

FREE GRACE OR FREE WILL?

God's Free Salvation Plan

.....written to Christians by a Christian

Jim Rooney

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Note: All scripture used is from the New King James Version (NKJV).

Amazing Grace

John Newton

(1725-1807 / England)

Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound!)
That sav'd a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears reliev'd;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believ'd!

Thro' many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promis'd good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease;
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

This earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who call'd me here below,
Will be for ever mine.

(PoemHunter.com)

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¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power... (Eph. 1:17-19)

The Apostle Paul

Introduction

This book is written to Christians by a Christian. It deals with one of the most important topics facing believers in Jesus Christ. It involves a controversy within our Lord's church that has been going on for centuries. This issue is important as it deals with the biblical truth of why we are saved and how we are saved. It is extremely important that we, as Christians, know the answers to those two key questions so that we can correctly teach others this truth and so that we can properly glorify our Lord for the special grace He has given to us who believe.

Since this is a sensitive subject, I have tried to handle it with great care. Therefore, I will not mention any individuals, religious organizations, churches, or denominations. There will be no labeling of groups of people on either side of this issue as there are many different definitions regarding such labels which are oftentimes offensive and unfair. This book is not about counting noses. Godly men and women have been on both sides of this issue. I have tried to be kind in the choice of words used. A Christian has the right and the responsibility to study this issue and then decide what is correct according to the Scriptures. Therefore the main reference source used in this book is the Holy Bible.

I would ask several things of the reader. First, please give this book an honest review. Try to have an open mind as you go through these pages to see if it is the truth of God or not. Test it against the Holy Scriptures. Before judging or rejecting it, make sure you have read it in its entirety. In the end, you may disagree with what has been written, but you will have had the courage to be exposed to something different than what you believe. Second, challenge your own belief system against the Word of God. This is always difficult to do. I had to do this myself, and I asked why other Christians believe differently than I did on this topic. I was willing to study this issue with an open

mind, and, when I did, I realized I had been mistaken in my beliefs on this very important matter. Third, start at the beginning of this book and resist the temptation to skip around so that you can have the best reading experience and be fair in your analysis of what is written. Fourth, pray during the reading of this book that the Lord would reveal to you His truth regarding this subject. Finally, as Christians, let us study this issue together with respect for each other, regardless of which view we hold. As I said previously, there are godly men and women on both sides of this issue. I have kept that in mind as I have written this book.

I take the writing of this book and the discussion of this topic very seriously. One day I will be held accountable to my Lord for every word that I have written here. Therefore, I can assure you I have taken great care to make sure this book is based on the truth of His Word. Since I have been on both sides of this issue, I feel qualified to write this book. Many things that I will share here are among some of the best kept secrets in Christianity.

Why was I searching for the truth about this issue years ago? Why did I change my long held beliefs regarding what is being discussed in this book? I firmly believe it was by the grace of God who showed me for the first time how truly amazing His grace is. It is my hope and prayer that the Sovereign God of the universe will use this book to reveal His amazing free grace to others as He did to me.

Chapter 1

Common Ground

As I start this book, I want to emphasize what the proponents of both free grace and free will share. There are so many differences among Christians. Some are of more importance than others. Some groups baptize differently, some understand the Lord's Supper to mean different things, and some worship in a traditional style while others in a more modern or contemporary way. The differences are many. The issue of this book is one topic that is debated among Christians. However, those who believe in free grace salvation and those who believe in free will salvation share some of the most important beliefs in Christianity.

Within mainstream Christianity, both groups share the belief that our salvation rests on our repentance of sin and on faith in the glorious Son of God, Jesus Christ. Both groups believe that the unsaved man is lost in his sins and in need of a Savior. They agree that this salvation does not come about by our good works but by our faith in Jesus which should then produce good works.

There is agreement on the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless perfection, His miracles, the inerrancy of His Word, His redemption on the cross for our sins, His resurrection, His ascension to heaven, His return one day in power and glory, the resurrection of all mankind, and the judgment. In addition, both groups believe in eternal life and happiness in heaven for believers in Christ and in hell, the tortuous place designed for unbelievers who must endure everlasting punishment for their sins. With so many points of agreement then, what is the problem?

The problem is subtle and seems unimportant at first. Some would say as long as we are saved that is the most important thing. True. However, as Christians, it is imperative that we know the truth about

our salvation, why we are saved and how we are saved. If our understanding on these key questions is flawed, how can we properly fulfill the Great Commission and teach family, friends, and others the truth about salvation? Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6) He wants us to know the truth on all matters He reveals in Scripture, especially about His free salvation plan. Let me be clear about this free salvation plan. While His salvation to us is free, it cost the Son of God dearly in His life on earth.

Perhaps the most important reason to delve into this area is to make sure we give the complete honor, glory, and eternal thanks to God who so freely saved us. We must know why we should be so thankful. We must understand that we should give Him one hundred percent of the credit in our salvation, because we are saved totally by His grace without any help or assistance from ourselves. If our belief system gives any credit or glory to the unsaved sinner in his salvation, however unintentional, then that same amount of credit and glory is taken away from God. We must not let that happen. That is not God-honoring to Him who died for us and brought us to Himself by giving us our faith.

Some might say that we shouldn't even discuss such a topic as this because they say it has nothing to do with the way we live our Christian lives. I would disagree with that conclusion. Doctrine, which is what we believe, does affect how we live our lives. What we believe on this issue impacts how we serve the Lord. It may cause us to try to use pressure tactics to bend the minds or wills of some to become believers. It has caused some pastors to blame Christians for the damnation of others because these pastors say these believers didn't witness as they should have. It can become a gospel of guilt rather than a gospel of grace.

So, the issue described in this book seems to be insignificant and subtle to some Christians. However, it is very important. We must believe the truth about our salvation, teach its truth, and give all the

glory and honor to our God who freely gave us eternal life. This is why I wanted to write this book.

Let's us rejoice and be united in our common ground. However, let us search the Scriptures to make sure we understand the truth concerning the freedom or the bondage of the human will in our salvation.

Chapter 2

“Let’s Start at the Very Beginning”

In the movie, The Sound of Music, Maria sang the song, “Do Re Mi” as she taught the children in her care how to sing. One of her first lines in the song was “Let’s start at the very beginning.” So, in discussing this important subject before us, it is necessary for us to start at the very beginning, to the moment of creation.

The Entrance of Sin: Satan and the Fallen Angels

We know from Scripture that, in addition to creating man, God created angels. The purpose of these angels is to worship and serve God. The Lord created them with wills with which they could freely choose to follow God in obedience or rebel against Him in disobedience. They had free will. That is to say, they had the innate ability or power to freely choose to do good or evil, right or wrong. What is important to note here is that they did not have any predisposition to sin against God. They were created without a sin nature. Sin, which is disobedience to God, had not entered the picture at their creation, so it could not adversely affect any of their decisions.

Let me graphically describe free will to you. Think of the blindfolded lady holding the scale of justice. A decision as to guilt or innocence is made without any undue or external influences. The symbol of the blindfold shows there is no predisposition to choose one way or the other. The plates of the scale of justice start out being perfectly balanced and level. There is nothing tugging downward on either side of the scale. The evidence mounts to either guilt or innocence and the scale tips one way or the other. There is no external force causing the scale to move. It’s only about the evidence which leads to a free decision.

This description fits well with what the angels possessed before sin came into being. They had this free will ability or power because they had no sin nature. As we read in Scripture, Lucifer, in his pride, wanted to be more than just an angel. He wanted to be God. Let's see from Scripture what took place.

¹² *"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! ¹³For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High."* (Isa. 14:12-14)

Lucifer freely made a choice to rebel against God. He had no outside force compelling him to make that choice; he did it freely in his pride. He then apparently led many angels to follow him in this rebellion against God. They freely made the choice to rebel against God although Lucifer may have enticed them to sin. God expelled Lucifer, also called Satan, and these fallen angels from heaven.

¹⁸ *And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."* (Luke 10:18)

"And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴ His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her child as soon as it was born." (Rev. 12:3-4)

So, we see here the entrance of sin into creation. The root cause was pride. However, these created beings did not possess a sin nature so they were able to exercise their free will to sin or not to sin. These fallen angels are the demons we read about in Scripture.

The Fall of Man and His Free Will

What about mankind? As we see in Genesis chapters 1 through 3, Adam and Eve were created by God in perfect innocence. They too were created with free wills. They had no sin nature or predisposition to sin. However, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sinned against Him by eating of the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They did this after Satan, that old serpent, tempted Eve to disobey God.

Now sin entered the world of mankind. Sin had reared its ugly head and entrapped many of the angelic host and now also the only two humans on earth. The consequences of Adam and Eve's sin brought judgment from God on them. They were removed from the Garden of Eden which was a paradise on earth. Man must now work hard for his sustenance. Women must suffer pain in childbirth and be under the authority of their husbands. In addition, all mankind must experience death. We will all die physically unless the Lord returns first. We also are spiritually dead until we come to faith in the promised redeemer, Jesus Christ, who bruised the head of the serpent.

¹⁵ "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." (Gen. 3:15)

Something else happened to us humans after the fall. We became separated from God because of our new sin nature. Sin had tainted us terribly. Now, the desire to sin became overpowering. The lusts of the flesh and the pride of life exert great pressure on us to sin against God and His holy Word.

"For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world." (1 John 2:16)

This sin nature is passed on from generation to generation from Adam and Eve. The Scripture says we are conceived in sin.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5)

The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. (Psalm 58:3)

If you don't think infants possess a sin nature, just watch them. They will take the toys of other children, throw temper tantrums if they don't get their way, and willingly disobey their parents. This evil all comes naturally to them because of their sin nature.

Those who are unsaved have no defense against their sin nature. They seek to please themselves. However, even those of us who are saved still have this sin nature. We have the help of the Holy Spirit and can deal with this disease called sin much better than the unsaved because we are spiritually alive not spiritually dead, but we still are in bondage to it.

³⁴ *"Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin." (John 8:34)*

In other words, if our wills commit sin, our wills are the slaves of sin. Where is the freedom of our will if our natural inclination or predisposition is to sin?

The Bible describes how corrupt our wills are because of this sin nature.

¹¹ *"There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God.*

¹² *They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one."*

¹³ *"Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit." "The poison of asps is under their lips."*

¹⁴ *"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ destruction and misery are in their ways; ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known." There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom. 3:11-18)*

This is not a pretty picture of the willful acts of unsaved men. So it is clear that after the fall of man due to sin, we lost the ability of free will. Before we make any choices, the scales are already being pulled down on one side by our sin nature making us want to choose to do

evil. This is true whether we are saved or not saved. Our wills are in bondage to sin.

Do the Saved Have Free Will?

To prove that even the wills of the saved are in the grips of sin and don't possess free will, let me give you two proofs. One is from practical experience and one is from Scripture.

First, let me ask you a question as a believer. Have you ever gone one day in your life without committing a sin in deed, word, or thought? Perhaps you may have gone one day without sin, but that would be very rare, if ever. In reality, we usually sin every day in our lives in some way and usually multiple times each day. Why? What is wrong with our free will that we can't even go such a short time without sinning as a Christian? How many times each day have you committed sin? How many times have you said to yourself that you were not going to lose your temper, say something hurtful, unkind, or evil, not think bad or immoral thoughts, not covet something, not be envious, not have bad feelings toward others, not be prideful, not worry, and not be fearful? Yet it happens repeatedly, day after day. How many times have you thought things that you were shocked you could think? The answer is that our wills are not free but are enslaved to sin. (John 8:34) It is because, even as Christians, this sin nature constantly tempts us and compels us to sin. It grieves us. This everyday actual experience all of us Christians have proves our wills are not free to keep from sinning. Our natural desire is to sin.

Now let me share with you the proof from Scripture. Who do you think was the greatest Christian who ever lived besides Jesus Christ? You would probably say one of the apostles. My guess would be the Apostle Paul. He actually addressed this very issue in Scripture as to whether he had free will as a Christian. Here is what he had to say:

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. ¹⁶ If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. ¹⁷ But now, it is no

longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

²¹ I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.” (Rom. 7:14-25)

Here is the translation: Paul was saying that his will wanted to do right, but it was defective and would do what was wrong. Why was it defective and not free to choose to do right? It was the sin that dwelt within him (vs. 20). His sin nature caused him to have a predisposition to choose sin rather than choose to do right. Paul, perhaps the most holy Christian who ever lived besides Christ, referred to himself as a “wretched man” (vs. 24). He was deeply afflicted and distressed over his inability to control his will to freely choose to do good or right.

The main point of this book is to address the issue of the unsaved man and his spiritual inability to use a free will to come to salvation. I only mentioned how even the saved do not have a free will spiritual ability to show how even more depraved the unsaved man is. He is totally lost and defenseless against sin without the help of the Holy Spirit which we as believers possess.

How Are We Free?

Let me say, however, that in one sense we all have free will or free choice. What I mean by that is we all do whatever we want to do. We are free agents in this sense. When it comes to the everyday normal choices we make, we freely make those choices to do what we want to

do. Although we are free beings and we freely choose to do what we want to do, we are not free spiritual beings. This is a very important distinction. When it comes to making decisions about God and the things of the Spirit, the unsaved do not have the free will spiritual ability to make those decisions. We are dead spiritually, as mentioned previously, which means we are dead or incapable of making free decisions of any spiritual good toward our Creator or our salvation. That ability has been totally corrupted by our sin nature. Sin destroyed our freedom of will to do right, and now we serve the lusts of our sinful flesh. At the fall of man, what was it that fell? It was the free will ability to equally choose good or evil with a view to pleasing God. Now we are left with an overwhelming predisposition and desire by our wills to do evil and sin against our Creator.

"There is none who does good, no, not one." (Rom. 3:12)

The good news is that as Christians we have the Holy Spirit convicting us not to sin and to confess our sins once we do commit transgressions. The unsaved person does not have this Helper and Comforter.

So here is the truth of Scripture. Since the fall of man, there is no such thing as a free will spiritual ability or power to equally choose good or evil. Man's inclination is to choose evil. Read again Paul's comments in Rom. 7:14-25. Man's will is corrupted and in slavery to sin (John 8:34). The unsaved individual does not understand the things of God and will not seek God with his spiritually dead will. The Scriptures are clear on this point. (Rom. 3:11-12)

Without a sin nature, we can have this free will spiritual ability. However, with a sin nature the power of free will does not exist. We will not shed this sin nature as long as we live unless the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth before we die. The free will belief system has caused Christians to think they are saved ultimately by their own will and not by the will of God. Although the free will approach seems plausible, fair, appealing, and is the most popular view within Christianity, it has to stand the scrutiny of Scripture. Please stay with me as we examine free will more in depth scripturally and see how this belief system has replaced the biblical view of salvation.

Chapter 3

Spiritual Death – What Does It mean?

After the fall of man, we saw in Chapter 2 how radically different mankind became. As a sinner, he became spiritually separated from God. Now men and women will physically die one day. Also, from conception the human race is infected with a disease called sin, thus men and women have a sin nature for the rest of their lives. As sinners, we are spiritually dead until the moment we are made alive by God.

Dead in Trespasses and Sins

¹ And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:1-7)

Is Paul here talking about physical death or spiritual death? Of course he is talking about spiritual death as the people he is writing to are alive. They are alive physically, but, before they were saved, they were dead spiritually in trespasses and sins. Spiritual death had direct reference to the unsaved person's will. It was his will that was dead spiritually. What else could it be?

Let's take a look at the heart or will condition of the unsaved man since the fall.

⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Gen. 6:5)

We certainly don't see free will here, just the will to do only evil continually.

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:44)

The unsaved person wants or wills to do the evil of his father, Satan. These verses do not describe the freedom of the will; they describe the bondage of the will and its desire to do evil.

Mistaken Views of Spiritual Death

How severe is this spiritual death? What does it mean with regard to salvation? Let me share with you how this has been incorrectly described. One story goes like this: A man is on a hospital bed and is dying. The doctor has some medicine on a spoon that the man has to take to keep him alive. It's up to the man to take the medicine and swallow it to stay alive. The doctor has done his part; now the patient must do his part to save his life. Here is another story: A man falls off a boat and starts to drown. Someone from the boat throws him a life preserver. However, the man must grab hold of the preserver to save himself from drowning.

The characters in these stories represent God who must do His part and draw men to Christ and the unsaved man who must do his part and use his free will to accept Him. Salvation becomes a two step process. If both parties do their parts, the unsaved man becomes saved. Another way to say this is that if God does His part and the man does his part, then God gives the man salvation. Do you see the problem here? Man gets salvation from God if he does something. If he is faithful in using his will properly, better than others, then he gets

salvation. Does this not sound like a reward rather than a free gift? Has not the unsaved person earned or merited this gift of salvation from God for what he did?

Let's go back to these stories. What is wrong with these two scenarios? What is clearly wrong is that, in both stories, the unsaved man in the hospital bed and the one drowning are not dead. They are both alive. Let's correct the stories to make them accurate with Eph. 2:1-7.

The man on the hospital bed has died physically. He is lifeless. He can't take any medicine because he has suffered physical death. The Holy Spirit comes and gives him mouth to mouth resuscitation and brings him back to life from the dead. The same is true with the person who is drowning. The correct biblical picture is that the man has already drowned and lies at the bottom of the ocean floor dead. The Holy Spirit jumps into the water, swims to the bottom of the ocean floor, picks him up, and swims with him back to the shore where the deceased man is laid down on the sand. Then the Holy Spirit breathes the breath of life into the dead man, and he is raised to life.

The Unsaved Cannot Receive Spiritual Matters

When the Scriptures say that the unsaved person is dead in trespasses and sins, it means dead to all spiritual matters. This person is incapable of using his will to come to Christ because the will is dead spiritually. What does the Scripture say about the unsaved person's ability of will to understand or process spiritual matters? Let me share just a few verses in the Bible that address this matter of the spiritual inability of the unsaved man to use his will to come to salvation.

¹⁴ *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:14)*

Perhaps this is the clearest statement in all Scripture regarding the ability of the unsaved person's will to receive Christ. The unsaved or natural man cannot receive spiritual things because he doesn't understand them. He thinks these things are too foolish to even bother

with. This means his will cannot understand and receive spiritual matters. His will is entirely lost and incapable of receiving Christ. He cannot cooperate with the Spirit to bring about his salvation because he doesn't understand spiritual concerns.

17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. (John 14:17)

Again, the Scripture clearly teaches us that the world, the unsaved world, cannot receive the Spirit because their wills do not see or understand the truth. The word "cannot" means not having the ability or power to accomplish something. It takes gracious divine intervention for that understanding to happen so that spiritual sight and reception can take place. The unsaved world cannot receive spiritual things because their wills are dead spiritually in trespasses and sins. It takes God removing the spiritual blinders of the unsaved person for him to be able to see, understand, believe, and receive the truth of Jesus Christ.

I would also like to mention the word "world" in this verse does not mean every single person in the world. It means the world of unbelievers for the believers John is writing to have received the Spirit. This fact will be important when we take a look at salvation verses with the word "world" in them.

It is interesting that so many Christians believe that they are saved ultimately by their wills, and yet there is not one verse in the Bible that states that. How can a theological doctrine be based on silence? Yes, I know the word Trinity is not in the Bible, and we believe in it. The difference is that there are many passages in Scripture that prove the doctrine of the Trinity. There are none that prove the doctrine of free will salvation.

In the Old Testament, God established with the Jewish nation the principal of substitutionary atonement for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. God commanded His people to sacrifice animals to be a type or picture of the atonement of Jesus Christ which would come later. Many of these sacrifices were done because of a vow or because of some sin. Some sacrifices were a

spontaneous or voluntary gift to God. These voluntary sacrifices were called free will sacrifices. However, these sacrifices only had to do with the Jews, and they were not done to prove any ability of the will. They were just voluntary gifts to God out of their love for Him.

In the New Testament, there is absolutely no mention of the words free will. There is no mention of mankind having any such power or ability of the will. How then could some theologians build such an important doctrine into salvation called free will when the Bible doesn't even mention it? I will answer this question later.

Not only are the Scriptures silent about a free will ability of the unsaved person, they openly declare that salvation has nothing to do with our wills.

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

This spiritual reception does not take place as a result of the will of man but only by the will of God. The Lord must graciously intervene and touch the person's will so that he can believe since his will is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. An unbeliever becomes born again, not as the result of his dead will, but as a result of God's grace that awakens him from spiritual death and gives him spiritual life.

¹⁴ Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." (Eph. 5:14)

Let's move on to some other verses that prove we can't use a free will power to receive Jesus Christ. When discussing the calling of Jacob over Esau in Romans 9, Paul states the following:

So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. (Rom. 9:16)

Paul is showing us that our salvation does not depend upon two key factors that many are mistaken about. It does not depend upon our good deeds or works that we do. This has reference to him who runs

in verse 16. It is equally not of him who wills. In other words, our salvation is also not dependent upon our wills. Paul has the opportunity here to clear up the issue about the will and state that our salvation does depend on how we use our wills if that were the truth. However, he does the opposite. He clearly states that our wills have nothing to do with our salvation.

So then, what does our salvation depend upon? Paul makes that clear at the end of the verse. It is all about God and His mercy. This was true in the case of Jacob and Esau. What is said in this passage about God's mercy?

For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." (Rom. 9:15) Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. (Rom. 9:18)

God has the sovereign right and power to extend mercy, grace, and compassion to whomever He wills to do so. In Rom. 9:11, God chose to bestow mercy to Jacob and not to Esau. He made that decision before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad.

¹¹ *(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls),* ¹² *it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger."* ¹³ *As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." (Rom. 9:11-13)*

I will be discussing the case of Jacob and Esau in more detail later.

⁶ *But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. (Isa. 64:6)*

What is this verse saying about the wills of the unsaved? Even all the good things they try to do are like filthy rags to God. Why? This verse tells us it is because of their iniquities or sinfulness. It is that sin nature that drives them away like the wind from doing the right thing. It has so damaged their wills that they no longer have the power or ability of the will to do what is right with the motive to please God.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? (Jer. 17:9)

This verse clearly tells us the state of the heart or will of man. It is desperately wicked. So, if the will of man is desperately wicked, how is it free? The will is not free because the sin nature is causing it to commit sin, to be full of lies and wickedness.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Rom. 8:7-8)

The mind or will of the unsaved man has hatred toward God and the things of God. His will is carnal, motivated by the pleasures of the flesh and sin. In this unsaved state, he can never please God. He and his will are totally lost, and he does not have the power of the will to turn things around. He is lost and needs a Savior to seek him since his will cannot seek the Savior.

Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. (Eccl. 9:3)

Here we see a clear indication of the condition of the hearts or wills of the unsaved man. The Scripture says their wills are full of evil and madness. Can the unsaved man use his will to freely choose good or evil? Not according to this verse. The will is in complete bondage to sin and evil.

³ *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. (2 Cor. 4:3-4)*

Here we see that the gospel message is veiled or hidden from those who are perishing. Why has the gospel been hidden from them? It is because the god of this age, Satan, has blinded them who don't believe in Jesus Christ. There are two reasons they can't see Christ. One, they are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins and don't have the spiritual ability of will to come to Jesus. They are full of evil. Second, Satan has blinded their wills so that they can't see or come to

Jesus. There is no free will ability here. Their wills are no match against Satan and their own sinfulness.

⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. (2 Cor. 4:6-7)

The only way these unbelievers who are perishing can see the light of the gospel is if God, in His almighty power, removes the veil of darkness, defeats Satan, and imparts to the unbeliever the knowledge of Christ. It is not by the power of any free will of ours but only by the power of God (vs. 7) who commands light to shine out of darkness. This power is the new birth or the regenerating power of God which is given to His people at the appointed time so they can see by faith and enter the kingdom of God.

Lazarus and the Rich Man

The story of the beggar Lazarus and the rich man is important here. (Luke 16:19-31) Jesus told this story and does not refer to it as a parable. He named a person called Lazarus. Therefore, it is an actual event that took place.

Lazarus was a poor beggar with sores over his body and had only crumbs to eat from under the table of the rich man who lived in comfort and ease. At death, Lazarus went to paradise, called "Abraham's bosom," and the rich man went to hell where he suffered. The one who in his life had been rich asked Abraham if he would have Lazarus dip his finger in the water and come and place it on his tongue so he could have some relief as he was tormented in the flames. Abraham said he couldn't send Lazarus to him because there was a great gulf between them. Let's pick up the story from that point.

²⁷ "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹ Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ And

he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

Notice that the rich man wanted to warn his brothers by sending Lazarus back from the dead to them. He felt certain that his brothers would heed someone who rose from the dead to pass on a heavenly message. Abraham said they would not listen to someone who came back from the dead if they didn't listen to Moses and the prophets.

Why would some people not listen to a person who came back from the dead? Wouldn't their free will accept what that person said? You certainly would think so. The reason why they wouldn't believe is because their wills were dead in sin and could not understand spiritual matters. Those spiritually dead people could never believe even if someone came back from the dead to warn them. It would take the grace of God, in the new birth, to awaken their wills and give them spiritual sight, hearing, and understanding.

In this chapter, I have provided many verses that prove that the unsaved man's will is spiritually dead and unable to receive Jesus Christ. There are many more that could be quoted, but those provided here are more than sufficient. The only way the spiritually dead person can be saved is if Jesus brings him back from the dead and gives him new life called eternal life. The difference in our salvation does not depend on us or our will, the difference in our salvation is what God does for us by His mercy and grace.

Oh, how amazing His wonderful free grace is to us!

Chapter 4

Free Will Salvation – How Does It Work?

As I have mentioned previously, the belief in free will salvation is the predominant belief in Christianity today. I also mentioned that the free will power or ability of the unsaved man is not found in Scripture. We have already looked in depth at the Scriptures that prove the unsaved man's inability to use his will in salvation. At this point, I want to describe how the system called free will claims to bring about salvation.

The Drawing of God

The first stage of the free will salvation view is that God is drawing every man and woman to Himself. As this view teaches, for God to be fair, He must of necessity be drawing not only every single person on earth, but He must be drawing them with equal power and might. If He doesn't draw every single person with the same power and might, then He would be unfair in showing preferential treatment to some over others. If He gives more drawing blessings to some than that would be tampering with their free will, and their free will must be protected at all times according to this view. If God gives to some more drawing grace than to others, on what basis does He do so? If it is because of their good deeds or some measure of faithfulness, then salvation is a reward. Giving some more grace than others is a tenet of the free grace view of salvation to be discussed next, not the free will view.

So, with regard to this first stage, God draws every single person on earth with the same power. However, God must not completely draw the person to Him. He spiritually pleads or entices but does not outright bring the person to Him in faith. According to this view, God must not violate the person's free will, so God can only go so far and must stop. It is then left up to each of us to respond using our free wills to come to Christ. The person's salvation depends ultimately, not

on God, but on man. Why? It is because what God does He does for everyone according to this view. It is man who determines his salvation, not God. Therefore the difference in our salvation is not what God does; it is what we do with our will which is not overly influenced by God. Since it is what we do with our will that determines our salvation, we are rewarded with salvation if we are faithful to God in coming to Him. Is this the grace of the Scriptures?

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Eph. 2:8-9)

In the free will view, God must do His part and man must do his part. Salvation becomes a two-part process. If man can use his will, his free will, to come to faith, he gets salvation from God. He receives the new birth or regeneration. However, he only gets this if he can achieve faith by using his free will effectively. The unsaved person must make an independent spiritual decision for Christ and receive salvation. Whatever part or role the person's free will played in his salvation, he should receive that part of the glory and credit for his salvation and God loses that same part of the glory and credit. Free will saves the day for the person. That is the difference in man's salvation. It is up to the spiritually dead sinner to somehow use his free will to accomplish his salvation. If he uses it well, if he co-operates better than others, he is rewarded with the new birth and salvation.

Since he is ultimately saved by his free will decision, the man has something to boast of. He got salvation and can say to those who didn't that he was able to better use his will than they were. He was able to process this spiritual information better than the lost and therefore was able to bring about his own salvation. He did a better job co-operating with the Spirit. Again, this is not the salvation plan mentioned above in Eph. 2:8-9. In chapter 3 of this book, we saw clearly that the unsaved man is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins and cannot make any such spiritual decision using his will. The Scriptures make it clear that the unsaved man cannot respond to spiritual pleadings to cooperate with the Spirit to come to faith or salvation. (1 Cor. 2:14)

As we examine free will salvation, let's look at this word draw. It is true that God draws men to Himself. However, does He draw every single person to Himself? Let's go to some verses in Scripture that discuss God drawing people to Himself. Before we do that, it would be good to get the correct definition of the word draw from the original Greek. Let's go to the Greek dictionary of the New Testament in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible for assistance.

1670. helkuo *hel-koo'-o* or *helko hel'-ko*; probably akin to 138; to drag (literally or figuratively):--draw. Compare 1667.

So, the word draw actually means to drag in the following salvation verses mentioned in this chapter.

And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish (John 21:6).

Here we get a real visual of this word draw. The fishermen had to actually drag the net full of fish to the shore because there were so many fish and the net was so heavy. God literally drags some people to Himself spiritually because they can't use their dead wills to come to Him. Let's take a look at perhaps the main verse with the word draw that is used to support the free will view of salvation.

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. (John 12:32)

In this verse, we see that Jesus does draw all peoples or men (KJV) to Himself. Does this verse mean He draws or drags every single person who has lived since the time of Christ with the same drawing power? Let's examine this verse more closely in the biblical context of the gospel or good news message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

The Drawing of God in the Old Testament

We know from the Bible that God's chosen people in the Old Testament were the Jews. From Abraham through the earthly life of Christ, the message of God's salvation was directed to the Jews.

Some Gentiles became saved if they came into contact with the Jews and were converted by them to Judaism, but, by and large, the great majority of Gentiles died without salvation in the Old Testament. So, did God draw every single person to Himself in the Old Testament? No. Jesus, in talking with the woman at the well said the following.

You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. (John 4:22)

Jesus commanded his disciples not to preach to the Gentiles or Samaritans, but to preach only to the Jews, the house of Israel.

⁵ *These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. ⁶ But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'* (Matt. 10:5-7)

When speaking to the woman of Canaan who wanted Jesus to heal her daughter, Jesus said the following:

²⁴ *But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* (Matt. 15:24)

Jesus clearly makes a distinction between some who would be saved, God's chosen people, and the others who would not be saved. Why did God in the Old Testament reveal Himself to the Jews in a way that He did not to everyone else? Why did He give special grace to the Jews but pass over practically everyone else? It is clear from Scripture that God used His drawing power to save primarily the Jews in the Old Testament. The rest of humanity entered eternity lost. Why this special grace to the Jews? It was because they were His chosen people. God chose them, not because they were a good or faithful people because they were a stiff-necked and disobedient people. Moses said the following.

²⁷ *...for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD, then how much more after my death? (Dt. 31:27)*

God just loved them and chose them in spite of their sinfulness.

"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. ⁷ The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;..." (Deut. 7:6-7)

The Drawing of God in the New Testament

After the ascension of Christ, something very gracious happened in the plan of God. Salvation became not only a Jewish blessing but also a Gentile blessing. Gentiles were now given the message of salvation. This meant that all men, all peoples and nations (Matt. 28:19), would be given God's grace to become saved. The Apostle Paul became a missionary to bring the Gentiles into God's fold. The salvation plan of God would not change. It would still be for those He chose; however, those chosen would now include Gentiles.

This was the gospel or good news of Jesus Christ of the New Testament. It would be for all peoples, without distinction. God would now draw (drag) all peoples or men, without distinction of nationality or race. John 3:16 states that *"God so loved the world [God's chosen of the Jews and Gentiles], that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life."* This is what Jesus meant when he said. *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw [drag] all peoples [chosen Jews and Gentiles] to Myself."* (John 12:32)

Let's take a look at another verse that uses the word draw in it often cited to support the free will salvation view.

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:44)

This verse again shows that for salvation to take place God must draw mankind to Himself. This is certainly a true statement. However, this verse does not indicate that God draws or drags every single person to

Himself. Actually this verse begins by saying that no person can come to Jesus. The word can denotes power or ability. No one has the ability, by the will or otherwise, to come to Jesus. This verse says they can't come. Something first must happen before the unsaved person can come to Christ. The requirement "unless" has to happen first. That requirement is the drawing that the Father must do. This drawing or dragging is the new birth or regeneration of the Holy Spirit. This will be discussed in more depth later in the chapter on the Holy Spirit.

Does God Draw Everyone Equally to Himself?

At this time, I want to discuss the belief of the free will salvation view that God draws every single person to Himself in an equal fashion. Remember, it is the free will view that says God wants to save everyone. If He wants to save everyone, He would want to draw them equally to Himself. If He draws some more strongly than others, why would He do that? Is it because they were more worthy or faithful? If that were the case, then salvation is a reward. The free will view can't go there. So, it is left with God drawing every single person on earth in an equal fashion to be fair to everyone's free will.

Does this really happen? Let's just simply look at the Scripture and the real world to answer this question.

First, did God reveal Himself in the Old Testament to every single person for all those thousands of years? No. Since the time of Abraham God only revealed Himself to His chosen people the Jews. With few exceptions, the vast majority of Gentiles died in spiritual darkness and eternal damnation. We have already seen in Deut. 7:6-7 that God revealed His salvation plan primarily to the Jews. He did that because they were His elect people.

That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel. ⁴ For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; (Isa. 45:3-4)

Now let's take a look at the New Testament era. Does God equally draw every single person in the world to Himself? What does actual reality reveal to us?

Is it not true that some people are blessed by God and born in a nation like America that has Christian roots and influences while others are born in some foreign countries that have no Christian influences or spiritual light? Those born in some of these non-Christian nations do not have the freedom, knowledge, or even the Word of God that we have here in America. In some of these countries, if you are a Christian or try to share your Christian faith, you can be persecuted and even executed.

Millions of people around the world are born, live, and die without ever experiencing the spiritual advantages that God has blessed us with here in America and in other places in the world. God made the decision before we were born about where we would be born and whether we would be born to Christian or non-Christian parents. So, it is clear from reality that there has been no drawing by God of countless millions of people in various places in the world. These people were born in spiritual darkness, live in a culture without spiritual light, and die in that state of spiritual death. In some of these countries, this has been going on for many centuries.

Let's take a look at Scripture to see if God gives His revealing and saving grace to everyone alike.

Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. ⁷ After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. ⁸ So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. ⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:6-10)

In this account, we see that God forbade the saving message of Jesus Christ from going into some regions, preferring it to go to others. In those areas the Lord forbade the missionaries to go, most of those

people died without Christ. Were they drawn by God to Himself? The answer is no.

Therefore, the belief of the free will salvation view, that God draws every single person to Himself in an equal fashion, cannot be correct. It is not supported in the Old Testament, the New Testament, or reality as we know it.

Can an Unsaved Person Cooperate With the Spirit to Become Saved?

Now that we see that the first stage of the free will salvation view fails, let's look at the second stage of this belief system. This stage states that after the drawing by God of every person on earth, the unsaved person must apply his free will to either accept or reject this drawing for salvation to happen.

I have thoroughly discussed in chapters two and three with many biblical proofs how it is impossible for the unsaved person who is dead spiritually to receive Christ or cooperate with the Spirit by using a free will spiritual ability. It bears repeating just a couple of those verses now.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:14)

...the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. (John 14:17)

Scripture cannot make it any clearer that the unsaved spiritually dead person cannot receive Christ. He cannot cooperate with the Spirit to come to Christ because he can't see the Spirit nor can he know the Spirit. He is dead spiritually. Therefore, the two main phases or parts to the free will salvation view both fail as shown above. As attractive as this view may be from a human perspective, it is not supported by

either the Scriptures or what we know to be true in actual reality with regard to whom God reveals Himself.

So, if it is impossible for the unsaved man to come to Christ, how can he become saved?

When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 19:25-26)

Praise God that He can save us who are so desperately lost in our sinfulness and unbelief. Only God has the power to drag a lost, unsaved sinner who is spiritually dead to Himself. He does it in His free grace by the power of the new birth. The lost sinner cannot do it by any free will ability; as this verse says, "with men this is impossible." The new birth will be discussed more fully in chapter 7.

Where Did the Belief in Free Will Come From?

If this free will salvation plan is not found in the Bible, where did it come from? I have an opinion I would like to share regarding that question.

I believe it was designed by some who felt it made more sense than a God who would choose some and not others before the world began. It was a more fair and attractive approach in their minds. No one could blame God if someone rejected Him with his free will. The blame would fall squarely on the rejecting sinner. God's integrity would be kept blameless. The problem here is that if the individual chose Christ, then he was saved by his own ability of the will, if his will was really free and independent. Those saved had something to boast of over those who were not able to use their free wills as well as the believers did. The believers accomplished salvation when the others couldn't. Again, free will saved the day and the person. It was not God who ultimately saves because He must stop short of actually saving anyone according to this view. It has to be ultimately left up to the success of one's free will.

Free will was conceived to explain away God's sovereign choice in election. It seemed to be a much better way to describe how some men are saved and some are lost. Election just didn't seem consistent with God's love. Free will seemed to make more sense, protect the integrity of God, and explained away the difficulties presented by God electing some and not others according to His will. Free will has become the dominant view today and has, in most churches, replaced the biblical view of salvation.

The free will approach also tries to mix free grace and free will. A component of free will salvation is that God is trying (note the word trying) to save everyone by drawing them to Himself. So grace is a part of this view. Most Christians understand that we are saved by grace so this view is able to mix a form of grace with the will of man. However, the grace in this view only tries to save but it actually does not save anyone in the final analysis. It is what the spiritually dead unsaved sinner does with his own will that saves him, not what God does for what God does He does for everyone according to this view. In the end, it is the spiritually dead and lost unsaved person who somehow saves himself by the use of his own will.

The free will view changes the sovereignty of God in the salvation of man. Who is sovereign, in charge, or in control of our salvation? Is it the all-powerful, all-knowing, and present everywhere God or the vile, sinful, spiritually dead unsaved sinner and his corrupt will? Would the Almighty Sovereign of the universe be in control of all things except one thing, the salvation of mankind? God would never give up part of His sovereignty to sinful man and Satan, who controls the unsaved man. What sense would that make? For God to be God, He must be sovereign and in control of all things, especially the salvation of mankind. We have to choose between a sovereign God over everything or no God at all.

This brings us to God's wonderful free grace salvation plan. Over the next three chapters we will see how God uses truly amazing grace to save His people.

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21)

Chapter 5

Free Grace Salvation – The Work of God the Father

God is Sovereign

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain his hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" (Dan. 4:34-35)

As Christians, we know that God is the Sovereign ruler of all things. He is the Creator of everything that is. So, it is not strange to think that this God who is in control of all things chooses to do what He wants with His creation and then acts on His choices. He is the Master Architect.

But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. (Psalm 115:3)

As the Master Architect and Builder, did God just have a general plan for all eternity and leave the details up to sinful men, Satan, and to luck? Instead, did He have a very specific, detailed plan of His own design? God, who is all-knowing and all-powerful, would make sure He had a specific plan to keep all His promises in the Bible and to insure that His will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. Without a specific and detailed plan which includes the salvation of all of His people He could never make the following promise to us.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Rom. 8:28)

God is in the choosing business; He always has been. He chose in eternity past to create everything that exists. He chose to create the angelic host and mankind. He chose the plan that would redeem mankind. He chose His Son to accomplish the work of redemption on

earth. He chose the Jewish nation in the Old Testament to be His own special people to whom He revealed His salvation plan. He chose who would be born, when they would be born, what their gender would be, what they would look like, what their talents would be, who their parents would be, and the date and cause of their death. God leaves nothing to chance or luck because there is no such thing as chance or luck.

Since God is both all-knowing and all-powerful, all happenings occur by His design, foreknowledge, and permission. What appears to be chance or luck to us is really His foreordained plan from eternity past.

Would God decide to give up His sovereignty regarding who would be saved and just leave that up to spiritually dead people and Satan? If He did then no one would be saved. Would God choose what was to be done with all things except the salvation of man? The salvation of man is so important to Him that He would most definitely want to have control over who would spend eternity with Him in paradise. The God who died to save sinners would certainly want to decide who would be the recipients of His gift of salvation. It would be contrary to His nature and deity to hand over part of His sovereignty and control to the wills of unsaved sinful men and Satan who deceives them.

⁹ So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev. 12:9)

Now we want to look at God's free grace salvation plan. To understand this plan of salvation, we need to know some important biblical facts about the Triune Godhead and the respective roles each divine member plays in the salvation of mankind. Without the work of God Who exists as the Holy Father, the Holy Son, and the Holy Spirit, the salvation of mankind could not happen. In the next three chapters, I will discuss the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Their respective roles in the free grace salvation of man.

The Father's Role

First, what role did God the Father have in the salvation of mankind? The Father's role was election. It was the Father who, in eternity past, before the world was even formed, elected or chose whom He would graciously save. These people whom He elected or chose are referred to in the Bible as God's elect. No one elected these particular persons other than the Father. They didn't elect themselves nor did they elect God. The elect are the recipients of the wonderful free grace of the Father who unconditionally loved and elected them to salvation before the foundation of the world. (Eph. 1:4-5) All the elect will become Christians. When Christ returns He will send his angels to gather His elect. (Matt. 24:31)

There are many key verses in Scripture that very clearly show us this work of the Father in election.

Election in the Old Testament

The following verses show us God's unconditional love and choice of Israel over all the other people in the world during Old Testament times.

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. ⁷ The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; ⁸ but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Dt. 7:6-8)

Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it. ¹⁵ The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day. Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer. (Dt. 10:14-16)

That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. (Isa. 45:3-4)

So will I do for My servants' sake, That I may not destroy them all. I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, And from Judah an heir of My mountains; My elect shall inherit it, and My servants shall dwell there. (Isa. 65:8-9)

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. (Isa. 65:21-22)

God had a special love for Israel above all nations. They were loved by Him, He set His affection upon them, and He revealed Himself to them in a way that He did not to the other nations of the world He created. He did not love or choose Israel because they were large in number or because they were faithful. They were small in number and were a stiff-necked people. They repeatedly participated in idolatry, persecuted and murdered God's prophets, and committed other sins against Jehovah, but He still unconditionally loved them in spite of all their many shortcomings. He chose them even though He foreknew the evil they would commit.

Yet I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel. (2 Chron. 6:6)

For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. (2 Chron. 7:16)

God elected not only His special people Israel, He also elected the city on which He would put His Name, the king who would rule over His people, and the very house where His presence would be.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance. (Psalm 33:12)

Israel truly was blessed of the Lord. Only they out of all the peoples of earth had been chosen to receive His inheritance. What inheritance was that? He chose them to receive both an earthly and a heavenly inheritance, physical and spiritual, the Promised Land on earth and in heaven. This verse is especially appropriate for us today. We as Christians have been blessed by God as He has chosen us to also receive His own inheritance. We have been chosen to serve Him on earth and to have a secure knowledge of our eternal life which is our present possession after becoming saved. We will also receive the fulfillment of this eternal life in heaven with Christ for all eternity.

Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, of Your holy temple. (Psalm 65:4)

God's elect or chosen ones are again truly blessed. Not only does He choose us unconditionally, despite our sinfulness and unworthiness, but He also graciously and mercifully causes us to come to Him. Without that drawing or dragging power of the Holy Spirit we would be unable to come to Christ in our unsaved, spiritually dead state. Our election brings a peace and satisfaction to our souls knowing He set His love upon us.

He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen. They performed His signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. (Psalm 105:26-27)

God has always chosen His special messengers such as the prophets, apostles, and disciples to spread the Word of God and do His miraculous works. We saw this in the life of Moses and Aaron whom God selected to bring His chosen people out of bondage in Egypt.

"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom my soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles." (Isa. 42:1)

Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was prophesied in the Old Testament as God's elect One who would open the doors of salvation to the Gentiles. He would bring mercy, grace, and justice to a heathen and lost people.

¹ I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ³ "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? ⁴ But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." ⁵ Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (Rom. 11:1-5)

Although God chose the nation of Israel to be His special people, not all the Jews in the Old Testament were elected to personal salvation. There were many in Israel who did not have true faith in Jehovah. They worshipped idols like Baal and murdered God's prophets. Only those who truly believed in the God of Israel and the coming Messiah Who would be the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system were saved. Their faith would make them righteous before God. It was said of Abraham, "⁶ And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6.). Notice God "reserved" for Himself seven thousand men (vs. 4). Only this believing remnant would be the elect of God with regard to personal salvation.

Things seemed so bad to Elijah in his day that he thought he was the only true believer left. God wanted Elijah to know that even though most in Israel had not remained faithful to Him, there was still a faithful remnant in Israel who was saved according to God's election of grace.

Election in the New Testament

The doctrine of personal election to salvation by God became more clearly defined in the New Testament. In Ephesians chapter one, we have perhaps the clearest statement of God the Father choosing those He planned to save and on what basis that choice was made.

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

Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. (Eph. 1:3-6)

We learn three important biblical facts from these verses. First, the Father chose us in Christ. Second, this choosing, election, or predestination took place before the foundation of the world. Third, He made this choice based on the good pleasure of His will.

I would like to take a moment to discuss the word predestination. This word sounds ominous and many seem afraid of the word. Some don't trust it and don't like it. Many will deny the belief in God's predestination even though the Word of God attests to its validity.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Rom. 8:29-30).

....just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will... (Eph. 1:4-5)

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. (Eph. 1:11)

The word predestination means that God foreordained or predetermined in eternity past the ultimate destination of each person He created to either heaven or hell. Ephesians 1:5 tells us on what basis God made this choice. He did it "...according to the good pleasure of His will." What does that mean? It means that God never discloses in Scripture any details as to why He chose one person and not another. The only answer we have in Scripture is that He based

His choice on His own good pleasure. God's choices, determinations, and decrees before time are pleasing to Him. This is the essence of free grace.

Of one thing we can be sure: God did not base His decision to choose us based on what we did here on earth. If He did, our salvation would be a reward. Salvation is not based on a merit system. To make sure we would know our salvation is based only on His grace to us, He tells us in Ephesians 1:5, 11 that He chose us based on His good pleasure and the purpose and counsel of His will. God's election robs mankind of ever claiming any credit for his salvation. If the Father chose us, Christ died for us, and the Holy Spirit brought us to Christ, then it is all of God. There is no room for the one who had been spiritually dead to say he was the ultimate cause of his salvation through the use of his will. In verse 6 we see more grace from God. Notice that God "made" us accepted in the beloved or Jesus Christ. Salvation is of God, and He made us acceptable to Him in Christ because of His love for us, His chosen people.

Here is another key verse that states that God chose us to salvation and when He made this choice.

¹³ But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, ¹⁴ to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 2:13-14)

Here we see similar language to Ephesians chapter 1. God chose us for salvation, and His choice was from the very beginning. We were called to obtain Christ's glory.

Let us look at another key passage regarding the work of God the Father.

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means 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 This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I

should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. (John 6:37-39)

This is perhaps one of the most important but overlooked passages in the Bible for it tells us specifically why Jesus came down from heaven and what the Father's will was in sending Jesus. The Father gave those He chose to Christ before the foundation of the world. He sent Jesus to earth to make sure that not one of these elect would be lost but that they would all be raised up on the last day. It was the mission of Jesus Christ from His Father to come to earth to save each of these persons the Father gave Him, the Father's elect.

Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48)

Here we see that as many people as God had appointed or chosen for eternal life believed. They believed by God's grace and by the fact that God had ordained (KJV) these people to eternal life beforehand. Notice also that only those whom God appointed to eternal life later believed.

For many are called, but few are chosen. (Matt. 22:14)

This verse teaches us that the gospel seed is spread out over many people for many are called. We see witnessing taking place on a grand scale now. Billions have heard the gospel on radio, television, and the internet. We are commanded to take part in the Great Commission and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. However, the domain of salvation is in the hands of the Giver of eternal life, the Lord God. He chooses whom He will save and when they will be saved. He has chosen to save few. We know that few will be saved.

Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matt. 7:14)

Although few will be saved, we must remember this is a relative word. Heaven will be full of souls. The few will be an extremely large number when you consider how many people have been created by God from the very beginning of time.

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matt. 24:30-31)

Again, who does God send His angels out to gather up when Christ returns? It is His elect according to the Scriptures. Who are these elect? They are Christians, those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. ⁷ And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? ⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily..." (Luke 18:6-8)

Who is God interested in avenging? Who is crying out day and night to Him? Is it everyone? No, it is only His elect.

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. (Rom. 8:33-34)

These verses teach that absolutely no one can bring any charges against God's elect people. Why, because it is God who justifies or makes just His elect or Christians. Christ will condemn unbelievers on judgment day for wrong doing. These are blessed verses that teach that Christ intercedes on behalf of God's elect. We have a wonderful attorney who will plead our case before the throne of God. What amazing grace.

All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (Matt. 11:27)

You might not catch election in this verse if you read over it too quickly in your Bible. The only people who know the Father are those individuals to whom Jesus chooses to reveal Him. These are God's

elect whom the Father gave to Jesus before the foundation of the world. The rest of humanity will not know the Father because Christ has chosen not to reveal Him to them.

⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Christians have been chosen by God to be a royal priesthood. They are His own special people who by God's wonderful grace, mercy, and power were called out of the darkness of trespasses and sins into the marvelous light of Christ. Before they were saved, they were lost in darkness without the mercy of God, but now, because of His saving mercy, they have the light of Christ and are the people of God.

²¹ "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. ²² For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²³ But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand. (Mark 13:21-23)

Mark is pointing out the great deception displayed by these false Christ's and false prophets. Their deception will be so powerful that they will lead many away from the truth of Jesus Christ. It will be so deceptive that, unless God does something supernatural to protect His elect, even they will be deceived. However, God does protect His elect so that they will be saved as we see in the following verse.

And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. (Mark 13:20)

Who is God concerned with here? Is it every single person in the world or only His chosen or elect people? During this time of trial mentioned in Scripture, God supernaturally protects His elect or chosen people to make sure they will be saved. Christ will not lose even one of the Father's elect. (John 6:39)

⁷ *What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. ⁸ Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day." (Rom. 11:7-8)*

We see in this passage that the elect obtained salvation. They obtained it, not because of their own human abilities, but by the mercy and grace of God. The rest were blinded by God. This blinding or hardening the hearts of some will be discussed more fully later.

¹² *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. (Col. 3:12-13)*

Paul wants the Colossian believers, those elected by God, to exhibit these traits as being part of God's people. We as Christians should show forth these godly character traits daily. Our election to salvation brings with it a responsibility to God Who chose us to live godly lives.

² *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, ³ remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, ⁴ knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. (1 Thess. 1:2-4)*

Paul commends the Thessalonians for their Christian maturity and acts of love, patience, and faith which were being displayed before the eyes of God. They were elected by God and this was evident by their godly lives.

Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, (2 Tim. 1:9)

Again, we see another verse which talks of our holy calling or election, not according to the things we have done, but according to God's gracious purpose which was given to us before time began.

⁹ ...for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. (2 Tim.2:9-10)

Paul is addressing Timothy about his own persecution and suffering for the cause of Christ. He mentions that he is willing to endure every imaginable suffering for the sake of the elect so that they will obtain salvation in Jesus Christ. Who is he willing to suffer for? Is it every single person, or God's elect only? The purpose of his sufferings is to bring the elect to salvation.

¹ Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, ² in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, ³ but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior; (Titus 1:1-3)

Paul refers to his faith as the faith of God's elect and to the promise of eternal life. When did God make this promise? He made it before time began. He also chose to give salvation to His elect before time began. His elect are saved by their faith which came by the preaching of His Word. They will have eternal life because of the promise of God who chose them and cannot lie.

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: (1 Peter 1:1-2)

Peter is writing to the Christians of the dispersion, those who have been scattered abroad because of persecution, and he calls them elect. All believers or Christians are the elect of God. All the elect of God either are Christians or will become Christians by God's grace. The foreknowledge of God will be discussed in greater detail later.

¹² By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God

in which you stand. ¹³ She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son. (1 Peter 5:12-13)

Peter refers to a lady in Babylon who is one of God's elect along with Silvanus and others. This election is by the true grace of God by which these people stand firm.

Let us note also that in the end of time we see the chosen of God who are with Christ.

These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful. (Rev. 17:14)

These saints who are with Christ when He returns are those God had called and chosen to be His saved. They are faithful because they have the faith of God's elect. (Titus 1:1)

Here is another key passage regarding the Father choosing those He wants to be saved.

(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), ¹² it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." (Rom. 9:11-13)

Here we see that God chose Jacob over Esau. His choice was made before the foundation of the world. God's point is that He made this choice before the two boys were born, before they had done any good or evil works. God is saying that His election of Jacob was not because of merit. His passing over Esau was not because of any evil he had done. God's choice was a sovereign choice based on His own good pleasure without regard to what the boys had done in their lives. Otherwise, Jacob's salvation would be a reward for what he did. This is the purpose of election stated in verse 9:11, that we would know our salvation is a gift as a result of God's free grace to His chosen ones and not a reward based on what we did in our lives. Romans chapter 9 will be discussed in more detail later in this book.

*"...Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."
⁷ Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone," (1 Peter 2:6-7)*

These verses refer to Jesus Christ who also is elect of God the Father. He truly is precious to us who believe for He saves us from eternal punishment. Jesus is our elect Brother and the Chief Cornerstone of our faith.

I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. (1 Tim. 5:21)

This is interesting. Before their creation, some angels were elected by God and some were not. Those that remained faithful were His elect angels, and those who were disobedient and cast out of heaven were not elected. Those expelled from heaven are the demons we read about in Scripture led by Satan or Lucifer. God elected some angels and not others to prove and establish His sovereignty over them.

²⁷ John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. (John 3:27)

Some of the followers of John the Baptist said to John that most of the people were now coming to Jesus and His disciples to be baptized. John's reply in this verse makes it clear that a person can receive nothing unless God gives it to him. Included in what is given are faith, repentance, and salvation. If one believes, repents, and becomes saved, it is only because God gave them those gifts or abilities. Election is something that God has given to those He wills to save. If He willed to save everyone, He would have elected everyone. Salvation is a free gift, not based on what one does in his life. That is why it is a gift, not a reward.

*¹² Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"
¹³ But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴ Let them alone. They are blind*

leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.” (Matt. 15:12-14)

Here we see the Pharisees were offended when Jesus called them hypocrites (vs. 7). The Pharisees questioned Jesus about His disciples eating without washing their hands thus going against one of the Jewish traditions. Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites for transgressing the command of God. The disciples noted to Jesus that the Pharisees were offended at His harsh words toward them. Jesus makes a very interesting statement in verse 13.

He said that every plant that the Father did not plant would be uprooted. What is Jesus saying here? Who are the plants that the Father has planted? They are His elect who were chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world. The others, the non-elect, have not been planted by the Father in a spiritual way or sense. The reference here is to the Pharisees who were blind leaders of the blind and would fall into the ditch. These Pharisees were not planted by the Father, so they would be uprooted and cast into hell. Remember the parable of the wheat and tares.

³⁷ He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. ³⁹ The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰ Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, ⁴² and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Matt. 13:37-42)

Jesus, God the Son, plants the good seed, the sons of the kingdom, God’s elect. Satan plants the tares or his own sons, the non-elect. Those whom God has not planted will be uprooted and cast into the lake of fire. The free will view would say God planted those He foresaw would make a good spiritual decision toward Christ. We have already seen that the unsaved do not have the ability to make a good spiritual decision. To claim that God’s decision is based on what people do turns salvation into a reward, not a gift.

¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 16:15-17)

Here we see that Peter makes that great confession of who Jesus is. Peter was absolutely correct in identifying Jesus. Our Lord wants Peter to understand how he was able to state this truth so that he doesn't become proud. First, Jesus tells Peter that he is blessed. This means he received a blessing. Where do blessings come from? They come from God. Second, He wants Peter to understand where this knowledge did not come from. It did not come from flesh or blood. It didn't come from Peter or his will. Third, He tells Peter where this knowledge and truth came from. It came from His Father who is in heaven.

Peter is blessed by God because God gave him the knowledge of salvation by knowing and believing in the Son, Jesus Christ. God does not give this knowledge to everyone. He didn't give it to the Gentiles in the Old Testament. Why did He give this special knowledge to Peter? It was because Peter was one of His elect. Jesus uses this opportunity as a teaching lesson to the other disciples who, other than Judas Iscariot, were also His elect.

We see, in summary, that God the Father chose in Christ those He planned to save. He made this choice before the foundation of the world. He based His choice of these people according to the good pleasure of His will and not according to what they did in their lives. This made certain that salvation was by God's free grace and not according to one's merit, works, or will. It was the Father's will to give these people to Jesus Christ and to send Jesus to earth to save them. Not one of God's elect will be lost.

Why did the Father even have an election? First, God is showing us that He is sovereign and in control of all things, especially the personal salvation of all of mankind. Second, God is telling us by His election that man is saved, not by his efforts, but only by the grace of God. Therefore, man is either saved by the work of God Who chose him or

the work of his own doing. The free salvation plan of God and the Bible is the former, not the latter view.

Now let us turn next to the free grace work of the Son of God in the salvation of man.

Chapter 6

Free Grace Salvation – The Work of God the Son

There are many different facets to the work of Jesus Christ in salvation, far too numerous for me to outline in this one chapter. Therefore, I want to focus my comments here on the atonement of Jesus Christ and, in particular, one aspect of that atonement which deals with free grace. To do that, we need to have an understanding of the word "atonement" and some other theological terms associated with it. We also need to have some basic Old Testament knowledge for that is where we first get a glimpse of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Background

The word "atone" means to make amends or payment for sin. Atonement is what Jesus Christ did on the cross. He died to make payment for our sins. This was necessary because God's wrath against sin had to be appeased or satisfied. A holy and righteous God requires judgment and punishment for the sins of disobedience against Him. Another word that is synonymous with atonement is the word "redemption". Redemption is a payment to buy back something or someone who is lost. Atonement also involves reconciliation or restoration between God and man.

Here is where we come to another theological term relating to this atonement. It was a vicarious or substitutionary atonement. In other words, in God's plan, someone else could atone or make payment for another person's sin. The sinner himself didn't have to atone if an acceptable substitute could be found that would satisfy God. Now let's take a look at the Old Testament examples of atonement instituted by God to see the basis for the atonement of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

As you will recall, God instituted the animal sacrificial system and gave it to His chosen people Israel. He did this when He explained in great

detail to Moses how the people would sacrifice certain animals that were without spot or blemish at the tabernacle. God was showing His people the biblical principle that there was no remission or forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood.

¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul. (Lev. 17:11)

²² And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. (Heb. 9:22)

Therefore, in His wonderful grace, God allowed the blood sacrifice of these animals when the people sinned. His anger for their sins was satisfied or appeased as He judged these innocent animals in place of the sinner. The theological term for this appeasement or satisfaction is propitiation. We see the details of this animal sacrificial system in the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch.

The point God was making to His people is that He hates sin which is disobedience and disrespect toward Him. For God to be a holy and righteous Judge, He must punish people for their sins. The Old Testament said that *"...The soul who sins shall die."* (Ezekiel 18:4) He instituted the animal sacrificial system in His grace so that these animals could die in the place of His people who committed sins against Him. God was showing the people He was serious about dealing with sin but was also a God of grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

The animal sacrificial system was inadequate for a number of reasons. First, it was not a like kind sacrifice. A human should die for the sins of men. Two, the animal was not as valuable to God as a perfect, sinless person. Three, these sacrifices had to be continually repeated because they could not make the person perfect. Four, the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin, it would just cover it.

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of

sins. ³ But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. (Heb. 10:1-4)

The animal sacrificial system of the Old Testament was just a shadow, or type, of the perfect sacrifice to come later, that of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on the cross. Jesus satisfied all the four points mentioned in the previous paragraph. The animal sacrifices pointed to the day when Jesus' one sacrifice would take away sins and would not have to be repeated.

And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. (Heb. 10:11-14)

The point I would like to make here is that God instituted the animal sacrificial system for His chosen people the Jews in the Old Testament. It was His people, Israel, who benefitted from these sacrifices, not the people of other nations. He loved His people and wanted to provide a substitutionary atonement for their sins. This atonement would point forward to the perfect substitutionary atonement of His coming Son, the Messiah. The heathen and uncircumcised nations did not have their sins atoned for by these sacrifices, only God's chosen people whom He loved did. Notice verse 14 above. Christ's one sacrificial atonement was to perfect forever those who are being sanctified. This can only be referring to Christians. Those in hell can never be made perfect.

The Old Testament salvation plan and sacrificial atonement was for God's people the Jews mainly, with some Gentiles being saved if they converted to Judaism by their Jewish acquaintances. In addition, this atonement was not for all Jews, only those who were saved by repentance of their sins and faith in the coming Messiah.

The New Testament salvation plan is the same. It is still for God's chosen or elect people, which graciously now includes the world (Jews and Gentiles alike). To be saved, one must have repentance for sin and saving faith in Jesus Christ, just as in the Old Testament. God is

immutable and His salvation plan has not changed. He just has graciously opened the doors of salvation to include Gentiles who receive Jesus Christ by faith.

The whole purpose of the animal sacrificial system in the Old Testament atonement was for the innocent animal, without spot or blemish, to be killed with the shedding of its blood and to suffer in place of the sinner so that the sinner would not have to receive the punishment for his sins. Jesus' atonement in the New Testament worked the same way. The perfect Son of God, without spot or blemish, shed His blood on the cross and died in place of those who believe in Him. Those in hell are suffering for their sins and unbelief; therefore they never received Christ's atonement for their sins.

Verses That Prove That Christ's Atonement Was For Christians Only

With this background, let us move forward into the area that is somewhat controversial but must be discussed if we are to understand free grace salvation regarding the work of the Son. The question we want to answer now is: for whom did Christ die? Did Jesus' atonement apply to every single person in the world or just to Christians who are believers in Christ, God's elect? What was the purpose of Jesus' coming to this earth? Was it to redeem or make payment for every single person or to redeem only believers, God's chosen people?

Again, let's recall a passage given previously that addresses what God's will was in sending His Son Jesus to the earth.

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means 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 This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. (John 6:37-39)

Jesus makes some things very clear here as to why He came to earth. First, He came down from heaven to do His Father's will. Second, His

Father's will was for Jesus to save everyone the Father had given Jesus. When did the Father give these people to Jesus? As we have seen, He did it before the foundation of the world at the very beginning. Third, Jesus will not lose one of the Father's elect, and He will raise them all up at the resurrection on the last day.

So it only stands to reason that, if the Father sent Jesus to earth to save the Father's elect, those He gave to His Son, Jesus' saving death on the cross was intended to save those individuals, not every single person. Jesus came not to do His own will but the will of His Father. Would Jesus do something contrary to the Father's wishes? Would He try to save everyone if the Father sent Him to earth to save only those the Father gave Him? The answer is no. Jesus always was submissive to the will of His Father. He always did what His Father wanted Him to do rather than His own will. (vs. 38)

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Rev. 1:5-6)

Clearly, the purpose of Christ's blood atonement was to cleanse believers of their sins. Blood, as well as water, are biblical symbols of cleansing. Let me ask you a question. Did Christ's atonement cleanse from their sins all those suffering in hell? The answer to that question is obvious. They are in hell paying for their sins because those sins were never atoned for or forgiven. Christ's blood has washed away the sins of Christians but has never cleansed those being punished in hell. God loved us, Jesus shed His blood for us, and made us kings and priests of God. This is never true of the lost who perish. As a consequence, there was no blood atonement or cleansing of sins applied to those in hell.

⁸ *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the*

death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (Rom. 5:8-11)

Atonement involves reconciliation between God and man. The "we" refer to the believers in Rome to whom Paul is writing. In these verses, we see that Christians were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Only Christians are justified or made just by His blood. Are those in hell justified or reconciled with God? Have they been saved from wrath through Christ's blood sacrifice? Do they rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ? Clearly, the answers to these questions is no. This means they received no atonement for their sins.

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, (Rom. 3:21-25)

These verses are telling us that those who believe in Jesus have the righteousness of God. Those believers have received justification (were made just before God) freely by His grace through Christ's redemption on the cross. As mentioned previously, the word "atonement" is synonymous with the word "redemption". Believers, who are the redeemed, have received the propitiation or satisfaction of God by Christ's blood. God has passed over their sins because of that satisfaction.

This is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover when God's people were in bondage to Egypt. God passed over and did not kill the first born of the houses that had the blood of the lamb on their doors. (Ex. 12) This Old Testament example shows us that this blood atonement was applied only to believers who had faith in the Word of God. There was no protection for those unbelievers who did not put the blood of the lamb on their doors. Christ is our Passover Lamb. (1

Cor. 5:7) The atonement or redemption by Christ's death is applied only to the sins of believers, God's people, not to the sins of those who are in hell suffering for their unbelief and sins. God has never passed over their sins nor will they ever receive His satisfaction or propitiation.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree", (Gal. 3:13)

Only Christians have been redeemed by Him who hung on the tree of Calvary. He became a curse for them. Are those in hell redeemed from the curse of the law? No; they are paying the penalty of the law for their sinfulness and are receiving the curse themselves. Only Christians have had their curse transferred to Christ who died for them on the cross.

¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9:12-14)

Jesus' blood atonement obtained eternal redemption for the sins of believers only. Those in hell are receiving eternal wrath. They are never counted as part of the redeemed. Their consciences are never cleansed by the blood atonement of Christ.

And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. (Heb. 9:15)

Christians alone, who are "the called" (Rom. 8:28), receive the eternal inheritance purchased by the death of Christ. The unsaved in hell receive no redemption for their transgressions and no eternal inheritance, but, instead, they receive the wrath of God which abides on them. (John 3:36)

...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

Here, Peter is clearly referring to Christians only. He is writing to believers. Only Christians have been healed by the stripes of Christ. Jesus died on the tree, that we (believers Peter is writing to) having died to sins might live for righteousness. Did those who are enduring eternal damnation in hell live for righteousness when they were alive? Were they healed in salvation by the stripes of Christ? No. Therefore, Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross was not applied to them.

...who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. (Titus 2:14)

Paul, a believer, is writing to Titus, a fellow believer. The use of the word us refers to believers. Jesus redeemed us, believers, who have been purified as His own special people, His elect (Titus 1:1) who are zealous to do good works.

Have the unsaved in hell been redeemed and purified by our Lord's death? Were they zealous for good works in serving God? No, as they must suffer in hell for all eternity for rejecting Christ and living a life of sinfulness.

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,²⁸ so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. (Heb. 9:27-28)

Here we see the Scripture telling us that Christ's atonement was for many, not for every single person. The many refers to Christians alone who are saved by His grace through faith.

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you."²⁸ For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:27-28)

Again, we see that many, not every single person, will receive remission of their sins by the sacrificial blood of our Savior. What does the word "remission" mean? It means to cancel the guilt or penalty of

sins and to obtain forgiveness. Do those in hell have remission or forgiveness of their sins? Has their guilt and punishment been cancelled? No; so it is clear that those in hell did not have the blood of Christ shed for them as stated in verse 28.

Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. (Heb. 13:12)

To “sanctify” means to make holy or to consecrate. Jesus’ blood atonement sanctified believers only. Are those in hell ever made holy or consecrated to God?

³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, (1 Cor. 15:3-4)

¹¹ Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. (1 Cor. 15:11)

The “our” in verse three of 1 Cor. 15 refers to the believers or brethren in the church of Corinth (vs. 1) to whom Paul is writing. We know this is referring to believers because of verse 11 in the chapter. Jesus died for our sins, the sins of believers, not for the sins of those who are in hell suffering for their own sins.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, (Eph. 1:7-8)

Paul is writing here to the Ephesian believers who were chosen by God the Father in Christ before the foundation of the world. (Eph. 1:4-5) They, like all believers, had their sins forgiven through the blood atonement and redemption of Jesus Christ. Notice that Jesus made His grace abound to us who are believers in Christ. Only Christians have the forgiveness of sins by the redemption of the blood of Christ.

³ Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from

this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, (Gal. 1:3-4)

Jesus Christ gave Himself on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins to deliver us from this present evil age. Only Christians are delivered from this evil age. Those in hell are never delivered. This deliverance was all done according to God's will, not according to man's will, because God chose from the very beginning those He planned to deliver and save.

...for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. (2 Tim. 2:9-10)

The Apostle Paul was willing to endure all suffering, even death, so that the elect would become saved through Jesus Christ. This willingness to suffer was only for God's elect. If this willingness to die only for God's elect was true of the Apostle Paul, how much more so was it for Christ Himself to be willing to die only for the elect, those the Father gave Him before the foundation of the world. It was His mission from the Father to not lose one of these that were given to Him by His Father. (John 6:37-39)

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— (Col. 1:21-22)

Only Christians have been reconciled to God through Jesus' death. They only are holy, blameless, and above reproach in His sight. This is never how the unsaved are described either on earth or in hell. They would not be suffering in hell for their sins if they were blameless and above reproach in His sight.

²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Acts 20:28)

¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph. 1:13-14)

These verses prove that Christ's blood atonement on the cross was only meant for and applied to Christians, the Church of God. He paid the price of the punishment for their sins so that they would not have to pay for them in hell. The Holy Spirit guarantees believers their inheritance by Jesus' purchased redemption of them on the cross. Those in hell who rejected Christ and His blood atonement suffer damnation for their sins which were never forgiven. There is no blood atonement, redemption, or reconciliation for them.

⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. (1 Thess. 5:9-10)

Here we see clearly for whom Christ died. Paul is writing to believers in Thessalonica. We know that believers are being referred to because only believers have been appointed or chosen to obtain salvation and not wrath. Paul says that Jesus Christ "died for us" that we should always live with Him. Those in hell will never live with Him.

¹⁰ For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. (1 Tim. 4:10)

Paul is writing to Timothy as one Christian to another, both of whom trust in the living God. Who is this living God? He is the Savior of all men, meaning both Jews and Gentiles. Notice Paul adds a further clarification in this verse. He says "especially" of those who believe. Believers are Christians or God's elect. Jesus Christ is the Savior of Jews and Gentiles who believe in Him. Those who reject Him are not saved by Him, thus He is not their Savior. His atoning death was meant for believers, Christians, the elect, and not for those who die in unbelief.

Clearly, Jesus knew before coming to this earth, who would believe and who would not believe in Him. He died on the cross to save those He knew would have faith in Him. His death or blood atonement had no relevance, meaning, purpose, or value for those who rejected Him and His atonement and then suffer eternally in hell for their sins which would never be forgiven nor atoned for.

Verses That Appear To Support A Universal Atonement

Next, I would like to examine a number of verses in the Bible that appear to say or suggest that Jesus died for every single person. I believe after this examination, it will be clear that Jesus died for Christians or believers only, not for every single person who has ever lived since the time of Christ.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

At first glance, it appears this verse is saying that Jesus, in His death as the Lamb of God, took away every sin of every person who lived after Jesus' crucifixion. Let me show you how this understanding of the verse could not possibly be the correct interpretation.

When the word "world" is used in the New Testament, especially when salvation is being referred to, it is not necessarily referring to every single person in the world. It may be talking about the world which includes the only two groups of people that make up the world, Jews and Gentiles. Remember, salvation was opened up to include Gentiles in the New Testament. This was a major aspect of the gospel or the good news of grace. So, Jesus' atoning death would now take away the sins of the world which consists of Jews and Gentiles.

The word "world" can also refer to two different groups of people, the world of God's elect people who are or will be believers or the world of the non-elect who will never believe in Christ. Let me give you two verses that show this difference.

Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." (John 4:42)

Here the words "Savior of the world" clearly refer to God's chosen or elect people of the world, those who will become Christians who are saved by Jesus by their faith. Notice these people said, "Now we believe..." Did Jesus save anyone in hell today? The answer is no. Otherwise, they would not be in hell. Therefore, was He their Savior? No, He wasn't because He didn't save them from punishment in hell because of their unbelief and sins. Jesus cannot be a Savior to people He didn't save. To think otherwise just doesn't make sense.

Now let's take a look when the word "world" is used to refer to the non-elect only or those who will never be saved because of their unbelief.

I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. ¹⁰ And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. (John 17:9-10)

Here we see that the Lord Jesus said in his high priestly prayer that He would pray for His chosen people whom He would save, who were His and His Father's, and who had been given to Him by the Father. He also said He would not pray for the world. Well, we can't interpret the word "world" here to mean every single person in the world, for the elect are being prayed for here. So, the only possible understanding of the word "world" here is the world of the non-elect, those who were not chosen by God and will never come to faith. Now, if Jesus would not even pray for this group, would He have died for them? If He would not have interceded in prayer for them to be saved, He certainly would not have died to save them.

This would also be the proper understanding of the word "world" in John 3:16. *For God so loved the world [His chosen of both Jews and Gentiles] that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

The only people that know the Father are those to whom Jesus has chosen to reveal Him. Since only few are saved (Matt. 22:14), Jesus

only died for those few to whom He revealed the Father. What sense would it make for Jesus to die for people He was not willing to reveal the Father to?

All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (Matt. 11:27)

The most powerful evidence that Jesus did not take away the sins of every single person in the world after His crucifixion is hell itself and those who have died and gone there. Did those who are suffering and being punished in hell at this very moment have their sins taken away, pardoned, forgiven, and atoned for? If their sins have been atoned for, why are they in hell being punished for them? The whole purpose of the atonement of Christ is for someone else to pay the penalty for one's sins so that they would not have to. That was why the animal sacrifices were instituted. For one to receive the grace of that vicarious or substitutionary atonement, one must be a believer in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The reason these people are in hell is because they didn't believe in Christ. Therefore they had no atonement for their sins and are having to pay for their own sins in eternal suffering in hell.

Compared to God and His divine government, our government is completely lacking, inadequate, and elementary. Yet, even according to the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. constitution, there is a double jeopardy clause which states:

"nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb;."

If everyone's sins have been taken away by Christ's sacrifice, then those in hell are being punished twice. They are being punished once in Christ, their substitute, on the cross and now in hell forever. They are experiencing double jeopardy. How can that happen if their sins were atoned for or already paid for by Christ? The simple answer is that their sins were not taken away. Only the sins of believers, Christians, are taken away or atoned for by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Christ's atonement was limited in scope to Christians only. That is why only Christians are saved.

Let me address something right now that is so very important regarding Christ's blood atonement. When it is said that His atonement was limited in scope to Christians only, that in no way denigrates or lessens His wonderful, blessed, and powerful atoning death and sacrifice. Jesus' blood sacrifice was sufficient to literally atone for the sins of every single person in the world if that had been the Father's will. It was, however, efficient only for Christians, those the Father gave to Christ before the foundation of the world. There is really no difference in saying that Christ's atonement was only for Christians than in saying salvation is only for Christians. Yet many Christians are offended at the former statement but none at the latter statement. The atonement and salvation go hand in hand. You can't have one without the other.

And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)

In verse 2 here, we see the word "propitiation". As stated earlier, this word means satisfaction or appeasement. God the Father was satisfied or appeased to forgive us of our sins because Christ paid the penalty for them. This verse appears to say that God's satisfaction or propitiation was for the sins of every single person. Here again, that view would not be correct as it was not correct when discussing John 1:29 previously. The words "whole world" used in this verse is added emphasis to mean not just a propitiation or satisfaction for the sins of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles who believe. We can understand this verse as follows:

And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins [saved Jews-John was Jewish], and not for ours only [saved Jews] but also for the whole world [saved Jews and Gentiles].

In this verse, the words "whole world" are used. Does the fact that these words are used mean every single individual received God's propitiation or satisfaction? No, it doesn't. Let me give you another verse in Scripture where these words are used and they clearly do not mean every single person.

⁹ *So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev. 12:9)*

After Satan was cast out of heaven he has deceived great multitudes of unsaved people. However, he has not deceived Christians who have received the truth of God and salvation. In Mark 13:20 and 2 Thess. 2:9-14, we see that God protects His elect from the deception of Satan. Therefore, the words "whole world" cannot possibly mean every single person in the world.

Also, what about those suffering in hell?

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36)

Again, those suffering in hell are undergoing the wrath of God for their unbelief. Christ's crucifixion did not propitiate, satisfy or appease God for their sins. They are paying the penalty for their own sins for all eternity.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. (Heb. 2:9)

Let me say that only in a generic or general sense did Jesus taste death for mankind. I would view the meaning of the word everyone here to again be adding emphasis to the fact that the benefits of Christ's death included everyone in the world meaning both Jews and Gentiles, not every single person. Jesus in no sense atoned for those who have died in unbelief. They are receiving the wrath of God for all eternity because their sins were not atoned for by Christ.

To understand Heb. 2:9 more completely and to know specifically for whom Jesus tasted death, we need to continue on with the verses that follow to understand the proper context.

¹⁰ *For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their*

salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² saying: I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." ¹³ And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."

In verses 10 through 13, it is clear that those for whom Jesus tasted death referred to in verse 9 are Christians only. They are His sons who were brought to glory, His brethren, and His children who were given to Christ by the Father, who are saved by the captain of their salvation through His sufferings in His atonement. This description would never be referring to the unsaved in hell, only to believers saved by the blood of Christ.

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. (II Peter 2:1)

Again, it must be understood that these who go to destruction and hell for their unbelief and evil actions were bought by the Lord only in a general sense in that Christ died for mankind in a general way. In no sense, however, did Jesus Christ's blood atonement take away the sins of these evil men in hell. In no way did the blood of Jesus cleanse these men of their sins. In no way did these men receive redemption or reconciliation for their sins. If they received Christ's atonement, their sins would have been forgiven and they would have been reconciled with God. Those in hell are never saved by the blood of Jesus. Therefore, they never received His blood atonement.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (Isa.53:6)

To understand who the "us all" is, we must go back to the first verse of chapter 53 for the proper context. "*Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*" (Isa. 53:1) In verse one, Isaiah is writing to the chosen people of God and asks the question who has believed our report which is another way to

ask who has faith in the message of God? The next question is, to whom has the Lord been revealed? The answers to these questions are believers who are the people of God, not every single person. The Lord laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of all of us who are believers.

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, ⁷ for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. (1 Tim. 2:5-7)

These verses say that Christ gave Himself a ransom for all. The “all” here is referring to all men or peoples, saved Jews and Gentiles, not every single person. In verse 7, we see Paul emphasize that he was a teacher of the Gentiles, something that would be unheard of in the Old Testament. His mentioning the Gentiles is another way of saying that Jesus gave Himself a ransom for believing Gentiles also.

What is a ransom? It is a payment price to have someone released from captivity. In this case, it would be release from the punishment of their sins. Those in hell will never receive release from their chains and imprisonment. Why? It is because there was no ransom payment ever made on their behalf to get them out. Jesus paid the ransom price for Christians only as they have been pardoned for their sins and will never have to receive eternal punishment in hell.

And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Matt. 20:27-28)

Many people had the ransom price paid by the blood of Christ on the cross but not every single person did, only believers in our Lord Jesus. Remember, a ransom is a price paid to release someone from captivity or imprisonment. This only happens for believers who have the faith of God’s elect. (Titus 1:1) Those in hell will never be released so the ransom payment was not paid for them.

⁴ *I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ¹⁵ Yet if your brother is grieved because of your*

food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. (Rom. 14:14-15)

The first thing we need to know about verse 15 is the fact that Paul has been talking to believers in Rome. In this chapter, he is talking about those Christians who become offended if they see another Christian brother eat, drink, or do something that they feel is not appropriate for a Christian to do. This might be harmful or hurtful for the Christian who is offended. The word "destroy" doesn't mean the offended Christian loses his faith and might become lost. It just means the offended Christian might be damaged spiritually. It may create confusion in him and have some harmful effects in his Christian life. We will see in chapter 7 of this book that once a person truly repents of his sins and has saving faith, he will never lose that salvation. God has promised those He has chosen to keep them saved. Verse 15 could not be talking about the unsaved because they could care less about these matters they consider foolishness. (1 Cor. 2:14). Therefore this verse cannot be used to prove that Christ atoned for the sins of those who will perish in hell.

⁹ But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. ¹⁰ For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? ¹¹ And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? ¹² But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. 1 Cor. 8:9-13.

These verses and the explanation are also similar to the previous verses. Notice also here that it is talking about the brethren or our brothers stumbling. Our brothers or brethren are referring to our fellow Christians. We don't want to offend our Christian brothers or sisters by doing something in our liberty that is a stumbling block to them. Therefore, this passage also cannot be used to support atonement for the unsaved as believers are being referred to here as the ones for whom Christ died.

¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (2 Cor. 5:14-15)

These verses are simply saying that Jesus died for all believers without distinction, both Jews and Gentiles. All men are dead in trespasses and sins until they come to saving faith. All men will die physically one day. Jesus died on the cross to save those chosen by the Father which included both believing Jews and Gentiles. Those for whom Jesus died here are believers who no longer live for themselves. Unbelievers always live for themselves. Notice how the verses continue in chapter 5 of 2 Cor.

¹⁸ Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:18-21)

In verse 18, God has reconciled "us", the believers to whom Paul is writing, to Himself. God reconciled the "world" (Jew and Gentile believers) to Himself, not every single person. Notice God did not impute or credit to their account their trespasses. However, those in hell do have their sins imputed to their account. Only those who have become the righteousness of God in Christ are reconciled to God. Those in hell never have this righteousness or reconciliation with God. Therefore Jesus did not die for them.

Conclusion

Although there are a few verses that appear to indicate Christ died for every single person, we must compare Scripture with Scripture and consider the totality of the verses on each side. The verses that prove

the atonement for Christians only are overwhelming contrasted with those few verses that appear to suggest an atonement for those unbelievers who are damned.

If we want to know the truth of the extent of Christ's atonement, all we have to do is to consider those in hell. None of those people received the atonement of Christ which includes redemption, reconciliation, cleansing from sin, righteousness, forgiveness, pardon, propitiation, a ransom, or the remission or removal of their sins. For atonement to have happened, all these aspects of atonement would have had to have taken place also. Only Christians have received all these benefits from Christ's atoning death.

Who are they who have been redeemed by Christ's blood? They are only Christians or believers who will be kings and priests and will reign on earth. This can never happen for those in hell.

⁹And they sang a new song, saying; "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, ¹⁰and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth." (Rev. 5:9-10)

However, there is one thing both sides of this issue agree on. Only those who die with saving faith will have eternal life. The rest will suffer eternal damnation. Both sides agree that Jesus died for Christians or God's elect. The only point of disagreement has to do with the unsaved in hell. If they perish in hell, how did Christ's atoning death benefit them? It didn't. So, this disagreement in the final analysis doesn't really matter. It is only brought up to show how the Son's free grace role in the salvation of God's people works.

This concludes the Son's part in the free grace salvation of man. The Father chose, elected, and predestined a people whom He foreordained to save. The Father sent Jesus, His Son, to earth to die for these He chose and to save each and every one of them so that none would be lost. This was the Father's will. This is what Jesus did. We, God's children, His elect people, have been the beneficiaries of His wonderful free grace, for we did nothing to deserve it.

Thank You, Lord Jesus, for dying in Your atonement for us, those chosen by You, so that we would escape the damnation we deserve in hell.

...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,... (Heb. 12:2)

Chapter 7

Free Grace Salvation – The Work of God the Holy Spirit

Now that we have seen the role of free grace by the Father and the Son, let us turn to that of the Holy Spirit to see His free grace role in the salvation of man. We have seen how the unsaved man is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. He is incapable of coming to Christ by the power of a free will. So, how does the Father's chosen vessel for whom Christ died come to Him in faith? How does God make that happen? The work of the Holy Spirit is that last phase in the free grace plan of God's salvation. It is the Spirit of God who takes what the Father did in election and what the Son did in His sacrificial death for those elect, and applies it to the heart of the unsaved, spiritually dead, elect sinner to bring him to saving faith. The role of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of man is regeneration or the new birth.

You Must Be Born Again

To help us understand more how the Holy Spirit brings the chosen but helpless unsaved sinner to Christ, let's look at some Scripture where we see how this happens. The first important Scripture concerning the new birth or regeneration that I would like us to look at is the familiar account of Nicodemus, the Pharisee, who comes to Jesus by night to have a discussion with Him.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." ³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, 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, "Most assuredly, 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 the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:1-8)

In this account, Nicodemus is confused by the words of Jesus. He thought that Jesus was talking about a physical rebirth. Jesus, however, was talking about a spiritual rebirth. This spiritual new birth has to happen before an individual can see the kingdom of God and have spiritual sight. We know this because of the use of the word "unless" by Jesus in verse 3 and 5 above. The KJV uses the word "except". This spiritual sight is faith. Something must happen first for a person to come to faith to be able to see the kingdom of God.

Jesus says the same thing in a different way in verses 5 and 6. He says unless one is born of water and the Spirit one cannot enter the kingdom of God. A spiritual washing must happen before one can have faith and enter the kingdom of God. What was this spiritual washing? It was the new birth or the washing of regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, (Titus 3:5)

Regeneration, the new birth, and the quickening power of God are the work of the Holy Spirit in the free grace salvation of God. It is what Jesus is describing to Nicodemus that must happen first before one can come to faith.

Which Comes First, Faith or the New Birth?

The issue before us is the order of the new birth. This is a key question and one that divides many Christians. Most Christians believe that they produce their faith by the use of their free will with the help of God. Once they produce faith then God gives them the new birth and they are saved. There are problems with this view.

The first problem is the words of Jesus Himself. Jesus was saying to Nicodemus that the new birth has to happen first. He is saying that before someone can have spiritual sight (faith) and before he can enter the kingdom of God (salvation), the new birth must happen first so the spiritually dead sinner can see and enter the kingdom. Again, the key word is "unless" in John 3:1-5.

The second problem with this view that faith comes before the new birth is that it makes salvation a reward rather than a gift from God. According to the free will view, we get this new birth and thus salvation after we are able to produce faith by our own ability of the will. If we use this ability well to produce our faith, God gives us the new birth, regenerates us, and then we are saved. We earned it by being able to somehow process this spiritual information by our free will while being spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. This would be a spiritual impossibility.

The free grace view maintains that regeneration or the new birth comes before faith therefore salvation is truly a gift and not a reward. Now, on whom does God bestow this gift of regeneration and on what basis? The grace or gift of the new birth is bestowed on those God has chosen, before the foundation of the world, to give it to. This is how God, in His free grace salvation plan, brings His chosen vessel to Himself. He does it by the power of His grace in the new birth, not by any power of the will of the spiritually dead unsaved sinner. The basis of why one receives the new birth is, as was said earlier, according to the secret good pleasure, counsel, and purpose of God. (Eph. 1:5, 11)

It is only by the work of regeneration of the Holy Spirit that a spiritually dead unsaved sinner can be raised spiritually from death to life. It is only then that such a person can receive the gift of faith from

God. It is the Spirit who gives one eternal life. The flesh or wills of men profit nothing.

⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. (John 6:63)

How the Holy Spirit Brings Us to Faith

Let us now turn to some verses in Scripture that describe the work of the Holy Spirit as He brings God's elect to saving faith. We know from the Bible that for one to be saved the person must repent of his sins and have faith in Jesus Christ. We know that faith comes from God. It is His gift to us, not our gift to God. (Eph. 2:8-9) As Christians we do the believing but only after God has graciously opened our hearts so that we can believe. An excellent example of this is the case of Lydia.

Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. (Acts 16:14)

We see here that God opened Lydia's heart first, that necessary action by God in regeneration before faith can happen, and then she believed the things Paul shared with her about Jesus Christ. The heart here is just a synonym for the will. The Lord opened her will. Could Lydia have believed in Christ without God opening her heart or will? The answer is an obvious no. The opening of her will was necessary because her will was dead in sins. The opening of the heart or will is the new birth. This is accomplished by God, not by man or by his will.

²⁷ Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. (Acts. 14:27)

Here we see God opening the hearts and wills of many who were Gentiles. Who is in control of faith here? Was it by the will of God or by the will of men? It was God Who determined to give faith to the Gentiles. The Gentiles could not have come to faith just like Lydia could not have come to faith unless God opened their hearts or wills

for them to be able to receive His gift of faith. This was a sovereign decision by God. He did not show the Gentiles this grace in the Old Testament, but He did in the New Testament. Praise God!

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:44)

When this verse says no one can come to Jesus, it means no one has the ability or power to do so. Their spiritually dead wills are not able to accomplish this. The drawing of the Father refers to the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit to draw or drag the chosen sinner to faith in Christ.

Repentance is something we normally think comes from us, but Scripture records that repentance is as much a gift from God to us as faith is.

Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. (Acts 5:31)

When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life." (Acts 11:18)

From these two verses, we see that it is God who gives or grants repentance to people. He did this for the Jews and for also the Gentiles. It is necessary that for a person to repent, God must turn his heart to repent and turn him away from his sins. The person does the repenting just like the believer does the believing, but only after God has opened his spiritually dead and hardened heart or will so that he has the ability to repent and believe. It can only happen by the new birth before repentance and faith occurs, not by someone's free will. This is what Jesus is telling Nicodemus in John 3:3, 5 when He said that "unless" a person is born again, he cannot see or enter the kingdom of God. The "unless" (the new birth) must happen before spiritual sight (faith) can happen and before entering the kingdom (salvation) can occur.

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, (Phil. 1:29)

...if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, (2 Tim. 2:25)

These are two more verses which show it is God who gives faith and repentance to people so they can believe and repent. The word "grant" which means to give is the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit opening their wills so that they can come to Christ.

There are two verses that not only tell us Who causes this new birth but also who is not the cause of this regeneration or quickening.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

Here we see clearly that those who believe and receive Christ were born (again), not by the will of man but by God. You don't see free will here, but you do see this birth taking place by the power of God.

So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. (Rom. 9:16)

This verse also tells us our faith and salvation comes not from the person who wills it (free will), nor from one who tries to obtain it by doing good works (running). Salvation and the new birth only come from God in His marvelous mercy toward us. We did nothing to earn it or bring it to pass. It was by His free grace of mercy in His choosing us to salvation before the world began.

Another way to understand this new birth is that it is accomplished by the quickening power of God. To quicken means to make alive.

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, (Eph. 2:1-2)

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (Eph. 2:4-5)

In the KJV, the word "quicken" is used instead of "made us alive" which is used in the NKJV. Notice here that we were spiritually dead and then God made us alive by the new birth. It was God "who made us alive" not our wills. We had no faith when spiritually dead. God made us alive so that we could see and enter the kingdom of God by faith. We must not get the cart before the horse. The new birth comes first to quicken us out of our state of spiritual death so that we can come to faith in Christ. Note that it is the Holy Spirit who gives us whatever measure of faith we possess. We must not exalt ourselves to think we brought ourselves to faith. It is entirely a free gift from God and not of us. (Eph. 2:8-9)

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. (Rom. 12:3)

So, it is evident that the only power that can bring us out of a state of spiritual death is the quickening or regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. We can't see spiritual things nor can we enter the kingdom of God because we are spiritually dead without any spiritual understanding. (Rom. 3:11) When God graciously gives us the new birth, He opens our eyes so we can see and gives us spiritual legs to walk into the kingdom. It truly is the same type of miracle that Jesus did when He gave physical sight to the blind, made the lame walk, and raised dead people back to life. It is a spiritual miracle rather than a physical miracle but a miracle just the same.

Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, of Your holy temple. (Psalm 65:4)

It is the Holy Spirit, in His regenerating, drawing, and dragging power that causes the chosen, unsaved person to come to Christ and be saved. Without this wonderful grace and power, an unsaved person could never come to Christ.

⁶ And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. (Dt. 30:6)

This is an Old Testament verse that describes the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. It is God who spiritually cuts away the foreskin of sin that has blinded their wills so that they can see and live spiritually and love God with all their being. This can happen only by the gracious act of God because their hearts or wills are dead.

²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (Ezek. 36:26-27)

Again, we see these hearts are hearts of stone, hardened by sin. This is describing their wills which are hard and obstinate. No free will here. The Holy Spirit then, by His powerful grace, gives them a new heart and causes them to be saved and to walk in His statutes. This is accomplished, not by their wills of stone, but only by the wonderful grace of God who softens and causes their wills to be obedient to Him.

¹ Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, ² as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. (John 17:1-2)

We see in these verses the power of God to give eternal life to all of God's chosen vessels. By His omnipotent power and authority over all flesh, Jesus gives eternal life to all those the Father gave Him. For no one can resist God's will or power.

¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa. 55:11)

The witnessing power and success of the Word of God will never fail to accomplish the will of God. If it did one time, this verse could not be true. The Word will accomplish God's will every time because it will

bring to salvation every one of those the Father planned or chose to save and gave to His Son. It is by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit that this happens.

We also see the great power of God the Holy Spirit in drawing or dragging His chosen ones to Himself in the call of Jesus' disciples.

¹⁸ And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. ²¹ Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. (Matt. 4:18-22)

These fishermen left everything immediately to follow Jesus. They left their occupation and their family to follow this itinerant preacher they knew little of. They did this because of Jesus simply commanding them to follow Him. How could they not obey the power of God's voice when even the wind and sea obey Him?

Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷ So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Matt. 8:26-27)

We see this same power used in the case of Levi.

¹³ Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. ¹⁴ As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. (Mark 2:13-14)

Levi was a tax collector who earned a very good living taxing the people. He was set for life if he just did not make any mistakes with the Roman authorities. Yet he gave it all up after this stranger just walked by and said, "Follow Me." That simple command of two words overpowered his will that would have wanted him to stay. He could

not withstand the power of Jesus' command, so he left everything and followed Him.

Can Those God Wants to Save Resist His Will?

In this segment, I want us to look at a couple of verses that are often quoted to show that those whom God wants to save can resist His will by their free will.

³⁷ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matt. 23:37)

First, chapter 23 is about Jesus denouncing the religious leadership, the scribes and the Pharisees, for their evil deeds. In verse 37, Jesus criticizes them for doing all they could to prevent Him from getting His message across to their children. The "you were not willing" part of the verse is referring to the religious leadership in Jerusalem, not to the children.

Actually, all unsaved people are unwilling to come to Christ, for no one seeks Him. (Rom. 3:11) They will all resist any spiritual enticing or pleadings. (1 Cor. 2:14) Before one is saved, he can't come to Christ unless and except God works the miracle of regeneration in his heart or will. (John 3:3,5; 6:44; Acts 16:14)

Jesus Christ possessed two natures. One was His human nature and one was His divine nature. We see His human nature when He "wept" at Lazarus' funeral, when He asked his Father to remove the cup at the Garden of Gethsemane, and when He tired, was thirsty, and needed rest and sleep. In the garden His divine side knew it was the Father's will for Him to suffer the cross, yet His human side requested that this cup be removed. (Matt. 26:39) We see also that Christ's human side did not know the time of His return in power and glory to the earth after His resurrection (Mark 13:32), yet His divine side, of course, did know this fact.

Therefore, in His human, compassionate side, He would have gathered the children under His arm, even though His divine side knew that only the Father's elect would be so gathered. His point of this verse is to denounce the religious leadership for the hardness of their hearts. However, they had no power over Him to prevent Him from bringing these children to Him if any of them were one of His elect. Jesus will not lose a single person given to Him by the Father. (John 6:39) These religious leaders could never resist or prevent Jesus from bringing His elect to Himself. For no one can resist His will.

"...For who has resisted His will?" (Rom. 9:19)

The same can be said of Acts 7:51.

51 *"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.*

Stephen is here talking to those Jews who were about to stone him to death. They resisted the Holy Spirit in that they rejected the message of Christ. Most of whom he was referring to were not among the elect of God. We know that at least one of those Jews was numbered among the elect. It was Saul who later became the Apostle Paul.

We need to remember that the gospel call is both external to the "many" and internal to the "few".

14 *"For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. 22:14)*

All men will resist the Holy Spirit until God, in His grace, touches the wills of His chosen people, opens their hearts, minds, and wills so that they will come to Christ most freely and willingly. No one comes kicking and screaming against their wills to Christ; they come freely and willingly because God has touched them and inclined them by His Spirit of grace to come to Christ. This internal call they will not resist because they want to come to Christ being made willing by God. This He did for Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), to Lydia in Thyatira (Acts 16:14), and to every other person who has come to faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9). No one can resist His will (Rom. 9:19) to bring every single person God has given to the Son before time. (John 6:39)

³⁷ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. (John 6:37)

Here Jesus makes a promise that cannot be broken. He promises that every single person the Father gave Him, all the Father's elect, "will" come to Him. Not maybe or possibly or if they use their wills properly. They will come. It is a certainty. The Holy Spirit will draw or drag them to Jesus for certain. It is a guarantee and promise from God Himself.

But What About the Whosoever Will?

I remember once hearing a preacher make the following statement very emphatically in a sermon when talking about the salvation of man.

"It's not the elect, it's the whosoever will!"

Although this preacher certainly had enthusiasm for evangelism during his message, he didn't understand the Scriptures on this particular point. If he had, he would have known that the "whosoever will" are the elect and only the elect. Every Christian is the elect of God. I have given many passages in this chapter showing that God, in His grace, touches, softens, inclines, and causes the wills of spiritually dead unsaved men who have been chosen by Him to come to Christ freely and willingly. They are the whosoever will. They can't come by any free will of theirs, but they will certainly come when God quickens their dead wills mercifully and wakes them up spiritually.

¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13)

Can You Lose Your Salvation?

Another debate among Christians has to do with whether or not we can lose our salvation once we have come to saving faith. Since this is a work of free grace by the Holy Spirit, I want to address this issue here, so I will try to examine the most important verses on each side of this issue.

Scriptures that Prove the Eternal Security of the Believer

First, I want to discuss the eternal security of the believer. This is part of the free grace plan of salvation and also a work of the Holy Spirit of God. The eternal security of the believer simply means that once God has saved us, His elect, by our faith and repentance, we are forever saved as a child of God and can never lose this as the Holy Spirit has sealed us until the day of redemption. God would not choose us for salvation before the foundation of the world only to let us perish later. The power that raised us to Christ when we were spiritually dead will also keep us saved throughout our life. Praise God!

⁴⁰ And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. (Jer. 32:40)

Jeremiah tells us that when God saves these people by His everlasting covenant that He will continue to be faithful to His people. He will instill a fear in their hearts or wills so that they will not depart from Him.

²⁴ "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." (John 5:24)

All of God's saved by their faith in Jesus Christ have everlasting life. They will not come into judgment for their salvation but have passed from spiritual death to spiritual life. If they have everlasting life how can it be taken away? It can't because it is everlasting.

Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. (John 17:12)

Jesus will keep from losing salvation those the Father has given the Son, His elect. Not a one will be lost. Only the son of perdition, Judas, who was never one of the elect of God, was lost. Judas was chosen by Christ to be a disciple but not to personal salvation. This was all accomplished so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

The saved of God receive an eternal inheritance that will never fade away and that is securely reserved in heaven for them. They are kept eternally secure by the powerful grace of God through faith and salvation which will be revealed on judgment day.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph. 4:30)

Once we are saved, the Holy Spirit of God seals us to Himself. No one can break that seal, for we are sealed until the day of redemption. The day of redemption is the day when we get our glorified bodies at the resurrection of life on the last day (John 6:39) when Jesus returns to earth. That is when our bodies and spirits find full redemption and are reunited into a wonderful new and eternal body.

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph. 1:13-14)

Here is another verse regarding the sealing of the Holy Spirit who keeps us saved for all eternity. The Holy Spirit of promise seals God's people once they believe, and guarantees our eternal inheritance in heaven. Jesus Christ purchased our redemption with His blood and the Holy Spirit seals us to the day of our bodily resurrection when Christ returns to earth.

There are many verses in the Bible that state believers in Jesus Christ have everlasting life. Perhaps the verse we are most familiar with is John 3:16.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Once we believe in Christ, we have everlasting life and will not perish. This everlasting life is a present possession, one that we "have" immediately after coming to faith in Jesus Christ. What does everlasting life mean? It means for all eternity. It is ever-lasting. Once we are saved, we have spiritual life forever. How then can it be taken away if it is everlasting? You can't have everlasting life and at the same time not have everlasting life. That is impossible.

The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. (Jer. 31:3)

Not only do we have everlasting life as believers in Christ, we also have God's everlasting love upon us. He brings or draws us to Him with His loving kindness. He would never forsake us and let us perish because He loves us forever.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psalms 23:6)

God's people are recipients of His goodness and mercy their entire lives. We will dwell in His house (heaven) for all eternity.

Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: (Jude 1)

Jude is telling us that Christians are preserved or kept by God. We have been chosen, called, and sanctified as believers and are preserved by the power of God in our belief so that we never lose our status with Him as believers.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, (Jude 24)

God keeps us from stumbling (falling in the KJV), and Christ presents us faultless before His glory. This is all done by the miracle of God's free grace and not by any power of the human will.

²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (John 10:27-29)

Here we see that the Lord's saved, His sheep, those given to the Son by the Father have eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take Jesus' sheep out of the Father's or the Son's hand, not even we ourselves.

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:37-39)

Nothing in all of creation is powerful enough to separate us from the love of God once we are one of His believers. Remember, Paul is writing to the Roman believers in the epistle of Romans. Only Christians are more than conquerors through the love of God in Christ Jesus.

We can only have assurance of our salvation if we know it can't be lost. If we are saved we have eternal life. How then can we lose it if it is eternal? The apostle John says we can know we have eternal life.

¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:13)

If you could lose your salvation at any moment, you would never be able to be certain you were saved. John here says we can know we are saved and have eternal life. We will also continue to believe in Jesus Christ.

⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; (Phil. 1:6)

It was the Holy Spirit who began the good work of salvation in us by the new birth. It was by His revealing gift of faith by grace that we believe. The Holy Spirit also keeps us saved by completing this work of faith in us to the day Jesus Christ returns.

¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. (Heb. 10:14)

Because of the wonderful sacrificial death of Jesus, Christians, who are being sanctified, are made perfect. We receive His perfection in His vicarious or substitutionary death on our behalf. If by His one sacrifice we have been perfected forever, how then can we perish? The answer is that we can't.

In closing, let me say that even though we have eternal security as believers, we can't just live for the Devil and think we can get away with it. First of all, if a person continues to enjoy his sins and not repent and confess them to God, I would question whether this person was ever truly saved or born again. However, if a person is saved and backslides into repeated sin, the Lord can chastise the believer to bring him back to Him. The Lord can also take him on to heaven. If we can lose our salvation and then gain it back, lose it again and gain it back, it appears that salvation is based on our works or efforts and not a free gift from God.

Verses That Appear To Say We Can Lose Our Salvation

As with any biblical issue that is debated, there are always some verses that appear to support the other side. I want to take some time to analyze those verses that appear to indicate that, once we are saved, we can lose that salvation.

And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. (Matt. 10:22)

Some view this verse to mean you can lose your salvation if you don't endure to the end. If, once saved, we didn't endure, we could lose our salvation. The Bible, however, makes it clear that all who are saved, Christians, God's elect, will endure to the end because they are sealed by the Holy Spirit to the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). If left to a free will, they wouldn't endure. However, God, in His free grace, supernaturally keeps us in Him so that we will always endure. No man can take us out of the hand of the Father (John 10:29).

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. (John 15:1-6)

Jesus Christ is the true vine or the trunk of the tree. Many branches spring forth out of the tree, so, in that sense, all the branches are a part of Jesus or in Him. Is not Jesus the Creator of all things? Are we not, therefore, in a creative sense, all children of God? However, many of the branches in Him do not bear fruit because they are not saved. They do not abide in Him because they have no fruit which is evidence of them having no saving faith. James 2:20 says, *"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead"*? These branches will be removed from the trunk of Christ and will be

cast into the fires of hell. Those branches that abide in Jesus are those who have saving faith and produce fruit for the kingdom.

²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. ²¹ For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. (2 Peter 2:20-21)

⁴ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. (Heb. 6:4-6)

²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:26-29)

These three passages are referring to the same thing. We have here unsaved people who have come close to salvation. Perhaps they were witnessed to, read the Bible, attended church, and had a false salvation experience and never became saved. They tasted the gospel and they partook of the Holy Spirit. They were enlightened. Anyone who reads the Word of God, hears it, or takes the Lord's Supper tastes the gospel or partakes of the Holy Spirit who wrote the Word of God. We know of people who have been touched by the gospel but never came to saving faith and who fell away. Many a profession of faith has been a false one. They had knowledge of the Lord Jesus but rejected Christ. They put Christ to an open shame, trampled over Him, and insulted the Holy Spirit by hearing the gospel and its benefits and

rejecting it. The Holy Spirit will not bring these people to salvation. In hell, their torment will be greater knowing they rejected the truth shown them. They had a head knowledge of the Lord, just like the demons (James 2:19), but not a saving, heart knowledge. They were never saved, so they didn't lose their salvation.

It is therefore *"...impossible...to renew them again to repentance..."* (Heb. 6:6) Repentance means to feel sorrow for sin and to turn from it. For a time, these unsaved persons did experience a form of repentance but it was not genuine. Their total repudiation of Christ makes it impossible for them to renew their sorrow for sin or desire to turn from it.

The phrase in Heb. 10:29 quoted previously that says *"...by which he was sanctified..."* needs some further clarification. There are two possible ways to understand this phrase.

First, these unsaved individuals were associated with the true church of God, but never became true believers. They were in a sense sanctified or set apart for holy purposes for a time but later fell away. They had attended church, participated in the holy ordinances of Christ, and some even did great miracles as indicated in the next verses but were never saved.

²¹ *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* (Matt. 7:21-23)

Second, it may also be said that the person being referred to by this phrase in Heb. 10:29 is not the apostate but Jesus Christ. In other words, the apostate counted as a common thing the blood of the covenant by which Jesus was sanctified or set apart for holy purposes.

Three Views of Salvation

As we study salvation with regard to free grace and free will, we see that there are three different views. I would like to take a moment to discuss them briefly as we end this section on the eternal security of the believer.

Consistent Free Will

Consistent free will is the view that one comes to salvation by the use of his free will and that he can lose his salvation by the use of his free will also. It stands to reason, if one is going to claim that a free will exists and that it can be used to save someone, that same freedom can cause one to be lost. Therefore this view is consistent in its approach to free will.

That being said, I must respectfully also state this view is not scriptural for all the reasons fully enumerated in this book. Free will cannot make a spiritually dead person alive or quickened. Only the Holy Spirit in the new birth can do that. Also, we have already shown many verses that prove overwhelmingly that once we have been saved by Jesus Christ, no man can take us out of the Father's hand, not even ourselves. Why? It is because we are sealed and kept by the Holy Spirit to the day of redemption when Jesus Christ returns to gather His elect. (Matt. 24:31)

Inconsistent Free Will

Another view is what I term inconsistent free will. This view picks and chooses the best of both worlds, so to speak. It tries to mix free will with free grace. It claims the spiritually dead unsaved sinner can somehow use a free will ability to bring about his salvation on the front end but on the back end this believer cannot lose his salvation by his free will because of the special sealing grace of the Holy Spirit. God therefore allows freedom of the will before salvation but prevents

freedom of the will after salvation. This view is a contradiction with regard to the freedom of the will.

I must respectfully disagree with the first part of this view as also unscriptural but agree with the second part. The first part of this is to be rejected for reasons already given. With regard to the second part, this approach is correct as has been noted in previous sections of this chapter.

Consistent Free Grace

This view is both consistent and scriptural. Free will can neither save you nor cause you to lose your salvation. God's sovereign and omnipotent grace in the Father's election, the Son's redemption, and the Holy Spirit's regeneration and sealing will save and keep saved all of God's children, His elect or chosen ones. This is done by His free grace salvation plan which is the theme of this book.

Our unconditional election by God before time is the best proof that we will not lose our salvation. If God chose us before the foundation of the world according to His good pleasure and not according to what we did in life, we will never perish. However, if He chose us based on what we did in our lives then we can never know if we were good enough for salvation. We would never have any assurance of salvation. This would also make salvation a reward.

The immutable God who never changes (Heb. 13:8) and foreknows all things would not elect to salvation someone who later loses his or her salvation and perishes in hell. This would make it look like God didn't know what He was doing. God forbid! We will learn more about this in the next chapter.

Again, while there are some verses that appear to suggest we can lose our salvation, there are far more verses that prove otherwise. We have to compare Scripture with Scripture and look at the totality of verses that support each side. Doing this proves that we will never lose our salvation for the Scripture says believers will never perish. They will have everlasting life.

Chapter 8

Who Chose Whom?

The Bible teaches clearly that the Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world according to the good pleasure of His will. (Eph. 1:4-5) However, the free will salvation view tries to modify this biblical view. To make God seem more fair, this view says that God based His choice on what He foresaw people would do in their lives. In other words, God looked down through the tunnel of time, before the foundation of the world, and, in His omniscience and foreknowledge, He knew who, of their own free will, would choose Him or reject Him. So, on the basis of His foreknowledge of what people would do with the gospel, God chose them. Those that He foresaw would accept Christ, He chose or elected them. Those He foresaw would not accept Him, He passed over. Let's examine some of the biblical passages used to support this view.

God's Foreknowledge

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: (1 Peter 1:1-2)

There is no question that verse 2 states the "...elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..." What does foreknowledge mean? The word foreknowledge simply means to know beforehand. The next question we have to answer is what is it that the Father knew beforehand? Although God knows everything that is going to happen in the future, nowhere in this verse does it say that the elect were chosen according to God's foreknowledge of what they would do in their lives. It just simply says the elect according to the foreknowledge of God. Now, let's think this through. Wouldn't God have had to know

beforehand who these individuals were if He was going to elect them before the foundation of the world? Here the words elect according to the foreknowledge of God simply mean God knew beforehand the individuals He was going to elect. He knew who they were; He knew their names in His foreknowledge. In other words, God's foreknowledge in this passage had only to do with knowing people. Nowhere does it say here that God elected anyone based on His foreknowledge of what they did in their lives.

²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Rom. 8:29-30)

Again, this verse simply says that those God predestined (chose or elected before time) He knew who they were beforehand. The key word in verse 29 is "whom" which is a personal pronoun and refers to people not to actions. Notice this personal pronoun is used four times in this verse. God had to have this knowledge of who people were beforehand to be able to choose them from the beginning. There is nothing here that says God based his choice of particular persons on His foreknowledge of what they did in their lives. His foreknowledge here again has to do with people. There are significant problems with the free will view as to why God chose the elect.

First, if God chose people based on what they did in their lives, salvation is a reward for what they did. It turns the grace of God into a salvation based on the merits or actions of men. It makes salvation a two part process. If God does His part, and man does his part, God rewards man with salvation. This is not the salvation plan of the Bible.

Second, it takes away from God some of His glory in the salvation of man. Whatever man claims for himself, his free will leading to his salvation, then an equal amount is taken away from the glory of God.

Therefore, this free will view of the foreknowledge of God that bases election and thus salvation on the foreseen actions or merits of men is unscriptural and not true. The true and scripturally correct view is the free grace view of salvation.

According to the Good Pleasure of His Will

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,* ⁴ *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,* ⁵ *having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,* ⁶ *to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. (Eph. 1:3-6)*

¹¹ *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, (Eph. 1:11)*

The underlined words in the previous verses are exactly what the Scriptures tell us about how God chose us in Christ. He didn't choose us based on His foreknowledge of our merits, actions, or decisions. He chose us based on what the Scripture says in these verses. This is all God tells us and is all we are allowed to know. These underlined words prove that salvation is by the free grace of God and not according to our wills. If it is by our wills, then our salvation is a reward and not a gift.

However, we know that salvation is a free gift from God.

⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,* ⁹ *not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Eph. 2:8-9)*

We can boast in rewards, but if salvation is by free grace we have nothing of which to boast. We have to humbly accept the fact that we did absolutely nothing to merit our salvation from God. He chose us simply because He loved us before the foundation of the world.

So, the free will view puts the cart before the horse. It turns the free grace of God in His election of His people into a decision by God based on the actions of men. Who is sovereign in the free will view? Is God sovereign or is the spiritually dead unsaved sinner? Who chose whom? Notice a verse Jesus spoke to His disciples.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. (John 15:16)

We know that the biblical answer is God chose man first and enabled those chosen ones to come to Him. The saved man thinks he chose Christ, and he did, but only after and because God first chose him.

²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence. (1 Cor. 1:26-29)

As I stated previously, God has always been in the choosing business. We see here that God has called and chosen the brethren, those who are and will become believers. However, God's ways are different than man's ways. God doesn't choose on the same basis that man would choose. He often does the opposite. He may choose some of the most unlikely people so that no flesh would glory in His presence. This was what He did when He chose the twelve disciples. They were common, ordinary men who were uneducated and not eloquent. They would be considered lower class persons. Some were fishermen, and one was a hated tax collector. God chose these people so that He would get all

the glory and credit in their success. They could not glory in it, for they knew it all came from God.

The proper order is that God chose an elect people in the beginning according to His secret good pleasure and the purpose of His will. Those chosen then chose Christ at the appointed time after they experienced the new birth. However, God did not use His foreknowledge of the actions of men to elect them, for the Bible says none seek God or do good deeds that please God. (Rom. 3:10-11) He simply foreknew who they were and then chose those individuals based on His unconditional love for them. All to the praise of His glory and grace!

The Blowing Winds of the New Birth

Before closing this chapter, let's go back to Jesus' meeting with Nicodemus to learn more of the unconditional nature of God's electing love.

⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:7-8)

Nicodemus was confused about the new birth so Jesus here explains this to him in more depth. How is the new birth, being born again, or being regenerated by God, just like the wind that blows this way and that way? One cannot ascertain where the wind comes from or which way it is going. The wind has a random nature to it. This is exactly like the new birth in God's grace. God bestows the new birth on those to whom He has chosen to give it, not according to their works, merits, faithfulness, or actions. To us it appears that God's grace is randomly given to some, His elect, and not to others. It just looks random from our view point, but Scripture states God based His choice or election of individuals according to the good pleasure and purpose of His will. (Eph. 1:3-5, 11) God has His own reasons why He chooses some and not others. He does not reveal those reasons to us. This is unconditional grace because it is not based on what we did in our

lives. This keeps our salvation as grace and not a reward for past accomplishments. It keeps us from bragging, for we have nothing in our lives to brag about.

So, in summary, all Christians must believe in God's election and His elect for there are just too many verses to deny it. Therefore, each Christian is left with two choices regarding election. Conditional election, the free will view, teaches God chose us before the foundation of the world based on what we did in our lives with our will. Unconditional election, the free grace view, teaches that God graciously chose us before the foundation of the world according to the good pleasure of His will and not according to what we did in our lives. Since conditional election is based on what we did in our lives, it is a reward salvation. Unconditional election is based solely on the free grace of God and not on what we did in our lives. Therefore it is grace salvation. There is no middle or moderate position. To try to somehow take a middle or moderate position by holding on to free will in any way is to mix the work of God and the efforts of man. To do so again takes from God what is rightfully His and injects some form of merit into the salvation of man.

We chose Christ only because the Father first chose us!

Chapter 9

Doesn't God Want Everyone To Be Saved?

It does seem that most Christians today talk and write about God's love and how He wants everyone to be saved. That mindset is certainly appealing to us when it comes to our view of God. However, we also know from Scripture that only a few do get saved. In addition, if God wanted everyone to be saved, why did He have an election? Why would God elect some to salvation and not others before time if He truly wanted to save every single person? How can we reconcile these contradictory beliefs of God's sovereign will in election and the view held by most Christians that God wants to save every single person? If God is omnipotent, how can His will be defeated so often when so few are saved? Is the free will of man the only answer?

Verses That Appear To Say God Wants Everyone To Be Saved

Let's take a look at the main verses in Scripture that appear to suggest that God wants everyone to be saved to see if there is another way to understand and reconcile them with God's sovereign or unconditional election.

God is Not Willing that Any Should Perish

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

I would say this is perhaps the main verse in the Bible used to support the view that God wants everyone to be saved. At first reading, that is what it does appear to be saying, especially if viewed out of context.

However, let's examine this verse in some detail and also examine the context of the verse.

First, what is the promise that the Lord is not slack about? We see the answer to that in verses 3 and 4 of this chapter.

³ *knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,* ⁴ *and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."*

So, the promise being referred to in verse 9 is not the promise of His will for all men to be saved, it is referring to the promise of His return.

Second, to whom is Peter writing in this epistle? For that, we must turn back to the opening verse of this book and also of chapter 3.

¹ *Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: (2 Peter 1:1)*

¹ *Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), (2 Peter 3:1)*

It is very clear from these verses that Peter is writing to other Christians, those who have obtained like precious faith with him. They are beloved by Peter, and they have pure minds. Peter is writing to believers, not to anyone who is an unbeliever.

Third, with this background, we can now begin to understand the true meaning of 2 Peter 3:9. Peter next mentions that the Lord is longsuffering toward us. In other words, He is patient toward us. Who are the "us" toward whom God is longsuffering? The "us", without question, are those to whom he is writing: other Christians. Who are Christians or believers? They are the elect of God chosen before the foundation of the world. God is saying He is longsuffering toward them. There is nothing in this passage that has anything to do with the non-elect or those who will perish in hell. He is only longsuffering to

His own people, those who will one day come to faith. He is patient and is delaying His promised return to make sure that everyone of His elect will come to saving faith by His free grace.

Fourth, the verse can be understood as follows:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise [of his return], as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any [of us] should perish but that all [of us] should come to repentance.

The words any and all refer back to their antecedent "us". The "us", as we have noted, refers only to Christians who are God's people. Why would Peter who clearly addresses his remarks to Christians only in this entire book shift gears in the middle of this one verse to include every single person? The answer is he wouldn't and didn't.

So the proper way to understand this verse is as follows:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise [of His return], as some count slackness, but is longsuffering [patient] toward us [His elect] not willing that any [of His elect] should perish but that all [of His elect] should come to repentance.

This is not a self-serving interpretation of this verse as the context of this verse, chapter, and epistle support it. It reconciles this verse with God's election. It is a restatement of John 6:39 where Jesus says He will not lose one of those given to Him by the Father, His elect. So, this verse does not mean that God wills for every single person to be saved.

Did Peter Believe in Election?

Incidentally, did Peter, who wrote this passage, believe in election? If he did, then it would make sense that my interpretation above is the correct view. Let's look at some other verses written by Peter that can help us determine his view about election.

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: (1 Peter 1:1-2)

Here Peter calls Christians or believers elect. Their election was according to the foreknowledge of God in knowing who they were. It was not according to what they did as we have seen previously.

¹³ She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son. (1 Peter 5:13)

Peter refers to this Christian lady in Babylon as part of the elect along with those to whom he is writing.

¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹ for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:10-11)

Peter here is encouraging these Christians to whom he is writing (vs. 1) to live godly lives and show forth the traits mentioned in the previous verses of chapter 1. They had been called and elected by God to salvation so they should show forth those fruits of that salvation by their lives. God's elect will never lose their salvation because of the grace of God.

Therefore, Peter clearly believed in election. He would not have confused believers by declaring his belief in God's election in these verses but then go contrary to that declaration by saying that God wanted every single person to be saved in 2 Peter 3:9.

God Desires All Men to be Saved

Let us look at another key verse that is often used to suggest God wants every single person to be saved.

³ *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. 2:3-4)*

Does God truly desire that every single person be saved? If so, why doesn't He give every single person the same grace, benefits, and advantages? As we have seen before, some are born into Christian light with believing parents here in America and other places and some are born in countries with little or no light and sometimes suffering great persecution. If God wants every single person to be saved, why did He elect some and not others?

Let's see what is actually being said in this passage. God does will, want, and desire all peoples, nationalities, and countries to be saved. Remember, in the Old Testament, salvation was of the Jews. (John 4:22). God, in His wonderful grace, opened up the way of salvation to also include Gentiles. Jews and Gentiles make up all men just like they make up the world. What the Apostle Paul is saying here is that God desires all different kinds of peoples to be saved now (Jews and Gentiles - all men), not every single individual. Understanding the passage in this way enables us to reconcile it with the many other passages concerning God's election.

These Little Ones

¹⁴ *Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. (Matt. 18:14)*

From this verse, it appears that it is not the will of the Father that any of these people should perish. First, I do believe that it is not His will that children who die in infancy perish. You will see my thoughts and Scripture on this later. However, some interpret this to mean that it is not the Lord's will for any person to perish. That is not what He is saying here. We must go back to verse 6 of this chapter to understand who these little ones are.

⁶ *"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea."* (Matt. 18:6) Notice these little ones are believers in Christ. The Father is not willing that any of these little ones should perish "who believe in" Jesus. Believers are Christians who are also the elect of God. God is not willing that these should perish. (John 6:39) He will keep them saved by His wonderful free grace.

Does "World" Always Mean Every Single Person in the World?

¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16)

I have previously explained how the word "world" can mean different things. It can mean every single person, or it can be referring to a smaller group of people, all depending on the context. It can mean the world of God's elect (of all peoples Jews and Gentiles), as I believe it does here, or it can mean the world of the non-elect (John 17:9) who are of the world or worldly in a negative way. When you see the word "world" used in the context of salvation in the New Testament, it is almost always referring to God's elect of both Jews and Gentiles. Let me give you some more examples where the use of the word "world" or "whole world" does not mean every single person.

¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.* ¹⁸ *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,* ¹⁹ *that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.* (2 Cor. 5:17-19)

These verses are talking about saved persons who are new creations in Christ. In verse 19, Paul uses the phrase "...reconciling the world to Himself". Are those in hell reconciled with Christ? No. Clearly, the word world here is referring only to the world of believers whose

trespasses have not been imputed to them because they have been forgiven. Those in hell whose sins have been imputed to them must suffer for those sins for all eternity.

⁹ *So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev. 12:9)*

Do the words "whole world" here mean that every single person in the world is deceived by Satan? If that were the case, then no one has believed since Satan was cast out of heaven. The words "whole world" is special emphasis as to the effectiveness of Satan in deceiving great multitudes of people.

¹ *Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. (John 13:1)*

In John 13:1, we see Jesus loved his elect, "His own", to the very end. These He loved were in the world. This is consistent with my interpretation of John 3:16 and the other salvation verses that employ the word "world" in them.

¹⁶ *For God so loved the world [His elect who were in the world and whom He loved to the end] that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

Since God is omnipotent, He will accomplish whatever His will is. If He willed that every single person be saved, He would accomplish that. For with God all things are possible.

²⁵ *When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"* ²⁶ *But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 19:25-26)*

God wants or wills to save every single one of the elect the Father gave the Son before the world began. It was the purpose of the

Father in sending Jesus to the earth for Him to not lose one of those the Father gave Him. This was the main mission Jesus came to earth to accomplish.

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. (John 6:37-39)

If God truly willed that everyone be saved then everyone would be saved, for whose will is stronger, God's or man's?

³⁵ All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" (Dan. 4:35)

"For who has resisted His will?" (Rom. 9:19)

Scripture that Proves God Does Not Want Everyone to be Saved

The Parables of Christ

The parables of Christ are instructive here. As little children in Sunday School, we were all taught that parables were stories Jesus told, using earthly examples, to help people understand spiritual truths.

This explanation regarding parables is not scripturally true. What I'm about to share might shock you. Actually, Jesus spoke in parables to conceal the truth from a segment of the population. It was not His will that these people know the truth and then become saved.

¹⁰ But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. ¹¹ And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, ¹² so that ' Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not

understand; Lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them.”¹³ And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? (Mark 4:10-13)

In this passage, we see that Jesus spoke in parables to conceal the truth from certain people. He would then only reveal the truth to His disciples and others to whom He chose to reveal Himself. (Matt. 11:27) He had to explain to the disciples the meaning of these parables because they couldn't understand them.

³³ And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. ³⁴ But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples. (Mark 4:33-34)

Mark 4:10-13 clearly states that Jesus purposely hid spiritual truth from some (the non-elect) so that they would not be converted. He then revealed these truths to the Father's elect so that they could come to salvation. How else can this passage be understood?

Now let us look at a parallel passage that confirms what I have said here.

³⁷ But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, ³⁸ that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: “ Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: ⁴⁰ “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.” (John 12:37-40)

Here John states that even though Jesus had performed miracles in front of the people, many still did not believe in Him. How could the religious leaders and others reject Jesus after these miraculous displays of His power? This passage of the prophecy of Isaiah explains how that could happen. These people could not believe because God blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts or wills because He didn't want to heal or save them. This may be hard for us to accept, but this is the truth of Scripture.

The Apostle Paul makes a similar statement regarding the elect and the blinding of the non-elect. How can it be said that God is not willing that these whom He blinded should not perish but should come to repentance? What sense does that make if He blinded them so that they couldn't see or understand spiritual truth?

⁷ What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. ⁸ Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day. ⁹ And David says: Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. ¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always." (Rom. 11:7-10)

Although not in a parable, we see another example from Scripture where the Father hides spiritual truth from some, and reveals it to others to whom He has chosen to give it. Jesus only reveals the Father to those He chooses.

²¹ In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. ²² All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." (Luke 10:21-22)

The Holy Scriptures

We have just seen how the parables of Christ were given to conceal the truth of the mysteries of the kingdom from some and to reveal them to God's elect. It is also true that the Holy Scriptures are given only for the spiritual understanding of God's elect or His chosen people. This statement may seem harsh to you, but let's examine this more closely.

The Old Testament Scriptures were written only to the Jews beginning when Moses penned the first five books under the inspiration of the

Holy Spirit. The Old Testament books were written to God's chosen people, the twelve tribes of Israel, for their salvation, encouragement, warnings, and judgment. Throughout these many centuries, only the Jews received spiritual revelation from God. The other nations remained in spiritual darkness and damnation. Was God willing for these lost nations to perish? Yes. Was He willing for them to come to repentance? No. We know this as God only gave His salvation plan to the Jews through the Old Testament Scriptures.

The New Testament was written to God's people also, including both Jews and Gentiles which make up the "world"....."*For God so loved the world...*". The epistles of Paul and Peter were all addressed to believers. Luke and Acts were written by Luke to strengthen the faith of his friend Theophilus. Hebrews was written to the Jews to prove that Jesus was truly the Messiah, the sacrificial Lamb of God. Jude was written to those who were sanctified, called, and preserved in Christ. Revelation was written to God's servants in the seven churches. First, Second, and Third John were written to believers. Matthew starts off with the genealogy from the first Jew to Christ Himself. Mark mentions that John the Baptist is a fulfillment of what was prophesied by the Old Testament Jewish prophets regarding John as the forerunner of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. (Mark 1:2-8)

These New Testament books were written to other believers, God's elect, to encourage and strengthen their faith so they could grow in Christ and be used of God to spread the gospel around the world to bring to salvation more of God's chosen people. In the early church, these New Testament letters or books were passed hand to hand by Christians and given to churches to be read to believers there. No one knows who the elect of God are, so we are to witness to as many people as we can. God will bring to faith those He has chosen to be gracious and merciful to. God the Holy Spirit will reveal to His people the mysteries of His kingdom through the Word of God.

We need to remember that Jesus Christ is the Word of God.

¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)*

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

The main mission of the Word of God, Jesus Christ, from His Father was to not lose one of those the Father had given Him. (John 6:39) These are God's elect, chosen before the foundation of the world. The purpose of the Word of God is to bring the elect to salvation and to help them grow in Christ as Christians.

Only the elect of God, because of His grace to them, can understand the Holy Scriptures. We see this when Jesus appeared to two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus.

⁴⁴ Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." ⁴⁵ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. (Luke 24:44-45)

God Sends Some a Strong Delusion to Believe a Lie

Another passage that proves that God does not want every single person to be saved is the following passage concerning when the man of sin, also called the lawless one, is revealed.

⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. ⁹ The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thess 2:8-12)

This passage talks about how this evil, lawless one will come and show great signs and wonders to deceive many people by the power of

Satan. These people will perish in hell for their sins. The free will view explains these verses as judicial punishment by God for their continual unbelief and rejection of the gospel of Christ. This actually is true. However, it is also true that all men are in unbelief and reject the gospel until they believe by the free grace of God, for no one seeks or understands the things of God in his unsaved state. (Rom. 3:11, 1 Cor. 2:14)

If God truly wanted these people who perish to be saved, why did He send them a strong delusion that they would believe a lie and be damned? Would not this be considered tampering with their wills? If they were already in unbelief, why make sure they didn't believe later? Isn't it possible that if God had not sent this strong delusion so that they would believe this lie, they might have later repented and believed if someone had witnessed to them? We have all heard of death bed conversions. The thief on the cross was converted right before his death. Yet God's action here makes that impossible for them. Therefore, He does will for them to perish and not to come to repentance. These people are the non-elect, and it is not God's will for them to be saved or He would not have purposely sent them this strong delusion to cause them to believe this lie and be damned. He would have protected them from the deception of Satan as He does for His elect.

²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Matt. 24:24)

This refers to the great deception that will deceive everyone but the elect of God. How do we know the elect will be protected from this deception?

²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. (Matt. 24:22)

God, in His mercy to His chosen ones, supernaturally protects them from this great deception by shortening the days of trial. Paul, in the previous passage referred to (2 Thess. 2:8-12), is writing to the Thessalonians who have been chosen by God to salvation. After discussing the great Satanic power of this lawless one which deceives the non-elect, Paul goes immediately into comforting the Thessalonian

believers, telling them, in effect, not to worry about these great deceptions, for God has chosen them for salvation from the very beginning.

¹³ But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, ¹⁴ to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 2:13-14)

Judas Iscariot

Next, let's examine Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. There have been many questions about this man. Let's answer some of them with regard to free will and free grace. Did God want Judas to be saved? Did Judas have free will in his decision to betray Christ? At the last supper, Jesus informed the twelve disciples one of them would betray Him and who would do it.

²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. ²⁷ Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." ...³⁰ Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night. (John 13:26-27, 30)

The Scripture here tells us that Satan entered into Judas. This is a key fact and leads us to the answer of our two questions about him. If God wanted Judas to be saved, why did God allow Satan to enter Judas? He could have easily prevented Satan from entering Judas as God is all powerful. Jesus then could have taken Judas aside and warned him not to betray Him or he would suffer the consequences of damnation. He chose to allow Satan to enter Judas knowing, in His omniscience, that Judas would then betray Him. Jesus knew that after Judas committed the heinous sin of betraying the Son of God, he would commit suicide and perish in eternal damnation as Jesus called him the "son of perdition". (John 17:12)

Remember, Satan and the demons, although much more powerful than humans, can do nothing without the permission of God. God is all-powerful and will only allow something to happen if it fulfills His will so that it can be worked out for good in His eternal plan for "the called" or His elect who love Him. (Rom. 8:28)

We see in the book of Job, chapters 1 and 2, that Satan could only inflict suffering on Job after gaining permission from God. Satan could go no further than God allowed. Satan or the demons always must get permission from Christ before entering another creature. God is sovereign over all His creatures.

³¹ So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." ³² And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. (Matt. 8:31-32)

¹² And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." (Job 1:12)

We also see this permission in the case of Peter before he denied the Lord Jesus Christ. Before Satan could try to influence Peter's will, Satan had to get God's permission to do that.

³¹ And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." (Luke 22:31-32)

Notice that Jesus told Peter He would pray for him so that his faith would not fail. Jesus never told Judas that He would pray for him regarding his betrayal. Why? Peter was one of the Lord's elect and Judas, the son of perdition, was not. Jesus does not pray for everyone in the world, only those the Father gave Him. Only those Jesus is willing to pray for are those He wants to be saved.

⁹ "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. (John 17:9)

So, regarding Judas' will, Satan overcame it when he was allowed to enter Judas. Judas was not able to resist Satan's will as Satan is one of the most powerful creatures of God. No free will here. This is evident because as soon as Satan entered Judas, he left the supper to betray Jesus. Before Judas left, Jesus could have counseled Judas not to do this terrible deed. Instead, he commanded Judas to do it quickly. How could Judas disobey the command of the omnipotent Christ who has power over the winds, seas, and demons?

This all worked out according to the eternal plan of God Who had planned all these details beforehand. God foretold in the Old Testament that Christ would be betrayed by someone for thirty pieces of silver.

¹² Then I said to them, "If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain." So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. ¹³ And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter. (Zech. 11:12-13)

Therefore, it was God's will for Satan to enter Judas because Satan had to get God's permission first. It was God's will for Judas to betray Jesus as He allowed Satan to influence Judas to do it. It was God's will for Judas to perish because God allowed Satan to influence Judas' will which led to his damnation. Also, Jesus did not pray to help Judas from betraying Him nor did He counsel him against it. Therefore, Judas did not have free will in this matter as Satan overcame his will to cause him to betray Christ. Finally, God, the Son, who is all-powerful, commanded Judas to betray Him quickly. No one can resist God's will. (Rom. 9:19)

The will of Judas and Satan was subservient to the providential will of God who is more powerful than either of them. God used the evil actions of Judas and Satan to further His own will for Christ to die for the sins of God's chosen people. As the patriarch Joseph said to his brothers, "²⁰ *But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.*" (Gen. 50:20) Judas and Satan meant it for evil,

but God meant it for good. As soon as Judas left the last supper to betray Christ, notice Jesus' response.

³¹ So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. ³² If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. (John 13:31-32)

Right after Judas leaves, Jesus tells His disciples of the glory that will now be given to both the Father and the Son. Why will they receive glory? It is because of the crucifixion and resurrection which will lead many to salvation through faith in Jesus. That glory was going to happen soon because Judas immediately left to betray the Lord after Jesus commanded him to go do it. That was why Jesus commanded Judas to do "quickly" what Satan had put in his heart to do. Jesus wanted this betrayal to happen quickly so that He and His Father would be glorified "immediately".

Notice also a statement Jesus made about Judas.

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

Jesus states that it would have been good if the man who betrayed Him would never have been born. Christ's betrayer will be damned for what he does. So, if God didn't want Judas to perish in hell why did He create him knowing what his future was going to be? The fact that God created Judas knowing beforehand what he would do proves that it was not God's will for him to be saved.

Acts of God

In this world, there are many earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, tsunamis, famines, diseases, drought, and other catastrophic events that kill extremely large numbers of people of all ages. Many of these people die without Jesus Christ. Yet we know that God is in control of all such events. If God is not in control of these forces, then who is? If God is not in control of these happenings, then He is not God. Since

the omnipotent God is in control of these events, if He truly wanted every single person saved, then why did He send such forces of nature that would take the lives of so many unsaved individuals of all ages before they had more opportunity to hear the gospel and be saved?

The reason God sends these plagues is known only to Him. However, it is obvious that God did not intend to save those unsaved persons who perish in these catastrophic events. He knew they were unsaved before He sent these forces of nature. He also knew that these unsaved of all ages would die in these plagues. If He didn't want them to perish but wanted them to come to repentance, why did He take their lives before they had more opportunity to become saved? The answer is that He did not desire for them to be saved as they were not among His elect people. What else can we conclude?

God's Eternal Plan

Finally, there is a definitive way we can know it was not God's will or desire that every single person be saved. In eternity past, when God was designing His salvation plan for mankind, He had any number of different plans to choose from. He could have chosen a plan that every single person would have been saved if that truly was His will. He could have selected one where most people would be saved. He did neither. The plan He put into effect was one that would only save few, and most would perish. (Matt. 7:13-14, 22:14) This proves that God did not will or desire to save every single person. We see this truth in the Old Testament where salvation was mainly only for the Jews, in the New Testament, and in the salvation plan God designed in eternity past.

These are hard passages for us to accept, especially when we have been taught that God wants everyone to be saved. However, we must not ignore or reject important passages of Scripture just because we don't like them. We have to believe all the Scripture and reconcile passages with other passages that seem to contradict each other to come to the truth.

The fact that God wills or wants to save only His elect is a great stumbling block to most Christians. We want to believe that God

wants everyone to be saved. If He doesn't and if He gives special grace only to some, we think that is unfair. Let us now discuss in the next chapter the fairness of God in choosing some for salvation and not choosing others.

Praise God that we as believers were given to Christ before the foundation of the world by His free grace!

Chapter 10

Wait A Minute, This Just Doesn't Seem Fair

Fair is an interesting word. What is fair? What seems fair to one person is not fair to another. Whose sense of fairness counts? Is it God's view of fairness or ours? When a child is born with a birth defect, does that seem fair to you? Is it fair that some people are born with more intelligence than others, are better looking than other people, or have more health problems than others? Is it fair that some people can eat much more food than others yet not gain weight, whereas some starve themselves but can't lose the extra weight? As I am writing this, Japan has just experienced an earthquake and tsunami of catastrophic proportions. Over 10,000 people have already died. Does that seem fair to you? Yet we as Christians know that God controls and determines all such matters.

The Blind Man

Remember the blind man to whom Jesus gave sight. He had been blind from birth. The disciples of Jesus asked the Lord why this man was born blind. They wanted to know if it happened because of his sins or because of the sins of his parents.

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him." (John 9:1-3)

Does it seem fair to us that this man spent the first part of life into adulthood blind? It wasn't because he or his parents did anything wrong that caused his blindness. It was a decision God made before he was born. His blindness was going to be used so that the power of

God would be displayed in this man's healing. We need to be careful not to be critical of the fairness of God in His plan for mankind. This is especially so when it concerns His salvation plan.

The Fairness of God in Salvation

I want to examine closely what the Bible has to say about the fairness of God with regard to the salvation of man. The best way to do that is to examine Romans 9:8-24 because this passage addresses not only the salvation of man but also God's fairness in His free grace to us.

The first eight verses of chapter nine deal with Paul's heaviness of heart that many in Israel rejected Christ. However, God has made promises (vs. 4) and is going to reveal to us how He makes good on those promises of salvation in His sovereignty over mankind.

Individuals and Not Nations

⁸ *In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.* ⁹ *For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."*

¹⁰ *Not only that, but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac.* ¹¹ *Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹² not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger."* ¹³ *Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."*

Notice here that the Lord is talking about individuals in this passage. I bring this up because some want to lessen the impact of these verses here in Romans chapter 9 by saying they are referring to nations that come from Jacob and Esau and not about their personal salvation. Abraham is mentioned along with his wife, Sarah, their son Isaac, and also Isaac's wife, Rebecca. Esau and Jacob, Rebecca's twins, will be

mentioned as well as, later, Pharaoh. These are all people, individuals, not nations. Although it is true that nations will spring forth from Esau and from Jacob, those who are being discussed here are named individuals. God will bless Israel over the heritage of Esau but what is being discussed in these verses is God's sovereign decision regarding the salvation of men.

The Purpose of Election

¹¹ (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls),

In verse 11, God is going to be discussing His purpose in election. Why would God elect some and not others? God is going to address that question for us. God does have a purpose for everything He does and such is the case in His free grace of election. As you recall, this election took place before the foundation of the world, from the very beginning (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9). None of us had been born at that time. The "children not yet being born" refers to Rebecca's twin sons, Esau and Jacob, not to nations. God is about to explain why He chose Jacob over Esau for salvation through the process called election.

In verse 11, we see some crucial aspects to God's election of men. God makes it clear that this election of Jacob and rejection of Esau took place before these two boys were born and before they had done anything good or bad. Why does He mention this? He wants us to know that the cause of election which leads to our salvation has nothing to do with what people do in their lives. If it does, then salvation is a reward for whatever they did in life that motivated God to choose them for it. Although it is true that God knows in His omniscience what people are going to do in their lives before they do it, God's choice of words here telling us His election took place before the boys were born and before they had done anything good or evil, prevents us from believing that God chose Jacob and not Esau because of what God foresaw these two would do in life. These words used by God in verse 11 disprove the foreknowledge or free will view of election which holds that God elected people based on His

foreknowledge of their choices. God's choice of Jacob over Esau for salvation had nothing to do with what they did in life, either their works or their choices. It was a sovereign decision made by God based on His unconditional love for Jacob before the world was formed. It is not based on works or what people do in their life, it is based on Him who calls. God has a purpose in election and He wants us to clearly understand it. It is unmovable. It must "stand" and not be tampered with or the grace of God is damaged.

Election is based on what God does, not on what people do. This is perhaps the greatest stumbling block to many Christians. The purpose of election is to prevent people from thinking that they are saved by what they do in life, whether it is by their works, or by their wills. It is all about God and not about us. Election, if properly understood, prevents us from taking any credit in our salvation. Election makes all the credit go to God. Without election, we have salvation based on the efforts or actions of men. With election, we have salvation based on grace, God's free grace, and His election of grace. (Rom. 11:5-6)

Jacob and Esau

¹² it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

In verse 12 we see that before Jacob and Esau were born God told Rebecca that her older son would serve the younger one. This is the reverse order of how things were done in that society. God is providentially setting the stage for His preferred choice of Jacob over Esau. In Verse 13 God says He loved Jacob and hated Esau. This verse comes from Mal. 1:2-3 where God states clearly He loved Jacob but hated Esau. No one has a problem with God loving Jacob, but His hating Esau is difficult for us. We have always been taught that God loves everyone. First, let's see what the word translated hated here means from the Greek. We will again use Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible to get the Greek word and translation that is used.

G3404. μισέω (1) to hate, pursue with hatred, detest (2) to be hated, detested.

So, it is clear that God hated Esau. God here is talking about two individuals and not nations. Besides, what is worse from a human perspective, hating an individual or an entire nation? Next we have to determine why He loved Jacob and hated Esau. We have only two possibilities.

One, God loved Jacob and hated Esau based on His foreknowledge of what they did in their lives. The problem with this is that it makes Jacob's election and salvation a reward based on what Jacob did in his life to earn God's love and salvation. The other problem with this is Jacob did not lead a good life. He deceived his father Isaac and stole his brother's blessing. His open favoritism of his son Joseph caused great dissention in his family. Therefore, this option cannot be correct. This is the free will view of conditional election.

Two, God loved Jacob and hated Esau before the foundation of the world, before the boys had done anything good or bad (vs. 11). This makes Jacob's salvation a free gift from God because it was not based on how he lived his life. Jacob would never have received God's love or salvation if it was based on his life because he committed so much evil. Also, this view agrees with verse 11 where we see that God's election is not based on what people do, it is based on God who calls. This view also squares with verse 12 where we see that God's decision for the elder to serve the younger was made before the boys were born and before they had done anything good or evil. Verse 13 is a continuation of God's actions and dealings with these two boys before they were born. He loved Jacob and hated Esau before they were born. This is the free grace view of unconditional election.

God is using Jacob and Esau as examples to show us about His loving some, His elect, and rejecting others before time. We do not know why God loved Jacob and hated Esau before the foundation of the world, only that He did. This is His sovereign right as God the Creator. Does this seem fair to you? Let's see what Paul has to say about this issue.

Is There Unrighteousness with God?

¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." ¹⁶ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Paul brings up a crucial point here. He asks, "Is there unrighteousness with God?" His reply is God forbid anyone thinking such a thing. Paul is asking if God is unrighteous or unfair if He loved Jacob and hated Esau before they were even born, before they had done anything good or evil. His answer is there is no unrighteousness with God. Now, if Paul thought the foreknowledge view of election was correct, the view that states God chose us based on what we do in our lives, why would he ask this question? The foreknowledge or free will view of election was designed by men to present a fair picture of God in election by basing it on what people do. It is only the belief in God's unconditional election or the free grace view that is based on God's sovereign choice that most would object as unfair or unrighteous. Therefore, it is clear that by raising this question, Paul is defending God's unconditional election of people based on His sovereign choice according to the good pleasure of His will. Paul could have used this opportunity to make the case for the foreknowledge view, but he doesn't. He instead defends the free grace view of unconditional election.

Verse 13 is an extremely difficult verse for us to come to grips with so I want to add some additional thoughts here. If God loved and chose some people for salvation and hated and rejected the rest of humanity all before the foundation of the world without regard to what they did in their lives, how would that make us feel? How would most of us respond to that? We would strongly object, as most Christians do, and say that was both unfair and unrighteous. We would then, in effect, be saying that God was unfair and unrighteous if He did that. This is exactly why Paul asks the question in verse 14, "Is there unrighteousness with God?" He already anticipates what the common objection is going to be. God doesn't run away from dealing with this complaint. He answers it in verses 11-24. Paul raising this question in verse 14 immediately after verse 13 is proof that he is defending the free grace view which is the view most object to as being unfair or

unrighteous. He is also defending God's sovereign right to love some and hate others before time. God is not unrighteous to unconditionally elect some and reject others before time because He has the right to do with His creation whatever He wants to do with it as we will see in the following verses. Remember, God's ways are not man's ways. (1 Cor. 1:26-29)

Paul would never have raised this question if the free will view was correct because that view was designed by men to make God appear to be fair and righteous. Paul would also not have raised the issue of God's righteousness if God loved Jacob and hated Esau based on what they did in their lives. No one would think God was unrighteous for that. He would only be charged with unrighteousness if He loved Jacob and hated Esau before they were born and before they had done any good or evil. This proves that Paul is truly defending God in His loving Jacob and hating Esau unconditionally before time. Paul is defending the free grace view in these verses.

To bolster the free grace view of God's unconditional love and election, Paul quotes the Old Testament in verse 15 concerning a conversation that God had with Moses. He tells Moses that He will have mercy and compassion on whomever He chooses. When He uses the word "whomever" He is talking about individuals. God's point here is that His gifts of grace and mercy are bestowed unconditionally on those He chooses. They are not gifts of mercy and compassion but a reward if they are in some way merited or earned or based on foreknown acts or decisions. Verse 15 is again a defense of unconditional election or the free grace view.

Salvation is Not by Man's Will but by the Mercy of God

¹⁶ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Verse 16 is one of the key verses in the Bible regarding the subject of this book. It answers the question of the title Free Grace or Free Will? Paul starts out with the issue of the will. He says "...so then it is not..." What is Paul talking about here? He is talking about salvation

because he mentions election in verse 11, God's unconditional acceptance of Jacob in verse 13, his mercy and compassion in verses 15, 18, and the saved in verses 21,23,24.

Paul says salvation is not of him who wills! Man cannot use his will, which is not free, to become saved. Why, because the unsaved man's will is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. It absolutely cannot be any clearer than this in Scripture. He goes on to say it is not of him who runs or does physical works of righteousness which confirms salvation is being discussed here. Good deeds don't save anyone. (Titus 3:5) Paul tells us our wills or works are not the reason for our salvation. He then goes on in the verse to tell us what the reason is. It is God who shows us mercy, and that mercy He gives to whomever He chooses. (vs. 15) The mercy He gives is the new birth as He draws or drags us to Himself by His grace. You will notice that the "him" in verse 16 refers to individuals and not nations.

Pharaoh and Those Whom God Hardens

¹⁷ For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." ¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

Now Paul brings up the issue of Pharaoh, an individual. Why did God raise Pharaoh up? God used Pharaoh for a good purpose which was to show His omnipotent power over perhaps the most powerful man in the world at that time. God would defeat Pharaoh in the battle of the wills. The world would know that Pharaoh and his gods were no match for the God of heaven and earth.

Notice, in verse 18, Paul repeats what he said in verse 15 but adds that God hardens whom He wants to harden. We know that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Why?

²¹ And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. (Ex. 4:21)

God hardened Pharaoh's heart or will so that he would not let Israel go before Pharaoh, Egypt, and Israel had the opportunity to see all the might and power of God in the different plagues God sent to free His people. Although at times Scripture says Pharaoh hardened his heart, it was God who purposed from the very beginning to harden Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let Israel go immediately. God told Moses this before He sent him. Pharaoh hardened his own heart as a consequence of God hardening it. Did Pharaoh have free will to either let Israel go or not to? No, because God hardened his will so that he could not let Israel go early on.

Not only did God harden Pharaoh's heart so he would not let the Israelites go, He also hardened the Egyptians' hearts so they would pursue the Israelites which ultimately led to their deaths in the Red Sea.

⁴ Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD." And they did so. (Ex. 14:4)

¹⁷ And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. (Ex. 14:17)

Does all this seem fair to you? Again, God's ways are not man's ways. Keep in mind what He said in verse 18. He has mercy on whom He chooses to have mercy and hardens the wills of those He chooses to harden. So, were the Egyptians' wills free regarding the Israelites? No, they did not have free will because God hardened their hearts to accomplish His will and plan.

There are two views regarding God hardening the hearts or wills of men to accomplish His will. One view is that God actively hardens the wills of some men so they do His will. Another view is that God passively hardens some men by withholding His grace and letting them act out on their own sinful desires. You decide for yourself how God hardens the hearts and wills of men. The end result will be the same. The person will only do what God wills him to do by His hardening. According to verse 18, He hardens those whom He wills to harden.

When God hardens the will of someone, that means He imposes His will over the will of that person. How then is that person's will free?

God, Why Do You Find Fault With Those You Have Hardened?

¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"

Now, the person who objects to all this says to God, "God, why do You find fault with people who don't obey You if You hardened their hearts to prevent them from obeying You. For who can resist Your will"? In other words, "God, this is not fair. It is not fair of You to condemn Pharaoh for not letting Israel go when You hardened his heart so he couldn't let them go." How does God respond to this question?

²⁰ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"

God answers this seemingly difficult question directly and powerfully. He first puts the person who asks this question in his proper place. Who are we to question the fairness of God who is our Creator? We need to be very careful not to charge Him with unfairness or unrighteousness in His free grace salvation plan for we will have to give an account to Jesus Himself on judgment day if we do. I must respectfully state that it is the free will position that holds that God would be unfair or unrighteousness if He hardened men's wills to cause them to do something against their "free" will. Pharaoh is a prime example of God doing just that. God does this often with men and their leaders to accomplish His own objectives.

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of the water: He turns it wherever He wishes. (Prov. 21:1)

²⁴ A man's steps are of the LORD; How then can a man understand his own way? (Prov. 20:24)

Again, Paul, here in Romans, is defending the free grace view and not the free will view. We are created by God for His own purposes. We are subservient to God and are dependent upon Him. We don't have

the right to criticize God for making us the way He made us as He accomplishes His own will and purposes. Shall we criticize God on judgment day and blame Him for making us the way He did? Will that do any good for Pharaoh?

The Potter and His Vessels

²¹ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

God is in control of all things. God, as the Creator of us all, has power over His creation to make one vessel or person for honor and another for dishonor. He makes the vessels of honor, His elect, to give them saving free grace, and He makes vessels for dishonor, the non-elect, who are passed over for salvation. Does not God have the right to do what He wants with those He has created? Do His creatures have a right to call into question His fairness or righteousness for what He does with them?

²² What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

In verses 21 through 24, we see the predestination of God with regard to His human creatures. God has wrath against sin. He will put up with much longsuffering with the vessels of wrath that were "prepared" by God for destruction for their sins and unbelief in Christ for a day is coming when they will be cast into the lake of fire. However, God's vessels of mercy or His elect, will receive mercy and salvation as they were "prepared" for glory before time by the predestinating free grace of God. They didn't deserve it, but they freely received it by His unconditional love and grace. In verse 24 we see that God's elect, chosen, and called are made up of both Jews and Gentiles or the "world". (John 3:16)

Romans 9:8-24 may not seem fair from a human perspective, but who are we to criticize our Maker for what He does? Does He not know what is best for His people as He works out Rom. 8:28? These are tough verses but they are the Word of God, and we have a responsibility to believe them whether we like them or not. We can't pick and choose which verses we want to believe. We must believe all of them. God is saying in these verses that He is sovereign and in control of this universe. He made it and He made us. He can do with His creation what He wants.

What About the Gentiles Before Christ's Ascension?

As mentioned previously, God only provided salvation to the Jews prior to His ascension. The only Gentiles who were saved were those few chosen by God who received Him by the Jews witnessing to them. The rest of the Gentiles perished. This went on for many centuries. Does this seem fair to you? Whether it seems fair or not, both sides of the issue being discussed in this book agree that salvation was basically only for the Jews in the Old Testament. How do we know that? Jesus tells us this in His Word. So, was God not willing for these Gentiles to perish? Was He willing for them to come to repentance? Not according to His plan to save mainly the Jews up to the time of Christ's ascension. Hear what Jesus said:

You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. (John 4:22)

⁵ *These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. ⁶ But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'* (Matt. 10:5-7)

²⁴ *But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 15:24)*

Therefore, if you are having trouble accepting unconditional election because it just doesn't seem fair to you, how do you handle the fact that God basically only revealed Himself and saved the Jews, His chosen people, from the time of Abraham to the Lord's ascension. Does that seem fair to you? Yet we know this is the truth of the Scriptures.

More on Fairness

Let's examine the fairness issue a little more closely. Neither the elect nor the non-elect deserve salvation because of their sins. The non-elect, because of their sins and rejection of Christ, get what they deserve. They get damnation. The elect also deserve damnation for their sins. However, God in His free grace, decided to give them mercy and save them by bringing them to faith in Christ. Does that make God unfair? The non-elect get what they deserve, justice and punishment. The elect get what they don't deserve, amazing free grace and mercy. Is God unrighteous if He chooses to give some grace? No, for He says He will give mercy to whomever He wills to give mercy to. (Rom. 9:15,18) Isn't that what grace is, undeserved mercy? Salvation is a gift, and not a reward. God has done nothing unfair to save some from hell. He has been wonderfully merciful to His chosen people.

Do you really want fairness? God would have been entirely just and fair to damn us all for our sins. Would that make us happy? I think not. No, God has not acted unfairly or unrighteously by choosing some to escape damnation in His free grace. God not giving grace to everyone shows how special salvation is to those of us who are wonderfully blessed to be chosen by God for that salvation. (Rom. 9:22-24) If God gives grace to some, is He somehow required to give it to everyone? Grace is special when few receive it. (Matt. 22:14) Grace comes from the well-spring of the mercy of God, and He can dispense it to whomever He wishes.

Let us never charge God with unfairness or unrighteousness in this matter of His free grace. Let us just rejoice for His wonderful goodness and free grace that He gave us so that we could believe in

His Son Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords. For without that gift of free grace we would never have received Jesus as our Lord and Savior. This faith came directly from a gracious God and not from our spiritually dead, unsaved will.

The entire passage of Rom. 9:8-24 is all about the Apostle Paul defending the free grace view of salvation and rejecting the free will view. Rom. 9:16 could not be any clearer about the issue before us. One, we are saved by the free grace of God. Two, God is not unfair to save some in His mercy and require others to receive the just punishment for their sinfulness. Three, God is fair and just in all His dealings with man. Some get His undeserved mercy and grace and the rest get what they deserve for their sinfulness and rejection of Jesus Christ. The fact that Paul devotes this entire section to prove the fairness of God in His salvation plan is evidence that free grace is the biblical truth, and free will is not.

²⁴ Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” (John 7:24)

What about Babies Who Die or the Mentally Deficient?

As I close this chapter on the fairness of God, one topic comes up occasionally, so I would like to address it here. What about babies who die or people who are mentally deficient? Are they among the elect of God? This question is not one that is specifically answered in Scripture. However, my opinion is that these people are numbered among God’s elect. God can regenerate whomever He wills whenever He wills to do it. For with God all things are possible. My opinion is based on the following Scripture.

¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ² Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, ³ and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

⁶ *"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matt. 18:1-6)*

¹³ *Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." ¹⁵ And He laid His hands on them and departed from there. (Matt. 19:13-15)*

² *It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. (Luke 17:2)*

These verses show us how special little children are to Jesus. Little children have humility like the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Those in the kingdom of heaven are like little children. Jesus warns people not to offend one of these little children. Those who are mentally deficient, in most ways, are like little children. Therefore, it is my opinion all of these are elect of God.

Rejoice!

Let us rejoice in our salvation knowing that it is only by the grace of God that we are saved. We must be extremely careful never to judge God's fairness in His salvation plan for mankind. We must remember our low estate as His creatures and have absolute trust in our Creator that whatever He does for His people is good and righteous.

²⁸ *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Rom. 8:28)*

Chapter 11

Is Salvation Based On The View One Holds?

There are some who believe in free grace salvation who also believe that those who reject the free grace view and believe in free will salvation cannot be saved. They base this belief on several verses from Scripture.

Saved by Grace and Not of Ourselves

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Eph. 2:8-9)

This verse is saying that we are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. This grace and faith are gifts from God. It is not of us or from us. It is not of works or things we have done in our lives. Otherwise, we could boast about our salvation if it had anything to do with what we did to get salvation in our lives.

Therefore, as some would say, if you reject God's free grace and replace it with salvation by a free will ability to come to God, you have something of which to boast. You were able to accomplish something spiritually others couldn't. Also, you have made faith, which in truth is a gift from God, part of a work of your own doing. Faith is a work of salvation. It is a work of salvation by God in you. However, if you claim you were responsible for achieving faith by the use of your will, then you have accomplished a work of salvation in some measure apart from God.

Many Christians think that if a person believes he is saved by the good deeds he accomplishes, that person is not saved because he has rejected grace. Some advocates of free grace say that those who

follow the free will salvation plan really are doing the same thing in their works or ability to use their dead wills to generate their own faith and come to salvation. They see no distinction.

The Election of Grace

Perhaps the main passage of Scripture used by those who hold to the view you must believe in God's free grace plan to be saved is the following verse.

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. (Rom. 11:5-6)

Those who say you must believe in free grace to be saved interpret this verse as follows. Election cannot be separated from grace. To try to remove election from grace seriously damages grace. If one makes grace a work of his, then grace is no longer grace. It has been damaged. Grace has been replaced by works. No man can be saved by his works.

...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, (Titus 3:5)

My View

It is my opinion that one's salvation is not dependent on which of these two views one holds. We are saved by our repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ. Those who follow the free grace view and those who follow the free will view are both saved if they repent and believe in Jesus Christ. However, the free will view is mistaken regarding why people believe and how they believe. Believers didn't produce their faith through the application of a free will, it was a mighty display of grace from God the Holy Spirit that gave them their

faith, after being chosen by the Father and redeemed by the blood of the Son.

Please note also the following two verses:

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31)

...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Rom. 10:9)

Those in both salvation belief systems confess Christ and believe in His resurrection. They have repented of their sinfulness and have faith in the Lord. It just comes about as a result of the free grace of God and not from any ability of will within the spiritually dead sinner to bring about faith.

The Thief on the Cross

Did the thief on the cross, who turned to faith in Jesus and was saved right before he died, know any of the theological details of election? No, he came to faith by the grace of God while the other thief did not believe. The thief who believed had nothing of which to boast since his faith came from God. If it came from him, from his own will, then he does have something to boast of over the unbelieving thief. He accomplished something spiritually that the other thief didn't.

No, the reason why the one thief believed was because he had been chosen by God before the foundation of the world and was given his faith by God's grace at that appointed time. He cannot boast because it was all of God. God chose not to give that same grace of faith to the other thief. The reason the unbelieving thief didn't receive the same grace from God resides in the secret counsel of His will. It is not for us to know.

If we have repented of our sins and have faith in Jesus Christ, we are saved. This is the only requirement for salvation.

Is it Really Important Then Which Way We Believe?

As stated earlier in this book, free will salvation, for the most part, has replaced the biblical view of salvation of the free grace of God. Although one's salvation does not hang in the balance, the free will view is not pleasing to God. Believing in the wrong way of salvation or rejecting the true belief in salvation is a serious thing. We all will be accountable to God for what we believe regarding the Word of God and His holy doctrines. What we believe affects how we live our Christian lives.

What we believe on this issue is important. We must give all the glory, credit, and honor for our salvation to God. We must not take any of that away from Him to be "well pleasing" to Him. We must teach others the truth of salvation and not teach error. Finally, we all must stand before our God one day and be judged on what we believed and taught others.

⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:9-10)

Chapter 12

The Challenge

In this book, I have quoted many verses that prove that the unsaved, spiritually dead, lost sinner is totally incapable of using his will to come to Christ. It just won't happen until God, in His free grace to His elect, opens the will and gives spiritual sight and spiritual legs so that a person can come to faith and see and enter the kingdom of God. However, perhaps you are still unconvinced regarding what I have written in this book. If so, I have a way to prove to you beyond any doubt the truth of what I have written. I'm going to put you to the test. Let us settle this issue that has been debated for over a thousand years once and for all.

I want you to search the Scriptures and find a verse that proves that the spiritually dead, unsaved person has a free will spiritual ability to receive Jesus Christ. Let me add that this verse cannot imply such a free will, it must state it categorically. Certainly, if free will salvation is a major Christian doctrine, one should be able to find at least one verse that proves this free will spiritual ability or power and not just verses that might seem to imply it.

For instance, note the following verses:

³³ *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matt. 6:33)*

⁷ *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. (Matt. 7:7-8)*

These verses, and others that command people to seek God, seem to imply that a person has the ability to seek Christ which would also imply a free will ability to do so. You have to first determine if the verses are written to saved or unsaved people. Saved people should

be able to seek a closer relationship with God. What I am talking about in this book is unsaved people. Note the following passage regarding the ability of the unsaved person to seek God.

"There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. ¹² They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." (Rom. 3:10-12)

So you see here that no unsaved person has a free will spiritual ability to seek Christ. How do we know that? These verses tell us that no one does seek Him. The reason is that they do not have the ability to seek Christ for they are spiritually dead. The same principle would be true of this verse.

¹⁵ And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15)

This verse doesn't prove one has a spiritual free will ability. Perhaps one would say it implies it. All this verse says is that these Israelites had a choice to make. It doesn't prove any power or ability to seek or choose God. In truth, those who choose Christ, seek Him, or come to Him only do so after God first chose them and then enabled them to choose, seek, and come to the Lord. I have provided many verses that prove this. Here is just one verse that not only applied to our Lord's original twelve disciples but to all of His believers or disciples.

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 remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. (John 15:16)

What follows is another example of when God commands us to do something that our wills are not free to do.

Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matt. 5:48)

Now can anyone obey this command to be perfect? No. So, just because God commands us to do something doesn't mean we have a free will ability to do it.

Another verse that seems to support the free will view is James 4:8.

⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Some say that this verse proves that an unsaved person can use his free will to come to God before God regenerates, draws, or drags that person to Himself. The problem with this understanding is that this verse is not referring to unsaved persons; it is talking about those already saved. Notice the first four verses of James 1.

¹ James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings. ² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

James is writing to those who already have saving faith. James is encouraging them to strive to become perfect. As believers we should draw near to God, and He will draw near to us. However, it is impossible for an unsaved person to draw near to Christ until the Lord has drawn him to Himself by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, for no unsaved person seeks the Lord.

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Rev. 3:20)

Again, at first glance this verse appears to imply a person has the free will spiritual power or ability to open the door. Does this verse state that we can all hear His voice and use our free wills to open the door? No, it just says "If" we do hear His voice and open the door, He will come in to our hearts. The problem is that, in our unsaved state, our

wills are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, and we can't hear with understanding Jesus' voice to open the door.

And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them. (Matt. 13:14-15)

The heart is one's will. The unsaved heart or will can't hear or see with understanding the spiritual things of Christ. (Rom. 3:11) Only by God's grace are we, God's elect, quickened and regenerated out of that dead spiritual state, and we are able to hear Christ and then open the door.

¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. (Matt. 13:16)

Our eyes and ears are "blessed", not because of any power or ability of ourselves to see, hear, seek, or understand, but only because of the special blessing and grace God gave to us when He opened our eyes and ears so that we could see, hear, seek, and understand spiritual matters.

Ought Implies Can?

I've heard it said that ought implies can. In other words, when God commands the unsaved to do something, there is an implied ability to be able to obey those commands. This line of thinking could not be farther from the truth of God's Word. I have already addressed this issue in this chapter. Commands or statements from God do not mean we have the ability to obey those commands. God commands us to be perfect (Matt. 5:48), yet no one has the ability to be perfect, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23). God commands us to seek Him, yet no unsaved person will seek Him. (Rom. 3:10-12)

Why Would God Command Us to Do Things We Can't Do?

So the question you might ask is why would God command us to do something He knows we can't do? This answer is simple. God expects perfect holiness in order for people to have fellowship with Him. God raises the bar to the highest notch. This is to show us our utter inability to get there. It is to prove to us that our spiritually dead wills cannot make it happen. The human will fails time after time. There is no free will in our unsaved state to help us obey these commands or to receive Christ. God must perform a miracle first, like He did with Lydia, when He opened her heart or will so that she could understand the gospel message Paul taught her. (Acts 16:14) She did not have a free will spiritual ability to do it for herself. It is all about the free grace of God. If we could obey these commands with our free wills, then we wouldn't need the Holy Spirit to draw or drag us to Christ. We could just use our free wills to seek God and be saved.

Now, are we clear about this challenge? You must provide a verse that definitively proves that the unsaved, spiritually dead sinner has a free will spiritual ability to seek and receive Christ. It must state this clearly, and you must not use any verses that might seem to imply such ability. We have already seen that a command or statement from God does not mean we have the spiritual ability to obey the command in our unsaved state.

The Truth is in the Scriptures

After studying this issue for over 20 years, I have never found such a verse. What are you going to do if you could find such a verse? Would that one verse negate the many verses I have shown in this book that refute any possibility of a free will spiritual ability of an unsaved person to receive Christ? Does God speak with a forked tongue? God would never do that.

It is certainly fine for a Christian to disagree with what is written in this book. However, that disagreement should come with it a responsibility to provide specific, definitive scriptural proof that the unsaved person, who is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-5), has a free will spiritual ability to receive Jesus Christ. Without that scriptural evidence, free grace is proven to be the truth of God's Word.

If one is going to maintain free will salvation as a major Christian doctrine, it is essential that there is some scriptural proof of this doctrine. Certainly God, if He wanted us to believe in a free will salvation plan, would have at least recorded one verse out of the many thousands in the Bible that would prove that the unsaved person has a free will spiritual ability to seek and receive Christ. We must never believe in a major biblical doctrine on the basis of an implication or assumption.

I am so certain that there is no such verse in the Bible that can prove that the unsaved man has a free will spiritual ability to receive Christ that as part of this challenge I am going to provide my email address to you who have read this entire book. I want anyone who can find a verse that proves, not implies, the unsaved man does have this free will spiritual ability to email it to me. If you send a verse, please use either the King James Version or the New King James Version to keep it consistent with this book. Also, if you disagree with this book, please do not send me arguments, opinions, rationale, or commentary. Those on both sides of this issue have their verses they can quote and debate. This is the only way we can determine the truth on this issue. Therefore, please only send me the verse. My email address is: freegrace3@gmail.com

This is the very heart of the matter and issue before us. Free will salvation stands or falls upon the Holy Bible. It is false if there is no Scripture to prove that the unsaved man does have this spiritual free will ability to seek or receive Jesus Christ. I have already provided many verses that prove the unsaved man does not have this ability.

Let the Word of God decide this issue debated for so long over the centuries.

If you accept this challenge, please keep the following verses in mind as you search the Scriptures. Remember, the free will view states that the unsaved man has the spiritual free will ability to respond to the gospel and receive it even though spiritually dead in trespasses and sins.

¹ *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, (Eph. 2:1)*

¹⁴ *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:14)*

¹⁶ *So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. (Rom. 9:16)*

"There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. ¹² They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." (Rom. 3:10-12)

Chapter 13

Final Thoughts

Which grace is more amazing, a grace we get for doing something or a grace we get for doing nothing? Free grace salvation exalts the will of God. Free will salvation exalts the will of the spiritually dead unsaved sinner. Free grace is a God centered salvation and free will is a man centered salvation. Free grace is a God caused salvation. Free will is a man caused salvation. In free grace, the difference in our salvation is God. In free will, the difference in our salvation is the spiritually dead, unsaved sinner. Free grace is grace salvation. Free will is reward salvation.

Which view of God seems correct? (1) A God who is "trying" to save everyone yet only saves a few. (2) A God who saves every single person He planned to save. The biblical view of our sovereign, omnipotent God is the latter view, not the former. (John 6:37-39)

But More Christians Believe in Free Will Salvation

I have said several times in this book that the free grace view is the minority view in Christianity today. Does this admission in some way mean that free grace salvation cannot be correct since more Christians believe in free will salvation? Is this a majority rules type of issue? Let me remind the reader that with regard to the Bible, the minority was usually right or chosen by God.

The chosen people of God, Israel, was small in number in relation to all the other peoples of the world who were heathen and lost. When Moses sent the twelve spies into the Promised Land, only two, Joshua and Caleb, had faith to go in and take the land. God chose only 300 men from all of Israel to stand with Gideon to fight the Midianites. Also, remember what was said in Rom. 11:5. God always has His remnant or smaller number of His chosen people among the many.

⁵*Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (Rom. 11:5)*

Let us not forget that it is the minority that will be in heaven. The majority will have been wrong about Christ and will suffer in hell for all eternity because of their rejection of our Lord.

¹³ *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matt. 7:13-15)*

The gospel is given out to vast multitudes but only those chosen few will receive it and be saved.

¹⁴ *"For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. 22:14)*

Common Objections

Not a Sincere Offer

It is thought by some that, if the free grace view is correct, then the offer of salvation by God is not a sincere offer because God is only going to save His elect. However, we just saw in Matt. 22:14 that many are called, but few are chosen. God calls many to salvation but only His chosen few will believe. Since no one believes because they are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, God graciously gives faith to His elect. That is God's plan in the Bible. Who are we to criticize God for His free salvation plan? We must be very careful not to do that as we will have to give an account to God on judgment day if we do.

¹⁴ *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." (Rom. 9:14-15)*

¹⁸ *Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. ¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For*

who has resisted His will?" ²⁰ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" (Rom. 9:18-20)

God has the sovereign right as the Creator to give mercy to whomever He wants (His elect) and to harden whomever He wants (the non-elect). We must never criticize or question His fairness, righteousness, or sincerity. We must always trust God to do that which is right. We might not understand what He does, but that is not our responsibility. Our responsibility is to trust and obey Him.

This objection really goes back to the complaint of the fairness of God which was dealt with in chapter 10. God could have fairly damned everyone because of sin. Is He unfair to save some by grace? Isn't that what grace is, the unmerited favor and mercy of God? The purpose of this book is to prove that the free grace view of salvation is the only view that makes salvation a free gift and not a reward.

The free will view raises the objection of how the offer of salvation from God could be sincere if the free grace view is correct. However, the free will view also believes in the foreknowledge of God. This means God foreknows all future events and happenings. God foreknew who would believe in Him and who would reject Him. Even though God foreknew in eternity past who would reject Him, He still sent out the gospel to "many" of them. (Matt. 22:14) So, this objection of the sincerity of God's offer could also be made against the free will view.

Does Election Make God a Respector of Persons?

Is God a respector of persons or one who shows partiality if He elects some to salvation and not others?

³⁴ Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. ³⁵ But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. ³⁶ The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— (Acts 10:34-36)

The answer is no, God is not a respecter of persons and does not show partiality with regard to election. God did not consider personal characteristics in His choice to elect one and not another. He didn't consider whether people were good looking or not, whether they were male or female, what their social class was, what country they live in, or whether they were rich or poor. His choice was based on the good pleasure and purpose of His secret will before the foundation of the world. Those He has chosen will have a reverential fear of God and produce fruit for the kingdom of Christ.

What About Man's Responsibility?

It is certainly true that a mystery exists between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. God is in control of all things, yet man is responsible to God for his actions. We see other mysteries beyond our ability to fully understand such as the Trinity, the dual nature of Christ who is both God and man, and the eternal preexistence of God. Our finite minds can only go so far into such mysteries. We realize that they are not totally understandable in this life. The Bible teaches both divine sovereignty and man's responsibility. They are both true.

We see in Scripture that God hardened Pharaoh's heart or will to not let the children of Israel go out of Egypt (Ex. 4:21), yet God still held Pharaoh responsible for the fact that he didn't let them go (Rom. 9:17-19). God decided to allow Satan to enter Judas (John 13:27) knowing Judas would be influenced to betray Christ, yet Judas, the son of perdition, is damned by God for that decision and action. (John 17:12) We see that God judged David for numbering Israel, yet Scripture declares that both God (2 Sam. 24:1) and Satan (1 Chron. 21:1) moved David's will to number the people.

God's sovereign will always over rules the wills and decisions of men to work out all things according to His purpose and glory. (Rom. 8:28)

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. (Prov. 21:1)

If God can turn the wills of kings, governors, and presidents, He certainly can turn the wills of those below these powerful rulers.

A man's steps are of the LORD; how then can a man understand his own way? (Prov. 20:24)

We may respond that it is not fair or right of God to hold men responsible if God gives mercy to some but hardens the wills of others to further His will, but we will always get this same response from God.

¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. ¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" ²⁰ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

Without Free Will We Are Reduced to Puppets or Robots

This, of course, is a ridiculous charge. Puppets and robots are created by man and have no soul or spirit. They also don't have the ability to make free choices. As mentioned previously the unsaved man is a free agent. He makes choices freely doing what he wants to do. However, he no longer is a free spiritual agent since the fall of man. He will not, nor cannot, do anything of spiritual value toward God because he thinks such things are foolishness. (1 Cor. 2:14) He can't understand spiritual matters. (Rom. 3:11) He has lost the free will ability to make good, spiritual choices. So, the unsaved man is free to choose what he wants. What he wants is to do those things that please himself, not God. The Bible is clear on this. Although the unsaved man may do some worldly good deeds, they are not good in the sight of God (Rom. 3:12) unless they are done with a motive to please the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pride or Humility?

Some have charged those who believe in the free grace view with pride saying that if they believe God chose them before time as His elect, they must think they are really something special. Some have even referred to those who believe in free grace as the “frozen chosen”. Of course this is all unfair and unkind. The elect are special but not because of anything they did to deserve that election.

Unconditional election, if understood properly, humbles us. This is true as God, who could rightly have damned us for our sin, has chosen to save us even though there is nothing in our lives to warrant such action on His part. He simply loved us before time, not according to what we did in our lives, but according to His grace and mercy which He bestowed on us before time. Now that is amazing grace!

Blotted Out of the Book of Life

Some have objected to the free grace view by raising the fact that people can be blotted out of the Book of Life. This would mean, in their view, the elect or Christians could be blotted out later. If people can be blotted out of the Book of Life, they can be saved and subsequently lose their salvation. Some people make the assumption that everyone’s names all started out in the Book of Life.

Only the names of Christians, the saved, or God’s elect were written in the Book of Life. The unsaved who will suffer in hell never had their names written in the Book of Life.

⁸ *All who dwell on the earth will worship him [the beast], whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:8)*

⁸ *The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the*

foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is, (Rev. 17:8)

When were the names of God's chosen people written in the Book of Life? Scripture doesn't tell us, but it certainly makes sense that at the moment God chose His elect before the foundation of the world He wrote their names in that book. Names written in the Book of Life can never be blotted out since only Christians are named in that book. They are kept eternally secure by God the Holy Spirit as we have seen already. Jesus will not lose one of those given to Him by the Father. (John 6:39)

⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (Rev. 3:5)

Rev. 3:5 does not prove or even imply that names can be blotted out of the Book of Life. It simply states that the name of the Christian who overcomes will not be blotted out of this book. Christians are saved and kept saved by the grace of God. They overcame, not by their own abilities, but by the grace of God working in them. If they overcame by their own efforts, then salvation is according to merit and not by grace.

Let's put this in an eternal perspective. God chose His elect before the foundation of the world. God, in His omniscience, knows everything before it happens. What sense would it make for God to elect people, put them in His Book of Life, to later blot them out? Doesn't God know the beginning from the end? The answer is of course He does. The non-elect were excluded by God from the Book of Life and in that sense only were they blotted out of this book.

Why Pray?

Some also object and ask why pray for someone's salvation if the free grace view is correct? God is going to save or not save based on His election, so why even pray for someone to get saved? God commands us to pray for others. He uses us to bring His chosen ones to Himself.

In the free will view isn't God being asked to save people? God is being asked through prayer to intervene so that the person in question will believe and become saved? God is being asked to impose His will over the unsaved person's will so that they will believe and be saved. Isn't this tampering with that person's will?

Why Witness?

Some have also said that if the free grace view is true, why witness to others because God is going to save His elect anyway. It is true that God is going to save His elect regardless. Why? It is because God's plans are not dependent on human beings. If God's plans depended on sinful human beings and their dead wills, God's plans would certainly fail and Satan would get the victory. When we witness to others we can be assured that as we are planting or watering seeds, those God wants to save will be saved as He alone gives the increase. The purpose of our witnessing is to be obedient to the commands of God to spread the gospel. God uses us as His tools to bring others to Himself.

Fatalism?

Some charge that the free grace view is nothing more than fatalism or the belief that all events are fixed. There is a major difference between fatalism and biblical predestination. Fatalism is a superstitious belief, and it is controlled by no one. Fatalism is much like its brother luck. They are both nothing. No one controls either of these mythological forces. A Christian should not believe in either of these falsehoods because they exclude God who is in control of all things. (Eph. 1:11)

However, predestination is a biblical doctrine of the Word of God. (Eph. 1:5,11; Rom. 8:29-30) Predestination is the plan of God for all things. God is in control and predestination proves that. God, in His

predestination promises to work out all things for the believer's good. (Rom. 8:28) Who is in control of the universe? Is it an all-knowing, personal God Who plans out all things that will happen or an impersonal, false god called fate that has no purpose or plan? The answer is clear for the Christian.

Ending Considerations

An Improper Understanding of Evangelism

What we have here is a basic misunderstanding of the purpose of witnessing or evangelism. The purpose of our witnessing is not for us to try to save people. I know that sounds strange, but it is true. When we try to save people we often use approaches or tactics to pressure or bend the will of someone to get a quick conversion experience. That can consist of using extreme pressure or guilt to get someone to walk down a church aisle or to get them to say a prayer which then "causes" them to be born again. Walking down a church aisle or saying a rote prayer does not save a person. There is nothing wrong with an invitation for spiritual counseling or to pray for salvation. However, using extreme pressure or guilt to get a quick conversion will often result in a false conversion.

The purpose of evangelism is to be obedient to God's command to spread the seed of the Word of God and to water it. It is God who saves people, not us. See what the Apostle Paul has to say about this.

⁵ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. (1 Cor. 3:5-8)

Here Paul is telling us not to be proud when we are used by God to bring a lost sinner to Christ. Some plant the seed of Christ in the hearts of hearers and others come along and water that seed with more of the message of Christ. Can a person receive Christ by the use

of his will before God gives the increase? No. It is only by God giving the increase, opening the will of the sinner to believe, that a person can receive Christ.

God, the Holy Spirit, is the key in opening the wills of mankind to be able to see, hear, understand and enter the kingdom by the new birth. Only God can cause a lost sinner to be quickened from spiritual death to spiritual life, and that only happens with the new birth by the sovereign grace of God. Paul even tells us in verse 7 that the person who plants or waters is nothing. It is God who gives the increase that makes the unsaved person understand spiritual truth. So, the purpose of our witnessing is to be obedient to God in planting and watering the gospel seed. God uses our efforts to evangelize the "many" that are called to bring to saving faith by the work of the Holy Spirit the "few" who are chosen by the Lord. (Matt. 22:14) We don't know who God's elect are, so we are commanded to spread the gospel seed to all people.

Who Gets the Credit for Our Faith and Salvation?

The free will salvation view keeps God from getting all the credit in our salvation. It gives the most important credit to the spiritually dead unsaved sinner. How is that true? Yes, the free will view believes that Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins. However, the sinner still has to come to faith for salvation. It is how that person comes to faith where the free will view takes from God. It changes the biblical view of God's free grace whereby the Holy Spirit graciously causes faith in the chosen sinner to the sinner getting this credit by virtue of a free will ability to choose Christ. The unsaved person does not have this spiritual ability.

It is not until the Holy Spirit opens the heart of the unsaved person (Acts 16:14) that a person will believe and then choose Christ. The Holy Spirit opens the wills of those the Father chose before time and gave to the Son. Then the sinner, by virtue of this God given gift of faith, chooses Christ. The free will view says that spiritually dead unsaved sinners are the ultimate cause or reason for their salvation. The free grace view says that it is God who is the ultimate cause or

reason for their salvation as He alone gives the increase of faith to those according to His will not theirs.

When We See Him Face to Face

When we as Christians die and see Jesus Christ for the first time, we will immediately know the truth of His free grace as described in this book. We will be like Isaiah who said:

"Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." (Isa. 6:5)

We will know for the first time how really sinful, evil, totally depraved and spiritually impotent we were before being given the free grace of God. We will know how lost we were and how unable to come to Him. It will be so clear and evident when we see His wonderful holiness and perfect purity that we will fall prostrate before Him thanking Him for His wonderful free grace in our salvation to us, men and women of unclean lips, deeds, and thoughts.

Removing Election From Grace Damages Grace

Notice again what the Apostle Paul says in Rom. 11:5.

⁵ Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. ⁶ And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

Paul is telling us here that God's election and His grace are bound together. That is why he calls it the "election of grace". You can't have one without the other. If election is removed from grace, then grace is severely damaged. Let us never deny God's unconditional election called free grace, for, if we do, we are damaging the truth of the grace of God and turning it into a reward.

In writing this book, I am either presenting the truth of the Scriptures or error. I believe with all my being I have presented the truth of God. If I am in error, I would much rather error in favor of giving God all the credit, honor, and glory in my salvation than to give any credit, honor, or glory to my own will. I would also rather error in favor of exalting His sovereignty in my salvation than in favor of exalting my will. My will cannot accuse me on judgment day or do me harm, but I must stand before an awesome God one day and give an account to Him on this issue.

Do You Really Believe God is Sovereign Over Everything?

Let me ask you a few questions before this book ends. Do you believe that God is sovereign over everything? Most Christians would quickly reply yes. However, do they really mean it? Do they instead really mean God is sovereign over everything except the salvation of man? What about you? Do you believe that God is totally sovereign over man's salvation? Either God is the determining factor or the unsaved, spiritually dead sinner is. These are important questions to answer. Every Christian should be able to answer these questions correctly.

God would never transfer any part of His sovereignty or control over this universe to the wills of spiritually dead, unsaved sinners who are ruled and deceived by Satan.

¹ And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Eph. 2:1-3)

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev. 12:9)

The purpose of this book is to help demonstrate that God is sovereign over all things, especially the salvation of His human creatures. This is extremely important because how we answer these key questions will determine our view and understanding of God. Is He a God who is "trying" to save everyone but only saves a few? Is He a God who successfully saves every single person He planned to save from all eternity? Does the spiritually dead unsaved man have veto power over God? God wants us to have a correct and proper understanding of Him and all His holy attributes. We have a responsibility as believers before God to know Him as He is and how Scripture describes His free salvation plan. The whole purpose in God having an election or choosing an elect people is to show the world that He is sovereign over the salvation of man.

Do Not Walk Away From the Truth of Jesus

In John 6, Jesus made a number of statements to the Jews, upsetting them. The following verses are especially important regarding free grace.

⁶⁵ And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

⁶⁶ From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. ⁶⁷ Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"

In verse 65, Jesus said that no one can come to Him unless the Father grants him access to the Son. Not one single person can come to Jesus without the Father's direct permission. The word can denotes power or ability. The unsaved man has no free will ability or power to come to Christ without God causing it to happen individually. The Father chooses who will get to come to Jesus. This verse clearly shows the electing role of the Father in salvation.

Verse 66 is a key verse. Notice the reaction of some of the Lord's disciples upon hearing this. These were not the original twelve disciples but other disciples who had been traveling with Jesus. The Scripture says many of these disciples walked away from Jesus. Why?

They were offended at some of His comments in chapter 6, and this final comment in verse 65 was the straw that broke the camel's back. Why were they so upset? They were offended because they did not like Jesus saying that it was God who was in control of man's salvation and not man, so they walked away from Him. Jesus then turned to the twelve and asked if they too were going to leave Him.

It is a fact that most Christians are offended at the thought of the Father unconditionally electing some people to salvation and not others. In a sense, they too walk away from Jesus on this issue by rejecting the truth of God's sovereign right to choose whom He wants to save. It is my hope that you will not walk away from Jesus' truth of the electing free grace of God in the salvation of man.

I would also like to say about this passage that Jesus, who is omniscient, knew before He made this controversial statement that many of His disciples would be offended and leave Him. Yet He made the statement anyway. He did it because it was important to tell the truth on this matter even though He would be criticized, rejected, or thought evil of. It is important for us to also speak the truth on this issue regarding free grace even though it might offend others. We too may be criticized or rejected by some for sharing this salvation truth.

Epilogue

So to Jesus I say, publicly and eternally, thank You, Lord, for saving such a wretch like me. I love You only because You first loved me. (1 John 4:19) I chose You only because You first chose me. (John 15:16) I couldn't come to You because my will was spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. (Eph. 2:1-5) I'm only saved because of the blessed, wonderful free grace given to me by the Father who loved and chose me unconditionally before time (Eph. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9), by the Son who died to atone for my sins (Rom. 5:10-11) and redeem me (Eph. 1:7), and by the Holy Spirit who graciously caused me to come to Christ (Psalm 65:4; Eze. 36:26-27) and keeps me in Christ (Eph. 4:30; John 10:27-29; 1 Peter 1:3-5). I didn't contribute to my salvation (1 Cor. 2:14), nor did I bring myself to faith

by my will. (Rom. 9:16; Eph. 2:8-9) Thank you God for doing it all!
You and You alone deserve all the glory and credit for my salvation.

Praise God for His wonderful free grace and the riches of His glory to
His unworthy but chosen vessels of mercy.

*...and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels
of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, (Rom. 9:23)*

Hallelujah!

Amen!