at

organizations like Heart-Cry Missionary Society – founded with a firm conviction of God’s sovereignty over salvation – and accuse it of being hampered or hindered by that belief? Or perhaps tell the missionaries that our church supports that somehow believing God’s sovereignty over salvation hinders their missionary zeal as they live in third world countries and hack through jungles to tell unreached people about Jesus?

Will you reason with me?

Can you see that the claim that there is no need for evangelism if one believes in sovereignty is an unfair and inaccurate characterization that has no grounding in reality – a reality that you, yourself can see with your own eyes if you were to look around?

There are some who are called “Hyper-Calvinists” who believe that God does not desire evangelism or missions. I have been a pastor for 15 years, and I have only met two of these strange creatures in all my life – and they, only over the Internet. They are rare beasts, and they are thoroughly heretical and almost as elusive as a leprechaun. Most of these have been relegated to a group called “Primitive Baptists” (although even the majority of Primitive Baptists are not hyper-Calvinists, although they do disagree on *how* missions and evangelism should be done) and have always been a bizarre and fringe minority. The notion that evangelism is not the duty of every Christian should be rejected by every sincere believer, as it is by literally by every individual I *personally have known* who believes in God’s sovereignty over salvation.

Consequently, if believing the Bible's teaching on election has never had and does not now have a demonstrative negative impact on evangelism, from where did the myth arise? The next section answers the question.

### **WHY EVANGELIZE?**

Why on Earth share the Gospel with anyone if God is sovereign over salvation? Why not just stay home and let God do the work? Why not just shrug our shoulders and stay home?

First, I will ask you. Is God sovereign over your health? Is he truly in charge of your life and death? Surely, you must say yes. Then let me ask you, Beloved, "Why exercise?"

Is God sovereign over you safety, Beloved? Then let me ask you, "Why lock your doors at night?"

Does God not say that he will care for you, and that you are not to worry about what you will eat or drink? Does he not tell you to consider the lilies in this regard? (Matthew 6:28) Then why, dear friend, do you go to work each day to make a living?

### **GOD GIVES THE INCREASE**

*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. (1 Corinthians 3:6-7 ESV)*

God uses *means*. The reason you don't sit in a stew of your own slothfulness, just because God is sovereign over your livelihood and has promised to care for you, is that God uses *means*. My grandfather used a colloquial expression, "If you're going to pray for potatoes, you had better have a spade in your hand." This thought is simple; God makes the potatoes grow, after you plant them, and you had also better be ready to dig them up for harvest.

In the verse above, Paul says that he has planted (the Gospel). Apollos watered. But God, Paul says, gave the growth. We plant the seeds. We exhort those within whom the seed has been planted, watering it. But it is God and God alone that makes the seed take root and reap salvation.

This is one of the most amazing statements I could make, to speak of God's great love for the Gospel witness; **God, in his goodness, has chosen to let his children play a significant role in his distribution of grace to our fellow man.**

How amazing that is. It's simply...amazing. God could make rocks cry out if he wanted to (Luke 19:40). He could talk through a donkey (Number 22:28). Instead, he has chosen to use his people to deliver the good news to others.

So let's understand this important tenet – God doesn't *need* you. First and foremost, the reason we do evangelism is not that God can't save people without your help. Do you remember the story of Esther and Mordecai? Ester is greatly apprehensive about interceding for her people because it may

bring her own demise. Mordecai has some words for her:

*For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* (Esther 4:14 ESV)

God was intent on saving his people. If Esther was unfaithful to intercede, God would bring about their salvation through another one of his people. But, if Esther would have been unfaithful, her disobedience would have brought suffering. Christians share the Gospel, not because God cannot save someone without our assistance, but because it is an honor to us to demonstrate our faith by participating in God's redemptive plan.

We also see clearly in Scripture what the means is by which God saves people. Chiefly, that means is God's Word (primarily), and (secondarily) the proclaimers of God's Word. We see this throughout Scripture, but especially in Romans 10 – right after Paul teaches of God's election in Romans 9.

*For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 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? 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!"* (Romans 10:13-15 ESV)

Starting with a beautiful promise that anyone who desires to be saved can be saved (a truth that all of us who believe in God's sovereignty heartily affirm), we're told that in order for someone to be saved, he must call upon God, after hearing of God, by being preached to, because the preacher was sent to preach to him. At no point would we believe that because God is sovereign, he will save people without them first hearing his Word.

Simply put, hearing God's written Word is necessary for one to come to faith. This, again, is affirmed all throughout Scripture.

*...since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God* (1 Peter 1:23).

Two things must be present for a person to come to faith. The first is the working of the Holy Spirit. People cannot come to Christ unless they are drawn by God (John 6:44). The Christian cannot help or change that. We are unable to make a Sovereign God draw a man. However, the second ingredient that must be present for a person to be saved is the Word of God, and God will not save anyone apart from it. It is the imperishable seed of the Word of God that the Spirit uses to draw a man to Christ.

And so, God in his goodness has chosen to use men to deliver that second ingredient of God's Word. Thus, we preach with all our might in anticipation

that God will save. We see this in Ezekiel 37, which is a picture of God's salvation. The prophet is told to prophesy to wind, and by God's power, those dead, dry bones live. The prophet did not cause them to come alive, but God Almighty did! But God Almighty did use the prophet's words to accomplish his sovereign will.

### **WILL YOU REASON WITH ME?**

You have been presented, in as clear and simple terms possible, the doctrine of election as given in the Holy Bible. I would ask you not what you feel emotionally about it, and not what you prefer to be true, but if what I have presented is in accord with Scripture.

Does this not give complete glory and honor to God for our salvation? Does this not make clear that God is sovereign in his distribution of both justice and grace? Does this not preserve the will of man, while yet clarifying that God must supernaturally change the heart in order for a man to be saved? Are these not doctrines from the Scripture?

Please understand that as you sit in a church that preaches the entire counsel of God's Word (even the parts that are uncomfortable or new to you), it is not done without reservation. I assure you, dear reader, that men like me would far rather conceal what God's Word says for the sake of your continued fellowship and to make peace with other men. But alas, God's Word does not give us

permission to change or edit his Scripture; we must proclaim it.

Ask yourself, "Why would preachers of modern day and ancient preach a doctrine that is so terribly offensive to those who do not understand it?" I assure you, Beloved; it is not because we enjoy the fall-out. It is because we can preach no other word than what is before us.

In John 6, Jesus taught that the lost could only believe if it were a work done by God in them (John 6:29). He taught the multitudes that every single person chosen by God and sent to the Son would go to him and that all who are sent by God to the Son will remain saved (John 6:37-40). In short, Jesus taught the doctrine of election.

The crowd rejected it. They detested it. They had been taught that a part of their salvation was *their* doing. They refused to share the credit of their salvation with God. And, they left.

*After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. (John 6:66)*

They heard the doctrine of election taught, and they left because they could not stand it. Then, Jesus looked at the sincere, serious followers and said:

*"Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:66-69 ESV)*

I've presented to you the Word of God, in spite of it being a hard saying. Some will leave because of it. I will ask you, "Will you leave, too?"

I write this with a pastor's heart. I write this in love and concern.

Will you reason with me?