

EPHESIANS

ENGAGING THE POWER OF GOD'S AMAZING GRACE



ABUNDANTLIFE
FOURSQUARE CHURCH

APPENDIX

BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF GRACE

Like many other familiar terms, the word “grace” has a variety of connotations and nuances, which need not be listed here. For the purposes of this article, its meaning is that of undeserved blessing freely bestowed on man by God — a concept which is at the heart not only of Christian theology, but also of all genuine Christian experience. In discussing the subject of grace, an important distinction must be maintained between common (general, universal) grace and special (saving, regenerating) grace, if the relationship between divine grace and the human situation is to be rightly understood.

Common grace is so called because it is common to all mankind. Its benefits are experienced by the whole human race without discrimination. The order of creation reflects the mind and the care of the Creator who sustains what He has made. The eternal Son, through whom all things were made, “upholds the universe by His word of power” (Hebrews 1:2-3; John 1:1-4). God’s gracious provision for His creatures is seen in the sequence of the seasons, of seedtime and harvest. Thus Jesus reminded His hearers that God “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). The Creator’s sustaining care for His creation is what is meant when we speak of divine providence.

Another aspect of common grace is evident in the divine government or control of human society. It is true that human society is in a state of sinful fallenness. Were it not for the restraining hand of God, indeed, our world would long since have degenerated into a self-destructive chaos of iniquity, in which social order and community life would have been impossible. That a measure of domestic, political, and international harmony is enjoyed by the generality of mankind is due to the overruling goodness of God. Paul actually teaches that civil government with its authorities is ordained by God and that to resist these authorities is to resist the ordinance of God. He even calls secular rulers and magistrates ministers of God, since their proper concern is the maintenance of order and decency in society. Insofar as they bear the sword for the punishment of wrongdoers in the interests of justice and peace, theirs is a God-given authority. And, significantly, the state of which the apostle was proud to be a citizen was the pagan and at times persecuting, state of imperial Rome, at the hands of whose rulers he would be put to death. (See Romans 13:1 ff.)

It is due, further, to common grace that man retains within himself a consciousness of the difference between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, and the awareness that he is answerable or accountable not merely to his fellowmen, but also and ultimately to God, his Maker. Man, in short, has a conscience and is endowed with the dignity of existing as a responsible being. He is duty-bound lovingly to obey God and to serve his fellows. The conscience is the focus within each person, as a being formed in the image of God, not only of self-respect and of respect for others, but of respect for God.

To common grace, then, we must thankfully attribute God’s continuing care for His creation, as He provides for the needs of His creatures, restrains human society from becoming altogether intolerable and ungovernable, and makes it possible for mankind, though fallen, to live together in a generally orderly and cooperative manner, to show mutual forbearance, and to cultivate together, the scientific, cultural, and economic pursuits of civilization.

Special grace is the grace by which God redeems, sanctifies, and glorifies His people. Unlike common grace, which is universally given, special grace is bestowed only on those whom God elects to eternal life through faith in His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

It is to this special grace that the whole of the Christian's salvation is owed: "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself," Paul writes of the believer's re-creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18). God's regenerating grace is dynamic. It not only saves, but also transforms and revitalizes those whose lives were previously broken and meaningless.

This is graphically illustrated by the experience of Saul the persecutor who was dramatically changed into Paul the apostle, so that he was able to testify: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them [the other apostles], though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). All is thus ascribed to the grace of God, not merely the Christian's conversion, but also the whole course of his ministry and pilgrimage.

For the sake of convenience, the theme of special grace will now be developed under a number of customary theological heads or aspects, as prevenient, efficacious, irresistible, and sufficient.

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SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:13-3:7 and 5:5-7

Even though there are extremes of submission, these extremes are not rationalizations for not living in submission. Just because there are a few who take submission and misuse it as a tool for control and abuse, doesn't mean we now throw out the whole concept.

Submission brings up the issue: Is God on a de-humanizing program that is designed to take away our inalienable, unchallengeable, and absolute rights? Is God taking control away from us? Has God failed to realize that since this was written the constitution has been written? I am an American and I have my rights.

The Bible says that the assurance of our fulfilled destiny is never realized by the insistence of our rights. Rather it is by our willingness to lay them down, knowing that God will not forget us, and that He is watching out for us.

Submission myths debunked:

1. Submission is not becoming a doormat to anyone. Submission is the means by which personhood is established. Who we are is based on the promises of God and not on the strength of our own assertiveness.
2. Submission is not passive; it is not a "wimp-ish" attitude. There was a woman who was sharing about the fact that her husband had made an investment, but that she had read something in advance suggesting that this was not a good investment. She felt that submission to her husband that. They lost the money and she was wrong. Non-participation is not submission.
3. Submission cannot be imposed on anyone who doesn't want to submit. It is a gift that comes from the heart. Anything else is slavery. It requires trust, not in a situation or circumstance, but in God. Who do we trust with all the details of our lives?
4. Submission is not a substitute for personal and corporate responsibility. "Just tell me what to do." Submission becomes an excuse for "lazy spirituality." We excuse ourselves from the process of problem-solving, from the struggle of decision-making.

Submission spelled out: Submission is voluntarily cooperating with someone, first out of love and respect for God, and second, out of love and respect for that person.

1. Submission is an acknowledgment and trust in leadership and authority - God has placed people in my life that I am submitted to: My family...My staff...My denominational authorities...My church council. A quality of good leadership is the ability to be submitted to others. Before you can be a leader, you must first learn how to be a follower.
2. Submission is a gift we give to others because we care. Submission = service; it's the loving acknowledgment of another's value as a person. I am submitted to my family and my children to serve them. As I do this, as I love them, discipline them, play with them, care for them, establish boundary lines for them, I will win their respect and love.

3. Submission is being part of a team – protecting and covering. It is mutual, humble cooperation with one another. Our responsibility is to cover for one another. Submission: Greek “hupatasso” (hoop-ot-as’-so); - A military term - to place in right order indicating the arrangement of troops for moving into battle; victory comes as a team and not individually; to obey: be under obedience, put under, be subject to.

It is a voluntary action by individuals. It is a covering for one another. This is done out of reverence or respect (Fear of God). Respect: Webster’s defines respect as: An act of giving attention, a high or special regard, high regard, esteemed. Regard, deference, veneration, reverence, esteem, appreciation, affection, praise, admiration, approval, notice, recognition, consideration, honor, pay attention to, look up to, value, admire, cherish.

1 Peter 2:13 - 25 “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men-- as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” The word ordinance literally means “creature” or “that which is created.” In other words, believers ought to defer to others, willingly putting them first, showing respect for everyone, friends and enemies alike.

... whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.

Peter was speaking of Emperor Nero, a notoriously cruel tyrant who ruled from A.D. 54-68. The emperor was the supreme ruler over all Roman provinces -- including the areas to which Peter addressed this letter. Emperor Nero was the supreme authority and was to be worshipped. Peter was saying to christians should never worship the emperor, but they should obey his laws because he was an authority put in place by God.

Romans 13:1-2 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

Peter was not telling believers to compromise their Holy Spirit-directed consciences. Remember, Peter had told the high priest years before; “We must obey God rather than any human authority” (Acts 5:29).

15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men - 16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

You're free, party on!
Freedom! Let's get stoned!
No more rules! Let's pick up some. . .

Believers have freedom in Christ, but the apostles defined freedom more narrowly than the normal use of the word in common language. Our freedom is a tool for a life of service. It's the foundation that God gives to us to reach our highest potential.

Because God gives us freedom from religious rules and eternal guilt, we must not seek to indulge our own desires; instead, we should reach for the best God has for us. Don't be fooled if someone tries to sell you other versions of freedom.

Our freedom means that our salvation is not determined by good works or legalistic rules, but by the free gift of God. We are free from keeping the law as a way to earn salvation. We are still to obey God's laws (specifically his moral law, outlined in the Ten Commandments), because they are expressions of God's will for us. With our freedom comes responsibility.

17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. 19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

21 For to this you were called – submission to:

- every ordinance of man (all)
- your masters (all) – Ephesians 6 accountability to care and serve and benefit your employees.
- your own husbands (wives)
- your elders (young people)

Because Christ also suffered for us: Why have believers been “called” to unjust suffering? Because such suffering was endured by Christ. Jesus had told Peter and the other disciples at the Last Supper: Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also (John 15:20-21). When we patiently suffer injustice, we are following our supreme example in Christ.

- He suffered great injustice in order to obtain our salvation.
- He endured the unbelief of his own people (John 1:11).
- He endured a trial by religious leaders already committed to his death (Mark 14:1; John 11:50). He endured the lies of false witnesses (Matt 26:59-60).
- He endured beating and mockery from his people and from the Roman soldiers (Mark 14:64-65; 15:16-20).
- He endured merciless flogging (Mark 15:15).
- He endured an excruciatingly painful death by crucifixion (Mark 15:22-37).
- He endured the insults of bystanders as he suffered on the cross (Mark 15:29-32).
- He endured a time of separation from God (Mark 15:33-34).

Leaving us an example: The Greek word for “example” is hupogrammaton, which was a model of handwriting set up by masters for their pupils to copy. Christ is the model for the believer to follow; believers, who soon would be persecuted for their faith. They would face injustice from harsh masters or from other authorities with supreme dignity, trusting God’s control.

21 That you should follow His steps: This is one of the great challenges of believers in Jesus. We can still go to heaven, as well as drive over the speed limit, or retaliate at work when treated unfairly, or wives don’t have to have a heart of submission, and husbands don’t have to treat wives as Christ treated the church, etc. We can do all these and not lose our salvation, but what we do lose are the benefits of following His steps today, and we don’t have to wait till we get to heaven.

We can follow in His steps during: Trials that refine us...Temptation that comes as an assault by the devil... Frustrations... Irritations with people’s ineptness, insensitivity... Difficulty with circumstances, unplanned events... Misunderstandings by friends... Mistreatment by someone... Disappointments... Delays... Cancellations... Reversals... Accusations... Persecution... Loss – job, money, theft, damage, car broke down and the warranty is not honored... Pain and affliction...

Teaching and worship will never eliminate the possibility of these things happening in our lives. This is not negativism, but reality, and what we do and how we respond to these things is important.

The truth is most of us work through issues on our own and our prayer to God is either a “thank you” or “safety net” type of prayer.

22 “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”

What this is saying is that we might end up “hanging on a cross” for our commitment. If we let go of our “rights, individuality, independence, then we might end up looking like a fool, idiot, and we will hear the words “I told you so.” The question rises to the surface: Is God really as big as He says He is? What brings about resolution for us: our abilities, intelligence, or creativity? Will these win the day for us? The truth is, for most of us the answer is YES. We are more reliant on us than we are on God. How do I know this? Because of the lack of prayer requests, lack of questions being asked, the lack of fellowship interaction, the lack of small group involvement. You cannot live the way of submission alone.

23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; **24** who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. **25** For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Peter 3:1-7 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, **2** when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.

What should a wife do if her husband is an unbeliever or very difficult to live with? Peter says she should accept the authority of her husband. To accept authority means to cooperate voluntarily with someone else out of love and respect for God and for that person.

Submission can be an effective Christian strategy to win unbelievers. Jesus Christ submitted to God's will and died so that we could be saved. A Christian wife may sometimes have to live with some unpleasant circumstances so that her husband will see that Christ is her Lord and come to believe. Yet submission never requires us to disobey God, submit to abuse, or participate in what our Holy Spirit-directed conscience forbids. One-sided submission requires tremendous strength. Ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to help you obey Christ in your marriage.

3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

Note: Husbands are to be submitted to their wives, "likewise," and even more is being asked of them: Understanding; honor; equals (heirs together) so that the husband's prayers may not be hindered.

1 Peter 5:5-7 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Submission to one another is not what we will naturally do. Most Westerners are basically self-centered. Our first concern is for us. We tend to "take care of our own - only". We value our independence, our liberties, and our freedoms. We have established our "comfort zones." We are being held captive to a "spirit of independence." In our society, the natural thing to do is our own thing --The supernatural thing to do is God's thing. If you want to destroy the work of God, the best way is to fight among one another, create division, don't serve one another, stay in your comfort zone, etc.

Ephesians 4:1-3 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

PREDESTINATION

The Concept: Divine predestination means that God has a purpose that is determined long before it is brought to pass. It implies that God is infinitely capable of planning and then bringing about what He has planned, and Scripture speaks of Him as doing this (Isaiah 14:24-27; 22:11; 37:26; 44:7-8; 46:8-10). Prophecy in its predictive mode is to be understood accordingly.

God plans and makes His plans known, as He chooses, to His servants the prophets (Amos 3:7).

God's purpose is one of love and grace (Deuteronomy 7:6-8; Isaiah 41:8-9), above all because in love He predestined what should come to pass in His plan to save and to restore sinful humanity through Christ (Ephesians 1:5). Colossians 1:26 speaks of this purpose as "the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but now is disclosed." This implies that all that is in God's good purpose for us, individually or as part of the people of God, is by God's initiative and thus is a work of grace, something that we could never instigate or deserve (Deuteronomy 9:4-6; 2 Timothy 1:9).

God's Predestining Purpose: From the call of Abraham (Genesis 12:3) his descendants, in particular the progeny of Jacob/Israel, are predestined to fulfill the purpose that God has for them (Psalm 105:5-10). They are to be seen in the world as His people (Deuteronomy 7:6; Psalm 33:11-12), holy and obedient to Him, living to His praise (Isaiah 43:21), a priestly nation bringing the knowledge of God to other nations (Exodus 19:5-6). The New Testament bears witness also to this purpose and foreknowledge of God concerning Israel (Romans 11:2).

It is also made clear in the Old Testament in a number of ways that the purpose of God embraces all nations. He has foreordained it when a nation is used to chasten Israel and then when a Gentile ruler sets them free (Isaiah 10:5-6; 44:28-45:1). Yet irrespective of Israel, Yahweh has a plan determined for the whole world as His hand is stretched out over all nations (Isaiah 14:27). God "determined the times set" for the different nations "and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17:26). In relation to the nations the word of the Lord in Isaiah 46:10 is, "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."

Predetermined also, and thus mentioned variously in the prophets, is the purpose of God to be fulfilled in a Messiah of the house of David (Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-9; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-28).

It is also planned and foreordained that through Israel the knowledge of God should go out to the nations that they might be drawn to the worship of the Lord, a purpose to which the New Testament in turn bears witness (Galatians 3:8; Colossians 1:27).

In the New Testament it is stressed repeatedly that the divine plan to be fulfilled in Christ was predestined. Paul speaks of the purpose in Him as "God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began" (1 Corinthians 2:7). "God's eternal purpose" it is called in Ephesians 3:11. Although there was a human responsibility for the death of Jesus, all that happened was by "God's set purpose and foreknowledge" (Acts 2:23). So also was the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:31), and furthermore he is "appointed as judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42).

The people of God in the New Testament, like Israel in the Old Testament, have a destiny to fulfill. They are appointed to have an inheritance (Matthew 25:34), to receive God's kingdom (Luke 12:32), to have "the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27), which is "eternal life" (Acts 13:48). This appointed destiny for God's people can also be spoken of as their being chosen to be born anew (James 1:18), to gain salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:13), and to be adopted as children of God through Christ (Ephesians 1:5).

In terms similar to those applied to Israel, the people of God in the New Testament are chosen to be holy, to be obedient, to live to God's praise (Ephesians 1:6,11,12,14; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:2), and, going beyond anything in the Old Testament, "predestined to be conformed to the likeness" of God's Son (Romans 8:29). In practical terms Ephesians 2:10 says that "we are ... created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Both Old and New Testaments also speak of individuals being predestined to fulfill a divine purpose. Jeremiah (1:5) is spoken of as being set apart before he was born to be a prophet to the nations. The servant of Yahweh in Isaiah 49:5 is conscious of being "formed in the womb to be his servant." In Genesis 25:23, a statement is made concerning the destinies of Jacob and Esau before they were born. In the New Testament Paul speaks of himself as set apart from birth to know God's Son and to make Him known (Galatians 1:15-16).

A final question that has concerned-and divided-Christian people down through the ages is whether some are predestined to life and salvation and others predestined to condemnation ("double predestination").

On certain things Scripture is clear:

- 1 We all, because of our sinfulness, deserve only God's condemnation.
- 2 Our salvation is entirely because of God's grace and God's initiative.
- 3 The dominant emphasis is not on the fact that some are chosen by God and some are not, but on what is the purpose of God for those chosen: "to be conformed to the likeness of His Son" (Romans 8:29), or, "adoption as his children through Jesus Christ ... to the praise of his glorious grace" (Ephesians 1:5-6 NRSV).

What, then, should be said of Paul's argument in Romans 9-11? In those chapters much is said in positive terms of God's purpose, grace offered in turn to Jews and to Gentiles.

Much also is said of human responsibility in the rejection of God's grace on the part of many in Israel and thus their failure to obtain God's salvation. The only verse that can be and is often taken to speak of predestination to condemnation is in the form of a hypothetical question (and one capable of very diverse interpretations, as the commentaries indicate): "What if God, choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of His wrath-prepared for destruction?" (Romans 9:22). It would be hard to fit together a predestination to judgment and the operation of human free will and our responsibility. The failure to find the salvation offered to human-kind by a gracious and loving God seems more wisely assigned to the way men and women "reject God's purpose for themselves" (Luke 7:30) rather than to a prior, unalterable rejection by God.

References: G. C. Berkouwer, *Divine Election*; P. Jacobs and H. Krienke, *NIDNTT*, 1:692-97; J. I. Packer,

Predestination in the Doctrine of Election

The doctrine of Election is one of the most controversial in all theology. Down through the centuries it has continued to divide Christians into various camps. Some books on Systematic Theology do not even teach this subject.

It has sometimes been presented in such an extreme manner as to make it sound as though those who are elected will certainly be saved, regardless of their response to the Gospel, and their manner of living. Contrarily, those who are chosen to be lost are said to perish eternally, regardless of any endeavor to come to God through faith in Christ.

This extreme position is based on the so-called doctrines of “unconditional election”—the elect are chosen completely apart from any repentance and faith on their part; and “limited atonement”—that Christ did not die for all Mankind, but only for those whom He chose. It is also based on the teaching that God’s general call to all men to come to Christ is not a “sincere call”—that He only “efficiently calls” (intending to bring to pass) those whom He has previously elected for salvation. It has been shown from the Scripture, under (pg. 180 - 193), that Christ did die for all Mankind and that He bids all who labor and are heavy laden to come unto Him.

What is Election? Thiessen says that, in its redemptive sense, Election is: “That sovereign act of God in grace whereby He chose in Christ Jesus for salvation all those whom He foreknew would accept Him.”

Election is a sovereign act of God because, being God, He does not have to consult with, nor ask the opinion of, anyone else. Inasmuch as the Scripture teaches that Election took place “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), there was none with whom God could consult. All men have sinned, and are guilty before God, so He was not under any obligation whatsoever to provide salvation for any.

Election is an act of God in grace for this same reason. All Mankind has sinned and deserves nothing but condemnation. Sinful man can do nothing of himself whereby he could be considered worthy of salvation. Thus any offer of eternal life must be of Grace.

It is “in Christ Jesus,” because He alone could provide the Righteousness which Man needed. God could not choose man in himself so He chose him in Christ.

Election is always said to be according to God’s Foreknowledge:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Romans 8:28–30).

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:1, 2).

We must clearly distinguish between God’s Foreknowledge and His Foreordaining. It is not right to say that God foreknew all things because He arbitrarily determined to bring them to pass. God in His Foreknowledge looks ahead to events much as we look back upon them. Foreknowledge no more changes

the nature of future events than afterknowledge can change a historical fact. There is a difference between what God determines to bring to pass and what He merely permits to happen.

Thiessen asserts: Certainly only few who hold the view of “unconditional election” would teach that God is the efficient cause of sin: practically all would agree that God merely permitted sin to enter the universe, and all would admit that He foresaw that it would enter, before He created anything. If, then, God could foresee that sin would enter the universe without efficiently decreeing that it should enter, then He can also foresee how men will act without efficiently decreeing how they shall act.

Ephesians 1:3–5 makes it very clear that believers were chosen “in Christ Jesus”:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Having chosen His own “in Christ,” God was not looking at man in himself, but as he is in Christ. Those who were chosen are those who were in Christ. By His Foreknowledge, God already saw them there when He made the choice. Those who are in Christ are sinners who have believed in the redeeming blood of Christ, through which they have been united with Him as members of His body.

There is no virtue whatever in this faith. Men are not saved because they believe, but through believing. Believers were foreseen by God in Christ when He chose them. How did they get there? Through faith in His dear Son. He did not determine who should be there. He simply saw them there in Christ when He chose them.

The Bible does not teach selection, but election. Nowhere does the Bible teach that some are predestined to be damned. This would be unnecessary inasmuch as all are sinners and on their way to eternal condemnation.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others ... at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:1–3, 12).

It is not a man’s non-election that leads to eternal ruin; it is his sin and failure to accept Jesus Christ. Every man is free to accept Christ as his personal Savior, if he will. Not only is he invited, he is urged to do so. Christ has made every provision for him. “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9). “The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

Many of the problems that have arisen in the Church over this doctrine of Election have come because some have applied it to the unsaved. It is truth for those who are already in Christ. It is universally recognized, within the body of believers, that the Epistle of Paul to the Romans is the

most orderly setting forth of the plan of salvation that we have in the Bible. It will be noticed that the Apostle does not deal with the subject of Election until he has passed the eighth chapter, which concludes with the truth of no separation from Christ.

The story has often been told, as a parable, of the man laboring up the hill laden down with his sin and condemnation. He sees the door of salvation up ahead of him, and over it is written, "Whosoever Will May Come." He rejoices as he enters and his burden is rolled away. Once inside the gateway of salvation, he looks up on the inside of the arch and discovers the words, "Chosen in Him Before the Foundation of the World." What a glorious truth to discover after one has found the peace of sins forgiven, as he has placed his faith in the redeeming Sacrifice of Jesus Christ!

Let no idea, with regard to this doctrine of Election, in any way hinder the preaching of the Gospel to all Mankind. The Great Commission is still the obligation of the Church of Jesus Christ: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16).

Election, being a doctrine wholly of God's Sovereignty, must be followed by those steps toward the personal experience of salvation which are required of the sinner: these are repentance and faith. Each of these can be considered in another discussion.

Duffield, G. P., & Van Cleave, N. M. (1983). Foundations of Pentecostal theology (pp. 206–209). Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College.

