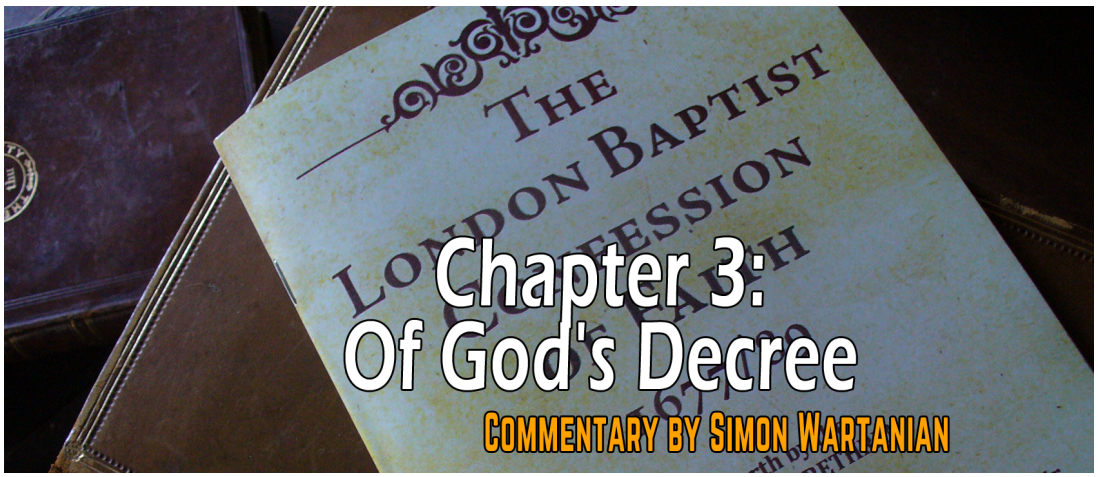
1689 Baptist Confession Chapter 3: Of God's Decree - Commentary

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Chapter 3: Of God's Decree

What does it mean that God is sovereign? Does God control all things? Does God ordain and is sovereign even over sin? What about election? Does God choose who goes to Heaven and who goes to Hell? Did God predestine because He saw what was going to come to pass? Does it matter what we do? Does God ordain the ends as well as the means?

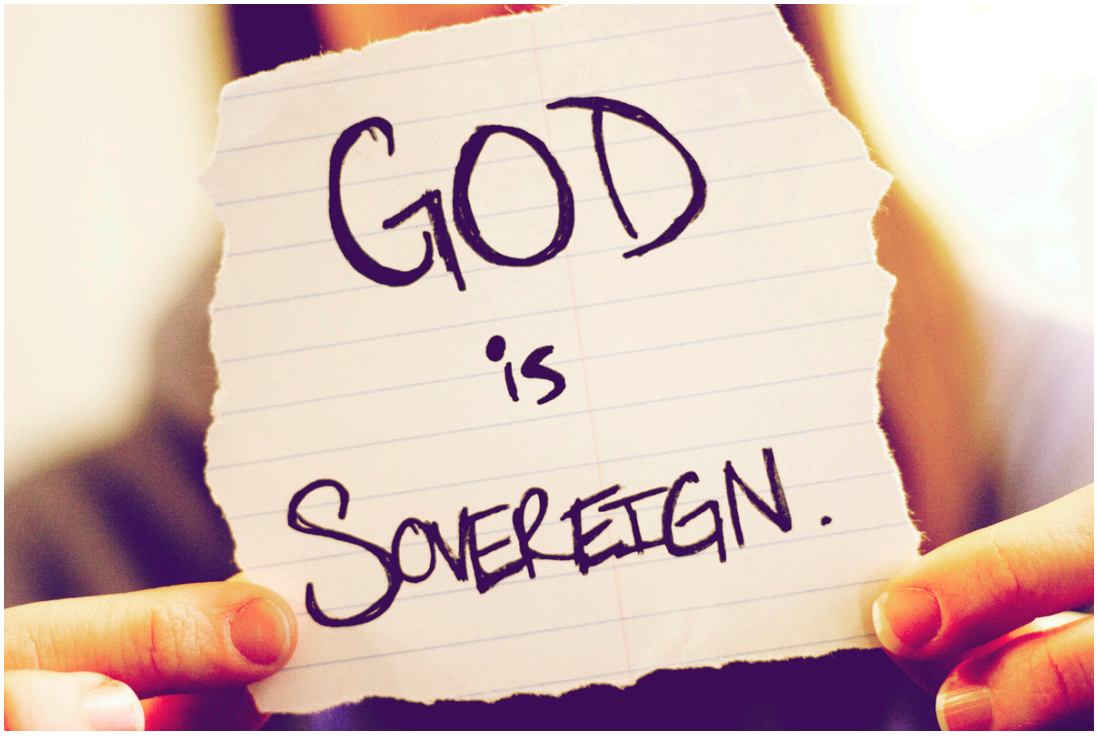
§1 God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity...whatsoever comes to pass

1. God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the **most wise and holy counsel of his own will**, freely and **unchangeably**, **1** all things, **whatsoever comes to pass**; **2** yet so as thereby is **God neither the author of sin** nor hath fellowship with any therein; **3** **nor is violence offered to the will of the creature**, nor yet is the **liberty or contingency of second causes** taken away, but rather **established**; **4** in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree. **5**
    1. Prov. 19:21; Isa 14:24-27; 46:10-11; Ps. 115:3; 135:6; Rom. 9:19; Heb. 6:17[1]
    2. Dan. 4:34-35; Rom. 8:28; 11:36; Eph. 1:11
    3. Gen. 18:25; James 1:13; 1 John 1:5
    4. Gen. 50:20; 2 Sam. 24:1; Isa. 10:5-7; Matt. 17:12; John 19:11; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28
    5. Num. 23:19; Eph. 1:3-5

God hath decreed in Himself means that He decreed by Himself alone without considering others. As the **modern translation** puts it: "From all eternity God decreed everything that occurs, without reference to anything outside himself." He was not influenced when He decreed everything. But what does it mean that God "decreed"? A decree, in this context, means putting everything in order and planning everything that is to occur in history. This decree of God was **from all eternity** and therefore is **unchangeable**. To further stress the "decreed in himself" part, the Confession adds that this decree was made **freely**. God was not limited by anything outside Himself. Furthermore, this decree was according to **the most wise and holy counsel of His own will**. It was not arbitrary or random. Rather, it was ordained by the Wisdom Himself Who does nothing without a goal, reason or a purpose (cf. Eph. 1:11). What did God decree? **All things, whatsoever comes to pass**. There is nothing that occurs that was not already decreed by God from all eternity. But this does not mean that God is **the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein**. God does not create sin or author it, nor does He have delight in it. Rather, He orders it and ordains it to be for His own holy purposes, according to **the most wise and holy counsel of His will**. Even evil and sin are ordained according to His holy purposes. Our redemption came

about by the greatest sin committed by man, the crucifixion of the Son of God, which was ordained by God (Acts 4:27-28).

When God ordains sin, He does no **violence** to the **will of the creature**, nor is their **liberty** hindered or **taken away**. Everyone committing sin and evil does so because they will and desire so. In the example about the crucifixion of the Lord, everyone in the act was a willing participant: Judas, the Jewish leaders, the Romans. All really wanted to do these things and they were not forced to will so. Nonetheless, the Scriptures are clear that they came to "do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place." According to Reformed theology, God's decree **establishes** the **liberty** of creatures, because their liberty is found within God's decree. This high and mysterious doctrine shows the **wisdom** of God **in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplish**ing **his decree**. How has determined everything that takes place in time and yet He is not the author of sin or we are not forced to do those things which God ordained, but freely carry out God's decree. All these things remain truths revealed by the Scriptures, but not fully comprehended by the human mind. Our authority in accepting this statement to be truthful is because the Scriptures teach these things asserted in this chapter, not because our mind can comprehend the truths confessed.



Introduction

There is no truth of Scripture more hated by some and cherished by others than the doctrine of *absolute divine sovereignty*. The natural man cannot bring himself to accept such a doctrine, yet the child of God who believes this precious doctrine loves it magnifies the Lord through it and finds his rest in it. The Confession is clearly and unashamedly Calvinistic in its view of the absolute, free, irresistible, micro-managing sovereignty of God. Every molecule moves the way it does because God from all eternity has willed that it be so. From eternity past to eternity future nothing will occur to the mind of God which He didn't already know and ordain. He possesses all knowledge, actual and possible (**chapter 2:2**). The Confession doesn't go into the Hyper-Calvinistic error of disregarding man's will and responsibility, but rather affirms that the liberty of second cause agents (men) are established because of God's decree. The liberty here discussed is obviously not the mythical libertarian free will. There is no such thing as libertarian free will. Libertarian free will says that one can go against all inclination and nature, which is impossible and ridiculous. Jonathan Edwards, in his *The Freedom of the* Will, shows the absurdity and impossibility of such a will. Rather, moral agency or free will, biblically defined, would be the **freedom to do whatever one desires.** The Bible speaks about a limitation upon the desires and inclinations of the natural man; this limitation is our sinful natures from which sinful actions are born. See **chapter 9** for our discussion of man's free will, moral inability, moral necessity, and libertarian free will.

God orders every event in such a way that He is sovereign over every step, yet at the same time, the second cause agent is not being coerced to do anything against their desire, but out their own desires and freedom carries whatever God has from all eternity decreed. We may not understand how this is done, but I believe that such is the testimony of Scripture. It is not for me to understand how the two work together, rather, it is for me to believe that it is such if I see both in Holy Writ. On a

personal level, there is no truth that I cherish more than knowing the Triune God and knowing Him as the only Sovereign. It is not merely "in the head" doctrine, but it is a doctrine that I praise God for, cherish and find comfort in daily.

Some years ago, I came across the Doctrines of Grace through the Facebook page called **Reformed Memes Daily** and I remember seeing something from Romans 9:18. I was amazed that the Bible had such things to say and wanted to study this issue. Apparently, I had not read that passage before. It was not easy, but I promised God that I would believe anything that His Word teaches, no matter how painful. Through my study, I tried to collect as many verses as possible in regard to God's sovereignty as are relevant and that I could find from daily Bible reading and other books. More about my journey can be read **here**. The document where I put these verses was the reason that this website was made; it is found **here**.

What I will seek to provide below is a case for God's absolute control of everything, thus justifying paragraph 1 of this chapter. Here we will touch on issues that are relevant to **chapter 5** (Of God's Providence), but we will direct the interested reader from chapter 5 back to paragraph 1 of chapter 3. Under the section *General Sovereignty*, I will deal with texts which speak of God's sovereignty over history and His counsel. Under *Particular Sovereignty*, I will try to deal with God's sovereignty over specific things such as evil and human actions. By no means is this an extensive case or discussion of God's absolute sovereignty, but I believe that it is nonetheless a decent biblical case for it.

General Sovereignty

First, let's start with verses about God's Lordship over the world.

> Neh. 9:6 **You are the LORD, you alone**. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and **you preserve all of them**; and the host of heaven worships you.

He not only has created the world out of nothing, but He keeps the world in existence. Genesis 1:1 should be enough to prove God's sovereignty over the creation that He has made. Everything is dependent upon Him. Without Him, all would perish. All things, from stars to ants and angels to men are dependent upon Him for their every moment existence. He is the Creator and Sustainer of everything. The God of the Bible is both the Creator and the Governor of the world. He both has created everything, and He keeps everything in existence.

> Acts 17:26-28 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having **determined allotted periods and the boundaries** of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28 for **"'In him we live and move and have our being'**; as even some of your own poets have said, "'For we are indeed his offspring.'

He has determined where everyone is to live. He has determined the countries in the world with their boundaries. Not only has He done that, but in Him, we have our being. *In* Him and *because of* Him we are able to do anything and everything. He is the Uncaused Cause, He is the Primary Cause; we are secondary agents. Anything we do, we first need to "borrow" power and strength from Him. Thus, whatever I do, whether evil or good, I still am dependent on Him for whether He will grant me power and ability to do what I will or not. Man is in no way independent of God, but in every way dependent upon God even when he denies His existence. The Scripture is clear that we're dependent upon Him for everything. The great Calvinistic Baptist commentator, John Gill, said the following: "The natural life which men live is from God; and they are supported in it by him; and from him they have all the comforts and blessings of life; and all motions, whether external or internal, of body or of mind, are of God, and none of them are without the concourse of his providence, and strength assistance from him; though the disorder and irregularity of these motions, whereby they become sinful, are of themselves, or of the devil; and their being, and the maintenance of it, and continuance in it, are all owing to the power and providence of God."[2] He is the independent and self-sufficient God. We are dependent upon the Independent One and we are not sufficient in and of ourselves, unlike Him. We are in everything dependent upon Him. We are dependent on Him even for our daily bread, as we ought to pray (Matt. 6:11).

> Heb. 1:3 "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and **he upholds the universe by the word of his power**. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Our beloved Lord is not only God and man, but He is also the One who directs everything in the universe. He is the One Who upholds everything by His power. You are not dead because the Lord Jesus is upholding you right now and giving you life. The earth is not destroyed because Jesus reigns as Sovereign over all things. The Universe is not turned into chaos because Jesus reigns as Supreme. The word "upholds" in the Greek is the word φέρω (*phero*, G5342), which has the basic meaning

of to carry, bear, move, bring forward and uphold.[3] So, He is the One Who is moving everything, bringing everything forward in the universe to its proper, predetermined and designed end. He brings it to the end that He has determined. He brings it to the place that He is willing to have everything. This is something that the Lord Jesus does from Heaven as the One reigning at the right hand of the Father. John MacArthur observes the following about "upholds":

> The universe and everything in it is constantly sustained by the Son's powerfully effective word (Col. 1:17). The term also conveys the concept of movement or progress – the Son of God directs all things toward the consummation of all things according to God's sovereign purpose. He who spoke all things into existence also sustains his creation and consummates his purpose by his word.[4]

Matthew Poole comments on this phrase saying, "the whole work of Providence is set out by *upholding*; ferwn imports sustaining, feeding, preserving, governing, throwing down, raising up, comforting, and punishing, &c. All would have fallen in pieces on man's sin, had not he interposed, and stopped the world when it was reeling back into nothing, Col 1:17; and to this instant he preserveth and ruleth all, Isa. 9:6; Joh 5:22."[5] The same Word Who created the world out of nothing (John 1:1-3), sustains and upholds the world in existence by the word of His power.

In Ephesians 1, we read of God's absolute sovereignty in these words:

> Eph. 1:11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who **works all things according to the counsel of his will**,

This is the God of the Bible. He is not the God Who lets people frustrate His purposes because He must respect their "*libertarian* free will" (not that **free will, biblically defined**, is contrary to divine sovereignty), but He is the God Who works above, under and through the free wills of men (Phil. 2:12-13). Surely in "all things" is included all actions of men, angels and everything else. He works as He wills and according to His decretive counsel in Heaven and also on the earth (Dan. 4:35). He is the God of the big things and small things. Indeed, as Dr. R.C. Sproul has observed: "There are no maverick molecules in the Universe." God doesn't need our advice, nor is He dependent upon us, rather, He works all things according to the counsel of His will. One cannot deny the absolute God-centeredness of Ephesians 1. It starts with a clear doctrine of divine election in vv. 3-6 and in v. 11, which begins by a restatement about election, which is also said to be according to His will (Eph. 1:5; see the case for **election below in paragraph 5**). This predestination of the elect is an example of what it means for God to "work all things according to His will." Albert Barnes comments on this verse, saying:

> His agency is not confined to one thing, or to one class of objects. Every object and event is under his control, and is in accordance with his eternal plan. The word rendered "worketh" - ἐνεργέω energeō - means to work, to be active, to produce; Eph. 1:20; Gal 2:8; Phi 2:13. A universal agency is ascribed to him. "The same God which "worketh" all in all;" 1Co 12:6. He has an agency in causing the emotions of our hearts. "God, who worketh in you both to Will and to do of his good pleasure;" Phi 2:13. He has an agency in distributing to people their various allotments and endowments. "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will;" 1Co 12:11.
>
> The agency of God is seen everywhere. Every leaf, flower, rose-bud, spire of grass; every sun-beam, and every flash of lightning; every cataract and every torrent, all declare his agency; and there is not an object that we see that does not bespeak the control of an All-present God. It would be impossible to affirm more explicitly that God's agency is universal, than Paul does in the passage before us. He does not attempt to prove it. It is one of those points on which he does not deem it necessary to pause and reason, but which may be regarded as a conceded point in the discussion of other topics, and which may be employed without hesitation in their illustration. Paul does not state the "mode" in which this is done. He affirms merely the fact. He does not say that he "compels" men, or that he overbears them by mere physical force. His agency he affirms to be universal; but it is undoubtedly in accordance with the nature of the object, and with the laws which he has impressed on them.[6]

Let's take a look at what the Bible says about God's counsel, will, and purpose.

> Ps. 33:10-11 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. 11 The **counsel of the LORD stands forever**, the **plans of his heart** to all generations.

It is Yahweh's plans and counsel that will come to pass in contrast to man's plans. God frustrates the plans of man and He prevails over their counsels. But His plans, in contrast, will stand and will not be frustrated. This is something that even a

pagan king knew. It amazes me that when even a pagan can recognize the absolute sovereignty of God, but some of His children do not want to acknowledge His sovereignty in all things. Nebuchadnezzar said:

> Dan. 4:34-35 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for **his dominion is an everlasting dominion**, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; 35 all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and **he does according to his will** among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and **none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"**

No one can question the Sovereign and His sovereign purposes. Job 42:1 says, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted." It is His prerogative to do with His creation as He wills. He did with Nebuchadnezzar as He willed and showed him his foolishness and His control over his life. He was driven to the fields and lived among the animals, and once he acknowledges who God is, his reason returns to him and he confesses God's absolute sovereignty to do as He wills. He does what He wills with whom He wills, how He wills and when He wills and no one has the authority to question Him. If a pagan king, who I believe was perhaps truly converted, could say this, how much those who know God through Christ must believe and praise God for His comprehensive and absolute sovereignty? John Calvin observed the following on Ephesians 1:11–

> *Who worketh all things.* The circumlocution employed in describing the Supreme Being deserves attention. He speaks of Him as the sole agent, and as doing everything according to His own will, so as to leave nothing to be done by man. In no respect, therefore, are men admitted to share in this praise, as if they brought anything of their own. God looks at nothing out of himself to move him to elect them, for the counsel of his own will is the only and actual cause of their election. This may enable us to refute the error, or rather the madness, of those who, whenever they are unable to discover the reason of God's works, exclaim loudly against his design. [7]

Albert Barnes notes the following about God's counsel:

> After the counsel of his own will. Not by consulting his creatures, or conforming to their views, but by his own views of what is proper and right. We are not to suppose that this is by mere will, as if it were arbitrary, or that he determines anything without good reason. The meaning is, that his purpose is determined by what he views to be right, and without consulting his creatures or conforming to their views. His dealings often seem to us to be arbitrary. We are incapable of perceiving the reasons of what he does. He makes those his friends who we should have supposed would have been the last to have become Christians. He leaves those who seem to us to be on the borders of the kingdom, and they remain unmoved and uneffected. But we are not thence to suppose that he is arbitrary. In every instance, we are to believe that there is a good reason for what he does, and one which we may be permitted yet to see, and in which we shall wholly acquiesce. The phrase "counsel of his own will" is remarkable. It is designed to express in the strongest manner the fact that it is not by human counsel or advice. The word "counsel"--βουλη--means, a council or senate; then a determination, purpose, or decree. See Rob. Lex. Here it means that his determination was formed by his own will, and not by human reasoning. Still, his will in the case may not have been arbitrary. When it is said of man that he forms his own purposes, and acts according to his own will, we are not to infer that he acts without reason, he may have the highest and best reasons for what he does, but he does not choose to make them known to others, or to consult others. So it may be of God, and so we should presume it to be. It may be added, that we ought to have such confidence in him as to believe that he will do all things well. The best possible evidence that anything is done in perfect wisdom and goodness, is the fact that God does it. When we have ascertained that, we should be satisfied that all is right. [6]

Let's take a look at the last text for this section. It's a text which John Piper used in the sermon which finally and definitely convinced me of God's absolute sovereignty.[8] This life-changing text is Isaiah 46:8-11. There are many God-exalting and clearly-pointing-to-an-absolutely-Sovereign-God-texts in Isaiah, but we will be satisfied with one passage. The infallible Word of God declares:

> Isa. 46:8-11 "Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, 9 remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 declaring the **end from the beginning** and **from ancient times things not yet done**, saying, '**My counsel shall stand**, and **I will accomplish all my purpose**,' 11 calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. **I have spoken**, and **I will bring it to pass**; **I have purposed**, and **I will do it**.

Please read this very slowly and pay close attention to each word, especially in vv. 10-11. God calls Israel to remember Who He is and what He has done for them. The miracles and wonders that He performed in the Exodus from Egypt, the display of His power and sovereignty over Israel's enemies, and the patience He has had with them. God calls His people to remember His sovereign power. Verse 10 is the verse that we will be focusing on. He declares the end from the very beginning. We can even say that He declares the end from eternity past as God never learns anything new, but has perfect knowledge of everything (Ps. 33:13-15; 44:21; 139:1-4; 147:4-5; 1 Chron. 28:9; Isa. 40:28; 1 Kgs 8:39; Acts 1:24; 1 John 3:20; Heb. 4:13; Rom. 11:33-36; **see chapter 2**). So what's the big deal about God "declaring the end from the beginning"? The big deal is that the LORD calls that which He declares His "counsel" and "purpose." All that happens, from the beginning to the very end, is determined by God and it is His counsel and purpose. That is what we basically mean by God's decree, namely, His counsel, purpose, and plan for history and the world. **God's decree is all that He purposes to accomplish**. I think that the passages which we looked at above were sufficient to prove that God directs every step and every molecule in the Universe, but this passage further strengthens our case. We had just finished looking at Ephesians 1:11, which was clear on the point that God works everything that comes to pass according to His purpose and counsel. John Piper says concerning the Isaiah 46 passage:

> Now at this point you might say, What we have here is the doctrine of God's foreknowledge, not the doctrine of his sovereignty. And that is right, so far. But in the next half of the verse God tells us how he foreknows the end and how he foreknows the things not yet done. Verse 10b: "I declare the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'" When he "declares" ahead of time what will be, here's how he "declares" it, or "says" it: "saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'"
>
> In other words, the way he declares his foreknowledge is by declaring his fore-counsel and his fore-purposing. When God declares the end long before it happens, what he says is: "My counsel shall stand." And when God declares things not yet done long before they are done, what he says is: "I will accomplish all my purpose."[8]

All that happens, God has purposed. He looks at world history and He says concerning everything that happens, good and evil: "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose." Isaiah doesn't leave us without proof of this but gives us a proof—Cyrus the Great. God directs all history according to His counsel and purpose, an example of that is the rise of Cyrus the Great, who is called "a bird of prey…a man of [God's] counsel." He has risen on the scene of history to accomplish God's purpose. One of his purposes was to bring the Old Covenant people of God back to their land and build the Temple of God. He was used for a *good* purpose. But in contrast, there was someone else who was raised by God for God's purposes, but that was a *dishonorable* purpose (Rom. 9:17; **see the discussion about Pharaoh** and **Reprobation in paragraph 3**).

Note the *monergy* in v. 11 (*mono* = one, *ergon* = work; one working) of God. I am *not* using this term in the same way as it relates to salvation. God is the One Who has *purposed* history and He is the One Who will *bring it to pass*, according to His fore-purpose and fore-counsel. He will move history to its appointed end and work all things according to His purpose (Heb. 1:3; Eph. 1:11). Nothing is left to chance or fate. God controls and directs history and man's actions, obviously, are part of what He controls, if He truly controls and ordains all things. God knows the future not because He looks to the "corridors of time," but because He creates the shape of the future–He foreordains all that happens and knows the future infallibly because He knows what He has foreordained and purposed.

This should be enough about general sovereignty. I believe that I have provided a decent case for God's absolute sovereignty over history. I have not gone deep and to other texts, but that is because I have **already** provided a case for God's absolute sovereignty, though not exegetically. In the next section, we will look at God's sovereignty over particular matters as evil and human responsibility, among other things.

Particular Sovereignty

Here, I'm going to provide verses for God's sovereignty in and over specific cases. Let's start with simple things. Simple, does not mean easy-to-swallow-things.

Life And Death

This should not be an issue for any Christian, but believe me, I've seen people who believe that God only "permits" death and does not cause it. What does the Scripture say?

> 1 Sam. 2:6 The LORD **kills** and **brings to life**; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

It is Yahweh, the LORD, the God of the Bible, Who *gives* life and *takes* life. Both words are verbs. It is something that God

does and not merely "permits." As the Giver of life He has every right to take it at any point He so wishes, in any way He wishes. It is He Who gives us life and creates us in the womb (Ps. 139:13-16). He is the Ultimate and Foremost Cause in our conception. It is He Who closes wombs so that they do not conceive and opens wombs so that they bear children (e.g., Gen. 20:17-18; 30:2; Ruth 4:13). After all the calamity that *God* (Job 42:11) brought upon Job and the death of his children, what did Job say?

> Job 1:21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The **LORD gave**, and the **LORD has taken away**; blessed be the name of the LORD."

Who took? Yahweh. The Lord doesn't owe us anything, even if we do all that He says we should do, we will only do our duty (Luke 17:7-10). We owe our very existence to His mercy and there is not a single obligation upon God that He would give us life or keep us alive. Therefore, He gives life whenever He pleases and takes life how, and whenever He pleases. All that Job had, wealth, family, cattle and whatever else he may have had, the Lord had given all of that to him. None of it ultimately came from Job, rather it was Yahweh Who gave it and He is to be blessed for that. But likewise, it is Yahweh Who ultimately took it. Yes, He did use secondary agents as Satan, the Sabeans (Job 1:15), fire from heaven (Job 1:16), the Chaldeans (Job 1:17), a great wind (Job 1:18-19). Job never says that Satan took anything from him, the Chaldeans or anything or anyone else. His charge was always against God. He connected His misery directly to the will of God. To be honest, by my reading of Job, I do not hear him or any of his friends say any word about Satan. Satan is totally absent from Job's mind and the narrative of his friends. It is likewise an interesting observation, and in many ways sobering, that Job and his friends, never once questioned the absolute sovereignty of God, but over and over again confessed and affirmed it. That is usually the *first* thing which we question at the time of tragedy, but not so Job.

It is often customary when an elder sister or brother dies on their death bed or in their sleep to say that the Lord took them to Himself. But what about when one dies at the hands of ISIS, in a car crash or any other horrendous way to die? Does the *manner* of death, how horrible it may be, invalidate the statements that the "LORD kills" (1 Sam. 2:6) and the "LORD has taken away" (Job 1:21)? Job's children did not die in a painless way, rather a great wind came which caused the house, in which they were feasting, to fall upon them. Still, Job cries, "the LORD has taken away" and blesses God. What about if one is eaten by a lion? Still, the Lord kills and the Lord has taken away (1 Kgs. 13:24-28). What about if people die from a famine? The Lord has called the famine upon the land (2 Kgs. 8:1; Ezek. 5:17). In whatever way we die, whether "normally" or in a dreadful way, still the Lord kills and the Lord has taken away:

> Deut. 32:39 "'See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; **I kill** and **I make alive; I wound** and **I heal**; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

Deuteronomy 32:39 goes even farther than life and death, but touches even upon sickness and the power of God over it. None can deliver out of His hand. He takes life when He pleases and gives life when He pleases. It's totally under His control and He does it according to His pleasure. Sometimes He takes it directly, other times He uses *means* to do so, such as illness (e.g., 2 Sam. 12:15), people, nature, etc. He even determines the span of our lives before we are born. God has predetermined how long I will live before I even came into existence (Job 14:4-6; Ps. 139:16; Eccl. 5:18). This obviously means that the day of my death is already ordained before I'm born, yea, from all eternity.

The Lives Of Men

Let's go back to a passage which we partially quoted earlier.

> 1 Sam. 2:6-8 The LORD **kills** and **brings to life**; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. 7 The LORD **makes poor** and **makes rich**; he **brings low** and **he exalts.** 8 He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world.

It is He who determines the lot of people—whether they're poor or rich, healthy or sick. This may seem shocking to "modern man," or some may object and say that this is an ancient idea of God, but it is not so for the one who believes the Bible is the Word of the everlasting God (**see chapter 1**). Many things which the Bible attributes to God, we, in the modern world, attribute to nature, as if nature does not carry out the counsel and will of God. But His power is not limited to the natural world alone, but touches even upon the crown of creation, namely, man. It is He who determines when we're born, to whom we are born and where we're born. It doesn't seem to be a stretch to say that He is also the One Who determines their lot. It may be emotional and against "modern man's" unbiblical notion of "free will," but it is not against Biblical revelation (**see chapter 9** for more on free will). It was the LORD Who raised Joseph from being a slave in prison to the second powerful

man in Egypt.

> Gen. 45:7-9 And **God sent me** before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 So **it was not you who sent me here, but God.** He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. 9 Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, **God has made me lord of all Egypt.** Come down to me; do not tarry.

It was the Lord Who *sent* Joseph down to Egypt through his brothers' act of wickedness (Gen. 50:20) and it was He Who raised him up to be "lord of all Egypt." Joseph, like Job, was not denying secondary causes, in his case being his wicked half-brothers, but he goes directly to the Ultimate Cause. It was God Who sent Him through the wickedness of his brothers and it was also God who raised him up as the second powerful man in Egypt. In Genesis 50:20, Joseph clearly does not acquit his brothers for their evil act but says it like it is. Nevertheless, He sees the overriding hand of Providence in His life.

> Luke 1:51-53 He has shown strength with his arm; he has **scattered the proud** in the thoughts of their hearts; 52 he has **brought down the mighty** from their thrones and **exalted those of humble estate**; 53 he has **filled the hungry** with good things, and the **rich he has sent away empty.**

This truth of God's absolute sovereignty over the lot of men was confessed by the mother of our Lord. It is He who blesses and curses (Deut. 28). This is not an "uncivilized" or "ancient myth" or whatever modern-man wants to call the doctrine of God's never-ceasing activity of lifting and casting man down and sustaining him every moment. This is the biblical revelation concerning the ways of God. This is the truth about how the Lord works in history and in people individually. Jeremiah long ago said—

> Jer. 10:23 I know, O LORD, that **the way of man is not in himself**, that it is not in man who walks to **direct his steps**.

It is not man, but it is God Who directs our steps. Our way of life and our steps and choices are ultimately under the sovereign control of God. This is similar to the many statements of God's sovereignty over our choices and lives we find in Proverbs 16:1, 9; 19:21; 20:24; 21:1; Ps. 37:23. It is God Who carries the universe to its appointed end (Eph. 1:11; Heb. 1:3) and obviously, the actions of man are included in that process. Acts 17:28 again comes to mind. It is in Him that we move and have our being. As we said above, this also includes our deeds. All that we do is in Him and through His power. We cannot do anything without Him, whether good or evil, we must "borrow" power and strength from Him to do whatever we're planning to do. Thus we are dependent on Him for all things. Belshazzar's godless ways were in the hands of the LORD—

> Dan. 5:23 but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the **God in whose hand is your breath**, and **whose are all your ways**, you have not honored.

Belshazzar, a wicked pagan king, had chosen to spoil the golden vessels which were brought from the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate his idols and glory in them. Judgment from God comes upon him and Daniel interprets the writing on the wall. Daniel tells him that the God in Whose hands is his life he has not honored. This God is angry at him and has brought judgment, which comes by his death that very same day and his kingdom is taken from him. But He is also the God "whose are all [his] ways." The HCSB says, "**controls the whole course of your life**" and the NET says, "But you have not glorified **the God who has in his control your very breath and all your ways!**" All Belshazzar's wicked ways and course of life were under the sovereign providence and control of God. It is this God Whom he had defied and he will not escape from His judgment even when all his wicked ways were under God's control. Albert Barnes comments on this phrase:

> **And whose are all thy ways** - That is, he has power to control thee in all thy ways. You can go nowhere without his permission; you can never, when abroad, return to your home without the direction of his providence. What is here said, also, is as true of all others as it was of the Chaldean prince. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." None of us can take a step without his permission; none can go forth on a journey to a distant land without his constant superintending care; none can return without his favor. And yet how little is this recognized! How few feel it when they go out and come in; when they go forth to their daily employments; when they start on a voyage or journey; when they propose to return to their homes![6]

God is sovereign over those who do good (Ps. 106:46; Ezra 1:5; 7:6, 9, 27-28; Gen. 20:6; 3:21-22; 12:35-36; Isa. 45:4-5; 2 Cor. 8:16-17) as well as those who do evil (Ps. 105:25, Ex. 4:21; Deut. 2:30; Josh 11:20; 2 Sam. 17:14; Acts 4:27-28; Rev. 17:17; **see below**). There is nothing and no one that falls outside of His providence, counsel, and control.

Over Peace And Calamity

The Scriptures teach that God is sovereign and that He's in control of everything. Under "everything" we have included that He's sovereign in human affairs. In this section, we will deal with one verse out of many which may be called upon.

> Isa. 45:7 I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.

In this passage, God unashamedly declares that He is the One Who is sovereign over light and darkness, well-being and calamity. It is He Who does these things. God is not ashamed to declare that in very clear words. It is important to notice the parallelism that exists in this verse. Let's see how it looks in a table:

I form light	and create darkness
I make well-being	and create calamity

Clearly, light is the antithesis of darkness and whatever well-being is, calamity is its antithesis. Both are made and controlled by God. Over both, He has control and is not ashamed to say "I do these things." It is interesting to look at the use of the Hebrew word *ra`*(H7451) in the Bible. The word is variously rendered depending on context as evil, distress, misery, injury, calamity.[9] In Jonah chapter 1, a chart in the ESV Study Bible observes the multiple meanings that *ra`* has:

> Jonah 1:2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their ***evil*** has come up before me."
>
> Jonah 3:10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their ***evil*** way, God relented of the ***disaster*** that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.
>
> Jonah 4:1 But it ***displeased*** Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.
>
> Jonah 4:2 And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from ***disaster***.
>
> Jonah 4:6 Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his ***discomfort***. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.

Thus we see that the word has a range of meanings according to the context. But we have already noted the antithetical statements of Isaiah 45:7. Whatever "well-being" is, "calamity" is its total opposite, as darkness is the total opposite of light. Therefore, what we have here said by the Lord is that He controls and makes, peace as well as disaster, good as well as evil. Let's take a look at what commentators say about this verse. Calvin says:

> Making peace, and creating evil. By the words "light" and "darkness" he describes metaphorically not only peace and war; but adverse and prosperous events of any kind; and he extends the word peace, according to the custom of Hebrew writers, to all success and prosperity. This is made abundantly clear by the contrast; for he contrasts "peace" not only with war, but with adverse events of every sort. Fanatics torture this word evil, as if God were the author of evil, that is, of sin; but it is very obvious how ridiculously they abuse this passage of the Prophet. This is sufficiently explained by the contrast, the parts of which must agree with each other; for he contrasts "peace" with "evil," that is, with afflictions, wars, and other adverse occurrences. If he contrasted "righteousness" with "evil," there would be some plausibility in their reasonings, but this is a manifest contrast of things that are opposite to each other. Consequently, we ought not to reject the ordinary distinction, that God is the author of the "evil" of punishment, but not of the "evil" of guilt.
>
> But the Sophists are wrong in their exposition; for, while they acknowledge that famine, barrenness, war, pestilence, and other scourges, come from God, they deny that God is the author of calamities, when they befall us through the agency of men. This is false and altogether contrary to the present doctrine; for the Lord raises up wicked men to chastise us by their hand, as is evident from various passages of Scripture. (1Kg 11:14.) The Lord does not indeed inspire them with malice, but he uses it for the purpose of chastising us, and exercises the office of a judge, in the same manner as he made use of the malice of Pharaoh and others, in order to punish his people. (Exo 1:11 and Exo 2:23.) We ought therefore to hold this doctrine, that God alone is the author of all events; that is, that adverse and prosperous events are sent by him, even though he makes use of the agency of men, that none may attribute it to

fortune, or to any other cause.[7]

John Gill observes the following:

> **I make peace, and create evil**; peace between God and men is made by Christ, who is God over all; spiritual peace of conscience comes from God, through Christ, by the Spirit; eternal glory and happiness is of God, which saints enter into at death; peace among the saints themselves here, and with the men of the world; peace in churches, and in the world, God is the author of, even of all prosperity of every kind, which this word includes: "evil" is also from him; not the evil of sin; this is not to be found among the creatures God made; this is of men, though suffered by the Lord, and overruled by him for good: but the evil of punishment for sin, God's sore judgments, famine, pestilence, evil beasts, and the sword, or war, which latter may more especially be intended, as it is opposed to peace; this usually is the effect of sin; may be sometimes lawfully engaged in; whether on a good or bad foundation is permitted by God; moreover, all afflictions, adversities, and calamities, come under this name, and are of God; see Job 2:10:[2]

Thus He is sovereign over good as He is sovereign over evil, though not in a directly symmetrical way. He does not create evil or sin in the hearts of men but brings upon them calamity and all that is the antithesis of "peace" as chastisement and punishment. What this passage speaks about is not moral "evil", but physical evil, or calamity or disaster as it is elsewhere attributed to God (Amos 3:6). We will be content with this much of God's sovereignty over peace, ill, calamity, disaster and evil and we will move to the most controversial part of God's absolute sovereignty.

Evil And God's Sovereignty

This is the controversial part of believing in absolute sovereignty, but this is a biblical warrant and conclusion given what I have sought to prove above. Many are comfortable in saying that God is sovereign over earthquakes, tornados, tsunamis and human life generally, but they have difficulty in saying that God is sovereign and ordains human evil—evil done by volitional agents. It is understandable in a certain sense. The big difference between these two is the fact that moral agents (humans) are held accountable for their evil deeds, while nature is not. It is humans who will stand before the throne of God and give account for every deed (Eccl. 12:14). "Creation" or "nature" will not give an account for the tornados, tsunamis, and earthquakes that were brought forth from it. Those who oppose Calvinism think that if God were absolutely sovereign, as Calvinists insist, then that would mean that people are "robots" (as they like to say) and God is the author of evil (because He is in absolute control of evil). We obviously reject that. We believe in a micro-managing sovereign God and believe that humans are responsible for their actions. We do not believe that just because men do not have libertarian free will that they're freed from responsibility. Neither do we believe that because human actions are ordained by God and under His rule that men are excused of responsibility. We believe that the Bible teaches both things side by side. I don't understand how it works, but I see it in Scripture and thus I'm bound to accept that my knowledge is limited.

Our presuppositions

We certainly cannot believe that God, by Him being God and thus sovereign over all things including evil, makes Him the author of evil or makes Him an approver of sin and evil. That's absolutely outside the bounds of Scripture. So we first establish that God is sinless and blameless in all that He does and then we look at the passages which describe His sovereignty over the evil acts of men.

> Deut. 32:4 "The Rock, his work is perfect, for **all his ways are justice.** A God of faithfulness and **without iniquity**, just and upright is he.
>
> Ps. 92:14-15 They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, 15 to declare that the LORD is upright; he is my rock, and there is **no unrighteousness in him.**
>
> Ps. 145:17 The LORD is **righteous in all his ways** and kind in all his works.
>
> Hab 1:13 You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?
>
> Job 34:10 "Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding: **far be it from God that he should do wickedness,** and from the Almighty that he should do wrong.
>
> Jas 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself **tempts no one.**

I think that these verses speak loud and clear on the fact that God is absolutely holy and there is no way for Him to do something unholy—sin, which is evil. "All his ways are justice", yes, even when He has decreed sin and evil. "His ways are

justice" and He "is righteous in all his ways…" If we only look at the passages which speak of God's sovereignty over evil and conclude that God actually causes sin and wickedness in the hearts of men and this reflects His nature, then we have not taken all divine revelation into consideration. Likewise, if we conclude from the following passages that God cannot have a purpose in ordaining evil, then we're not taking the whole of divine revelation into consideration.

Does God Have Two Wills?

Now that we've looked at clear passages for the fact that God is absolutely holy and righteous in all His works and His doings, we can move and see what's His relation to the evil acts of men. We saw that God controls and is sovereign over what may be called calamities and natural disasters, but now we're asserting that God is sovereign over "volitional evil"—evil done by humans of their own choice. Before we start we need to tackle another subject which is closely connected with this. This subject is: God's will. Does God have two wills? In a certain sense, yes. Now let me explain.

I believe that God has two wills in the sense that this is how we understand Him as humans, I don't believe that God *actually* has two wills. He has one holy will which He is set to accomplish. There is the absolute will of God which no one can resist (Rom. 9:19), then there is the will of God which men do resist (e.g., Acts 7:51; Luke 7:30). There is the will of God which ordains "whatsoever comes to pass", then there is the will which commands us to do things which we often than not resist. Matt Slick, from CARM, defines God's will which ordains whatsoever comes to pass as:

> The Decretive Will of God is that which is God's sovereign will that we may or may not know, depending on whether or not God reveals it to us. The decretive will is God's direct will where he causes something to be, he decrees it.[10]

While the will that may be resisted as:

> The Preceptive Will of God is the will of God for man. For example, God wills that man does not sin, that we do not lie, do not steal, etc. It is the will of God for man that is revealed through his Law (Exodus 20:1-17) where God is concerned with man following his precepts. It is also the will of God for us to be holy, repent, love, etc. (1 Pet. 1:16; Acts 17:30; John 13:34)[11]

What leads me to such a position which allows God to ordained that which He has forbidden in His Preceptive Will? Deuteronomy 29:29 teaches:

> Deut. 29:29 "The **secret things** belong to the LORD our God, but the **things that are revealed** belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Here we see that Moses tells the children of Israel that there are things, which God in His freedom has not revealed unto them. He has not revealed unto us the day of our death; He has not revealed the future aside from what He has said in the Bible; He has not revealed completely how the Trinity actually works or the Hypostatic Union; He has not revealed the Day of Christ's Second Coming and many other things which we may want to know. But not all the doings of the Lord are secret. There are things which He has been pleased to reveal to man. His existence and Law are an example of this and to this are men held accountable. We are not judged according to God's decretive will, but His preceptive will. We are judged according to His Law. John Gill observes about the first part of Deuteronomy 29:29:

> **The secret [things belong] unto the Lord our God,….** Respecting the people of Israel, and the providential dealings of God with them, and especially the final rejection of them; with respect to which, the apostle's exclamation agrees with this, Ro 11:33; and though the Lord had revealed many things which should befall them, there were others still secret with him, and the reasons of others; and particularly the times and seasons of their accomplishment, which he retains in his own power, Ac 1:6. There are many secret things in nature, which cannot be found out and accounted for by men, which the Lord only knows; and there are many things in Providence, which are unsearchable, and past finding out by finite minds, especially the true causes and reasons of them; and there are many things relating to God himself, which remain secret with him; notwithstanding the revelation he has made of himself; for not only some of his perfections, as eternity, immensity, c. are beyond our comprehension but the mode of subsistence of the three divine Persons in the Godhead, the paternity of the one, the generation of the other, and the procession of the Spirit from them both; the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of Christ; the thoughts, purposes, and decrees of God within himself, until brought into execution; and so there are many things relating to his creatures, as the particular persons predestinated unto eternal life, what becomes of such who die in infancy, what will befall us in life, when we shall die, where and in what manner, and also the day and hour of the last judgment.[2]

Moving forward from Deuteronomy 29:29, we see examples of the Lord decreeing that which He forbids in His Law. Take for example the incident in 1 Samuel 2. The sons of Eli the priest were worthless men (1 Sam. 2:12), the Scriptures tell us. They disgraced their father by their wickedness and messed with the prescribed way of worship and sacrifice that God has determined and given Israel through Moses (1 Sam. 2:17, 22). The Lord wanted them dead. How did He accomplish His purpose?

> 1 Sam. 2:22-25 Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they **lay with the women** who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 23 And he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. 24 No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. 25 If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But **they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death.**

The wickedness of these men was unbelievable. They were priests who were supposed to teach the people about righteousness and holy living, but they were examples of great wickedness, even having sex in front of the tent where God's special presence abode. Their father Eli, as any good father would, calls them to repent of their wicked deeds, but they disobey their father. Why did they do that? The Scripture clearly answers with: "for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death." But wait, how can it be God's will to put them to death through disobedience toward their father? Doesn't God require that we honor and obey our parents? God spoke from the Holy Mountain:

> Exod. 20:12 "**Honor your father** and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

How come then that it was the will of God to put them to death if His will is for children to obey and honor their parents? This is furthermore a case where what Eli said was absolutely right and according to the revealed will of God. That's why many Reformed theologians do believe in the distinction between God's Decretive and Preceptive Will. It was the will of God in a sense for them to obey their father (as expressed in His Law) and it was His will in another sense to destroy them (His sovereign decree). He destroyed them by rendering them unable to obey their father. He hardened their hearts and delivered them over to their sins as He did to Pharaoh (see **paragraph 3 below on Reprobation**). See also Samson (Judges 14:1-4) and the command not to intermarry (Deut. 7:1-3); the lying prophets (Ezek. 14:9-10; 2 Chron. 18:22) and the ninth commandment (Ex. 20:16; Prov. 6:16-19; 12:22); Joseph (Gen. 45:5-8; 50:20; Ps. 105:16-17) and slavery (Ex. 21:16; Lev 25:39).

God's Utter Sovereignty Over The Cross

When people hear someone affirming the absolute sovereignty of God even over evil, they may say things about the grossest evils they can think of and ask: Did God ordain and will that?! There is a great emotional power for those who are convinced by emotion and not Scripture, but there is an equally stronger argument both scripturally and emotionally that is able to answer those who oppose God's utter sovereignty over evil. The truth is that Scripture teaches that God had predestined the greatest sin in the world. No, I am not speaking of the genocide of 1,5 Armenians in 1916, those were my forefathers, they were butchered by the Ottoman Empire. Nor am I referring to the gross murder and persecution of 6 million Jews by Nazi Germany or the many wicked things that Saddam Hussein did in my country or the rape of little children. Each of those examples has great power for those convinced by emotion on what God does or does not ordain, rather by the testimony of Scripture. There is no question that these are wicked and extremely sinful actions. They will be judged, for sure! I am speaking of the greatest sin committed since the beginning of the world and there will not be any greater sin after it. I am also speaking of a wicked, vile and rebellious sin that has brought eternal bliss to man. I am of course speaking of the cross of our Lord. The horrific event of the crucifixion. Where the Immortal God having become man, died by the hands of His creation. Jesus Christ—the Son of God, Who is equal with the Father and Spirit, humbled Himself by becoming a man (Phil. 2:5-7) and died by the hand of His creation because of their wickedness. He was sinless (Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 9:14; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 8:46), yet crucified by His sinful and wicked image-bearers. The sinless, spotless Lamb of God was put on a cross and mocked by His creation. There is no greater sin than this for the Christian, while the world mocks the fact that we place Jesus' death as the greatest evil, because of His infinite holiness and worth, but every Christian should affirm and believe that Jesus' crucifixion was the greatest evil done in history. But how does the Scripture describe this event? What is specifically God the Father's role in this? First, let us establish the fact that it was prophesied and therefore it was made certain in the plan of God and that it *had* to come to pass.

In **Psalm 22**, we are given a picture of a man of God who suffers at the hands of the wicked and then is vindicated by God. This indeed is the song of every believer who suffers at the hands of the wicked, but it is especially typological of Christ, as it is quoted by the New Testament authors and applied to the Lord Jesus.

Ps. 22:16 For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have **pierced my hands and feet**—

This verse describes the crucifixion of our Lord. In the time that David wrote this (~ 1000 BC), crucifixion was not yet invented, but the Father foretells the crucifixion of His Son by the mouth of David. **Isaiah 53** is certainly one of the first places to go to when speaking of the Passion of the Christ in the Old Testament. There we are told that the Messiah "was despised and rejected by men" (v. 3), "he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (v. 4), "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." Read this to any unbelieving friend and ask: Of whom does this speak? Anyone with any idea of Jesus will answer that it is speaking of Jesus! Yet it was written some 700 years before His virgin birth! In the Gospels, we read of our Lord speaking about His certain crucifixion and resurrection. There are no "ifs", but what is written must come to pass.

Luke 18:31-33 And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and **everything that is written** about the Son of Man by the prophets **will be accomplished**. 32 For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. 33 And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."

In no uncertain terms, the Lord foretells His certain death, saying also that it will be the fulfillment of what the prophets wrote, we've already taken a look at a couple of examples. From Luke 22:22 and Matthew 26:24 we learn that prophecy is not just "God looking down the corridors of time," but it's God actually *determining*.

Luke 22:22 For the Son of Man goes as it has been **determined**, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!"

Matt. 26:24 The Son of Man goes **as it is written** of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

In this parallel account, we see that "as it is written" means "determined," referring to the prophecies about the Messiah of Israel. What was written was not wishful thinking or God looking down into history and seeing what (libertarian) free willers will do, but it was God "determining." In **Acts 4:26-28**, we get a more straightforward and "at your face" proclamation of God's sovereignty over the cross. The Holy Spirit says:

Acts 4:26-28 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'—27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to **do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.**

Verse 26 echoes the words of Psalm 2 (as does Acts 4:25). The cross happened as the fulfillment of what was spoken of the great Messiah in Psalm 2. Verse 27 tells us that 1) Herod, 2) Pilate, 3) the Roman soldiers and 4) the Jews, gathered to crucify Christ. One thinks of all the thoughts and motivations running through these people's minds. Herod wanted to see a miracle from Jesus and didn't care much about Him (Luke 23:8). Pilate clearly saw that Jesus was blameless (Luke 23:4), but preferred to please the crowd (Luke 23:24-25) rather than serve justice. The Romans did what the Romans did, they crucified and mocked the Lord of glory. The people of Israel wanted Him crucified because of:

1. The claims that He made. (John 7:48-49)
2. The deeds that He did. (Matt. 12:23-24)
3. His threat to their religious system. (John 2:13-17)
4. His threat to their way of life.
5. The people with whom He socialized. (Luke 7:39; Matt. 1:9)
6. The lack of respect He had for their religious traditions. (Mark 3:4-6)

Four different groups of people with different motivations, but what do they have in common? Verse 27 declares they have come together to fulfill the purpose of God—they came "to do whatever [God's] hand and [God's] plan had predestined to take place". In no uncertain words, the cross and the deeds of Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and Jews are said to be "predestined" by God. The very event of the cross and all that surrounds it and has brought it to this point. It was predestined, preordained, predetermined by God. The very wicked acts of the people, those were all predestined. All the wickedness that the people had done, the early church says "to do whatever *your* hand and *your* plan had predestined to

take place." Some try to escape this by saying that God merely ordained the cross, but without the means. But this cannot be. How can God ordain a thing without the way to that thing? I do not believe that this passage or the Bible as a whole teaches that God merely planned the cross, but not the way to the cross. That is, God wanted His Son to die on the cross, but He did not plan the way in which this would happen. God is described as the One Who "works all things after the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11), the One Who carries the Universe to its appointed end (Heb. 1:3) and the One Who is sovereign over man's ways (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 16:1, 6; 21:1; Dan. 5:23). Therefore, obviously, God brought about what was written and what was determined beforehand to happen, and which His own hand predestined to occur. The early church takes comfort from this fact since they are being persecuted, they look at the cross, the grossest sin and acknowledge God's sovereignty there in the "big" things and take comfort that God will be with them in their persecution. The God Who was sovereign in the Lord's death will also be sovereign in the affliction of His saints:

> Acts 4:29-30 **And now, Lord, look upon their threats** and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

They do not think that God's sovereignty over evil was only in the case of the Lord Jesus' sacrificial death, but they take comfort in the fact that the same God Who was sovereign over the cross is sovereign over the persecution of His people (1 Pet. 4:19). Notice that the main point of their prayer in Acts 4:25-29 is that God would help them in the time of their persecution. The main point of their prayer and the mentioning of the crucifixion of the Messiah is that God was absolutely sovereign over that, and in the same way, God is absolutely sovereign over the persecution of the Messiah-followers. We could look at many more examples, but this post will be too long, as it is already long enough. I refer you to look at pages 101-104 of **this document**. Let's take a look at what commentators have said about this passage. The ESV Study Bible says:

> **4:28** In their prayer, reported with approval by Luke, the believers affirm both God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Whatever includes all of the evil rejection, false accusation, miscarriage of justice, wrongful beatings, mockery, and crucifixion that both Jews and Gentiles poured out against Jesus. These things were predestined by God, yet the human beings who did them were morally "lawless" (see 2:23, 36); they were responsible for their evil deeds (see 3:13-15); and they needed to "repent" (see 2:38; 3:19). This prayer reflects both a deep acknowledgment of human responsibility and a deep trust in God's wisdom in his sovereign direction of the detailed events of history.[12]

John Gill comments on verse 28:

> **For to do whatsoever thy hand,....** It was not the end of their gathering together against Christ, or it was not their intention and design, to fulfil the purposes and decrees of God, but to fulfil their own lusts, and satiate their rage and malice against him; but it was so in the event, according to the wise disposal of providence, that by their gathering together, by their consultations and conspiracies, they brought about what God in his everlasting council had decreed. By "the hand" if the Lord here is not meant, the grace and favour of God; or the power and providence of God; or his word of precept, his revealed will; but his secret will, the counsel of his will, the hidden purpose of his heart, the wise consultation of his mind, which is formed according to his infinite wisdom...
>
> **and thy counsel determined before to be done:** God's decrees are from eternity; there is nothing comes to pass in time but what he has beforetime determined should be done, either by effecting it himself, or doing it by others, or suffering it to be done, as in the case here. Whatever was done to Christ, either by Jews or Gentiles, by Herod or Pontius Pilate, was according to the secret will of God, the covenant he made with Christ, and the council of peace that was between them both: what they wickedly did, God designed for good, and hereby brought about the redemption and salvation of his people: this neither makes God the author of sin, nor excuses the sinful actions of men, or infringes the liberty of their wills in acting.[2]

Sovereignty And Responsibility

The obvious question asked during and after arguing for God's sovereignty over evil is: Doesn't this make people unaccountable and blameless? The short Scriptural answer is "no," the longer answer is below. While we just read of the Lord's death, let's stay on that topic. We saw that the Lord's death was preordained, but yet throughout Acts, we are told that it's the people who did the sinful deed and they were held responsible. God accomplished His will by working through the wickedness of the people. He did not simply "use" the opportunity, but the Scripture speaks of Him ordaining and working everything according to His purpose and will, therefore also evil.

Acts 3:14-15 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and **you killed** the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

Acts 7:52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom **you have now betrayed and murdered**,

See also John 19:11

Obviously, when the Bible speaks of God's sovereignty over the cross (e.g., Acts 2:23; 4:27-28), it does not then excuse the wickedness of the people of Israel and the Romans in what they did to the Lord of glory but holds them responsible. But how is this accomplished? The people did all that their hearts desired. None of them was forced to do something that they did not desire, we already discussed the motivations of those in Acts 4:26 above. These motives were their own and they *meant* to do evil to the Lord Jesus, but God had *meant* their motives and the cross for good.

Let's take a look at a very known and loved biblical account: Joseph, the favorite son of his father, tells his brothers the dreams he is having that provoke them to hate him (Gen. 37:4-5). At one time, they have had it with Joseph and wanted to get rid of him. His own brothers sold him into slavery. Their wickedness sent him in chains to a foreign land as a young man where he suffered as a prisoner and then came to be Egypt's second most powerful man. How did this happen? Well, I didn't tell the whole story. I didn't tell you about the One Who was arranging it for good. It was God Who sent Joseph to Egypt, using the instrumentality of his evil brothers selling him into slavery (Ps. 105:16-17). Joseph is aware of God's hand of providence over and in his life. He said to his brothers:

Gen. 45:5-8 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for **God sent me** before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 And **God sent me before you** to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 So **it was not you who sent me here, but God.** He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Joseph is aware that it was the will of God for him to be in Egypt. His brothers meant it for evil, they wanted him away from them, and they wanted him dead. But God's will was to send him to Egypt for good. Whenever the will of God and man conflict, the **will of God always wins.** Joseph goes so far as to tell them that it was not them (ultimately), but God who sent him to Egypt. Surely now that Joseph realizes God's hand of providence in the actions of his brothers he doesn't think that his brothers did evil…or does he? Perish the thought!

Gen. 50:20 As for you, **you meant evil** against me, but **God meant it for good,** to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Joseph doesn't make excuses for the wickedness that they had done to him by selling their own brother to be mistreated. Joseph doesn't compromise and tells them their sin just as it is. What they did really was pure evil. They were involved in this event and deed, yet they were not the only agents, there was Another. Even when Joseph tells them on one occasion "it was not you who sent me here, but God" (Gen. 45:8), Scripture makes it clear that Joseph does not think that on basis of this, the wickedness of his brothers are excused, rather, he clearly calls their action "evil" (Gen. 50:20). The Scripture tells us that God meant it for good. Please notice that it doesn't say that God merely *used* it for good, no. In the one deed, there were **two intentions**. Joseph's brothers wholly evil, God's wholly good. There were two intentions and "meanings." God intended the selling of Joseph for good; his brothers, on the other hand, meant it for evil. God was absolutely sovereign over this event and his brothers were responsible for the evil they had done, they even acknowledge their sin (Gen. 50:17). Both absolute sovereignty and human responsibility are in this passage with no conflict or contradiction. In fact, nowhere in the Bible, where absolute sovereignty and responsibility are mentioned, does the author try to make a philosophical justification for it. It is just there. The Bible teaches both truths side by side. What the Bible does not teach is libertarian free will (see **chapter 9** for more on that). John Gill says the following about Genesis 50:20:

But as for you, ye thought evil against me,…. That must be said and owned, that their intentions were bad; they thought to have contradicted his dreams, and made them of none effect, to have token away his life, or however to have made him a slave all his days:

[but] God meant it unto good; he designed good should come by it, and he brought good out of it: this shows that this action, which was sinful in itself, fell under the decree of God, or was the object of it, and that there was a concourse of providence in it; not that God was the author of sin, which neither his decree about it, nor the concourse of providence with the action as such supposes; he leaving the sinner wholly to his own will in it, and having no concern in the ataxy or disorder of it, but in the issue, through his infinite wisdom, causes it to work for good, as

follows:

to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive; the nation of the Egyptians and the neighbouring nations, as the Canaanites and others, and particularly his father's family: thus the sin of the Jews in crucifying Christ, which, notwithstanding the determinate counsel of God, they most freely performed, was what wrought about the greatest good, the salvation of men.[2]

We'll take a look at a second example and close on this paragraph. Isaiah 10 is very strong on utter sovereignty and man's responsibility. The Lord calls Assyria "the rod of my anger" (v. 5). He will use this rod to punish idolatrous Israel. He sends them "to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets." But in v. 7, we encounter the same conflict between the divine will and human will as in Genesis 50:20. Assyria does not want to be used as an instrument of God's justice. Assyria is prideful and wants to destroy for its own glory. But there is Someone else Who is seeking *HIS* glory and the glory of *HIS* holy Name. Assyria wants to destroy Israel for their own pride and their name, but Israel's covenant God wants to use Assyria, with its desires, to punish His rebellious people. God always gets His will. His will, purpose, and counsel are never frustrated, but the same could not be said about man (Ps. 33:10-11). In v. 12, the work of Assyria in punishing Israel (which is a prophecy, actually) is described as the work of the Lord: "When the Lord has finished all *his* work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem." God was utterly sovereign over Assyria such so that its work can be described as His own work. But, we come to a confusion in verse 12b.

Isa. 10:12 When the **Lord has finished all his work** on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, **he will punish** the speech of the arrogant heart of the **king of Assyria** and the boastful look in his eyes.

Assyria, by the hand of God and through God's sovereign providence, punished Israel for their sins. What we have in verse 12b is Assyria being punished for their pride. God hates boasting and those who boast, because none, but Himself deserves all glory. Assyria accomplished the work that was described in verse 12a as God's own, yet they are now called into account, they are held responsible for their motivations and their attitude. The king of Assyria thought that this victory over Israel has proven his majesty and might. Notice the "I's" and "my's" in Isaiah 10:13-14. Yet Isaiah tells us of the truth of divine sovereignty in no uncertain words:

Isa. 10:15 Shall the **axe** boast over him who hews with it, or the **saw** magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a **rod** should wield him who lifts it, or as if a **staff** should lift him who is not wood!

Assyria is described as an axe, a saw, a rod and a staff. It's clear that these pictures used by Isaiah are intended to describe the utter and absolute sovereignty of God over Assyria. Assyria is the rod in His hand that He used to punish Israel, but He still holds them responsible for what He decreed them to do because of their evil motivations. God called them to accountability. He was absolutely sovereign over their doings and He was righteous in His judgments, as always (see above **Our Presuppositions**). If Arminians want to use the "robot" argument against God, let them hear the testimony of Isaiah concerning God's sovereignty in such clear and undeniable terms. Let's look at what Calvin said of Isaiah 10:15:

15. ***Shall the axe boast?*** He now ridicules more strongly the mad effrontery of the Assyrians in imagining that he could create mountains of gold; for he tells us that the case is the same as if an axe or a hammer should despise the hand which sets them in motion, and should be proud of their activity, though it is manifest that they have no power of their own to move. But before explaining the subject more fully, I shall touch briefly on the words...

Hence we learn that men rise up against God, whenever they ascribe to themselves more than is proper, and that in such cases they war not with men but with God himself. Away, then, with those proud and blasphemous expressions, "By my power and wisdom and perseverance I have done and contrived and accomplished these things;"

for the Lord is a jealous God, (Exo 20:5,)

and does not permit his glory to be given to another! (Isa 42:8.)

We must attend to those comparisons by which he likens men to instruments; and we must not view it as referring to the universal providence by which all creatures are governed, as some do, who acknowledge that all the creatures are moved by God, because they cannot deny it, but add, that each of them is driven according to its nature, as the sun, the moon, the heavens, and such like. Thus they imagine that man is driven hither and thither by his own choice and by free-will; because God does nothing more than continue that power which he once bestowed at the beginning. Their false explanation amounts to this, that the whole machinery of the world is upheld by the hand of God, but that his providence is not interposed to regulate particular movements. Thus they ascribe to God the rain and the fair weather because he is the Author of nature, but contend that, strictly speaking, God commands nothing, that the rain is produced by vapours, and that fair weather also is produced by its natural causes. But this confused direction, which

they leave to God, is hardly the thousandth part of that government which he claims for himself. Justly therefore, does Isaiah show that God presides over individual acts, as they call them, so as to move men, like rods, in whatever way he pleases, to guide their plans, to direct their efforts; and, in a word, to regulate their determinations, in order to inform us that everything depends on his providence, and not on the caprice of wicked men.

It is objected, that it would be absurd to call men axes and swords, so as to take away from them will and judgment, and everything that distinguishes them from inanimate creatures, and to make them, not men, but stocks and stones. But the answer is at hand. Though God compares men to stones, it does not follow that they resemble them in all respects. No one thing is exactly like another, but they agree in some points; for as a staff cannot move itself in any direction, and yet is fit for inflicting blows, so wicked men have something which belongs to them by nature, and yet they cannot be moved hither and thither, without being directed by the providence and secret decree of God. This fitness of things, if we may so call it, is no reason why the action should not be ascribed entirely to God alone.

But the question about the will of man is unseasonably introduced on the present occasion. If God controls the purposes of men, and turns their thoughts and exertions to whatever purpose he pleases, men do not therefore cease to form plans and to engage in this or the other undertaking. We must not suppose that there is a violent compulsion, as if God dragged them against their will; but in a wonderful and inconceivable manner he regulates all the movements of men, so that they still have the exercise of their will.

In this passage Isaiah chiefly shows that all the efforts of men are fruitless, if God do not grant them success; and therefore that the Assyrian, even if he had attempted everything, would not have succeeded, if the Lord had not bestowed the victories; and, consequently, that he had no reason for laying claim to the praise of those things in which his success was owing solely to God. This is confirmed by another metaphor, that the lifting up of a staff proceeds from the will of him who moves it, and not from the nature of the wood.[7]

We saw in these examples the utter and glorious sovereignty of the Triune God and man's responsibility hand-in-hand. We know that God is righteous and holy and He will never punish those who are undeserving (see above **Our presuppositions**). The evil that men do, they do freely according to their desires. They are not being coerced or forced against their desires, but they are acting according to their desires, which is the definition of free will. Free will is the ability to choose according to one's liking. See **chapter 9 on Free Will**. Biblical free will does not mean freedom from God's sovereignty. God is sovereign over all things, including the will of man. Nothing and no one is free from God's control and sovereignty.

Let's end with a somewhat long quotation from the Prince of Preachers, Charles Spurgeon.

The system of truth is not one straight line, but two. No man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once.

I am taught in one book to believe that what I sow I shall reap: I am taught in another place, that "it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

I see in one place, God presiding over all in providence; and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions to his own will, in a great measure.

Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act, that there was no presidence of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to Atheism; and if, on the other hand, I declare that God so overrules all things, as that man is not free enough to be responsible, I am driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism.

That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other.

If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other.

These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.[13]

This should be enough about God's absolute sovereignty. I believe that I have given a satisfactory case for the things contained in paragraph 1 as I understand them.

§2 He hath not decreed anything, because he foresaw it as future

2. Although **God knoweth whatsoever may or can come to pass,** upon all supposed conditions, **1** yet **hath he not decreed anything, because he foresaw it as future,** or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions. **2**
    1. 1 Sam. 23:11-12; Matt. 11:21, 23; Acts 15:18
    2. Isa. 40:13-14; Rom. 9:11-18; 11:34; 1 Cor. 2:16

God knoweth whatsoever may or can come to pass. He does not merely know what is *going* to come to pass, but what *may* come to pass. He does not merely know the *actual*, but also the plausible if the circumstances were different whatever the **supposed conditions** (1 Sam. 23:11-12; Matt. 11:21-23) would be. God decreed all things in Himself (paragraph 1) and this means that He **hath not decreed anything, because he foresaw it as future**. His decree grounds the future and gives shape to the future. God is not influenced by things not yet existent or have not been decreed. The only thing God is influenced by is Himself.

Everything God has decreed He has done so because of his "most wise and holy counsel of his will," not because He saw *X* do it or looked in the corridors of time. God is independent and such a thing would make Him dependent on something that He has not even yet brought into being. It is an absurdity. The Scriptures teach us that the Lord takes counsel from no one and is independent (Isa. 40:13-14; Rom. 11:34; 1 Cor. 2:16), but such an idea that God would be dependent upon some actions of man and that's why He decrees it goes against the concept of God's freedom and independence. This is why the whole idea of "God looking down the corridors of time and saw who would freely choose Him, and those God chose" is messed up and unbiblical. It conditions and limits the Eternal and Independent God in what He can do. While the Scripture plainly teaches us of a God Who is free to do anything He pleases and is unhindered by anything.

> Ps. 33:10-10 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. 11 The **counsel of the LORD stands forever**, the plans of his heart to all generations.
>
> Ps. 115:3 Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

Dr. Waldron has an interesting point for those who want to jump upon **foreknowledge:**

> It is not speculative to raise here this question: 'Can God foresee that something will happen, before he decrees that it shall happen?' The straightforward answer to this question is 'No!' Only that which is certain to happen may be foreseen or foreknown. To foresee something is to be certain that it will happen. Since, however, it is God's decree that makes certain all that shall occur, nothing can be foreseen as certain to happen until God decrees that it shall.
>
> The idea that one may escape the problems associated with the divine decree by having recourse to divine foreknowledge is groundless. Foreknowledge assumes that some future event is certain to happen. The question remains: 'What made that event certain to happen?' The only possible answer is God's decree.
>
> In the Bible prophecies and predictions of future events are not viewed as based merely on divine foreknowledge, but as based on divine decree (Isa. 46:10; Acts 3:18; 4:27-28; 15:15-18). Scripture prophecy is, therefore, viewed as, so to speak, the transcript not of what God foresees, but of what God decrees (Matt. 26:54; Luke 22:37; John 13:18; 19:24, 34-36; Acts 1:16; 2:24-31; 13:34-35).[14]

See also above on Isaiah 46:8-11 and **God's foreknowledge being based upon His foreordination**. I believe that Isaiah 46:8-11 teaches that the perfect and infallible foreknowledge of God is based on His fore-counsel, fore-purpose, and foreordination. Therefore, God has ordained all things because He so pleased them to be and was unrestrained by anything outside of Himself.

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§3 Reprobation

3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some **men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life** through Jesus Christ, to **the praise of his glorious grace**; **1** others being **left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the**

praise of his glorious justice. **2**

1. Matt. 25:34; 1 Tim. 5:21
2. John 12:37-40; Rom. 9:6-24; Eph. 1:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:8-10; Jude 4

For the **manifestation of his glory**, which is the primary goal and end of everything that God does, God has both predestined to life as he has to condemnation. To **the praise of his glorious grace** (Rom. 9:23; Eph. 1:6), the Sovereign God has **predestined** and **foreordained to eternal life *some* men and angels**. Not all are predestined to life and blessedness with God. The Confession is carefully following Scripture when it includes **angels** among those predestined unto life because 1 Timothy 5:21 speaks of "elect angels", yet many things remain unrevealed about this election of angels. This predestination to eternal life was **through Jesus Christ** (Eph. 1:4). It is through and in Him that we were chosen and predestined unto eternal life as Ephesians 1:4-5 also teaches. He was our Federal Head and our High Priest, even from eternity. As foreordained unto eternal life, we were never considered without reference to Jesus Christ.

As to the rest of men and angels, they were **left** to act and live **in their sin to their just condemnation** (Rom. 9:22). The predestination unto condemnation and death is a passive act of God (also called *reprobation*). He *leaves* those to act in their sin, leading to their **just** condemnation for their sin and rebellion against God. He does not give Jesus Christ as their Head, neither does He send His Son to die in their place or give them His Holy Spirit. In redemption, God is getting His hands nailed in Jesus Christ. In reprobation, God is leaving those in Adam to their just condemnation. Therefore, predestination unto life and predestination unto death are not symmetrical. Even reprobation is **to the praise of His glorious justice**, just as Scripture teaches (Rom. 9:22-24).

Preliminary Comments

Everything that God does and has done has been for His glory above all things because He is the only and highest motivation He can have. When we do things, we try to do them for the glory and honor of God because He is the highest standard and the One worthy to be thanked and blessed. He is the Most High! God has no one higher than Himself, He is the standard, He is the highest, and that's why He swears by His own Name (Heb. 6:13).

Notice that on the basis of 1 Timothy 5:21 elect angels, and not only men are included in the Confessional statement, which is astounding. God had absolute control and determination over the Fall and rebellion of Satan and it could not have happened unless He decreed, ordained, willed and permitted it.

There are some who in 3:6 of this chapter will be recognized as "fallen in Adam" since God has decreed the Fall, which would make salvation possible, He would redeem them from their sins through Jesus. Jesus was already the means of salvation even before the Creation. That's why Adam was a type of Christ. Now the question is, did Adam become a type of Christ when Paul wrote Romans 5:14 or was that God's intention when He created Adam? Well, I think the answer is that when God created Adam, He consciously made Him as a type of Christ. This is also the case with the sacrifices and the other types in the Old Testament.

The statement on reprobation according to my and Dr. Waldron's judgment is weak. There could be more said about reprobation than this, but it is probably also intended to guard against the common misunderstanding of Equal Ultimacy: that is: God equally imputes unbelief into the hearts of the reprobate as He does faith in the hearts of the elect. That is not the case in reprobation as we will see below. The following is the 7th paragraph in the Westminster Confession and also the Savoy Declaration, which was omitted here:

> The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to **pass by**, and to **ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin**, to the praise of his glorious justice.

Although the words "ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin" are missing, I do not think that the theology behind these words is missing from the Confession or its framers.

Predestination unto life will be treated in **paragraph 5**.

What Is Reprobation?

People may not have so many issues with election if it did not have a flip side. There is not only a Heaven but also a Hell. If there was no Hell, I guess there would be less heat in the discussions of election, but because there is a Hell to pay, there is

among some a very strong rejection of sovereign election. Then there is the heresy and misconception of Equal Ultimacy that many (who are ignorant of the Calvinist and Reformed position) connect with historic Reformed doctrine. But Equal Ultimacy has always been rejected by the Reformed. Equal Ultimacy teaches that God works faith and repentance in the hearts of the elect to bring them to salvation, and also works sin and evil in the hearts of the reprobate to bring them to damnation. This view has been usually connected with Hyper-Calvinism, which is a distortion of true Calvinism.

We see that our Confession is very careful with what it says about reprobation and tries not to give the idea of Equal Ultimacy that is wrongly associated with Calvinism by those who are ignorant of Calvinist doctrine. Our Confession says that the damned are *left* in their wickedness:

> others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation

God's decree of reprobation is *passive*. That is to say, God has to do nothing for anyone to be damned. He just has to leave them as children of Adam and by doing nothing they will end up in Hell. As children of Adam, they are born as children of wrath and die because of Adam (Eph. 2:3; Rom. 5:12-19). And unless God intervenes, they will remain as children of Adam and are therefore destined for damnation. The fact that the decree of reprobation is *passive* does not mean that God does not will it to happen or that it is against His sovereign Decretive Will, but it merely speaks about *how* God works to accomplish His will. God does not create evil and sin in the hearts of the reprobate. Perish the thought! Rather, the heart of man, by his fallen nature, is already filled with evil and sin. Wayne Grudem defines reprobation as:

> Reprobation is the sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons, in sorrow deciding not to save them, and to punish them for their sins, and thereby to manifest his justice.[15]

John Calvin said:

> By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends. We say that he has been predestinated to life or to death.[16]

Many would and do take offense at this statement by Calvin, which they assume teaches Equal Ultimacy. But upon closer examination of what the Bible teaches about reprobation, which is the flipside of election, one certainly can affirm with Calvin that God has preordained and predestined the reprobate to damnation. The question is not, "has God predestined?", but rather "*how* has He predestined?" The Scriptures are clear on man's inability and depravity to come to God (John 6:44; Rom. 8:7-8; 3:9-12). They're clear on the universality of sin in all people (Rom. 3:23) and also upon the price for sin (Rom. 6:23; Rev. 21:8). Thus all who are born, are born sinful (Ps. 51:5) and thus are worthy of death (Rom. 6:23). The fact that they die proves that death indeed is the wages of sin (Gen. 2:17).

What About God Hardening Hearts?

Then the question is asked if God has to do nothing for men to receive their due punishment, what point does *hardening* have? Hardening is a further punishment for man's continual and present sin. Hardening is not an active work of God where He creates evil where there was no evil, but it's the passive work of God by which He takes away His restraining grace and leaves man to his sin (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). Many people talk much of free will, but if God gave us absolute freedom in our sin, civilization would not be possible and there will be more manifestation of evil in the world, than today (yes, even more than ISIS). From time to time, we see wicked people rise to power, we see Stalin, Mao, Hitler, Saddam, Pharaoh of Egypt and those God sets in power (Rom. 13:1) and gives them more freedom in their sin than usual for His purposes. In our day, we see the wicked Islamic State (ISIS). That God restrains evil is seen from Genesis 20:6:

> Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and **it was I who kept you from sinning against me**. Therefore I did not let you touch her.

God has kept him from sinning against God and He surely keeps us from sinning against Him now. I am very thankful to God that He daily restrains me from sin and from what I could do if His restraining and loving grace were not upon my life. This passage brings me comfort that I am never left alone to my wicked and deceitful heart. It is indeed true what a wise man has said long ago:

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.[17]

Reprobation In The Bible

Let's take a look at a few examples where the Bible speaks about God judging people by hardening their hearts so that they do not obey.

Pharaoh

There is no account more known of God's hardening than Pharaoh's. He is the example of a stubborn king who did not want to obey God. Let's get the context a bit. The book of Exodus starts with the fact that it has been something less than 400 years since the time of Joseph. It tells us that sometime after Joseph's death, there came another Pharaoh to power who didn't know about Joseph. The previous Pharaoh had allowed the people of Israel to stay in the land and even get the best of the land (Gen. 45:17-18; 46:6-7). But this new Pharaoh, who came after Joseph, enslaved the people for some 400 years. Then comes the birth of Moses. At that time, the Pharaoh commanded the midwives to kill all male children because he was afraid that Israel would rebel (Ex. 1:15-17). The Pharaoh commanded all male children to be destroyed (Ex. 1:22). The parents of Moses left him in a basket into the Nile assigning His destiny in the hands of Providence, where he then gets picked up by Pharaoh's daughter and is taught in all Egyptian wisdom (Acts 7:22). A time goes by and Moses escapes from Egypt to Midian where he settles and marries. He spends 40 years in Midian. He was 40 years old when he fled from Egypt to Midian. At age 80, Moses meets God on Mount Sinai, the Mountain of God, where God tells him that the LORD has not turned a deaf ear to the cries of His people, but He will surely deliver them (Ex. 3:7-10). Then the LORD says to Moses:

> Exod. 3:18-20 And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.' 19 But **I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand**. 20 So **I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt** with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go.

Here we see the Lord's perfect knowledge of Pharaoh's actions. This is not the same Pharaoh who lived when Moses was in Egypt, but this Pharaoh is even more wicked than the older. The LORD tells Moses in advanced, both 1) to command the Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go and 2) the fact that Pharaoh will not let Israel go. And by Pharaoh being disobedient to the Lord, Pharaoh will incur the wrath of God upon himself for his disobedience and God will thereby be seen as glorious and just for His judgments. The Lord gives Moses signs by which the presence of God with Moses is to be attested to (Ex. 4:5). But the Lord again warns Moses, before he sets a foot in Egypt:

> Exod. 4:21 And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But **I will harden his heart**, **so that he will not let the people go.**

The Lord tells of His determination to destroy Pharaoh king of Egypt. The LORD has had it with Pharaoh's sins and the persecution he's dealing to God's people. The LORD, Yahweh Himself, will harden Pharaoh (give him more freedom in his sins), in order that, for the purpose ("so that") of Pharaoh not letting Israel go. By Pharaoh not letting Israel go, Pharaoh is disobeying God and is, therefore, incurring more wrath upon himself (Rom. 2:4-5). The LORD Himself is the ultimate cause of Pharaoh's hardened heart, but this does not mean that He is the author of sin. The Confession is clear on the fact that God ordaining that sin be does not mean that He commits sin, commends sin or approves of sin (paragraph 1). But we see from these passages where God is said to be the One hardening Pharaoh that God is the ultimate cause of Pharaoh's hardening. This does not mean that Pharaoh did not harden his own heart, on the contrary, we read often of Pharaoh hardening his heart. Rather, God's hardening Pharaoh's heart is a judgment upon Pharaoh's current sins where the LORD gives him more freedom to act in sin. And to have more freedom in sin means not obeying God and Pharaoh remained in his disobedience.

We read again before Moses goes to Pharaoh about God's determination to harden Pharaoh's heart. In Exodus 7, the Lord is again determined to set the people of Israel free and have Pharaoh destroyed.

> Exod. 7:3-5 But **I will harden Pharaoh's heart**, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, 4 **Pharaoh will not listen to you**. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. 5 The **Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD**, when I

stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them."

Moses is again forewarned of Pharaoh's hardened heart. As in Exodus 4:21, God hardening Pharaoh's heart has the effect to cause Pharaoh not to obey. By disobedience, Pharaoh brings judgment upon himself and his nation (being the representative of Egypt himself), and by God's judgment His power is seen, His justice is vindicated and His grace is better seen for delivering the Israelites behind the dark wall of Pharaoh's destruction. Lest I get accused that I'm only looking to one set of passages, yes, I'm aware that Pharaoh also hardens his heart, but I have argued from Exodus 4:21 and 7:3 that God was the ultimate cause of Pharaoh hardening his heart. His hardening (Ex. 8:15, 32, 9:34) was the response to God's hardening (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 17) his heart. I think that I have been clear in saying that this hardening of God is giving someone over to their sins as is illustrated in Romans 1:24, 26, 28. This is *NOT* God working evil in Pharaoh's good heart. Pharaoh was a wicked, sinful and vile king. He has enough sin to be damned for all eternity without God hardening him. What God does, for the manifestation of the glory of His justice and the deliverance of His people, is give Pharaoh more freedom in his sins so that God may bring more and more judgments upon Egypt. That God was the ultimate cause of Pharaoh's hardening is seen from the comments of Moses upon Pharaoh hardening his heart:

Exod. 7:13 Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, **as the LORD had said.**

Exod. 7:22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, **as the LORD had said.**

Exod. 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, **as the LORD had said.**

Exod. 8:19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, **as the LORD had said.**

This is all confirmation of the Lord's word that He would harden Pharaoh's so that he won't listen, even before appearing in Egypt (Ex. 4:21). In the 9th chapters of Exodus and Romans, we meet Pharaoh and the reason why God created him and placed him as King of Egypt:

Exod. 9:15 For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. 16 But for this purpose I have raised you up, **to show you my power**, so that **my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.**

Rom. 9:17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that **I might show my power in you**, and that **my name might be proclaimed in all the earth**."

Here we see the LORD's patience, not because Pharaoh was such a good and righteous man, no. But for the manifestation of God's glory in judgment. God could've led the Israelites very easily out of Egypt. Nothing is hard for Him, yet it pleased the LORD to demonstrate His grace upon Israel by demonstrating His wrath upon Egypt for their sin. Pharaoh was raised for a particular purpose, and that purpose was to be a vessel "of wrath prepared for destruction" (Rom. 9:22). And he served his purpose well such so that in the time of Joshua, the people were afraid of Israel because the LORD was with them and they knew how God overthrew Egypt:

Josh. 2:8-10 Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof 9 and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. 10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. (See also Josh. 9:9)

By God being determined to destroy Pharaoh, He has purposed him for destruction and doom, not only in this life but an eternity in Hell, too. God perfectly knew what Pharaoh would do because God had ordained that it be so. God had raised him up for His own purposes and He brought him down for His own purposes, so that God may be glorified by His judgment upon Pharaoh and Egypt. No one is allowed to question God's judgments (Rom. 9:20). There is not a single requirement for Him to show grace to anyone! Let alone to "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Rev 7:9), of whom none deserve anything but wrath, but have received grace, which is God giving us what we do not deserve on the basis of Christ substitutionary atonement. There are other examples where we see that God is determined on destroying certain people, not only in this life but also in the next because they whom God hardens are faithless and deserve God's judgment.

The Sons Of Eli

1 Samuel 2:25 has already been dealt with **above**, which is a very good example of God being determined to destroy the wicked. They had broken God's command and God had turned them over to their sin for the purpose of not obeying their father and being destroyed. Their destruction is recorded in 1 Samuel 4:11.

King Rehoboam

After the death of Solomon (2 Chron. 9:31), the united kingdom of Israel is split into two. The people complained against King Rehoboam (reigned from 931 – 913 B.C.), saying:

> 2 Chron. 10:4 "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you."

They thought that the reign of Solomon was harsh for them, but they haven't seen the true Rehoboam yet. Rehoboam asks the people to come back in three days' time. Rehoboam gets counsel from the wise old men who have served his father Solomon also, and they encourage him to do the people's will. But Rehoboam sadly did not embrace the counsel of the old wise men, but went along with the foolish counsel of the young men with whom he grew up:

> 2 Chron. 10:4-11 "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you." 5 He said to them, "Come to me again in three days." So the people went away. 6 Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?" 7 And they said to him, "If you will be good to this people and please them and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever." 8 But **he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him**, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him. 9 And he said to them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put on us'?" 10 And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, "Thus shall you speak to the people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us'; thus shall you say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's thighs. 11 And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, **I will add to your yoke**. My father disciplined you with whips, but **I will discipline you with scorpions**.'"

The foolish young men advised him to be even more severe and wicked than he already was. It's like saying to them, "you thought my father Solomon was harsh? You ain't seen nothing!" But how could this happen? Did this just happen without the will of God? Was it outside of God's control? Of course, it was not. The same book records the will of God in regards to this action:

> 2 Chron. 10:13-15 And the king answered them harshly; and forsaking the counsel of the old men, 14 King Rehoboam spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions." 15 So the **king did not listen to the people**, **for it was a turn of affairs brought about by God** that the LORD might fulfill his word, which he spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. (parallel 1Kings 12:15)

Here we see that Rehoboam's wickedness in listening to the counsel of the foolish young men and treating the people badly was "a turn of affairs brought about by God". It was in no wise something outside of God's control, rather, as a punishment, God ordained these means (of taking the advice of the young men) to accomplish the end of tearing the kingdom from the hand of Solomon (1Kings 11:29-39). And like this we see more examples of God's control over the reprobate (Judge 3:12; 7:22; 2 Sam. 17:14; 2 Chron. 22:7; 25:16, 20; 2 Kgs. 24:2-4; Isa. 37:5-7, 21-29, 36-38).

Isaiah's Prophecy

There are tons of verses that teach that God gives people hearts that do not obey, ears that do not listen as a judgment upon present sin in their lives. Isaiah 6:9-10 is I believe the most cited (Matt. 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26-27; Rom. 11:8) passage in the New Testament about reprobation.

> Isa. 6:9 And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' 10 Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; **lest they see with their**

eyes, and hear with their ears, and **understand with their hearts**, and turn and be healed."

Isaiah, after seeing the Lord of Glory Himself, is sent by God and is forewarned (like Moses) that the people will not believe his message. He's going to have a hard ministry among a people who have blind eyes and hardened hearts. The most significant place that this prophecy is cited is in John 12:37-40:

> John 12:37-40 Though he had done so many signs before them, **they still did not believe in him**, 38 **so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled**: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" 39 **Therefore they could not believe**. For again Isaiah said, 40 "**He has blinded their eyes** and **hardened their heart**, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them."

The Lord Jesus' message is not welcomed with humble adoration, but with rejection. Jesus is saddened by the fact that they do not believe Him (Matt. 23:37-39; John 5:34), yet He also knows that eternal decree of God the Father concerning reprobation and He is not discouraged because things are running as it has pleased God to determine (Matt. 11:25-27). Notice carefully the wording of the verses 37-38. They did not believe, in order that, for the purpose of the prophecy's fulfillment. Furthermore, in v. 39, we have an even stronger statement than in the original passage. Here we are told that they "could not" believe. There is a huge difference between "could" and "would." "Would" denotes a *desire,* while "could" denotes *ability* and *power.* Those people did not have the ability to believe. It's not that they only did not desire and will Jesus and therefore did not believe, no, it's also because they had no *ability* or *power* to believe. For indeed, our Lord says in John 6:44, "**No one can come to me** unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." They cannot because they desire not, and they desire not because they love not the Lord Jesus.

I have always been fascinated by this phrase in verse 40: **lest they see**. This denotes a strong purpose from the Lord. This is a strong determination from the Lord's part for the destruction of these people. The purpose of giving these blind eyes to the people is that they may never come to faith and evermore wander in their sins as punishment for their already committed sins. This prophecy of Isaiah is used by Paul in Romans 11 again in regard to Israel's rejection of the gospel.

> Rom. 11:7-8 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. **The elect obtained it**, but **the rest were hardened**, 8 as it is written, "**God gave them a spirit of stupor**, **eyes that would not see** and **ears that would not hear,** down to this very day."

In Israel's rejection of the Messiah, they were carrying God's eternal plan of election and reprobation. God didn't lose control of the world but was carrying history to its appointed end. The fact that Israelites indeed did receive the gospel and believe, Paul, being an example (Rom. 11:1), along with the apostles and those in the early chapters of Acts, is confirmation of God's eternal election. Also, the fact that some did disbelieve happened "as it is written", i.e., it accords with God's eternal decree of reprobation. Notice also the force of the verse in the way that Paul quotes it: **God gave them** a spirit of stupor. Paul stresses the activity of God in their hardening and reprobation, which is not the same thing as Equal Ultimacy, which is the creation of evil and sin in the hearts of the reprobate. Rather, the hearts of Christ-rejecters are already filled with evil and sin.

God Sends Them Strong Delusions

One of the strongest statements about reprobation comes from Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians. He writes:

> 2 Thess. 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, 10 and with all wicked deception for **those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth** and so be saved. 11 Therefore **God sends them a strong delusion**, **so that they may believe what is false**, 12 **in order that all may be condemned** who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

First, this is not to be escaped by simply saying that this is still future, it is not. This is the same truth of Isaiah 6:9-10, but given in different words. Even if our opponents would object by saying that this refers to the future (as a few would claim), the fact remains that God sends strong delusions and this passage must be dealt with. Why are these delusions sent? So that good people would become bad? No, of course not. Over and over again we have seen that reprobation and hardening are passive works of God where He gives more freedom to a wicked heart in their sin. Those people described in v. 10 (which I believe refers to unbelievers generally) *already* do not love the truth and thus believe falsehood and have pleasure in unrighteousness. They are not sweet and upright people who love the truth, but God forces them to love falsehood, no. They

are already in love with falsehood. God sends more falsehood as a judgment on their ways, so that they may receive greater condemnation. He sends more falsehood on their way as a judgment on existing sin and falsehood. Notice that we have purpose clauses in our passage. The first is in v. 11 ("so that"), which describes the purpose of God in sending them these strong delusions. The second purpose clause explains the end for which the falsehood and the strong delusion are sent, namely, so that they may be condemned. This is much like the LORD did at the time of Ezekiel:

> Ezek. 14:6-11 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: **Repent and turn away from your idols**, and turn away your faces from all your abominations. 7 For any one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, who separates himself from me, **taking his idols into his heart** and putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to a prophet to consult me through him, I the LORD will answer him myself. 8 And I will set my face against that man; I will make him a sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people, and you shall know that I am the LORD. 9 And **if the prophet is deceived and speaks a word, I, the LORD, have deceived that prophet**, and **I will stretch out my hand against him and will destroy him** from the midst of my people Israel. 10 And they shall bear their punishment—the punishment of the prophet and the punishment of the inquirer shall be alike— 11 that the house of Israel may no more go astray from me, nor defile themselves anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be my people and I may be their God, declares the Lord GOD."

The LORD put the falsehood in the mouth of the false prophet as judgment both on the prophet and the inquirer. He is the Sovereign who put the falsehood in his mouth and the One who judged him for the falsehood. See also 1 Kings 22:19-23 for the case of Ahab and the 400 lying prophets in whose mouth the Lord has put a lying spirit.

Caught And Destroyed

In the second chapter of 2 Peter, Peter takes on the false prophets and warns the people of God about them. He warns the people of God's severe judgment by giving them several examples. When the angels fell, God did "not [spare]" the angels when they sinned but cast them into hell to be kept until the judgment, giving the idea that they are now kept under punishment. Even at the present time. The Lord did not even spare the ancient world, but only spared eight people from among thousands or perhaps millions. Indeed,

> Rom. 9:18 So then **he has mercy on whomever he wills**, and **he hardens whomever he wills.**

No one could rise and accuse God that He is not righteous or holy in destroying the world. One should praise His magnificent grace that He saved eight wretches from His righteous, temporary and eternal wrath. He did not even spare Sodom and Gomorrah, but rained fire from Heaven on them. But these wicked false prophets in Peter's eyes outweigh these wicked people from the past. That could be because of the greater revelation of Christ and the examples of judgment already laid down in the Scriptures so that we would not walk in their steps. Let's see how Peter describes these people:

> 2 Pet. 2:10-13 and especially those who **indulge in the lust of defiling passion** and **despise authority**. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, 11 whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. 12 But these, **like irrational animals, creatures of instinct**, **born to be caught and destroyed**, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, **will also be destroyed in their destruction**, 13 suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.

These people are described very horribly for their wickedness and this is not limited to Peter's day. This is a description of false prophets and unbelievers in general from the eyes of God. They are described as "Bold and willful" (v. 10). They do what they desire and are not ashamed of their wickedness, this is pretty much in agreement with what Paul said in Romans 1:

> Rom. 1:32 Though **they know God's righteous decree** that those who practice such things deserve to die, they **not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.**

These wicked reprobates (which I most assuredly deserve to be among them, but for the grace of God, which distinguished me for His purposes), are described in very strong and harsh terms, which they surely deserve to be described in. They are

said to be created for the purpose of being "caught and destroyed." They are described in these words because of their wickedness, which is also ordained of God, as He ordains everything according to the good pleasure of His will and in accords to the freedom of secondary agents and their natures. Being considered children of Adam, they are born wicked and in sin. The Lord, in choosing to pass over them, has passively assigned them to go to Hell for their sins and thus, to be caught and destroyed. Notice that throughout our discussion we have stressed the fact that the reprobate goes to Hell *because* of their sins. That is the means that God has ordained for their condemnation. They do not go to Hell merely because God has willed them to be there, but God has willed them to be there *because of* their sins. They are not innocent and good people who do not deserve to be there, or who were willing to change and repent. According to Scripture, in our natural and sinful state, no one is willing to seek God or to repent (e.g., Rom. 3:11; 8:7-8; John 6:44).

There should be some caution while approaching and understanding this phrase. It does not mean that their *only* purpose is to be caught and destroyed, but their ultimate purpose is to be caught and destroyed as they are to end up in Hell. To say that their **only** purpose is to be caught and destroyed is like saying that one buys flowers for someone for the purpose of throwing them away. That certainly is wrong. There would come a time when the flowers will be thrown away, but they will, in the meantime, serve their purpose for decoration, beauty, and whatnot. The same is true with the wicked. What I have said is in accords with Proverbs 16:4.

> Prov. 16:4 **The LORD has made everything for its purpose**, **even the wicked for the day of trouble**.

Nothing escapes the Lord's absolute sovereignty. He consciously creates everything for its purpose. Romans 9 tells us that there are two ultimate purposes:

> Rom. 9:22-23 What if God, **desiring to show his wrath** and **to make known his power**, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order **to make known the riches of his glory** for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—

These two purposes are the manifestation of His wrath and power and on the other hand, the manifestation of the riches of the glory of his grace (Eph. 1:6). When the Lord created man, He creates us consciously and appointed us either to eternal happiness or eternal misery. Not without sufficient causes, but with sufficient causes. Eternal happiness will only come through Christ's cross, and eternal misery would only come because of our sin. Both being children of Adam, sinful and thus deserving of death (Rom. 3:23; 5:12-14; 6:23) and wrath. The sufficient cause of being preordained/assigned to Hell or created as a vessel of wrath is being sinful and a child of Adam and being left in that state. God is not obligated to give mercy and grace to anyone!

> Rom. 9:15-16, 18 For he says to Moses, "**I will have mercy on whom I have mercy**, and **I will have compassion on whom I have compassion**." 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but **on God, who has mercy**. 18 So then **he has mercy on whomever he wills**, and **he hardens whomever he wills.**

Conclusion

We have seen that reprobation is God's passive decree of leaving those in their sins to perish. He also, as a judgment upon present sin gives them over to more sin, so that they may be punished and God displayed glorious in His justice and wrath. Although this is done by God's passive decree it does not mean that God does not will it. He certainly wills those in Hell to be in Hell and those in Heaven to be in Heaven. Thus the saying of Calvin that some are predestined unto life and others unto death certainly is true, but the predestination to death has to be qualified. I have pointed out the error of Equal Ultimacy.

This is a doctrine that our flesh hates because we see ourselves as ones who deserve to be damned but do not want to be damned, and therefore our flesh hates it. We see ourselves as Christians, not any better off than Pharaoh, Stalin, Hitler or Saddam apart from the grace of God, which has distinguished us for His purposes and glory. The fact that we believe in Christ is not due to anything in us, but merely of God's sovereign and distinguishing grace and love. This doctrine should awake in us a love for the none-saved and zeal for evangelism, for the same God Who wills the destruction of the wicked is the same God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:31-32).

The doctrine of reprobation certainly is a high mystery as is election, but it's a truth that the Scripture teaches and therefore we must embrace, even if it goes against our traditions or our feelings. Our allegiance should be to God and to His Word. He is the ultimate authority of righteousness and holiness. His judgments are always right and holy. He never does anyone wrong. Glory to His Holy Name in everything that He does and ordains!

§4 The Number Of The Elect Cannot Be Increased Or Diminished

4. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are **particularly and unchangeably designed,** and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished. **1**
    1. Matt. 2:1-14; John 13:18; Rom. 11:5-6; 1 Cor. 7:22-22; 2 Tim. 2:19

The number of the elect cannot change. It is **particularly and unchangeably designed**. All things were ordered by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will (paragraph 1). Therefore, if any change would be made concerning the decree of election or reprobation, this would mean that all things *were not* decreed by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, which is false. Therefore, if this is true, the number of the elect and reprobate is **so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished**.

God knows who are His (2 Tim. 2:19). His call is irreversible (Rom. 11:29). He will lose or add no one (John 6:37-40; 10:28-29). It is not fitting to think that the number of the elect may be changed because that would mean that God changed His mind upon a matter that He has decided from all eternity. I mean, what new information must come to the mind of God, which He did not already know, which would cause God to change His mind? God knows all things, contingent and actual. That which He has chosen from all eternity to occur is what He has chosen in full knowledge and wisdom, without any ounce of ignorance. See our discussion of **God's Immutability** and knowledge in chapter 2. God cannot learn any new thing because He already knows all things. Nothing new can be brought up to the table which would cause God to change His mind. Therefore, the idea that the "list of the elect" can change implies that God changes His mind, which is impossible, and that God is not all-wise, which is false.

§5 Unconditional Election

5. Those of mankind that are **predestinated to life**, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his **eternal and immutable purpose,** and the **secret counsel** and **good pleasure of his will,** hath **chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory**, out of his mere free grace and love, **1** **without any other thing in the creature** as a condition or cause moving him thereunto. **2**
    1. Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:4-6, 9, 11; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:9
    2. Rom. 9:11-16; 11:5-6; Eph 2:5

The **predestination to life** took place **before the foundation of the world** (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9) and it was according to God's **eternal and immutable purpose**. Yes, this predestination was **out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creation as a condition or cause** (Rom. 9:11), but this does not mean that God did not have a purpose in electing those people. It just means that this purpose or cause was not in them. One particular purpose is "to the praise of his glorious grace" (Eph. 1:6). This predestination was according to the **secret counsel** of His will, meaning, that God has not revealed to us who the elect are. Yet His word calls us to "be all the more diligent to confirm [our] calling and election" (2 Pet. 1:10) and we may know that we are elect through faith in Christ and the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our lives. His **purpose** and **counsel** is also said to be the **good pleasure of His will** (Eph. 1:5 KJV). It is not an evil or sinful purpose, but a **good** purpose.

What Is It?

> The doctrine of election and predestination. It is useful, necessary, and most sweet. Ignorance of it impairs the glory of God, plucks up humility by the roots, begets and fosters pride. The doctrine establishes the certainty of salvation, peace of conscience, and the true origin of the church.[18]

The doctrine of eternal election is a most sweet and glorious doctrine from the Word of God. It is a doctrine much disagreed

upon by Christians, yet I believe that the cause of disagreement is not based upon what the Scripture says, but rather because the idea is hateful to the human depraved mind. The doctrine is basically that God is free to select those, whom He has pleased out His mere pleasure, to save from His just wrath. Wayne Grudem defines election as:

> Election is an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.[19]

I still find it weird that I first came to believe in the doctrine of election and *then* the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty. I was indeed inconsistent. Somehow, for a time it was easier for me to believe in the 5 points of Calvinism, I saw them as standing or falling together indeed, but I did not believe in the absolute control of God upon the world in general. I thought that God was sovereign over salvation, but not so sovereign over everything outside of election. That was indeed a great inconsistency and error, but somehow election was easier to believe as I understood human depravity from the Scriptures. In laying a case for eternal unconditional election, it is not my goal to answer every objection brought against the doctrine or use every verse that supports the doctrine. But I will try, by the grace of God, to make a biblical case for **Unconditional Election**. Here are some more definitions of this doctrine. Dr. James White says:

> God elects a specific people unto Himself without reference to *anything they do.* This means the basis of God's choice of the elect is *solely* within Himself: His grace, His mercy, His will. It is not man's actions, works, or *even foreseen faith,* that "draws" God's choice. God's election is unconditional *and final.*[20]

David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn define the doctrine of election as:

> God's choice of certain individuals for salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause, of God's choice. Election, therefore, was not determined by, or conditioned upon, any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus, God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.[21]

The T Is First

In formulating the Doctrines of Grace or the Five Points of Calvinism, the Calvinists actually formulated these in answer to the five points of Arminianism. The five points stand and fall together. They are interconnected and dependent upon each other. Although some may object to the terms used, all the doctrines of the five points are indeed biblical, we believe. The five points are known with the acrostic TULIP:

1. Total Depravity (see **chapter 6**)
2. Unconditional Election
3. Limited Atonement (see **our case in chapter 8**)
4. Irresistible Grace (see **chapter 10**)
5. Perseverance of the Saints (see **chapter 17**)

There is a logical direction toward which these doctrines move. First, people are depraved, cut off from the life of God and are unable to come to Him. That's the way that God sees them and He has chosen them as fallen sons in Adam. That is unconditional election. Then comes the Son who pays their debt. The Spirit applies the work of the Son and they are kept forever for and by God. Total Depravity is defined as:

> Because of the Fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free; it is in bondage to his evil nature. Therefore, he will not –indeed, he cannot—choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ. Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not salvation, but itself a part of God's gift of salvation. It is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.[22]

The five points go from one who is utterly, radically depraved, to one who is made holy and blameless because of Christ's atoning death and kept safe forever in the arms of God. So, in thinking about election we must presuppose the depravity and

fall of man. When God chose, He chose those who would by Adam's Fall, fall into sin, misery, and depravity. We are told that He chose them to be "holy and blameless" (Eph. 1:4), presupposing that we were not holy and blameless. When thinking and speaking of Unconditional Election, we do not have in mind the election of people who were good, but the election of people who were fallen in Adam and on their way to Hell, if God did not intervene. If there was no election, no one would be saved, because man cannot and desires not to come to God, without the special and gracious work of God in his heart. This point is taken into consideration in the **6th chapter of the Confession**.

Unconditional Election From Scripture



After laying the basis for man's utter depravity—the fact that He cannot and will not come to God (Rom. 3:11; 8:7-8), the Five Points of Calvinism move to Unconditional Election, which as I have pointed out above by quoting some theologians, it is God's free decision to choose out of the fallen race of Adam, before creating the world, some who would not receive their just punishment, but instead will be saved from God's righteous wrath on the basis of Christ's work. While a case for absolute divine election can be made if one goes to church history, but that is not much of interest to me. The Scripture teaches it, church history confirms it. The Scripture is the only standard for the truth and we should go into this inquiry about election to the God-breathed Scripture as the highest and infallible authority (**see chapter 1**). There should be humility to submit to the Word of God in what it teaches about election and reprobation and to no other authority than God Himself in the Word.

> There are others who, when they would cure this disease, recommend that the subject of predestination should scarcely if ever be mentioned, and tell us to shun every question concerning it as we would a rock. Although their moderation is justly commendable in thinking that such mysteries should be treated with moderation, yet because they keep too far within the proper measure, they have little influence over the human mind, which does not readily allow itself to be curbed. Therefore, in order to keep the legitimate course in this matter, we must return to the word of God, in which we are furnished with the right rule of understanding. For Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which as nothing useful and necessary to be known has been omitted, so nothing is taught but what it is of importance to know. Every thing, therefore delivered in Scripture on the subject of predestination, we must beware of keeping from the faithful, lest we seem either maliciously to deprive them of the blessing of God, or to accuse and scoff at the Spirit, as having divulged what ought on any account to be suppressed. Let us, I say, allow the Christian to unlock his mind and ears to all the words of God which are addressed to him, provided he do it with this moderation, viz., that whenever the Lord shuts his sacred mouth, he also desists from inquiry.[23]

Divine election basically means that God is the One Who does the work of regeneration, granting of repentance and faith to people. We are not to look for election only in texts which specifically state that it was done before the foundation of the world, but we should also look at texts which speak of God's present work, like granting faith and repentance (Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 2:26; Eph. 2:8-9) and argue for election on the basis of God's working. What election tries to show is that God is the ultimate Agent and decision-maker in salvation. Indeed,

> Rom. 9:16 So then **it depends not on human will or exertion**, but **on God, who has mercy**.

We are here arguing for Monergism as opposed to Synergism. **Monergism** is the singular and effective work of the Triune God whereby He grants grace and mercy, faith and repentance, and all that is necessary for salvation to man and raises the dead sinner to spiritual life. As the many metaphors used in the Scriptures of men being raised from the dead (Eph. 2:1-4) or being born again (John 1:12-13; 3:1-8), these Scriptures suppose that man has no active role in the new birth/regeneration.

GotQuestions defines monergism as: 'Monergism, which comes from a compound Greek word that means "to work alone," is the view that God alone affects our salvation. This view is held primarily by Calvinistic and Reformed traditions and is closely tied to what is known as the "doctrines of grace."'[24] *Monergism.com* says the following about Monergism:

> Monergism: In regeneration, the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ independent of any cooperation from our unregenerated human nature. He quickens us through the outward call cast forth by the preaching of His Word, disarms our innate hostility, removes our blindness, illumines our mind, creates understanding, turns our heart of stone to a heart of flesh -- giving rise to a delight in His Word -- all that we might, with our renewed affections, willingly & gladly embrace Christ. The Prophet Ezekiel inspired by the Holy Spirit asserted "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God." (Eze 11:19, also 36:26) The Apostle Paul said, "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." (1 Thess. 1, 4, 5). I.e. In regeneration the word does not work alone but must be accompanied by the "germination" of the Holy Spirit. And again "...you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God." (1 Pet 1:23)[25]

The Century Dictionary says the following about monergism, "In theology, [monergism is] the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is the only efficient agent in regeneration [the new birth] - that the human will possesses no inclination to holiness until regenerated [born again], and therefore cannot cooperate in regeneration."[26] On the other hand, **Synergism** teaches that man and God cooperate. Arminians do not view this cooperation as a work because the Bible obviously excludes works from our salvation (e.g., Eph. 2:8-9). They say that God has done everything that is needed, the only thing left for man is to accept and receive the gift. *GotQuestions* says that 'Synergism, which also comes from a compound Greek word meaning "to work together," is the view that God works together with us in effecting salvation.'[24] *Wikipedia* says that "synergism is the position of those who hold that salvation involves some form of cooperation between divine grace and human freedom."[27] Monergism, the Calvinist and Reformed position, is God-centered, while Synergism is not so God-centered.

John 6 – The Doctrine Of Sovereign Election From Jesus' Lips

Very often, this doctrine of Unconditional Election is thought of as something that sweet, shampoo-model Jesus would never teach. They say that Jesus is a gentleman, He'll never force Himself upon anyone, all loving and stuff. Sadly, many today have an unbiblical, idolatrous, and an incomplete view of Jesus. They often pick and choose what they like about Jesus. They think of Jesus as some sissy and not as the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth, and the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. In John 6, we clearly hear the doctrine of election from the lips of our Savior. As it is now, so it was back then—people didn't like hearing about God's freedom and their inability.

Context

John 6 begins with Jesus feeding 5000 men. This multitude sees the power of Jesus and the fact that He is "the Prophet" (John 6:14; Deut. 18:15) and therefore, they want to make Him king by force (John 6:15). In John 6:16-21, we're told of the account that Jesus walked on water. His disciples got into the boat and went across the sea to Capernaum, but Jesus was not with them. In the night, He appears to them and comforts them with the words: "It is I; do not be afraid" (John 6:21). The next section begins the sermon in the synagogue in Capernaum (John 6:59) where Jesus talks about feeding on His flesh and blood, Him being the Bread of Life and sovereign election. This is the section that we'll try to examine.

Seekers

The crowd, John 6:22-24 tells us, was really *seeking* Jesus. They crossed a lake for Him! They really wanted to hear Jesus and to believe in Jesus...or did they? The Lord clearly sees the thoughts and intentions of their hearts (John 2:24-25) and tells them what the desires of their hearts were:

> John 6:26 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **you are seeking me**, not because you saw signs, but **because you ate your fill of the loaves**.

These people, from a human viewpoint, would've been seen as genuine believers, but Christ tells us the nature of their hearts. The Lord always goes after the intentions of the heart and these were not right. They did not love Jesus, they loved what He did. They had good food and were probably hoping to get the same or better this day. But Jesus tells them not to pursue and work for things that perish, but they are rather to work for the food that endures to eternal life (John 6:27). Jesus also defines what this work is:

> John 6:29 Jesus answered them, "This is **the work of God**, that **you believe in him** whom he has sent."

Mysteriously, the work of God is that people should believe in Jesus. Those in whom God works, do believe in Jesus, indeed. The Lord requires of them faith, and this is that which He Himself works in people. It is God Who grants us faith and repentance, and therefore, it is His work in our hearts (Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; **see here for faith being a gift**).

The Perfect Work of the Son

> John 6:37-40 **All that the Father gives me will come to me**, and whoever **comes to me I will never cast out**. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is **the will of him who sent me**, that **I should lose nothing of all that he has given me**, but **raise it up on the last day**.

There are indeed many things to be said about such a glorious passage. This passage, from the lips of our Lord, describes the perfect plan within the Godhead for the salvation of the elect. The Father who elects and gives a specific people to His Son. The Son who lays down His life for them. The Spirit gives them life. In this way, the Triune God is glorified. In v. 37, we read of a specific people given to the Son by the Father of whom the Son of God says "**will** come to me," not "*might* come to me". This is a *definite* coming on the part of those given. It is not conditional upon them, but is conditional upon the fact whether they are given to the Son. Those who come to the Son will never be cast out of His loving presence. They will not be plucked from His hand because they are secure in Him (John 10:28-29). The Gospel of John is fond of this idea of the Son being given a specific people by the Father. Let's look at a few examples from John 17—Jesus' High Priestly prayer:

> John 17:2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to **all whom you have given him**.
>
> John 17:6 "I have manifested your name to **the people whom you gave me out of the world**. Yours they were, and **you gave them to me**, and they have kept your word.
>
> John 17:9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for **those whom you have given me**, for they are yours.
>
> John 17:24 Father, I desire that **they also, whom you have given me**, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Here we clearly see that these specific people given to the Son by the Father are appointed to eternal life. Those people who are given to the Son are given for the purpose of **receiving eternal life** (John 17:2). These people know the Name of the Father and they have kept the word of God (John 17:6). Jesus **intercedes and prays for them**, not for the reprobate (John 17:9; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 Tim. 2:5). These people who are given by the Father **will be where Jesus is** and will see Jesus' glory (John 17:24).

Notice the order in John 6:37:

1. All that the Father gives me
2. will come to me, and
3. whoever comes to me
4. I will never cast out.

Many would like this verse to read otherwise to support their notion of human autonomy. They probably want it to be, or read it as, "All that will come to me, the Father gives me…" But that is not the way the verse reads, I have pointed this out to strengthen the fact that the *giving* of the Father precedes the *coming* of people. These people, which were given to the Son, will certainly come to Him at God's appointed time. There is nothing in the text which gives us the idea that they will not come, but everything here supports Divine Election. There are no "ifs" concerning whether these people, which are given to the Son, will come or not. Rather, it is expressed in certain terms that they will, in fact, come, and they will be raised up on the last day, i.e., the Day of Judgment (John 12:48). Those given by the Father will certainly come and when they come, they will come to the loving arms of Jesus and be received by the Father. John Gill observes:

> **All that the Father giveth me,….** The "all" design not the apostles only, who were given to Christ as such; for these did not all, in a spiritual manner, come to him, and believe in him; one of them was a devil, and the son of perdition; much less every individual of mankind: these are, in some sense, given to Christ to subserve some ends of his mediatorial kingdom, and are subject to his power and control, but do not come to him, and believe in him: but the

whole body of the elect are here meant, who, when they were chosen by God the Father, were given and put into the hands of Christ, as his seed, his spouse, his sheep, his portion, and inheritance, and to be saved by him with an everlasting salvation; which is an instance of love and care on the Father's part, to give them to Christ; and of grace and condescension in him to receive them, and take the care of them; and of distinguishing goodness to them: and though Christ here expresses this act of his Father's in the present tense, "giveth", perhaps to signify the continuance and unchangeableness of it; yet he delivers it in the past tense, in Joh 6:39, "hath given"; and so all the Oriental versions render it here. And it certainly respects an act of God, antecedent to coming to Christ, and believing in him, which is a fruit and effect of electing love, as is clear from what follows:

shall come unto me; such who are given to Christ in eternal election, and in the everlasting covenant of grace, shall, and do, in time, come to Christ, and believe in him to the saving of their souls; which is not to be ascribed to, any power and will in them, but to the power and grace of God. It is not here said, that such who are given to Christ have a "power" to come to him, or "may" come if they will, but they shall come; efficacious grace will bring them to Christ, as poor perishing sinners, to venture on him for life and salvation:

and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out; such who come to Christ in a spiritual manner, and are brought to believe in him truly and really, he not only receives kindly, but keeps and preserves them by his power, and will not cast them out, or thrust them from him into perdition: the words are very strongly and emphatically expressed in the original, "I will not, not, or never, never, cast out without"; or cast out of doors. Christ will never cast them out of his affections; nor out of his arms; nor out of that family that is named of him; nor out of, and from his church, which is his body, and of which they are members; nor out of a state of justification and salvation; and therefore they shall never perish, but have everlasting life. The three glorious doctrines of grace, of eternal election, efficacious grace in conversion, and the final perseverance of the saints, are clearly contained in these words.[2]

Jesus' purpose is to be obedient to the Father. Yes, although He is equal to God (Phil. 2:6-8), He humbled Himself and submitted to God for the glory of the Father's name, because He loves the Father and always does what pleases the Father (John 8:29, 55), therefore He cannot fail in doing the Father's will. The will of the Father for the Son is that He would lose nothing, not a single person that was given Him, and raise them (individually and collectively) up on the last day. All those given to Him by the Father are the ones who will never be cast out and will be raised up on the last day, the Day of Resurrection (John 11:24). The Son always does the will of the Father and He will not fail, because He, as God cannot fail! To say that some of them given to Him by the Father will not come to Him or that the Son loses them is to blaspheme the holy Name of the Son. This is the will of the Father for Him, and He never disappoints or disobeys the Father.

John 6:40 For this is the will of my Father, that **everyone who looks on the Son** and **believes in him should have eternal life**, and **I will raise him up on the last day.**

At v. 40, free-willers will object and say, "see, these people have to look and it says everyone, not only the elect", or other objections of this kind. When one understands what Calvinism truly teaches, they will see that this is not a valid objection to what we actually teach. For indeed, people have to come to Christ in faith, but they come because God has granted them to come (John 6:44, 65). Looking to Christ here is obviously having faith in Him, which is also granted by God to man (Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8-9). It is also good to notice that this verse **does not** say everyone **can** look at the Son. It gives us the promise that anyone who does, will receive eternal life and will be raised up on the last day. This is the result of God's work as the entire discussion and context make clear in emphasizing God the Father's and God the Son's role in the salvation of the elect. Albert Barnes gives a very helpful comment about John 6:40:

Verse 40. *Everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him*. It was not sufficient to see him and hear him, but it was necessary, also, to *believe on him*. Many of the Jews had seen him, but few believed on him. Jesus had said in the previous verse that all that the Father *had given him* should be saved. But he never left a doctrine so that men *must* misunderstand it. Lest it should be supposed that if a man was given to him this was all that was needful, and lest anyone should say, "If I am to be saved I shall be, and my efforts will be useless," he states here that it is necessary that a man should *believe* on him. This would be the *evidence* that he was given to God, and this would be evidence conclusive that he would be saved. If this explanation of the Saviour had always been attended to, the doctrine of election would not have been abused as it has been. Sinners would not sit down in unconcern, saying that if they are given to Christ all will be well. They would have arisen like the prodigal, and would have gone to God; and, having *believed* on the Saviour, they would then have had evidence that they were given to him--the evidence resulting from an humble, penitent, believing heart--and then they might rejoice in the assurance that Jesus would lose none that were given to him, but would raise it up at the last day. All the doctrines of Jesus, as *he* preached them, are safe, and pure, and consistent; as *men* preach them, they are, unhappily, often inconsistent and open to objection, and are either fitted to produce despair on the one hand, or presumptuous self-confidence on the other. Jesus teaches men to strive to enter heaven, as if they could do the work themselves; and yet to depend on the help of God, and give the glory to him, as if he had done it all.[6]

Grumbling

These people in the synagogue are offended by Jesus' words. He claimed to be the Bread of Life Who gives us satisfaction (John 6:35), but the Lord Jesus is not surprised by their rejection. He knew they would reject Him, as their depraved nature would lead them to:

> John 6:43-45 Jesus answered them, "**Do not grumble** among yourselves. 44 **No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him**. And **I will raise him up on the last day.** 45 It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' **Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me**—

Jesus tells the people to stop complaining about His sayings because none will receive Him and His sayings if the Father does not grant them to come to Him. Much like Peter's confession about Jesus' true identity was not by Peter's own observation, but a divine revelation (Matt. 16:16-17), the same is true for us who are saved by God's grace. As long as they remain in the flesh they will be unable to accept divine truths:

> 1 Cor. 2:14 The **natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God**, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
>
> John 8:43 Why do you not understand what I say? It is because **you cannot bear to hear my word.**
>
> John 8:47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why **you do not hear them is that you are not of God**."

There is a special divine revelation, which is not given to those outside of Christ but only to those who were chosen for salvation by the Father and given to the Son. The fact that people grumble and complain about Jesus' teaching is obvious, given human depravity and rejection of the truths of God. The removal of human depravity, acceptance, and submission to Christ's teaching is dependent on the Father's drawing. John 6:44 is one of the strongest verses on human inability to come to Christ. The sons of Adam do not have the ability to come to Christ. They ***cannot***, it's not they ***will*** not. It's they cannot. "*Can"* describes ability, while "*will"* describes desire. They do not have the ability because they do not have the desire. They do not have the desire because they do not love God. They are both unable and unwilling to come to Christ because the natural man does not love God. This verse, like John 6:37, many would like to read or understand in a different order than as it is written. The text says:

1. No one can come to me
2. unless the Father who sent me draws him.
3. And I will raise him up on the last day

First is the fact none has the power and ability to come to Jesus. By coming to Jesus is meant believing in Jesus, by which a person is then granted eternal life (John 6:47). Coming in this passage is synonymous with believing in the Lord Jesus. We can see this in v. 35, 'Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever **comes to me** shall not hunger, and whoever **believes in me** shall never thirst' where "comes" and "believes" are parallel. But, the Scripture says that they are unable and without power to do that which they need, i.e., turn to Christ and come to Him. The "him" who is drawn is the same "him" who is raised up on the last day. Those who are drawn by the Father to the Son are the very ones who are raised up on the last day. We see the "drawing" here is parallel to the Father's "giving" in John 6:37. Notice that in this passage again, there are no "ifs" or any possibilities that the work of the Son could fail. The one who is drawn is the same person who is raised up on the last day. It is not that the Father draws a different group than the one which is raised up on the last day. No. The same group which was given by the Father, drawn by Him to the Son, is the same group that is never cast out of the Son's presence and raised up on the last day.

John 12:32

> John 12:32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw all people to myself.**"

I will have to address one objection brought against the Calvinistic interpretation, which in my opinion, is the plain teaching and interpretation of the text. When non-Calvinists hear about God drawing people, they will immediately jump to John 12:32, ignoring the context here and there. That's the best way they see that they will escape the powerful case of John 6 for sovereign election. Most of the time, they do not speak about the context of John 12:32, and how it is related to what is plainly taught in John 6. It is sad. Let us start with John Gill, if you can't figure it out yet, I love his commentary:

I will draw all men to me; which is not to be understood of the concourse of people about him, when on the cross, some for him, and others against him, some to bewail him, and others to reproach him; but rather of the gathering of the elect to him, and in him, as their head and representative, when he was crucified for them; or of the collection of them, through the ministry of the apostles, and of their being brought to believe on him for eternal life and salvation: and this drawing of them to him, in consequence of his death, supposes distance from him, want of power, and will, to came to him, and the efficacious grace of God to bring them, though without any force and compulsion; and this is to be understood not of every individual of human nature; for all are not drawn to Christ, or enabled to come to him, and believe in him. There were many of the Jews who would not, and did not come to him for life; and who instead of being drawn to him in this sense, when lifted up on the cross, vilified and reproached him; moreover, in the preceding verse, "a world" is spoken of, whose judgment, or condemnation, was now come; and besides, there was at this time a multitude of souls in hell, who could not, nor never will be, drawn to Christ; and a greater number still there will be at the last day, who, instead of drawing to him in this gracious way and manner, will be bid to depart from him, as having been workers of iniquity. Christ died indeed for all men who are drawn unto him; but this is not true of all men, that are, were, or shall be in the world. Add to this, that the word "men" is not in the text, it is only παντας, "all": Beza's most ancient copy, and some others, and the Vulgate Latin version read παντα, "all things"; and by "all" are meant, all the elect of God, all the children of God, "that were scattered abroad"; the Persic version reads, "I will draw my friends to me"; it designs some of all sorts of men, of every state, condition, age, sex, and nation, Gentiles as well as Jews, and especially the former; which agrees with the ancient prophecy, Ge 49:10, and with the context, and the occasion of the words, which was the desire of the Greeks, that were come to the feast, to see Jesus; and which was a specimen of the large numbers of them, that should be drawn to Christ, through the preaching of the Gospel, after his death: the Jews say, that in the time to come, or in the days of the Messiah, all the proselytes shall be גרורים, "drawn", shall freely become proselytes {e}. The allusion here, is to the setting up of a standard or ensign, to gather persons together. Christ's cross is the standard, his love is the banner, and he himself is the ensign, which draw souls to himself, and engage them to enlist themselves under him, and become his volunteers in the day his power; see Isa 11:10.[2]

Second, and most importantly, in John 6, the Father is said to be the One Who draws people to Himself and not the Son. But in John 12:32, we see the far extent of the cross to all nations, indeed:

Rev 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every **tribe** and **language** and **people** and **nation**,

Contrary to the classic Arminian cry that "all means all," many times, in fact, it does not (John 4:29; 8:2; Luke 3:21; Mark 1:5; Matt. 2:3-4; Jer. 13:19 and Jer. 39:9-10; see **chapter 8 on universal redemption** and **Owen's Case for Particular Atonement**). Each instance must be examined within its context. We cannot make a dogmatic declaration on the meaning of a word and force it in every place. Rather, the meaning should be justified from the context. Furthermore, this understanding of John 12:32 destroys the consistency of the Scriptures. We are taught that many will end up in Hell and in destruction. Indeed, we have above, in paragraph 3 of this chapter, discussed the doctrine of **reprobation**. If Jesus draws "every single individual in the world without distinction", then the question is, why do they not come? John 6:37 says that everyone given to the Son **will**, not *may* or *might*, but **will** come. The one given will definitely come, but we know that some do not come (John 5:40), because they are not drawn by the Father, otherwise they would come. And those given are also not cast out but raised on the last day (John 6:39). But all this would be inconsistent if the Arminian usage of John 12:32 is correct. If the non-Calvinists are correct in their use of John 12:32 to understand John 6, then the Son fails in His work miserably as most Arminians believe that there will be an eternal Hell for the wicked to pay. According to this understanding and use of John 12:32, many people given to the Son do not come, and He loves them and does not raise them up on the last day. But all that aside, let us not forget a most important fact for Jesus' usage of "all": the presence of Greeks. There were Greeks who were seeking the Lord Jesus (John 12:21) and if they truly were seeking Him, they were given to the Son by the Father and the Son would have never cast them out. This is an "all" without distinction and not an "all" without exception. It is speaking about all kinds of people, not only Jews. The presence of Greeks among the Jews gives rise to this glorious declaration that the Lord Jesus will draw people not only from the Jews but from all peoples, just like Revelation 5:9 makes clear. He will draw all *kinds* of people, not all people without exception. The context of John 6 is indisputable in teaching unconditional sovereign election, therefore, it is a great inconsistency to force the context and the a-contextual meaning of John 12:32 upon John 6.

More Grumbling

Back to our text. We will go a little bit further down to John 6:60-65. The things that Jesus was saying, were heavy and unbearable for many. Indeed, He started with some 5000+ followers and ended up with 12 confused disciples, one of which was a devil.

John 6:61-65 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65 And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

The Lord Jesus reminds the people that their unbelief is “natural” and expected given the fact that they are not being drawn by the Father. It is God the Spirit Who is the Agent in regeneration, while the flesh, i.e., man and his will, do nothing and are set on sin:

John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 3:3-8 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Rom. 9:16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

Indeed, man has no active role in regeneration but is wholly passive as the Spirit raises the spiritually dead sinner to life in Christ. Verses 64-65 give the reason why these people remain in unbelief. It is because the Father has not given them to the Son. That’s the reason that they remain unbelievers and rejecters of God. Jesus is comforted and not discouraged by the fact that some do not believe in Him, as this was the good pleasure of God the Father.

Matt. 11:25-27 At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Turned back

The doctrine of sovereign election has never been popular and loved, even in Jesus’ day it was opposed. Those supposed disciples of Jesus, whom He fed just a day ago, who crossed the sea to see Him, are now turning back. Peter’s confession comes not from His own mind or his own abilities, but from the good pleasure of God:

John 6:67-71 So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” 70 Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” 71 He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

In Matthew, the Lord blesses Peter and counts him blessed because God has revealed the Son to him.

Matt. 16:16-17 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

As we are finishing chapter 6, let’s ask the question: What about Judas? Indeed, the text says that Judas was among the twelve who were chosen. But let us notice that Jesus is speaking here of choosing them as disciples and not choosing them for salvation. This becomes apparent when we look at the other statements of Jesus about the election of apostles:

John 13:16-20 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. 18 I am not speaking of all of you; I

know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' 19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. 20 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but **I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit** and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

Notice that the Lord Jesus makes a distinction between the eleven and Judas in chapter 13, and how He clearly speaks of sovereign election to salvation in chapter 15. In John 15:16, the Lord chose them for a purpose, namely, to bear fruit, but this is not said of Judas who was not present here (John 13:27-30). There is a distinction between the Lord Jesus choosing the disciples as a group of 12 followers, and choosing them for salvation and this distinction is seen when we compare the instances which speak of the election of the disciples.

Romans 8:29-30 – The Golden Chain Of Redemption

Although I honestly believe that John 6 and the Gospel of John, in general, is very strong about God's sovereignty in salvation, yet the passage that is most associated with Calvinism is Romans 9. It is indeed probably the strongest passage in the Bible on divine sovereignty. The truth of God's absolute sovereignty is clearly shown there. People will read it and won't want to believe what is taught there. I've had someone respond, after me simply reading Romans 9, in amazement and unbelief, they were like: If we are to take this literally it says that God chooses who gets saved. The point of Romans 9 is clear. People will want to make it to be about nations to escape divine sovereignty, but they become inconsistent in their "exegesis" and they will not follow the flow of the text. Let us not forget what comes before Romans 9. The Golden Chain of Redemption is also very strong on divine sovereignty. Indeed, Paul talks about it before going into the discussion about Israel's unbelief and God's promises in Romans 9-11. We will leave Romans 9 and will not deal with it because it would take too long to deal with the whole chapter. People understand what it means, but do not want to believe it. The difficulty lies not in the text, but in what the text teaches, which is hateful to human nature.

The Golden Chain is a sequence of five things that follow each other and depend upon each other. It is found after the great promise of Romans 8:28, which every Christian should take comfort in.

Rom. 8:28-30 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for **those who are called according to his purpose**. 29 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. 30 And those whom **he predestined he also called**, and those whom **he called he also justified**, and those whom **he justified he also glorified**.

In this passage, we are told about the plan of salvation from eternity past to eternity future. In this Golden Chain, we are promised that God works everything in our lives for our good, because we are called according to **HIS** purpose. My purpose is to go through all 5 points of the golden chain and try to explain them and provide biblical support for them.

Important Considerations

All these five things that are described (foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified) are things that God does. They are **verbs** of which God is the **subject**. It is God Who is foreknowing someone, it is God Who is predestining, calling, justifying and glorifying. It is also to be observed that there is a logical sequence: the one who is foreknown is also the one who is predestined, called, justified and glorified. Everyone who is foreknown and predestined is also brought to glory. Indeed,

John 6:39 And this is **the will of him who sent me**, that **I should lose nothing of all that he has given me**, but **raise it up on the last day**.

God loses none in the way, but He saves all those whom He intends to save. This is proven by the fact that all these verbs are used in the past tense to stress the certainty of these things coming to pass. There is no way that these things could not come to pass for the people that God has chosen. God does not fail and it is God Who accomplishes this work of redemption.

Those Whom He Foreknew

Many people who do not believe in the Reformed doctrine of predestination will say that this foreknowledge of God refers to the fact that God sees the decisions of the people, and what follows in the Golden Chain is on the basis of that. Thus, the basic Arminian/non-Calvinist position is that election is based on God's foreknowledge, or better said, God's foresight of those who would freely choose Him. Thus, God chose those who would choose Him. I believe that the Bible teaches no such

thing, although some will go to this text to get this idea, in actuality, this verse teaches no such nonsense.

Notice that it is a "**whom**" that God foreknew. He didn't know *decisions* that people would make, but foreknew a *specific people* and not a decision of a person. This is a huge difference. Consistently, in the Bible, whenever God is the subject of foreknowledge, the foreknowledge is of a person, and not an action (all of these are verbs, Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:20). Furthermore, this foreknowledge does not refer to mere knowledge of facts about a person, but fore-loving and fore-choosing the *person himself*. This is seen from the way that the Bible uses the verb "to know," both in the Old and New Testaments. Let's take a look at a few examples:

> Gen. 4:1 Now **Adam knew Eve his wife**, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD."

Who would seriously say that this refers to Adam merely getting to know his wife or have mere knowledge of her? Indeed, this is the most intimate, loving relationship that a man can have with a woman; this is sex. This is not mere knowledge, but a deep love and connection with the person. In many ways, this is obvious to us when we read the Bible, but apparently, in Romans 8:29, we have trouble with this concept. The Lord said to Jeremiah:

> Jer. 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb **I knew you**, and before you were born **I consecrated you**; **I appointed** you a prophet to the nations."

The next example comes from Jeremiah's ordination as a prophet, and in this verse, God tells him that He **knew** him from before the womb. I believe that it is clear that in this verse there a certain parallelism, which further expounds upon the meaning of the words, for example, what *knowing* Jeremiah meant. Let's put this verse in a table and see if this parallelism becomes more clear:

Before I formed you in the womb	I knew you
before you were born	I consecrated you
	I appointed you a prophet to the nations

In this verse, we see the parallel that is between God knowing Jeremiah, consecrating (setting him apart), and appointing him as a prophet of the Most High. This is not a mere knowledge of Jeremiah's existence, but appointing and ordaining him for the service of the Lord. He could not have been appointed to the service of God as a prophet if He was not chosen and consecrated as a believer also. These go hand-in-hand. In the New Testament, we have an example of "knew" in a most frightening verse. A warning to those false believers who think that they're Christian, but actually do not know Christ.

> Matt. 7:23 And then will I declare to them, '**I never knew you**; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

In another passage, it is said of the Lord Jesus:

> John 2:24-25 But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because **he knew all people** 25 and needed no one to bear witness about man, for **he himself knew what was in man**.

Yes, indeed it is. But is there a contradiction in these two passages? No. In Matthew 7:23, Jesus is not saying that He didn't *know of* the existence of these people, or know facts about them; indeed they were the creation of His holy hands. But He did not love them or know them relationally as He knows His sheep:

> John 10:27-28 My sheep hear my voice, and **I know them**, and **they follow me**: 28 and **I give unto them eternal life**; and **they shall never perish**, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

The sheep of the Shepherd hear the voice of their Shepherd and follow Him, they receive eternal life and they are **never** lost. He knows them and loves them one by one. I think that this should be enough to prove that the verb foreknew means fore-loving, fore-choosing, fore-consecrating to go into a relationship with this person before the foundation of the world. This **cannot** merely mean having knowledge of their decisions. It is the **knowing of the people**. Let's hear Calvin on this:

For whom he has foreknown, etc. He then shows, by the very order of election, that the afflictions of the faithful are nothing else than the manner by which they are conformed to the image of Christ; and that this was necessary, he had before declared. There is therefore no reason for us to be grieved, or to think it hard and grievous, that we are afflicted, unless we disapprove of the Lord's election, by which we have been foreordained to life, and unless we are unwilling to bear the image of the Son of God, by which we are to be prepared for celestial glory.

But the foreknowledge of God, which Paul mentions, is not a bare prescience, as some unwise persons absurdly imagine, but the adoption by which he had always distinguished his children from the reprobate. (269) In the same sense Peter says, that the faithful had been elected to the sanctification of the Spirit according to the foreknowledge of God. Hence those, to whom I have alluded, foolishly draw this inference, — That God has elected none but those whom he foresaw would be worthy of his grace. Peter does not in deed flatter the faithful, as though every one had been elected on account of his merit; but by reminding them of the eternal counsel of God, he wholly deprives them of all worthiness. So Paul does in this passage, who repeats by another word what he had said before of God's purpose. It hence follows, that this knowledge is connected with God's good pleasure; for he foreknew nothing out of himself, in adopting those whom he was pleased to adopt; but only marked out those whom he had purposed to elect. [...]

(269) Much controversy has been about the meaning of the verb προέγνω, in this place. Many of the Fathers, such as [Jerome], [Chrysostom], and [Theodoret], regarded it in the sense of simple prescience, as having reference to those who would believe and obey the gospel. The verb is found only in this place, and in the following passages, Rom 11:2; Act 26:5; 1Pe 1:20; 2Pe 3:17. In the second, and in the last passage, it signifies merely a previous knowledge or acquaintance, and refers to men. In 1Pe 1:20, it is applied to Christ as having been "foreordained," according to our version, "before the foundation of the world." In this Epistle, Rom 11:2, it refers to God, — "God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew;" and according to the context, it means the same as elected; for the Apostle speaks of what God did "according to the election of grace," and not according to foreseen faith.

The noun derived from it is found in two places, Act 2:23, and 1Pe 1:2. In the first it evidently means decree, foreordination, and in the second, the same; where it is said, that those addressed by the Apostle were elected, "according to the foreknowledge of God, κατὰ πρόγνωσιν Θεοῦ, through the sanctification of the Spirit, *unto* obedience;" they were not then elected, according to God's foreknowledge or foreordination, because of their obedience. This entirely subverts the gloss put on the verb in this passage.

The usual meaning given to the verb here is fore-approved, or chosen. [Grotius], [Turrettin], and others, consider that γινώσκω has the same meaning with the verb □□□, in Hebrew, which is sometimes that of approving or favoring, or regarding with love and approbation. So the compound verb may be rendered here, "whom he fore-approved, or foreknew," as the objects of his choice: and this idea is what alone comports with the rest of the passage.

[Stuart] prefers another meaning, and that which it seems to have in 1Pe 1:20, "foreordained." He says that γινώσκω means sometimes to will, to determine, to ordain, to decree, and brings examples from [Josephus], [Plutarch], and [Polybius]. Then the compound verb would be here, "whom he foreordained," or foredetermined. — Ed.[7]

He Also Predestined

Those who were fore-loved and fore-consecrated were also appointed to a certain end: conforming to the image of the Son. To be like the Son: what a glorious and gracious privilege that is! What a privilege and undeserving grace for those who deserve nothing but Hell. We are not just fore-loved and predestined to nothing, but we are indeed predestined to a certain end. This end is most glorious and gracious: to be like our Older Brother, the Lord Jesus Himself. Words cannot express the amazing grace of this magnificent privilege and position. Acts 13:48 is an example of those who were predestined:

Acts 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began **rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord**, and **as many as were appointed to eternal life believed**.

Here we are told that only those who were appointed to eternal life believed. None other. Notice, the order in this verse:

1. as many as were appointed to eternal life
2. believed

The *appointing* to eternal life came *before* the *believing*. They were not appointed to eternal life because they believed, no, they were **appointed *to* believe.** This is also interesting for those who think that sovereign election and evangelism do not go hand-in-hand. This happened in an evangelistic context. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility go hand-in-hand. God predestined and the people believed, although we must not forget that even faith is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29; **see here also**). We have both the sovereign election of God in this passage, and also the response of the people, faith,

which is the gift of God to the elect by which they cling to Christ and His righteousness. Let's take a look at a few passages and what they say about the goal of election:

- to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29);
- holy and blameless (Eph. 1:4);
- adoption (Eph. 1:5);
- to the praise of his glorious grace (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14);
- we have obtained an inheritance (Eph. 1:11);
- to believe (Acts 13:48);
- to be saved (2 Thess. 2:13).

John Gill observes:

> **he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son**; having perfect, distinct, special knowledge of them, joined with love to them, he predetermined, or fore-appointed them in his eternal mind, in his everlasting and unchangeable purposes and decrees to this end, conformity to the image of Christ; which is not to be understood of the Spirit of Christ: God's elect indeed are chosen to be holy, and through sanctification of the Spirit, but are never said to be conformed, made like to the Spirit, nor is the Spirit ever called the image of Christ; but this designs either likeness to Christ as the Son of God, or conformity to him in his human nature. There is indeed a great disparity between the sonship of Christ, and of the saints; he is the eternal and natural Son of God, he is the one and only begotten Son, they are adopted ones, yet in some things there is a likeness; as he is the Son of God, so are they the sons of God, though not in the same sense; as he is a beloved Son, so are they; as he is the firstborn with respect them, they are the firstborn with respect to angels; as he has an inheritance, so have they; moreover, he has a very great concern in their sonship; the predestination of them to it is by him; the blessing itself is founded on union to him, on their conjugal relation to him, and his assumption of their nature; it comes to them through his redemption, and is actually bestowed on them by him; and this conformity to Christ as sons, will mere fully appear hereafter, when they shall be like him, and see him as he is: or this may be understood of the saints' conformity to Christ in his human nature, both here and hereafter: here in holiness; the image of God was in in his first creation, this is defaced by sin; and in regeneration, the image of Christ is stamped, his grace is wrought in them, his Spirit is put into them, to enable them to walk in him, and after him: this will be complete hereafter, and will consist in perfect holiness, being freed from the very being, as well as the power and guilt of sin; in perfect knowledge of everything that will tend to their happiness; and in glory like to Christ, both in soul and body:
>
> **that he might be the firstborn among many brethren**; the persons among whom Christ is the firstborn are described by their relation, "brethren"; to one another, being related to the same Father, regenerated by the same grace, taken into the same family, and heirs of the same glory; and to Christ, which relation, as brethren to him, is not merely founded on his incarnation, but in their adoption; and which is evidenced by their regeneration, and doing the will of his Father; an which relation he owns, and is not ashamed of: they are also described by their number, "many"; for though they are but few, when compared with the world; yet they are many, a large number, considered by themselves; and among these, Christ is the "firstborn"; he is the firstborn of God, the begotten of the Father, he is the first begotten, and as such he is the only begotten; he is the firstborn of Mary, she had none before him, and he is the only one that ever was born in the manner he was; he is the first begotten from the dead, his resurrection is called a begetting, and he was the first in time that rose from the dead by his own power, and to an immortal life, and the first in causality and dignity. Christ is the firstborn with respect to all creatures in general; he was begotten of the Father before all creatures were; he is the first cause of them all, the governor, basis, and support of them: and he is the firstborn with respect to the saints; who are of the same nature with him, are made partakers of the divine nature, are sons in the same family, though not in the same class of sonship: moreover, this character may regard not so much birth as privilege which belongs to Christ as Mediator; who, as the firstborn had, has the blessing, the government, the priesthood, and the inheritance; all which is owing to, and is one end of divine predestination. The Cabalistic {m} writers among the Jews give the name of "firstborn" to the second Sephira, number, or person, "Wisdom", which answers to the Son of God.[2]

He Also Called

Those whom He foreknew, He predestined and He also called. He didn't just predestine them to eternal life and leave them. Rather, He called them to Himself through the Spirit and the proclamation of the gospel. Did you notice that every link in the chain calls our mind back to the one previous to it? The apostle Paul is emphasizing the connection between each link of the chain. The first link was the foreknowing of God of the elect. The second chain does not say that God merely predestined, rather, it connects the first link with the second, saying, "those *whom he foreknew* he *also* predestined". Now we come to **Effectual Calling**. In this link, as in all the others, a connection is made with the previous link: "those *whom he predestined* he *also* called".

We will deal with this in paragraph 6 when we will speak about the means which God uses. Suffice it to give a few verses which point to this effectual calling in Scripture. This is a special and effectual calling subsequent to which people are justified. This is not the general call of the gospel, but this is an effectual and indeed an **Irresistible Call** (see also **chapter 10**).

> 1 Cor. 1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were **called into the fellowship** of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
>
> 1 Cor. 1:23-24 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to **those who are called,** both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.
>
> 1 Cor. 1:26-31 For consider your **calling**, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But **God chose** what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; **God chose** what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 **God chose** what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And **because of him you are in Christ Jesus**, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

More on the Effectual Call in **chapter 10**. A further confirmation that this call is not simply the proclamation of the gospel alone, but is also accompanied with the effectual work of the Spirit is what is said in the fourth link of the Golden Chain of Redemption.

He Also Justified

Those whom He foreknew, were the same who were predestined, called and justified. Justification is by faith alone in Christ alone. Wayne Grudem says that:

> Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.[28]

Justification is best expressed in the third chapter of Romans.

> Rom. 3:21-26 But now the **righteousness of God has been manifested** apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—22 the **righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.** For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are **justified by his grace as a gift**, through the **redemption that is in Christ Jesus**, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, **to be received by faith**. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and **the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus**.

More on Justification in **chapter 11**. We cannot stress the connection between each link enough. The same group is the object of the five verbs, which have God as their subject.

He Also Glorified

This link refers to the final perseverance of the saints (**see chapter 17 on that**). This link is about God keeping them as He is the Faithful One Who called them, He also is faithful to keep them for Himself. This link ultimately refers to heavenly glory.

> Rom. 8:17-18 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided **we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him**. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with **the glory that is to be revealed to us.**
>
> 2 Cor. 4:17-18 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an **eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison**, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

John Gill says the following about justification and glorification:

> **and whom he justified, them he also glorified;** which is not meant of being made glorious under sufferings; nor of

being made glorious by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; for the word is never used in this sense, nor is God ever said to glorify his people in this way; and the apostle is speaking of the saints in general, and not of particular ones: if this was the sense, none would be predestinated, called, and justified, but such who have the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; and none would have the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, but such persons; whereas many have had these, and yet no interest in the grace of God, and everlasting happiness: but eternal glory is here meant, which is what the apostle had been speaking of in the context; is what the elect are predestinated and called unto; and which their justification gives them a right and title to; and will consist in a likeness to Christ, in communion with him, in an everlasting vision of him, and in a freedom from all that is evil, and in an enjoyment of all that is good; and so the great end of predestinating grace will be answered in them mentioned in the foregoing verse: now this glorification may be said to be already done, with respect to that part of God's elect, who are in heaven, inheriting the promises; and is in some sense true also of that part of them which is on earth, who are called and justified; being made glorious within by the grace of Christ, and arrayed and adorned with the glorious robe of his righteousness; by the one they have a meetness, and by the other a right to eternal glory; of which this grace they have received is the beginning, pledge, and earnest: besides, they are already glorified in Christ, their head and representative, and in the view of God, and with respect to the certainty of it, it being prepared and made ready for them, is in the hands of Christ for them, and is insured to their faith and hope. It is an observation of a Jewish writer {n},

"that a thing □□□□□ □□□□□, "which is decreed to be", is spoken of in the past tense:"

this is the Scripture style concerning things decreed, and such is the glorification of all God's elect.[2]

Concluding The Golden Chain

All who were foreknown, are predestined, called, justified and glorified. This is sure, because God has determined in Himself to save them, and no one and nothing can stop or frustrate the purpose of God, even a pagan king knew that (Dan. 4:34-35). Let us never fail to read the verses that follow the Golden Chain, because the promises of God's love and faithfulness to His elect continue to go on in the passage. It is for those ("us all") that God did not spare His only Son (Rom. 8:32). It is for them specifically that He gave His beloved Son, and it is for them that the Son intercedes and pleads before the throne of God above. It is indeed because of this indestructible love of God that we must never lose hope in dark times. He loves the elect as He loves His Son (John 17:23), and nothing can stand in our way if God is for us. Romans 8:31, which is often cited in times of distress and persecution, must never be divorced from the foregoing Golden Chain, which contains the basis of this confidence in God. Nothing can stand in the way of God's chosen people who are directly called "God's elect." It is because of this firm foundation upon God's promises and the Golden Chain by which God has determined to save His people. We, again and again, go back to John 6:37-40. There is nothing created that can stand against God's elect because God is on our side. There is no condemnation and there is no separation from the love of God which is in Christ! God saves all His own—from eternity past to eternity future. They are secure and shall never be moved.

Conclusion

Indeed, what should our attitude be toward the doctrine of election but humble adoration and love for the great love, grace, mercy, and patience of God toward us? We know that we could have never saved ourselves, if left to ourselves we would go to Hell, but it pleased God to display His grace on undeserving wretches, like me. We deserve nothing but wrath, but according to the good pleasure of His will, He has rescued and saved us from His righteous judgment by placing that judgment upon His Beloved Son, and thereby sparing us, while not sparing His Beloved Son.

The doctrine of election shows us the perfect work of the Triune God. God the Father elects a people and gives them to His Son as a gift of His love for Him. The Son dies in their stead and takes their punishment upon Himself and thereby satisfying the wrath of God on their behalf. The Spirit of God comes to apply Christ's perfect work and benefits those whom the Father chose. Indeed,

Rom. 11:34-26 "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" 35 "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. **To him be glory forever. Amen.**

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§6 God Foreordains All Means Unto His Appointed Ends

6. As God hath **appointed the elect unto glory,** so he hath, by the eternal and **most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto**; **1** wherefore they who are elected, **being fallen in Adam**, are redeemed by Christ, **2** are **effectually called unto faith in Christ**, **by his Spirit** working in due season,
are **justified**, **adopted**, **sanctified**, **3** and **kept by his power through faith** unto

salvation; **4** neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only. **5**

1. Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2
2. 1 Thess. 5:9-10; Titus 2:14
3. Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:5; 2 Thess. 2:13
4. 1 Peter 1:5
5. John 6:64-65; 8:47; 10:26; 17:9; Rom. 8:28; 1 John 2:19

God has not only **appointed the elect unto glory**, but has also **foreordained all the means thereunto**. God does not only elect people to share in Jesus Christ and leave it at that. But He also ordains everything so that those who were elected in Jesus Christ, will come to be united to Jesus Christ in time and history, unto their eternal glory. When they were **elected**, they were considered as **fallen in Adam** and in need of redemption. They were not considered as innocent. But as those who were in need to be holy and blameless (Eph. 1:4). Those who were elected are **effectually called** (**chapter 10**), **justified** (**chapter 11**), **adopted** (**chapter 12**), **sanctified** (**chapter 13**) and are **kept by his power** (**chapter 17**) **through faith** (**chapter 14**). God bestows every spiritual blessing upon those who are in Christ (Eph. 1:3) to bring them in Christ and to keep them for and in Jesus Christ (Jude 1:1). Only the elect are redeemed by Christ. Other people may appear to have redemption and to be called and justified. We are often deceived by hypocrites, but they cannot deceive God. These spiritual blessings enumerated here belong to the elect alone.

As affirmed in **2:1**, God is the Sovereign of this world Who moves it to His appointed end. It doesn't just run on its own. So is it also with election, He doesn't merely elect and leave it at that; He also ordains the means by which His elect will come to know Him. We saw that above with the Golden Chain of Redemption how the link of being predestined is followed by the effectual calling of the Spirit, and then justification. God ordains the means by which His people are brought into loving communion with the Trinity.

God has loved us, chosen us, sanctified us, sanctifies us and has called us through the proclamation of the glorious gospel of His beloved Son (2 Thess. 2:13-14). And as we have tried to do an exposition of the Golden Chain of Redemption, we saw that the effectual calling came after predestination. Those whom God has chosen for eternal life, He also calls through the proclamation of the gospel as is said in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. He doesn't leave the elect to themselves, but He sends His messengers to proclaim the gospel to them, which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

> 2 Thess. 2:13-14 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, **brothers beloved by the Lord**, **because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved**, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 14 **To this he called you through our gospel**, **so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

Notice the emphasis on justification, adoption, and sanctification in this passage. This has nothing to do with ideas of "being elect and doing whatever sin you want because you're elect." In fact, it is the opposite. We are to live holy lives unto the glory and honor of God, our Redeemer *because* we are chosen. We are to be "zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14). Notice that Paul is not ashamed to talk of election and evangelism side by side. He thanks God for His love for them and His election of them, but he also acknowledges that God called the Thessalonians through the proclamation of the gospel by Paul. He does not see a conflict between sovereign election and evangelism, and neither do Calvinists.

For more on God's effectual calling see **chapter 10**; for justification see **chapter 11**; for adoption see **chapter 12**; for sanctification see **chapter 13**.

The fact that God ordains both the ends as well as the means is not only logical but also Scriptural. By logical, I mean that a simple reflection on the passages which speak of God's sovereignty over history (as in **paragraph 1**) would lead us to conclude that He must both ordain the ends and the means to the ends ordained. Such is the case with election as we saw from 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. God elects and ordains the means to bring His elect to salvation. Outside of salvation, we read, for example, in 2 Samuel 17:14 the following:

> And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "**The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better** than the counsel of Ahithophel." **For** the **LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel**, **so that** the **LORD might bring harm upon Absalom**.

Notice how the main end of the Lord, namely, bringing harm upon Absalom, has the means of the counsel of Ahithophel being overthrown. Absalom chose the counsel of Hushai above that of Ahithophel and the Scripture gives us the reason why he did that. "For", says the Holy Spirit, the Lord ordained, decreed and wanted to defeat the *good* counsel of Ahithophel. But why did the Lord want to do that? The last part of the verse gives us the purpose of the Lord's doing, "so that", He would punish and bring harm upon Absalom. We see that the concept of God ordaining the ends as well as the means is not only logical and common sense given what the Bible says about God's sovereignty, but more importantly, it is biblically attested to. See also **chapter 5**, **paragraph 3**.

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§7 Our Attitude To The High Mystery Of Predestination

7. The doctrine of the **high mystery of predestination** is to be handled with special prudence and care, **1** that men attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and **yielding obedience** thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be **assured of their eternal election**; **2** so shall this doctrine afford matter of **praise**, **reverence**, and **admiration** of God, **3** and of **humility**, **4** **diligence**, **5** and abundant consolation **6** to all that sincerely obey the gospel.
    1. Deut. 29:29; Rom. 9:20; 11:33
    2. 1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Peter 1:10
    3. Eph. 1:6; Rom. 11:33
    4. Rom. 11:5, 6, 20; Col. 3:12
    5. 2 Peter 1:10
    6. Luke 10:20

The Confession closes this chapter by encouraging us and telling us how we are to think about this doctrine. It is called the **doctrine of the high mystery of predestination**. It is a mystery because many things puzzle our minds and keep us looking with awe at this awesome God. It is to be handled with **care** and most importantly, **men** should be **attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto**. In other words, this doctrine is Scripturally-driven. We do not believe it because human reason teaches us that. Nor do we believe because John Calvin taught it. We believe it because we believe that the Scriptures of God teach it.

While those who oppose Reformed theology think we cannot know if we are elect, yet the Confession teaches us that we can be **assured** of our own **eternal election** in accordance with the Scriptures (cf. 2 Pet. 1:10). Therefore, this moves us to **praise, reverence, and admiration** of this great God of heaven and earth. How much more should our worship be if we have been redeemed by this great God? It should move us to **humility** when we know that we have been chosen and saved by this great God when we should have been left to act in our sin unto our just condemnation. It should move us to **diligence** to obey and please this gracious God and **obey the gospel** daily and live unto His glory for He is worthy! It also gives us **consolation** in knowing that all things are ordered and ordained according to His holy purposes, therefore, nothing that happens is without reason or purpose. Furthermore, those in Christ have the promise that all things work *together* for their good (Rom. 8:28). All praise and worship for this great Sovereign God of the universe!

This doctrine is rightly called a high mystery, but this does not mean that we can't know anything about it. Rather, we don't know everything about it. This fact often drives people to put it in the background because it's difficult or complicated, or that many people have an opinion about it. Believe me, I say this as a personal testimony, the doctrine of divine sovereignty is the pillow upon which I rest my head. There is a comfort and praise unspeakable when one accepts and cherishes God and the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty. When we accept God as the Potter and we as the clay, then we have the proper distinction between Creator and creature. We need to accept God as God and we as mere sinful creatures on whom it has pleased Him to show mercy and grace. John Calvin observed:

> But before I enter on the subject, I have some remarks to address to two classes of men. The subject of predestination, which in itself is attended with considerable difficulty is rendered very perplexed and hence perilous by human curiosity, which cannot be restrained from wandering into forbidden paths and climbing to the clouds determined if it can that none of the secret things of God shall remain unexplored. When we see many, some of them in other respects not bad men, every where rushing into this audacity and wickedness, it is necessary to remind them of the course of duty in this matter. First, then, when they inquire into predestination, let then remember that they are penetrating into the recesses of the divine wisdom, where he who rushes forward securely and confidently, instead of satisfying his curiosity will enter in inextricable labyrinth[1]. For it is not right that man should with impunity pry into things which the Lord has been pleased to conceal within himself, and scan that sublime eternal wisdom which it is his pleasure that we should not apprehend but adore, that therein also his perfections may appear. Those secrets of his will, which he

has seen it meet to manifest, are revealed in his word - revealed in so far as he knew to be conducive to our interest and welfare.[29]

Let us never discourage people, but rather encourage them to study and search the Scriptures to find what the Bible says about God's absolute sovereignty and sovereign grace. I believe that if they start with the Bible as the ultimate authority, and believe everything that it says, without basing objections on emotion and tradition, they will find themselves to be reforming. As George Whitefield has said, "I embrace the Calvinistic scheme not because Calvin, but Jesus Christ has taught it to me." May the same be said about every believer. We believe this truth because such is the consistent testimony of the Scriptures.

Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

(Psalm 115:3)

Footnotes

1. ^ *Many Scriptural references have been supplied by Samuel Waldron's Modern Exposition of 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith which was apparently supplied by the Westminster Confession of Faith 1646.*
2. a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i *John Gill. Exposition of the Entire Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
3. ^ *I've taken a look at Joseph Henry Thayer's Greek Definitions and Mickelson's Enhanced Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionaries. Both from the TheWord Bible Software.*
4. ^ *John MacArthur. The MacArthur Study Bible: English Standard Version. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2010). p. 1848.*
5. ^ *Matthew Poole. English Annotations on the Holy Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
6. a, b, c, d *Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
7. a, b, c, d *John Calvin. Commentaries. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
8. a, b *John Piper. The Sovereignty of God: "My Counsel Shall Stand, and I Will Accomplish All My Purpose"*
9. ^ *Strong's H7451 - ra`. (Blue Letter Bible).*
10. ^ *Matt Slick. Decretive Will. (CARM.org).*
11. ^ *Ibid. Preceptive Will.*
12. ^ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version: The ESV Study Bible. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles. 2008). p. 2089.*
13. ^ *Where divine sovereignty meets human responsibility.*
14. ^ *Sam E. Waldron. A Modern Exposition Of The 1689 Baptist Confession Of Faith. (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2013). pp. 80-81*
15. ^ *Wayne Grudem. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. (Grand Rapids,*

MI: Zondervan, 1994). p. 684

16. ^ *John Calvin. Institutes Of the Christian Religion. 3.21.5.*
17. ^ *Letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton, April 5, 1887 published in Historical Essays and Studies, edited by J. N. Figgis and R. V. Laurence (London: Macmillan, 1907) Taken from Wikipedia*
18. ^ *John Calvin. Institutes of the Christian Religion. 3:21:1 (section heading).*
19. ^ *Grudem, Systematic Theology. p. 670.*
20. ^ *James R. White. The Potter's Freedom: A Defense of the Reformation and a Rebuttal to Norman Geisler's Chosen But Free. (Calvary Press Publishing. 2009, New Revised Edition). p. 39*
21. ^ *David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, S. Lance Quinn. The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publications. 2004). p. 6.*
22. ^ *Ibid. pp. 5-6.*
23. ^ *Calvin, Institutes. 3.21.3.*
24. a, b *Question: "Monergism vs. synergism—which view is correct?" (GotQuestions Ministries).*
25. ^ *What Is Monergism? (Monergism.com).*
26. ^ *The Century Dictionary's as cited in What Is Monergism?*
27. ^ *Synergism. (Wikipedia).*
28. ^ *Grudem, Systematic Theology. p. 723.*
29. ^ *Calvin, Institutes. 3.21.1.*