

THE REASONS FOR ELECTING GRACE: TOTAL HUMAN DEBILITY REQUIRES A DIVINE CALLING

*There is none that understandeth,
there is none that seeketh after God.*

Romans 3:11

PREFACE

This is a brief and introductory paper on the necessity of God's electing grace. It is not meant to answer every question or solve every mystery. It is presented for two simple reasons.

First, may this brief paper on electing grace introduce some to a correct interpretation of their personal experience with Jesus Christ. A major difficulty in theology among ordinary Christians is the different interpretations that are retained about just what happened that brought to them salvation from sin and its penalty. Falsehoods garnish the historical truth of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Savior with what are insulting ideas about the Almighty God. As a result, many Christians have been influenced by untruths that are actually blasphemous to their Savior. They are unlearned because they are untaught. This paper means to introduce God's gracious truth to those who just do not understand their gracious God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. It merely begins that

instruction toward edification by underscoring man's complete spiritual inability and the required Divine intervention in order for any powerless human to be saved from a just destruction.

Second, may this brief paper help clarify why an altogether Sovereign electing grace is necessary to the salvation of sinners. If God saves anyone, the total spiritual impairment of every human obliges God to use His powers in order to deliver a sinner from his deserved destruction. But that obligation is not subjective; that is, it is not compulsory for God to save any sinner. No attribute of God forces His choices in anything, or exercises any constraining power over His own prerogatives. If any are saved, it is only because God has Himself chosen to save some from among all humans for reasons known only to Himself.

Man's complete spiritual inability does not imply that God is under obligation to save anyone. Quite the contrary is true. Because all without exception are alike guilty of violating His laws and His holiness, God is rather obliged to condemn all men, if committed to His justice alone. He has no need for anything or anyone, but is quite independent and complete in Himself. From our completely helpless perspective, and what is the reality of salvation, He saves wicked men only because He chooses to be merciful to some.

The Author believes the Scriptural doctrine of man's complete moral infirmity is the necessary groundwork for understanding what has happened to us in Christ. Then we shall be prepared to receive the great truths about our Almighty and Independent God. This brief paper is just a start for us all eventually to reach that comprehension. Then our worship and service can indeed be *in spirit and in truth*. Amen.

The Author is bound to include two more prefatory notes. First, the Scripture employed is from The Authorized Version and from The Modern Language Bible as noted.

Second, this paper, as with all this Author's writing, is not meant for casual reading. It is intended to require the reader to reason, to think these truths through to a logical conclusion. Perhaps rereading and studying this paper and its subject matter would be helpful. This paper is not meant to be quickly scanned like much of the bland Christian literature of these "last days." We mean it to be digested by genuinely earnest Bible inquirers. Some others may find it boring or even irksome. Alas! the truths of Scripture are twisted and voided to men's destruction, but may it be of us that we believe every jot and tittle. In conclusion, we must say what Jesus repeatedly said to His listeners, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Amen!

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Election is a terribly neglected doctrine by many Christians. Because it is in the main disbelieved, or at best just ignored, the great details of God's grace are similarly abandoned by today's ministry. Christians must be careful not to blaspheme that about which they are unlearned and untaught. All natural men quite understandably hate any theology that presents man as unable to contribute to his own salvation, and thereby be completely at the mercy of God's Sovereignty. The Sovereignty of God in Unconditional Election, Total Depravity, Particular Redemption, Effectual Calling, and Saint Perseverance, creates an endowment of godliness and God-pleasing faith in sinful men.

Total Depravity

The word, total, in the phrase, total depravity, deals not with the measure of depravity, but with the scope or extent of depravity. Total depravity does not mean that men are as evil as they can be, but that all men are completely evil in every part of their beings; their "total" beings are deviant, aberrant, and altogether disposed to depart from God and all things spiritual. The theological phrase, total depravity, means that all mankind as a race of fallen created beings is evil or

depraved in the totality of their psyche—their existence, essence, attainments, and deeds. They can not make any good choice or do any good thing as relates to God, or as concerns the things of God. All men are steeped in sin throughout their “total” beings. Their emotions (i.e. what they like and dislike, their desires), their minds (what they think and how they rationalize), and consequently their wills (what they choose) are corrupted so that all they desire from their evil hearts is wicked by God’s appraisal. All they think in their evil minds is corrupt in the estimate of God, and all they decide to do from their evil wills is debased in the view of God. All men are incapable of desiring, thinking, or choosing any good concerning the law, the gospel, and the Word of God. While what some natural or lost men do seems to other men to be *good*, yet in the sight of God it is only evil, as testifies the Word of God in the following,

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Isaiah 64:6

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD.

Proverbs 15:8

A high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.

Proverbs 21:4

The three basic areas of respectable good are in these three verses—good deeds, good worship, and good secular work. *Isaiah 64:6* has to do with good deeds, *Proverbs 15:8* with religious seeking of God, and *Proverbs 21:4* with the ordinary and necessary pursuit of physical or animal life. God judges them all alike as evil.

Good Works and Depravity

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

First, in *Isaiah 64:6* there are acts of *righteousness*. These are those things done for others, to benefit men. These *righteousnesses* are acts of love toward other humans, usually referred to as philanthropic deeds, whereby an interest in the general human welfare is manifest. *Righteous* acts may include direct concern for reducing pain and suffering in other humans. Or they may even be altruistic, where one puts the welfare of others before one's own interests, when one is even free from selfishness. But because of man's innate and natural depravity, God says that all man's *righteousnesses*, such as those just named above, are as *filthy rags* in His sight. What God sees in the heart is what makes those kinds of deeds an abomination in His comprehensive sight. God only can see the real motive, and that factor will, according to God Himself, render any supposed and apparent righteousness as altogether evil to God. Every

supposed and attempted effort by the natural man to do good has always an evil motive, because he lacks the only righteous motive for any good deed, a desire to glorify God.

Religion and Depravity

*The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination
unto the LORD.* *Proverbs 15:8*

Secondly, as expressed by Solomon in *Proverbs 15:8*, men actually perform acts of worship and obedience to God in giving *sacrifices*, but God deems them only evil. Solomon's wisdom sees even sacrifices, when given by the *wicked* (which includes all naturally born men) as *an abomination unto the LORD*. The very best acts of love toward God by natural men are not considered good by God because of man's natural depravity. Sin intrudes upon his motives and makes all he does iniquitous. All that he thinks, does, and decides is sin, abomination, wickedness, to God. All sacrifices which originate from man are rejected by God because man is evil innately. Consequently, man's approach to God must be based not upon one's own provision, or resource, or expenditure, or stratagem, but solely upon God's own provision, resource, expenditure, and stratagem in the gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only worthy sacrifice before God.

The Pursuit of Ordinary Physical Life and Depravity

*A high look, and a proud heart, and
the plowing of the wicked, is sin.*

Proverbs 21:4

Thirdly, in *Proverbs 21:4*, Solomon's wisdom deals with *plowing*. It is what everybody considers to be man's honorable and good work that is required in order to survive in this life. To God, man's most necessary work, which may seem to us to be amoral or secular, is really no different from his most plainly debauched pridefulness and lust. God groups all works of the naturally born man together as similarly sinful to Him; *the high look, the proud heart*, and even the act of caring for one's family by *plowing* the ground in preparation for planting food, is all *sin*. To hear that with a hearing ear, to receive that into a pliant perception, to understand and humbly believe that about man is to know what **total** depravity actually is. Everything that natural men do *is sin in the sight of God*.

The Corruption of the Will

When Jesus told the leaders of the Jews, *Yet you do not want to come to Me in order to have life.*¹ He was not describing something unique to the Jews or with their leaders only; but was indicating the innate condition of all naturally born men. What was unique about those to whom Jesus spoke these words was that they were professing to have been God's leaders, yet they were still in their natural state of

¹ *John 5:40*; Gerrit Verkuyl, The Modern Language Bible; (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1945), p. 99.

degeneration. They would have come to Christ if they were born again, but because they had no spiritual life, because they were still in their natural condition of being spiritually dead, they did not want to come to Christ and accept His teachings about the true life. If they had come to Christ for spiritual help, through that yieldedness and procedure they would have had to acknowledge the kind of true spiritual life He offered to them. This they never would have done unless God had before given them new life and hence a desire to come to Him.

Election, Depravity, and Choices

Through the preaching of the gospel, all men are presented with the same choice. One can choose Christ and heaven or choose sin and death. But that choice is not limited to those who hear the gospel, because without regard to the preaching of the gospel, every man at some point in life makes a decision between eternal life and eternal death. However, because the gospel is not preached to all men everywhere, not all persons get to choose between the gospel and sin; only those who hear the gospel have that unique opportunity. Nevertheless, with or without the gospel being heard, all persons do choose between good and evil, because they possess the knowledge of God through the outward testimony of creation and the inner testimony of their own consciences (*Rom. 1:18-23; 2:12-16*). That makes them accountable before God for their wicked choices (*Rom. 3:19*).

All men are born sinners, sons of Adam, and chose a sinful way when Adam chose it; we all made that choice in Adam.² However, at some point in this life, God places before every man an opportunity to make his own choice regarding his eternal destiny. That opportunity to choose may or may not involve the gospel; that is, all men have opportunity to choose between right and wrong through the knowledge that they have, be it the knowledge gained from observing creation, the inner knowledge of conscience, or the

² *Romans 5:12, Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned* [added emph.]. The underlined portion is a Gk. aorist tense which is a pinpointed action, lit. “for all sinned,” i.e. at a point in past time (in the Garden of Eden) all mankind sinned in one all-comprehending sin with Adam, thus all men share in his guilt and condemnation.

I Cor. 15:22, For as in Adam all die [i.e. every man without exception is *in Adam*; therefore because every man without exception dies, it logically follows that all were counted guilty with Adam.], *even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Both Scriptures above include infants even though they have not reached an age when they can be held accountable for personal sin since they have no understandable law (*Romans 5:13*), but babies do, nevertheless, suffer death which is only by the commission of accountable sin (Q.v. *Romans 4:15; 5:13; 6:23; I Cor. 15:50; I Jn. 3:4*). Therefore, Paul’s inspired conclusion from these facts is that the guilt of Adam’s sin is shared by all his progeny, without regard to personal acts of sin, because no other reason can be found for infants’ subjection to death. (Study *Romans 5:12-14* for this Spirit-stimulated logic.)

knowledge of the gospel. But because of indwelling sinfulness, all men alike always choose evil. But for any to be saved, man's choice of good must involve the gospel³ (*Acts 4:12*). All men are already guilty sinners by Adam's choice, but the justice of God gives each man opportunity of his own to choose between good and bad, light and darkness, life and destruction. This opportunity amounts to a choice to remain or not to remain in the sin and death syndrome entered at birth, a choice given because man is a self-responsible agent originally made in God's Own likeness.

³ See in the following pages under the headings, Man's Enslaved Moral Agency, Obeying the Law and the Gospel, God's Sincere Offers in the Law, The Free Offer, Man's Enslaved Will, an explanation of this paradoxical antinomy. Although no man will ever submit to God without the influences of the gospel as applied by the Holy Spirit, but for the sake of clearness concerning the reality of God's opportunity to every man, note the following hypothetical and highly conjectural scenario. If any person did submit to what he did understand about God in creation and/or conscience, God would then bring more light to him in the gospel—by sending a missionary, providing a tract, referring a personal witness to him, etc.—, so that he could be saved by Christ. Yet in reality, he had to have been regenerated already, else he would never have obeyed either the light gained from creation or from conscience. (Cp. Cornelius in *Acts 10 & 11*) Because every man is totally debilitated, by himself he will never live up to any form of light from God, be it in creation, conscience, or Christ.

Man's Enslaved Moral Agency

However, many misconstrue man's freedom to choose and on that account overestimate man's will, not considering its depraved limitations. While man has opportunity to choose, he by no means has any freedom of will. A depraved and wicked heart and mind control his will. His desires are evil, as are his thoughts. Therefore, his choices are invariably evil also. He will never choose the good, the life, the narrow way, the light or the Christ; but will, because of his corrupt mind and heart, always choose the evil, the destruction, the broad way, the darkness or the Devil. Someone will say, "But I thought all men were given a free choice. Now you say he cannot make one. This is a contradiction." I respond, "No! It is not!" Although God gives the opportunity and makes clear in His Word the choices, man's sinful condition limits his own ability to make any other choices except the evil ones always. Every man has a sin-imposed restriction upon the "free" exercise of his moral choices. God cannot be held responsible for men's wicked hearts. He does good in telling men of the choices, but is not responsible for their evil disposition to choose always the evil and reject the good.

Obedying the Law and the Gospel

The choices are nearly the same with the Gospel as was true with the Law.⁴ As with the

⁴ See *II Thes. 1:8; Rom. 1:5; 2:8; 6:17; 10:16* with *Isa. 53:1; Rom. 15:18; Acts 5:32 6:7; Heb. 5:9; I Peter 4:17.*

Gospel, under the Old Testament God also told Israel and all men to make a choice.

And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD [i.e. the law], and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.

Exodus 24:3

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Romans 3:19

The people of Israel thought to obey the law, but never had the ability to do it. Because the law is spiritual, a spiritual power is needed to effect obedience to it, *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin (Romans 7:14)*. No man has the spiritual power to obey the law's requirements. The law said very simply, *Do this and live (See Deut. 28:1-2, 9-14)*. But the Scripture clearly teaches that no man can keep it; no man except Jesus ever kept the law (*Romans 3:19-20; Gal. 3:21-22*). Notwithstanding Israel's absolute inability to obey the law, God gave them repeated opportunity after opportunity to choose to obey the law. No

[Cont' fr. previous p.] A study of these references will aid in discerning the spiritual affinity between obedience to the law and obedience to the Gospel. To repent and believe the Gospel is as much a moral commandment as any of the ten moral commandments, or any other in the Law, *Acts 16:31; 17:30; Mk. 6:12; Mt. 4:17; Jn. 6:28-29*.

matter how they tried or how sincere they were, still they lacked the spiritual power to do it. Their flesh “willed” to do it repeatedly, but their “wills” were not able to maintain their initial and artificial urge to obey God; they could never actually do the law. Their flesh-controlled wills half-heartedly attempted to do the impossible rather than confess to total inability and apply to God’s mercy for their hopeless condition. While this was true of the nation as a whole, still many of their number did indeed receive the spiritual power to seek and find God’s mercy in His to be provided Messiahby grace .

God’s Sincere Offers in the Law

God’s sincerity, even the reality and authenticity of His offers to grant them life through the law, was not limited by their inability to obey the law. It was only their depraved condition which kept them from obeying. God cannot, must not, be charged with evil because of men’s wicked souls. The offer was repeated throughout Israel’s history, and is duplicated through different means for each individual even today, but with the same results always... refusal and/or failure! They are always sincere offers, and will be made in order to vindicate any charges against God’s judgments opposing man’s wickedness. Man’s continual rejection of these honest offers justifies God in all His dealings with the wickedness of men, while they stop every mouth and condemn all the world before His holy and spiritual

law. The offers were made to Israel through the law, but are made to all men in different ways (See *Romans 2:12-16*). They were and are sincere offers, but no man is ever able to gain life through these offers because of the wickedness of his heart, the depravity in his desires, and the feebleness of his will.⁵

The Free Offer

The free offer to obey the Gospel is given to the same kinds of depraved and limited sinners as were those invitations given to Israel to obey the law; Gentiles and Jews are identical in the depth of their depravity.⁶ Furthermore, obedience to the law and obedience to the gospel is very much the same, that is, both require something of man that he does not have resident within. In both the law and the gospel, for both Jew and Gentile, the compliance demanded is beyond the ability of any man to “will” and so to “do” as God requires. Even the “simple” matter of just believing on Jesus is impossible for the naturally born man (See *John 8:46-47; 10:25-26; 1:11-13*). This obedience to the gospel requires from depraved men precisely what the law requires, that is, **Complete surrender of the selfish state of man’s will to the pleasure of God.** Therefore, no unaided natural man can obey the gospel any more than he can obey the law.

⁵ *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20*

⁶ *Q.v. Romans 3:9-19, 23; I Thes. 2:14-16; Eph. 4:17-19*

The law offers life to a depraved man if he will only yield to the righteousness of its holy demands, while the gospel offers life to a depraved man if he will only yield to the lordship and saviorhood of Christ. He can no more do the one than the other. The choices are clearly defined in the law and the gospel. The offer is made because every man is a self-responsible agent; that is, in the beginning of his life, every person is completely free from all outside influences for his right of choice. When very young and when first confronted with right and wrong, every person is unfettered as regards any external powers which might hinder his decision.⁷ No outward agents or forces hinder the earliest exercises of each person's will. But as time passes in this life, each person chooses to allow certain sins or some other of the Devil's blindfolds to shield him from the glorious light of the Gospel (*II Cor. 4:4-5*). This is caused by man's enslaved will; man's will is never free from the inward influences of his own wickedness, and the outward influences that his own inward wickedness allows.

⁷I.e. At birth each person starts off with God without any accumulated habits or devilish influences outside himself which would presuppose his choices. Nonetheless, he begins immediately to choose the evil and to allow the Devil's influences to darken and to complicate his decisions because of his innate depravity. These devilish influences then will affect his choices throughout his life, and will increase in influence until death, unless and until he is regenerated by God's will, *John 1:13*.

Man's Enslaved Will

*...Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,
Having the understanding darkened, being
alienated from the life of God through the ignorance
that is in them, because of the blindness of their
heart:*

*Who being past feeling have given themselves
over....* *Ephesians 4:17b-19a*

In the passage just quoted, the Apostle refers to the masses of mankind when referencing the *Gentiles*. Indwelling sin makes an enslaved and sin-captured person out of every otherwise free agent (*Romans 7:13-20*). Man's will—that is, his powers to reason and his control of the emotions which determine his choices—is not free from the effects and influences of his own inclination toward sin. Therefore, while man is a free agent, he certainly is not a free moral agent. His moral choices are enslaved to indwelling sin. He is bound to and restricted by his own bent to choose always the evil and to reject the good, to choose his own way and to reject God's way, to choose his own destruction over the gospel of the grace of God.

This free agency and enslaved will thing works like this: Man is a walking corpse, that is, he is a spiritually dead being (*Eph. 2:1*). He is not alive to God, Who is all spirit. Everything about God and Christ and the Word of God and the Spirit of God and the law of God and the gospel of God is spiritual

and is only spiritually discernable through the use of spiritual receptors (*I Cor. 2:10-16*), but man is a depraved being and possesses impaired spiritual receptors as related by Jesus,

The eye is the body's lamp. If then, your eye is sound [through new birth], ***your whole body is illumined,***

But if your eye is defective [as you were when naturally born into this world], ***your whole body is in the dark. If then the light within you grows dark,—how dense a darkness!***⁸

[Added brackets.]

Matthew 6:22-23

Therefore, as regards spiritual things, the living natural man is like a corpse lying on a table. We give the corpse his choices in the gospel. We read the gospel offer for him to believe on Jesus and follow after Him, and to receive life in place of the present state in which he now exists. Just as the law announced through its required commandments, *Do this and you will live*; similarly, we also say through the gospel, *Do this and you will live*, but the corpse just lies there on the table. We may pound the table, stomp the floor, yell loudly in its ears, but the corpse just lies there. It cannot hear; it cannot get up. We say, "Reach out and touch Jesus and be saved; then begin to follow Him into life eternal." But he just continues to lie there on the table. He can do nothing because he is dead. He cannot hear. But

⁸ Gerrit Verkuyl, op. cit., p.6

someone will object, "That is ridiculous; the person is dead. It is an impossible prospect that he could hear when he is dead."

But that is precisely the unchanged condition of all men in their natural state without exception, as regards spiritual responsibility and culpability. The legitimate doctrine of the free agency of all men forbids any inhibiting chains, ropes, or fetters of any kind to be placed upon any members of spiritually dead mankind. As regards spiritual things and as regards actually understanding spiritual truth, all men are like the dead man on the table who was not chained down. No outward agency kept him from hearing, from rising up and seeking Christ. But his own condition prevented his proper response to the free and real offer in the Gospel. He was free to get up at any time. No one—not even God—restrained him in any way, but his own inherent condition denied him the ability to hear and obey what was offered him. That is precisely the spiritual condition of every natural born man in this world. While nothing from without hinders his perception of spiritual truth and his favorable reception of salvation in the gospel, his spiritual state of being dead to God obstructs him from ever obeying the gospel. So it is with free agency and human will; the free agency is maintained or sustained by the absence of any outside powers to

limit the spiritually dead man's response to the gospel. The human will is retained or preserved, but is itself limited by the deadness of man's consciousness to the spiritual things going on around him.

Man is a free agent without a free will. He has no restraints placed upon him other than those placed upon him through Adam's transgression and his subsequent spiritually dead condition which results always in his own wicked spiritual choices. Adam, as man's representative in the garden and as our Federal Head, enslaved our wills, and created within us special powers to sin at every opportunity (*Romans 7:5, 7-11*). The choices are clearly given to men, but the right choice is not so easily made. It requires especial grace from God for spiritually dead men to be made alive and able to hear, and then to respond to the opportunities offered them in Christ. Destruction will never be shunned, nor will life ever be embraced, unless and until God provides both the corrected light receptors and the light to see. His life, granted by grace, provides the power to respond to His love. Our only hope as sinners is to seek God for all light and life through His love, because we are completely at His mercy.

The Necessity of Election by God

Therefore, the rational deduction that sensibly follows man's incorrigible and unyielding depravity is the election of God, Who, because of the necessities of man's condition, must select some to

save from among mankind if any at all are going to be saved. Election follows very necessarily the doctrine of total human depravity since all men without exception are without any inherent inclination to seek God. The Apostle quoted the psalmist,

As it is written, There is none righteous; not even one.

No one has understanding; no one is a searcher after God.

*All have strayed aside; they have become utterly useless. There is none doing right, not even one.*⁹

Romans 3:10-12

The Complete Work of Grace

Consequently, because of the depraved and dead condition of all men, the initiative to begin and the strength to effect conformity to Christ is not in man. It is only by the comprehensive work of God's Holy Spirit as He regenerates and renews the dead spirits of impotent men that any man can become a "brother" to Christ, which is required by God. No man has it within himself to be as Jesus. Since initial salvation is by grace, the same grace vitally empowers the saint and overcomes the powers for evil in God's elect (See *Romans 5:20-21*). God assigns the resurrection life of His Son to certain of mankind, which enables them alone of all humanity to *put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision*

⁹ Verkuyl, op. cit., p. 160.

for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof (*Romans 13:14*). Therefore, in one sense salvation is by works; that is, final salvation will be achieved through the works of God in His elect. God empowers them realistically, and therefore facilitates their reaching their objective safely.¹⁰ It is God's work in His elect that is in view in the New Testament assurances that the final safety of heaven will be reached by the believer.

God's Special and Effectual Call to Salvation

At the very center of the Bible doctrine of total human depravity is man's heart of evil which will never surrender to, nor accept, nor believe in, nor trust in, God's will as being superior to and more reliable than his own will. Man's evil soul—his mind, heart, and will—would never allow him to trust God or His Son for salvation. God must change man's "want to," or will, through the workings of His Word in the gospel, His Holy Spirit's inner dealings, and His crucial acts of Providence in one's life. Those threefold workings make up God's effectual call to salvation. Thus Jesus referred to these workings when He said,

¹⁰ See *Romans 2:6-11* for Paul's clear reference to this truth. The Book of *Romans* undeniably has as its primary message our justification by grace through faith alone. Yet in *2:6-11* Paul prefaced his presentation of that great truth with a reference to good works as the determining evidence of one's reaching glory and eternal salvation in the end (*Q.v. Rev. 22:12; Matt. 16:27; James. 2:17-20*).

No one is able to come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

The Spirit is the life-giver; the flesh does not benefit at all. The messages I bring you are spirit and life;

But there are some of you who fail to believe. For Jesus knew from the start who were the unbelievers and who would be His betrayer.

He further said, For this reason I have told you that no one is able to come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father.¹¹

John 6:44, 63-65

According to these words of Jesus, if God did not initiate the salvation of every person who is saved, then no one would be saved. Jesus said that the Spirit of God, Who alone is the life-giver, must first give His life to dead sinners if they are to be enabled to come to Him as believers. That is plain in the scripture quote above. Since the messages brought by Jesus were spiritual in nature and gave spiritual life, and since men are only “unbeneficial flesh” as relates to spiritual comprehension and sincerity, if any of these dead, fleshly, and unbeneficial sinners are to believe unto life eternal, it must have been granted by the Father’s election and His subsequent special calling through the Spirit of God.

¹¹Verkuyl, op. cit., p. 101.

Paul related the occasion of the Thessalonians' believing as altogether these workings of God's spiritual calling,

Brothers, beloved of God, we know His choice [i.e. election] of you;

For our good tidings did not merely reach you in talk, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with sound conviction, as you well know in what way we conducted ourselves among you for your service.

You also became followers of ours and of the Lord, when with joy, derived from the Holy Spirit, you welcomed the message under great affliction,

So that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.¹²

[added emph.]

I Thessalonians 1:4-7

Man left to himself will only turn to his own way and be finally lost. Therefore, God must intervene with a special call in order to save any naturally born son of Adam's depravity.

Two Callings

Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Romans 8:30

For many be called, but few chosen.

Matthew 22:14

¹² Verkuyl, op. cit., p. 219.

In Scripture there are two kinds of fundamental callings made for men to be saved. The two verses above are references to those two different callings. The Apostle in Romans referred to God's inner calling, but Jesus in Matthew referred to man's outward calling. The inner calling relies upon an outward or some physical presentation of the gospel, but the outward calling may not include God's inner calling at all; and consequently it will not always result in salvation. The physical calling is made by men when preaching the gospel, or when witnessing to its truth; while the spiritual call is made by the Holy Spirit through that same witnessing or preaching (the human means). While God uses the outward call of the gospel message, and in that manner involves His higher call with man's physical call (preaching), notwithstanding, they are very different calls. The one is internal, the other is external; one is spiritual, the other is physical; one is unto salvation, while the other is unto opportunity only, because of man's total inability to respond to spiritual good. God's call is an effectual use of the gospel message. When man's call (preaching) is absent of God's higher call, it is an ineffectual use of the gospel message. One call is effectual, the other is ineffectual, when void of God's inner effectual call.

Called to Salvation

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.
Romans 8:29-30

Paul in *Romans 8:30* referred to the effectual call to salvation in the words, *them he also called: and whom he called*. This is evident because Paul clearly stated that the ones *whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and [all] whom he called, them he also justified*. In other words, He saved all whom He predestinated because He *called* them effectually by the Spirit of God through the gospel. This effectual *call* is unto salvation and is irresistible when issued by God; it always results in the salvation (justification) of all to whom it is issued. That is obvious in *Romans 8:30*. Furthermore, to those who are *called* in this way, *them he also glorified; glorified* is completed action or past tense as already done, as sure of actualization and accomplishment. When this effectual *call* takes place, a sinner is made into a *new creature in Christ Jesus*, having been *predestined* to be completely conformed to the image of his Son. That *new creature in Christ Jesus* is the beginning work of new birth from above. The glorification is the completion of the *good work* begun; and He will continuously *perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*,

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6

That completed work—the glorification, *being conformed to the image of his Son*—is begun with the effectual *call* initiated by God through the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God. That call immediately results in justification in the sight of God, which will without fail culminate in glorification. Jesus referred to this higher call when teaching his Parable of the Sheepfold,

To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. [added emph.]

John 10:3-5, 16, 26-27

Jesus assured His sheep that they *hear His voice* when He *calleth them*. This is a reference to His Holy Spirit's drawing or calling them to

Himself to come to Him and to follow His directions. Jesus Himself provided this interpretation when immediately following this parable of the sheep, He told the unbelieving Jews that *ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep (John 10:26)*. Then he explained that that was what He had meant when He said before, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them*. Notice this correlation of *John 10:26* with *verse 27*:

But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

John 10:26-27

In other words, the reason that they did not believe was just because they did not hear His voice in His effectual calling of His sheep. They did not hear His voice simply because He had not spoken to them, had not named them, had not spiritually and inwardly called them, because they were not His chosen sheep.

The word *called* and its forms are also often used in scripture of the physical, external, or regularly ineffectual calling of men, which is void of the Spirit of God.

Some are Called to Opportunity Only

For many be called, but few chosen.

Matthew 22:14

On the occasion for these words, Jesus had just given the Parable of the Marriage Feast in *Matthew 22:1-13*. In it He referenced a king who had invited people indiscriminately to his son's marriage feast. His servants had bidden *as many as they found* in the *highways, both good and bad*, and had in that manner furnished the feast with guests. But the king came in and found a guest without a wedding garment, meaning that he was really unprepared for the feast, although he had been outwardly invited. Whereupon, the enraged king *cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. Following that story, Jesus applied the parable with the words, *For many be called, but few chosen*.

Without doubt, according to Jesus' final words concerning it in *Matthew 22:14*, the meaning of the parable is this. That although a great many people are outwardly invited to His Marriage Supper of the Lamb (i.e. salvation and heaven, *Rev.19:9*) each time the gospel is preached indiscriminately to all men, still that supper is to be experienced only by those who are chosen and hence have been divinely prepared for it. All others will experience the *weeping and gnashing of teeth* in the *outer darkness*, which was the outcome for any who have not put on the proper garments for the marriage feast (*Matt. 22:13*).

In this same vein, concerning being *prepared* (i.e. *called, justified, and glorified—conformed to the image of his Son*) for the heavenly kingdom, when certain disciples asked for special future favors at Christ's Great Kingdom Feast (which is actually, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb as in *Rev, 19:9*), *He answered,*

...but to sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

[Added emph.]

Matthew 20:23

Jesus denied any special favors to His most intimate disciples—except the special favors given to all who are saved by His preparation of them through a divine *call*, by a divinely provided justification, and ultimately by their predestined glorification. God *prepares* men for the heavenly kingdom in no other way.

Consequently, Jesus obviously used the word *called* in *Matthew 22:14* only with the sense of an outward, external, physical call. All kinds and great numbers of people will be outwardly called by the preaching of the gospel, but only the *few* who are *chosen* or elected, and then on that basis are divinely and effectually *called* with an inner spiritual *calling* (enabled, or *prepared*, *Matthew 20:23*), shall in the end be saved.

A Predestined Call

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Ephesians 1:11

The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps. Proverbs 16:1, 9

Just because of man's absolute debility, and just because *known unto God are all his works from the beginning*, God also previously ordained the calling of those Whom He chose unto salvation in eternity past. God did not save them in eternity past, but elected them unto salvation; therefore in eternity He predestined the manner and procedure of their individual calls. For some it is in a church service, for others it may be at home, or in some one of any number of places and in any number of circumstances. But the call unto salvation will have been preordained by God and so orchestrated by God so that salvation will be most surely effected, and that elect person will be saved just at the proper time, when God has chosen.

The Always Successful Call

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:44

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.
John 6:37

No man can successfully resist this divine and predestined spiritual call.¹³ Its divine and authoritative prerogative is plainly taught in the Scriptures. To emphasize its divine origination and its unfailing operation, Jesus referred to it as an act of the Father in *John 6:44*. Furthermore, in *John 6:37*, Christ speaks of this call as an operation of the Father's handing over to Himself those who are effectually called, and that all who are thus given to Him through this call by God will indeed without fail always come to Him and will never experience any harm. That makes this call, according to Jesus' word in *John 6:37*, irresistible, always effectual, never thwarted, and divinely facilitated.

On the day of Pentecost, after giving the Jews who were then present the message of the gospel in *Acts 2:22-36* and after their acknowledgement for their needed response to it in *verse 38*, Peter extended his invitation for their salvation by saying,

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. [Added emph.]

Acts 2:39

Peter had issued an external, verbal, outward, call into their physical ears, but depended upon God to extend the inner, spiritual, and unseen call into their souls for

¹³ This effectual call is also referenced in *Romans 1:1; 8:30; 9:11, 15-19* [esp. v.19]; *Luke 14:23; II Cor. 4:6; II Tim. 1:9; II Thess. 2:13-14; Gal.1:15*; et al.

it to be effectual; and he limited it. That is, Peter knew that only those whom *the Lord our God shall call* would be saved. While acknowledging that the *promise* of salvation was given to *you all, and to all your children*—that is, to all the children of Israel, *Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved, (verse 21)*, he limited their individual salvation upon a special call from *the Lord our God*. *Only as many as He* would *call* would or could be saved and would respond. No more and no less, *only as many as God called* would be saved on that day of Pentecost. That limits salvation to those only who are *called* spiritually, divinely, especially, and effectually. Salvation from sin comes not just by a physical hearing of the gospel, but in addition to any external call from men, salvation is limited to those who also have an inner and spiritual call from the Holy Spirit. Peter had remembered the words of the Lord Jesus,

*No man can come to me, except the Father
which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him
up at the last day.*
John 6:44

This *draw* is the effectual *call* from God which results in the salvation of sinners because they have been chosen by God to salvation and are prepared and enabled with the necessary inner spiritual means to repent and believe the gospel truth of the substitutionary death and justifying resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the day of Pentecost, God chose to save about 3,000 souls through the effectual call

provided to His elect; and He continued saving Jews in accord with His own will,

And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Acts 2:47

Later God spread His effectual call unto salvation to the Gentiles,

And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. Acts 13:48

Those who were ordained (Gr. tasso, “appointed, placed in order, arranged”) were specially called or drawn by the Holy Spirit and thus given to the Lord Jesus by the Father, because God elected them *in the beginning*. No one can be successful in resisting this divine *call*; however the physical call by men when preaching the gospel can be and often is successfully resisted (Acts 24:24-25; 26:28; Matt. 22:11-14). The principle of both calls is revealed in the Word through Paul to the Thessalonians,

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men [i.e. as a general, external, and so possibly an ineffectual call], but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe [i.e. as an effectual call]

[Added emph.] *I Thessalonians 2:13*

The Word of God was made real to these Thessalonians because the Father used it as presented by Paul to *draw* them to the Lord Jesus, and in that manner they were *given* to Christ by the Father. Therefore, *the Word of God effectually worked in them that believed* as opposed to those who did not believe (q.v. *Acts 17: 4-5*). *Many were called* by Paul's preaching, but *a few were chosen* by God to be saved, and so they were called unto salvation.

Unconditional Election from Eternity

This favorable response to the gospel by the *few* (*Matt. 7:13-14*) is because God did elect, select, choose, and otherwise designate, some persons to become recipients of His grace in and through the works of His Son Jesus Christ. This election took place back in eternity,

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

*Even as He has chosen us in Him before the world was founded, to be holy and blameless in His presence.*¹⁴ *Ephesians 1:3-4*

Today we can only see the results of God's election when sinners come to Jesus and exercise faith in the cross. Everything that preceded their personal faith and all that is involved in the exercise of their faith is controlled and orchestrated by God's government as it is manifest in this world. This

¹⁴ Verkuyl, op. cit., p. 205.

sovereignty in all life's events is called Providence. This is why Jesus credited His disciples' decision to accept Him as their Master and Messiah as not really their choice at all. Their choice was only the result and affect of His first having chosen them,

*You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and appointed you to go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should be permanent, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may grant you.*¹⁵
John 15:16

Together with His Holy Spirit and the Word of Truth in the gospel, His Providence brings His elect to a place where they become willing believers in Jesus Christ, just as did Peter, John, Andrew, and the others (*John 1:31-51*). All His workings around and within His elect in this life are aimed at bringing them to the knowledge and subsequent grace of Jesus Christ. He will not fail. He cannot fail of this task since Jesus died for them, and paid for their sin; therefore God relentlessly pursues His elect and will in the end save through His substitutionary death on the cross every one for whom Christ died. This is the basis of salvation and this is the doctrine of effectual calling.

Salvation is All of Grace

Therefore, it is not by any uncommon abilities or innate resources naturally possessed by a few men which somehow qualify them for walking in a Christ-like manner in this carnal existence called the "world."

¹⁵ Verkuyl, op. cit., p. 115.

But it is by God's special gracious enabling through the new birth in His chosen children that some few of mankind are able to believe and to live faithful to Christ unto the end. Were it any other way, men could then boast in His presence. But the testimony of Scripture speaks most definitely concerning the source of believing faith. The origination of saving faith is the new birth,

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. [Added emph.]
John 1:12-13

The phrase, were born, places the time of faith after being born again, or places the time of being *born of God* before the reception of Christ and believing on His name. Besides this time element concerning faith in Jesus, notice that the new birth comes not *of the will of man*. That is a very plain statement that new life does not come as a result of man's choice. Regeneration, new birth, spiritual life is positively not a result of man's volition, **but** it is *of God*. In *John 3:8*, Jesus told Nicodemus, *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one born of the Spirit*. This means that every one that is born of the Spirit is acted upon just in the same way as the wind acts upon things physical. That is, one can only see the results of the wind but not see the wind itself, so is every

one born of the Spirit. As the wind is unpredictable, so is the Spirit of God in providing the new birth. We can only see its results, the affects of His regenerating power, which is faith in the crucified and risen Savior Jesus, and a changed life to live as He directs.

By this grace, God's commandments in His Word, endowments from His Spirit, and management through His Providence, set apart some from the general tenure and natural course of the world and its inevitable end of *destruction*.¹ *Many be called* outwardly, but *few are chosen* to receive His grace that effectually calls, justifies, and glorifies sinners so that they are being made over into the image of Christ. *Few* indeed are the numbers who receive grace to believe for initial salvation, and who by the same grace, rely on and work out that salvation until final deliverance is apprehended in the next life in heaven. Salvation is altogether of and through and from the free and pure and sovereign and unconditional grace of God. Amen!

...I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

...yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

[Added emph.]

Isaiah 46:9-11

¹⁶ *Matthew 7:13-14*

He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

Psalms 115:3

*And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, *What doest thou?* [Added*

emph.]

Daniel 4:35

Would you presume to say to God, *What doest thou?*
Who is man to ask of the Almighty, *Why hast thou made me thus?*¹⁷

What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

Even us, whom he hath called.

[Added emph.]

Romans 9:22-24a

Amen!

¹⁷ *Romans 9:20*

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