

W.E. BEST

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THE MOST NEGLECTED CHAPTER IN THE BIBLE (Romans 9)

by W. E. Best

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The two books entitled "God's Longsuffering Is Salvation" and "The Most Neglected Chapter In The Bible" are companion books. The first is a study of II Peter 3:9. The second is a study of Romans 9. Both are primarily a discussion of God's election of some to salvation and His passing by others. They are composed of sermons preached to the people of the South Belt Assembly of Christ.

INTRODUCTION

There are seven divisions to the ninth chapter of Romans:

- 1. Paul had great sorrow for the Jews, his brethren according to the flesh (vv. 1-3).
- 2. Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh were covenantly related (vv. 4,5). (1) They were adopted. In contrast to the individual adoption of Christians of Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:5, the adoption of verse 4 refers to the national adoption of Israel. Israel is called God's son: "...Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn" (Ex. 4:22). Paul used the term son because adoption pertains to placing as sons. (2) Glory was theirs. Glory is God's manifested presence. God manifested His presence to the Israelites when the tabernacle had been completed according to God's instructions (Ex. 40:34). The entire prophecy of Ezekiel describes the glory of God to Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh. (3) The covenants were theirs. The Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the Palestinian covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the New covenant, to name a few, were

given to Israel. (4) The law was given to them. The giving of the law was legislation under God. Since grace is a unilateral covenant, the covenant at Sinai, which was the covenant of the law, presupposes grace. What God had done for Israel is emphasized in Exodus 1-18. What Israel was responsible to do for God is demonstrated in Exodus 19-40. (5) The service was given to them. Service involves the tabernacle and temple services. This includes worship, ceremonies, education about God, etc. Service is not what God had done for them, but it is what they were to do for God. (6) The promises were given to them. The promises of the Old Testament were given to perpetuate confidence in God. One of the greatest promises was the promise of the Redeemer (Job 19:25). (7) The fathers were given to them. These patriarchs were named in Hebrews 11 to encourage us in our pilgrimage. (8) Jesus Christ, the anointed of God, according to the flesh came from them. The number seven—and there were seven things mentioned before this one—is the number of completion. But the number eight is perfection.

- 3. There is an election within an election (vv. 6-13). Israel—Jacob as an individual—was elected. God loved Jacob, and his name was changed to Israel. Israel began with an individual—Jacob; then, his name was changed to Israel with reference to the tribes of Israel.
- 4. Election is according to the purpose of the sovereign God (vv. 14-24).
 - 5. Gentiles are included in God's election (vv. 25,26).
- 6. Although national Israel is in a state of unbelief to this day, God has a believing remnant (vv. 27-30).
- 7. The suffering Christ was the stumbling stone over whom national Israel stumbled (vv. 31-33).

The following are contrasts recorded in Romans 9: (1) Ishmael versus Isaac (vv. 6,7), (2) children of the flesh versus children of God (v. 8), (3) Esau versus Jacob (v. 13), (4) hate versus love (v. 13), (5) hardening versus mercy (vv. 16-18), (6) man versus God (v. 20), (7) clay versus the potter (v. 21), (8) vessel unto dishonor versus vessel of honor (v. 21), (9) enduring the vessels of wrath versus the riches of glory on vessels of mercy (vv. 22,23), (10) fitted to destruction versus prepared beforehand for glory (vv. 22,23), (11) faith versus works (v. 32), and (12) election versus reprobation (vv. 11,17,18).

The two major themes of election and reprobation, with other related subjects, are taught in Romans 9. It is impossible to believe in election without also believing in reprobation. If God chose some, He passed by others, and all those He passed by are reprobates. Persons who have not been regenerated are incapable of receiving these or any other truths of God. Religionists know their human tradition, but they do not know the teaching of Scripture.

The Arminians' basic view of the ninth chapter of Romans is that the Jews as a nation had been appointed to eternal life, but they rejected the appointment. Will that view stand the test of Scripture? Paul and Barnabas preached the word to the Jews, but they judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life. They then turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46). Can any person who has been appointed to eternal life reject the appointment? The question is answered in Acts 13:48 — "... and as many as were ordained [perfect passive participle of *tasso*, which means appointed, designated, or ordered] to eternal life believed." Arminians claim that God would not allow the Jews freedom of choice to reject the gospel if He made it mandatory by an eternal decree that certain Gentiles should accept it. Their conclusion of the passage is that it simply means that all who were capable of believing were

disposed to believe and did believe. However, according to Scripture, those who have been appointed by God to eternal life cannot do other than believe.

Amillennialists say that according to Romans 9, God elected the nation of Israel to point the elect to Christ, but due to Israel's fall God nullified the nation's election. Therefore, they believe God is through with Israel, and the new Israel is Christ's assembly. They conclude that since the nation defaulted, they invalidated the Abrahamic covenant and were finally abandoned by God. It is interesting to observe that while the Arminians reject God's election to salvation, amillennialists believe God elected the nation of Israel and then made void the election because of their disobedience. Both are erroneous in their interpretations of Romans 9. When God elects a nation or an individual, He will not go back on His election. Although there were many in Israel who were not of Israel, Israel as a nation has been chosen by God, and that nation shall be saved. If God could void His election of that nation, He could do the same of every individual He elected to salvation.

The following are some of the erroneous conclusions that have been drawn from Romans 9—(1) Some say that here and anywhere else that you have predestination and election it is not to salvation. This is service. The elder shall serve the younger. (2) Some believe that the choice of Jacob rather than Esau was at most a choice to outward and national privilege. It was not a choice to salvation. (3) Others state that Paul was referring to the seed of Abraham typically and that the reference is to Jacob and Esau in their national capacity. There is no question of personal salvation by absolute decree. (4) Some erroneously conclude that to understand Romans 9-11, one must realize that Paul spoke of both Jews and Gentiles as having been chosen as nations in the counsel of eternity to be the recipients in time of the gospel blessing, the Jews being first.

The following is a list of questions on Romans 9 for you to test yourself on the teaching of this chapter.

- 1. Did God decree election?
- 2. Is there a difference between election and salvation?
- 3. Is election a manifestation of sovereignty or of justice?
- 4. Was man elected on the basis of foreknowledge?
- 5. Does election seal the destiny of the chosen?
- 6. Is reprobation the mere negative of election?
- 7. Was the destiny of the nonelect sealed in the choice of some?
- 8. Is nonelection punishment?
- 9. Were the nonelect condemned by God's preterition?
- 10. Is the condemnation of the nonelect a manifestation of justice?
- 11. Is there a difference between preterition and condemnation?
- 12. Did both the elect and the nonelect derive from the same lump?
- 13. Were both the elect and the nonelect involved in the fall?
- 14. Does God's infallible determination that some shall perish put a necessity upon them to sin?
- 15. Is the positive determination of what the sinner will do based on what God, the first cause, will effect?
- 16. Does foreknowledge of sin mean sin is eternal?

- 17. Is the condemnation of the nonelect for sin based on foreknowledge?
- 18. Was sin self-originated in Adam?
- 19. Does self-inducement require an antecedent cause?
- 20. Was Adam influenced by an antecedent cause?
- 21. Did Lucifer (Satan), the second cause, become the first cause in sin?
- 22 Can God, the first cause, create a first cause?
- 23. Did God create Adam with two principles—lower and higher?
- 24. Did God decree sin or did He decree to permit sin?
- 25. Since sin is against God's nature, does He have the right to permit it?
- 26. Does permission to sin make God a participant?
- 27. Does a permissive decree link God causatively with the thing permitted?
- 28. Does hardening stand in relationship to preterition or to the fall?
- 29. Is hardening ascribed to God and man?
- 30. Is hardening accomplished by mere permission?
- 31. Is it correct to say that God merely permits the actions of men, either good or evil?
- 32. How many kinds of hardening are taught in Scripture? Give the number and name them.

- 33. Does God see all things unfolded, in the sense of an aorist indicative Greek verb, or unfolding, in the sense of a present Greek participle?
- 34. Are the nonelect condemned because God passed them by or because of their sins?
- 35. Is preterition a sovereign or a judicial act?
- 36. Does God know all things intuitively?
- 37. What is determinism?
- 38 What is indeterminism?
- 39. Does determinism destroy personality and voluntary sinning?
- 40. Does the sinner sin freely?
- 41. Does God infuse hardness?
- 42. Is there a difference between providence of sustenance and providence of government?
- 43. What is providence?
- 44. Does God's entrance into second causes make Him an accomplice by concurrence in sin?
- 45. Does a good act cause an irregular act?
- 46. Can certainty be grounded in God's foreknowledge as well as in His decree?
- 47. Is decreeing to permit sin the same as bringing sin and its chain of consequences into God's purpose?
- 48. Does God's decree compel men to sin?

The following are brief answers to the preceding questions. These questions will be considered in greater detail as we proceed in the study of Romans 9.

- 1. Yes.
- 2. Yes.
- 3. Sovereignty.
- 4. No.
- 5. Yes.
- 6. No.
- 7. Yes.
- 8. No.
- 9. No.
- 10. Yes.
- 11. Yes.
- 12. Yes.
- 13. Yes.
- 14. No.
- 15. No.
- 16. No.
- 17. No.
- 18. No.
- 19. No.
- 20. Yes.
- 21. Yes.
- 22. No.
- 23. Yes.
- 24. Permit.

- 25. Yes.
- 26. No.
- 27. No.
- 28. Fall.
- 29. Yes.
- 30. No.
- 31. No.
- 32. Three—depravity, practice of sin, and judicial.
- 33. Unfolded—aorist indicative.
- 34. Sins.
- 35. Sovereign.
- 36. Yes.
- 37. Human choices determined by antecedent causes.
- 38. Human choices made independent of antecedent causes.
- 39. Yes.
- 40. Yes.
- 41. No.
- 42. Yes.
- 43. God's care and His government.
- 44. No.
- 45. Yes.
- 46. Yes.
- 47. No.
- 48. No.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IS ABSOLUTE ARBITRARINESS

The study of every Biblical subject must begin with God's sovereignty. Scripture extols God as sovereign:

But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine (Is. 43:1).

Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him (Is. 43:7).

Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you:

therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God (Is. 43:10 12).

YET now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring (Is. 44:1-3).

Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people....Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any... (Is. 44:6-8).

They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand (Is. 44:18).

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have

surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things (Is. 45:1-7).

Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? (Is. 45:9).

I have made the earth, and created man upon it... (Is. 45:12).

Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour (Is. 45:15).

God dwells in impenetrable light: "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see..." (I Tim. 6:16). But God's invisibility does not affect His disclosure in Jesus Christ: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). Jesus Christ is not a compensation for a lack of revelation, but He is revelation itself. This makes Philip's request that Christ show the disciples the Father (John 14:8,9) superfluous. There is a limit, however, beyond which we cannot go. Mystery is the seal of the infinite (I Tim. 3:16). But we must not look at the mystery and forget the Blesser.

The most concise definition of God's sovereignty is that God's sovereignty is absolute arbitrariness. The noun "sovereignty" means the quality or state of being sovereign.

It describes Him who has the authority and power to do what He pleases. One may question the use of the adjective "absolute" with the noun "sovereignty." But one can say "God is absolute" or "the absolute is God" because God is free from imperfection, restriction, constraint, and obligation. God unrestrainedly exercises His will. He is subject to His own will or judgment without capriciousness. God is operating under His own law because He is His own law. There is no higher standard to which He can be subjected. God is the ultimate; the absolute; the infinite. No one is God's adviser.

God's understanding is infinite: "Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite" (Ps. 147:5). Nothing has ever happened or will ever happen that God did not know beforehand. He knows the end from the beginning. Observe the magnification of God's absolute sovereignty, which is recorded in the following passage of Scripture:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

(Romans 11:33-36)

The sovereign God can never be summoned before a higher tribunal, much less before the corrupt tribunal of depraved man.

Arbitrariness in God differs from arbitrariness in man. Man is under God's law. God is not under man's law. When man ignores or rejects God's law, he acts arbitrarily. He is com-

mitting heinous sin by rejecting a standard above himself. Man detests God's arbitrariness in Divine election according to grace because it is not according to his arbitrary standard of justice. He judges God's actions by his arbitrary standard that he has set up by which he thinks God should act. All laws enacted by men which are contrary to God's law are arbitrary laws. Man's pride and arrogance are manifested when he questions God. He accuses God of being unjust to elect some and pass by others. Thus he manifests that he does not know that all men are depraved by nature. The person who does not believe in election, does not believe in grace; hence, he does not believe in salvation and is therefore lost.

The person who lives in his own view of nonarbitrariness in men sees arbitrariness in the freedom of the sovereign God. The person is wicked who sees arbitrariness in God's grace. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5). That is the reason he does not believe in God's absolute sovereignty. He claims it is limited. The god of the religionist is measured by his own depraved standard. Depraved man reprehends what he does not comprehend. He finds fault with election, predestination, and other great truths related to God's sovereignty. In this manner, he stains the excellency of the sovereign God with his thoughts and speech. Such people are portrayed in the scribes and Pharisees who interrogated the Lord Jesus Christ about His disciples' transgressing the tradition of the elders by not obeying the Jewish ritual of washing their hands before they ate bread (Matt. 15:1-3). The Lord replied by asking why they were transgressing the commandment of God on account of their tradition (v. 3). They were bringing reproach upon God. Jesus Christ confirmed Isaiah's prophesy of their hypocrisy. They drew near with their lips, but their hearts were far from the Lord. Therefore, they worshipped in vain, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men (Matt. 15:7 9). They made void the word of God with their human

traditions (Mark 7:1-13). The scribes and Pharisees were angered at the Lord's reply to their question. Jesus Christ explained to His disciples the sovereignty of God when He said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13).

No one can be drawn to God by human tradition. We are drawn to God by the word of truth. After this encounter of the Lord with the scribes and Pharisees, the Lord's disciples having come were concerned about the scribes and Pharisees being angered at His declaration. They said to Him, "Knowest [perfect active indicative of *oida*, which means you have known and are in a continual state of knowing] thou that the Pharisees were offended [aorist passive indicative of *skandalidzo*, which means angered] after they heard this saying?" (Matt. 15:12). The reaction of the scribes and Pharisees was the same as that of all who are incapable of accepting the truth. Human nature is the same today.

The Pharisees concluded that they must get rid of Christ or He would get rid of them. The Lord's reply to them finalized what they had to do; hence, they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. That same idea is common among people today who cannot accept truth. They conclude that they must get rid of the one proclaiming the truth or he will get rid of them. Religionists get upset at the truth, but Christians profit from it. But that which is not of God, men and teaching alike, shall be uprooted. This is evidenced in Romans 9.

We have given a concise definition of God's sovereignty—God's sovereignty is absolute arbitrariness. The following is a general definition of the sovereign first cause, as far as human words dare attempt. The eternal God is independent and self-existent. His purpose and actions originate within Himself without external influence. The absolutely Holy One is the Creator, Sustainer, and Controller of all His creation for

His own glory. Therefore, God is indescribable in His Essence, inconceivable in His mode of existence, and illimitable in His infinity. He is fully known only to Himself because the infinite One can be comprehended only by an infinite mind. Furthermore, this infinitely Holy God can do nothing that is not eternally just (Is. 45:5-7,9).

God's sovereignty is exercised without restriction in the regeneration of the elect. Since the natural heart of man cannot be changed by either influence or persuasion, an effectual work of grace alone can give him a new heart. Therefore, the grace of regeneration does not force the chosen sinner against his will. But the Spirit of regeneration works a change in the will of the passive sinner. Recipients of God's grace obey His commandments willingly, but it cannot be said that we do what we do out of our own mere—nothing more or less than what is specified—pleasure. Christians may do the will of God freely, but they do not do it out of their mere pleasure in the sense of their arbitrary wills. Our wills are subordinate to God's will. He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure, and His people are willing in the day of God's power (Ps. 110:3; Phil. 2:12,13). God's will is always first, and man's will comes second. We obey the commandments of Jesus Christ willingly, but our obedience is out of God's pleasure. We do not obey arbitrarily, but we obey because we are recipients of God's grace.

God's sovereignty is exercised without constraint. Men may do things voluntarily out of their own choice, as far as they are concerned, but there may also be a degree of constraint. A minister may continually exhort a person to believe in Christ, and that person may respond out of his constraint to "make a decision for Christ." However, the minister cannot constrain Jesus Christ to entrust Himself to the one who has been constrained to "make a decision" (I John 2:23-25). Every true conversion experience is the fruit of a work of grace

having been wrought in the convert. Men may do things willingly, but they do them out of fear. Fear of the results of a terminal illness might cause one to willingly submit to surgery, but his willingness is motivated by fear of the consequences of not having the surgery. However, no one can constrain God. It is His prerogative to bestow mercy on whom He will bestow mercy and that according to the good pleasure of His will: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. 1:5).

God's sovereignty is exercised without obligation. Obligation is binding, and it destroys liberty in the sense of independence. Since God is totally independent, He is not obligated to do anything other than what He purposed before the foundation of the world. For this reason, God does not give the things people request unless what they request is according to His will. It is one thing to be pleased to fulfill an obligation and something else to do something from the pleasure of one's own will. God has the right to do what He will with His own (Matt. 20:15).

An advocate of free will is an enemy of God's grace. He believes God can do nothing for him until he gives God permission. Thus, he appoints God as the second rather than the first cause. This would indicate that there are as many gods as there are free wills, thus classifying those who believe in free will as polytheists. Those who believe in free will are enemies of free grace. Enemies of free grace are enemies of the Bible and of Jesus Christ. Therefore, they have never been reconciled to God. The whole process of salvation from God's decree to its consummation in eternal glory is according to the will of God: (1) in its purpose (Rom. 8:28), (2) in its preparation (Eph. 1:3-12), (3) in regeneration (John 1:13; 3:8), (4) in preservation (Phil. 1:6; I Pet. 1:3-5), (5) in sanctification (I Thess. 4:3-7), (6) in resurrection (I Cor. 15),

and (7) in eternal glory (last chapters of Rev.).

God's will is beyond the control of man. Therefore, God is carrying out one purpose on one principle to one conclusion. Concerning God's purpose, the Greek word for decree (prothesis) is used in an intellectual sense by setting before us in the Scriptures His determination. We use the plural form "decrees" to speak of God's purpose, but our usage of the plural is reducible to one purpose. Therefore, decrees—as we speak of them for our convenience—are not successively formed as a so-called emergency arises, but they are all parts of one all-comprehending purpose or plan. This one purpose includes a number of events. These events are mutually related; therefore, we speak of decrees as many and as having a certain order. This certain order is designed by the One having supreme authority, purposing what is pleasing to Himself without prejudice, respect of persons, or arbitrariness as men view them

God's purpose is one, because He is of one mind: "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth' (Job 23:13). There can no more be a new thought or a new purpose in God than there can be a new God. Whatever God thinks He ever thought, always does think, and will continue thinking. Therefore, whatever God purposes He always purposed, ever purposes, and will continue purposing. Thinking and purposing are attributes of rational beings whether created or uncreated. The thoughts and purposes of the infinite God are coeternal with Himself. God's thoughts and purposes are absolute. If this were not true, no being could possibly exist. The fulfillment of God's purpose manifests the beauty of all His perfections. However, the fulfillment of God's purpose in providence often seems to run contrary to His eternal purpose. Some men go one way in the power of grace. Others go the opposite way in their naturally depraved power. In conclusion, all men accomplish

the purpose of the sovereign God.

To form a plan and then alter it, or to have a plan and then fail in it, is one of the sad imperfections of humanity. In the case of the altered plan, some new information was revealed which was not evident before the plan was formed. Hence, an absolute plan cannot be devised by man. Finite man, who continually learns, can never absolutely purpose anything. In the case of the plan that failed, man cannot foresee the future; therefore, he does not know what obstacles will prevent the success of his plan. But who is so foolish as to suppose any of these things in God?

An altered plan with God is unthinkable. God, who is infinite in understanding, can gain no new information: "Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite" (Ps. 147:5). Infinite understanding means God's understanding is unlimited and therefore perfect. Since an intellectual is one who shows a notable mental capacity, or one who is guided by the intellect rather than by feelings, God alone can fulfill the requirements of an intellectual. Hence, God is the only One of superior, absolute, and perfect intellect. God sees future, present, and past all at once. Therefore, God has a fixed and settled purpose, not just a purpose but only one purpose.

All history is one. There may be many ages and events, but there is only one history. There may be many provinces and rulers, but there is only one Lord of heaven and earth. There is no succession in God's knowledge. On the basis of the fact that in time man thinks and then purposes, some have concluded that since foreknowledge precedes predestination in Romans 8:29 and 30, God's logical process in thinking is not different from man's. They reason that after all man was made after God's likeness. Technically, there is no more foreknowledge than there is afterknowledge with God. He

knows everything simultaneously. Foreknowledge is an expression for our convenience. God's knowledge is infinite (Ps. 147:5). God sees future, present, and past all at once. He only accommodates Himself to man's method of communication, which is another manifestation of God's condescension. He knows all things intuitively, independent of any reasoning process. How else could the infinite God communicate with finite men?

Prophecy is proof of God's infinite knowledge. If He did not know future things, there would have been a time when He was ignorant. But every prophet's candle, in our way of thinking, was lighted by the torch of God's foreknowledge. But better still, the prophet's candle was lighted by the torch of God's infinite knowledge. God knows all things independently; therefore, who has been His counsellor? He knows all things distinctly, because there is no mote or beam in God's eye. He knows all things immutably. His knowledge of future things cannot be changed, because that knowledge arises from His will which is irreversible: "...But the counsel of the LORD, it will stand" (Prov. 19:21 NASB). God knows all things infallibly; therefore, He knows them perfectly. He knows all things perpetually. He cannot know Himself or any of His creatures more perfectly at one time than at another.

To suggest that what God knows will never happen is unthinkable. Who makes everything that is known by God certain to be fulfilled? Did God determine the acts of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, etc.? If they were not determined by God, there must be a force in time independent of God. This conclusion is to deny that God knows all things, and that would lead to deism. To say that Judas would betray Christ and yet to know that it might be otherwise would be contradictory. This brings up a difficult problem for many to solve.

One must learn to distinguish things that differ. For example, God's purposing an action so that it shall be sinful is not the same as God's purposing an action as sinful. God purposed that some actions shall be sinful for the sake of the good that He will cause to arise from the sinfulness thereof. Two indisputable facts of Scripture that prove this are Joseph's brethren and those who crucified Christ: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20). "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:22,23). God purposed sin for the sake of the good that shall be accomplished. On the other hand, man purposes actions for the sake of the evil in wicked men.

Religionists acknowledge that God permits sin; therefore, no one can honestly say that God permits sin when it is against His will to do so. Since God permits sin, it is evident that He wills to permit it. No one would say that God does what He does not will to do. However, God's purpose does not compel depraved men to do evil. He only leaves them to the workings of their own depraved hearts. Hence, His justice cannot be impeached because He neither infused an evil principle nor enforces evil actions. He only ordained what shall be.

God's purpose is founded in sovereignty, ordered by infinite wisdom, ratified by omnipotence, and cemented in immutability. Furthermore, His purpose is eternal (II Tim. 1:9), founded in Divine wisdom (Eph. 3:10,11), efficacious (Is. 46:10,11), immutable (Acts 2:23), absolute (I Pet. 1:2), all comprehensive (Rom. 8:28), and more than a mere permission of His will with reference to sin. The problem cannot

be solved by using the word "permission." Such a term would suggest that God allows the sinner to freely decide against His command. If this were the teaching of Scripture, God in providence would be no more than an observer of a contest whose outcome is never certain. Sin, according to the "permissive" view, lies in man's power of action, and God's action becomes His reaction to man's action. The teaching of Scripture forces one to embrace the fact that whatever is done in time was purposed in eternity. Therefore, a time was fixed for the execution of that purpose, and it is brought about by the providence of God at that particular time.

Did God foreordain that there should be a world because He foreknew there would be one, or did He decree that there should be one? The world is the result of God's decree. The same principle applies to man's creation and regeneration. Human effort has nothing to do with the eternal idea. There were no humans in eternity.

GOD ORDERS ALL THINGS

Nothing in time is greater than the exaltation of the Lord. The only thing that can be greater is to stand in His presence. The Lord Himself declared, "...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" (Is. 46:9,10). God said, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things" (Is. 45:7). The three words "form," "create" (used twice), and "make" should be observed.

According to the Septuagint, four verbs are used here:

1. "Form" (*kataskeuasas*, aorist active participle of *kataskeuadzo*, which means prepare, build, construct, equip, create, or form) shows that God is the One having formed the light. This word comes from the Hebrew word *yatsar*, which means to mold, determine, or fashion. It carries the idea of a potter molding a substance into a particular form. God formed the light. Light was molded into three different forms: (1)

There is the light of nature: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). (2) There is the light of rational understanding: "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). (3) There is the light of spiritual understanding: "...in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9). (See Matt. 16:17; I John 2:20,27.)

- 2. "Create" (poiesas, aorist, active participle of poieo, which means make, do, cause, effect, create, bring about, or appoint) shows that God is the One having brought about darkness. This word comes from the Hebrew word bara, which means to create. It is used only three times in the first chapter of Genesis. What kind of darkness did God create? There was natural darkness before God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." Natural darkness is the absence of the sun. It can be darkness caused by an eclipse or by thick clouds. There is thick darkness, such as that experienced in Egypt during the plagues brought upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Ex. 10:21). There is spiritual darkness, which is characteristic of every person without spiritual light (Mark 10:46; John 12:37 41). We are seeing precursors to the darkness of God sending strong delusion to those who receive not the truth that they should believe the lie (II Thess. 2:11). There shall be "the blackness of darkness forever" (Jude 13).
- 3. The word "make" (*poion*, present active participle of *poieo*) shows that God is the One causing prosperous peace. This word comes from the Hebrew word *asah*, which means to make, accomplish, advance, or appoint. God Himself is the peacemaker. He made peace by means of the blood of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:20). No one has peace unless he is under the blood of Christ. Peace is in the consciousness of the believer (Rom. 5:1). It is the fruit of the blood of Jesus Christ. There will be universal peace when Jesus Christ reigns as King, and the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the

sea. We will then enjoy universal peace under the rule and reign of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

4. The second use of the word "create" which refers to God creating evil is an entirely different verb (*ktidzon*, present active participle of *ktidzo*, which means create, completely change, or transform). This word also comes from the Hebrew word *bara*, which means to create. God does not create the evil of wickedness, but He creates the evil of judgment. Evil is not synonymous with sin. The evil of sin is not found among the creatures created by God (Gen. 1). Everything God created was pronounced very good (Gen. 1:4). This statement could not have been made had God created wickedness. The four verbs combined teach that God is the One who has formed the light, having brought about darkness, causing prosperous peace, and creating evil. All things are fulfilling God's eternal purpose.

Opponents of God's sovereignty in election and reprobation manifest their anger by asking, Did God make man to damn him? An Arminian always argues from the point of reprobation, but the Christian argues from the point of God's absolute sovereignty. Arminians will not take the time to consider the difference between their ignorant and sentimental question and God's creating man upright and then condemning him for his sin. When God chose some and passed by others, he saw all as sinners. The vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy all come from the same lump. God saw all mankind under sin. God did not have to choose any. Choosing some is a manifestation of His mercy. Condemning individuals for their sin is a manifestation of His justice. God is not only merciful, but He is also just.

When a person asks, Is God the author of sin? he means, Is God the actor or doer of sin? It is blasphemy to even suppose such a thing. God being the actor of sin is not the same as God creating evil. The evil is the punishment of sin by various judgments. Because Israel had forsaken the Lord and had worshipped other gods, the Lord brought upon them the evil of judgment (I Kings 9:9). The messenger who was restrained from beheading Elisha realized that his trouble was the evil of judgment from the Lord (II Kings 6:33). God brought the evil of judgment upon Israel because they had rejected God's law (Jer. 6:19). Jeremiah met the objector who thinks God sends only good and not evil (Lam. 3:37,38). God is merciful and loving, but He is also just, a God of judgment. If we disobey Him, God will send the evil of punishment upon us (Amos 3:6). In reply to his wife's advice that he curse God and die, Job replied that we receive good and also evil from the hand of God (Job 2:10). In Job's case, evil was not for punishment in the same sense as it was in the nation of Israel. God punished Israel, but He tested Job. The Lord referred to Job as being perfect and upright in his generation. This is what God said about him, not what Job said about himself. Job said he was vile (Job 40:4). He abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:6). Job was not sinless. He manifested some self-righteousness which needed to be removed. Therefore, God tested Job. The blind man who was healed by the Lord was not blind because of some sin he or his parents had committed. God had sent this upon him for the glory of God (John 9:1-3).

The contrasting word with evil in Isaiah 45:7 is not "good" but "peace." Hence, moral evil is by no means affirmed as being from God. We can say that as darkness is the deprivation of light, the evil of punishment is the deprivation of peace. God often procured peace for Israel by destroying their enemies with the evil of war. The principle of God creating the evil of punishment of sin and testing His people for their good and His glory is seen running throughout the Scriptures:

1. For wise and good purposes, God ordered that Joseph be

sold into Egypt by his brethren for God's glory and for the good of his brethren (Gen. 45; Ps. 105:17). Joseph's brothers meant to do evil to him, but God meant it for good (Gen. 50:20). He can even turn the wrath of man to praise Him (Ps. 76:10).

- 2. Pharaoh's heart was hardened. There are 18 references to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart from Exodus 4:21 through Exodus 14:8. These references state that either God hardened his heart or Pharaoh hardened his own heart. God was not a balcony observer while this was going on. God ordered the stubbornness of Pharaoh by commanding. Obedience was required, and by hardening his disobedience was punished. By God's command Pharaoh was obligated, but he did not obey.
- 3. God sent Assyria against hypocritical Israel to fulfill His will. Although the king of Assyria was sent by God to accomplish His will, the king completely left God. God's sovereignty does not eliminate man's responsibility. Assyria's deed was rewarded, but the motive was punished. Christians may learn a lesson from this. We can do God's will and yet be punished for doing it when it is done from an incorrect motive.
- 4. God providentially ordained Shimei to curse David (II Sam. 16:5 8). When Abishai wanted to cut off Shimei's head for his cursing David, King David told him, "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day" (II Sam. 16:11-12). David recognized that God had sent the evil of cursing through Shimei. David's recognition of his own unworthiness caused him to wonder at his exemptions from trials, not at his trials. While unworthiness convinced David that he had no right to choose, ignorance persuaded him that

he had no ability to do so. God makes the choice. David acknowledged God's sovereignty in elevating that poor shepherd boy to kingship. He, like Hannah, knew that God not only exalts but also abases a person. There is none as holy as the Lord. There is none beside Him. There is no Rock like God. But the Lord also kills and makes alive. He brings down to the grave and raises up. He makes poor and rich, brings low and lifts up, raises the poor out of the dust, lifts the beggar from the dunghill and sets him among princes, etc., (I Sam. 2:1,6-10). The authority of God awed David. He was submissive to the will of God in his life. There is a purpose for every Shimei in the lives of Christians.

- 5. God, for a holy and gracious purpose, ordained the death of Jesus Christ. Those who crucified Jesus Christ were wicked and sinful not because they crucified Christ but because of their sinful motive for crucifying Him. The sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man are manifested in Christ's crucifixion.
- 6. God orders wicked kings to do His will: "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (Rev. 17:17). This verse of Scripture has reference to the wicked kings of the last days; therefore, it deals with eschatology. But God works unseen in all the political and social changes of the day. All kinds of evil are continually multiplying in religious wickedness, social wickedness, political wickedness, governmental wickedness, etc. The day is fast approaching when God will speak in judgment. In the meantime, we are to pray for those in authority that we might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty: "I EXHORT therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is

good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (I Tim. 2:1 6). Our desire should be like that of the Israelites who requested to pay their own way and be allowed to live peaceably as they passed through a certain territory. Instead of kings, presidents, statesmen, religionists, and others thwarting God's purpose, they are unconsciously fulfilling it.

All rights to rule pertain to the Lord, and we are to patiently wait for Him to come. God has put in the hearts of kings to fulfill His, not their own, will. While here we are to be subject to the higher powers because they are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1-7). Paul did not specify any particular form of government because any kind of government is better than no government at all. Since governmental power is ordered of God, one who resists the authority resists God. Rulers are here for our good. It is encouraging to know that the consummation of our salvation is nearer now than it was when we were born of the Spirit of God (Rom. 13:11). We can patiently wait for the completion of our salvation when we will be under the direct perfect rule of Jesus Christ who alone has the right to rule.

God's sovereignty does not eliminate man's responsibility. The question is often asked, How can a man be held responsible if he is fulfilling God's purpose? Job illustrates that man is responsible in spite of God's sovereignty. A fourfold estimate of Job is given in the book of Job: (1) God's estimate of Job was "that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil" (Job 1:8). He was perfect in God's sight because his character contained the seed of completeness (I John 3:6-9). God's estimate of every child of God is the same because it is based

on God's grace. (2) Satan's estimate of Job was that God was overly protecting Job and providing bountifully for him; and if these things were removed, Job would turn his back on God. He thought Job would do anything for his life (Job 1:9,10; 2:4). (3) Job's friends' estimate of him was that his judgment must be coming from God because of his sin. (4) Job's estimate of himself was that he was vile (Job 40:4). He abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:6). When Job heard of his loss, he said he had nothing when he came into this world, and he would have nothing when he left. He recognized that God had visited him, but that God had used Satan as an instrument in the visitation. He did not blame God, and he did not excuse Satan. When Satan touched his body, his wife asked why he did not curse God and die. He told her she spoke foolishly. Hence, he did not excuse Satan. The apostle Paul did not blame God for his thorn in the flesh, and he realized that Satan was the one beating him (II Cor. 12:1 10). Satan was the instrument used by God in the cases of both Job and Paul. Satan's motive was to destroy Job; therefore, Satan was responsible even though he was the instrument used by God to fulfill His purpose. "The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov. 16:4).

God's sovereignty of relationship and His right over the nation of Israel is set forth in Romans 9. This does not indicate that there are not many lessons and principles set forth in the chapter that are applicable to us. God's sovereignty is His absolute and independent right to dispose of all His creatures according to His pleasure. God can either bestow or refuse to bestow blessings on the children of men without prejudice to any of His attributes. He arbitrarily does as He pleases. God is the cause of the effect. God, the first cause, cannot create a first cause. God cannot create God. Everything He created is the second cause. How can the second cause let the first cause do anything. The first cause planned, prepared, created, and

controls everything. He is either God or He is not God. Although most people give the Son of God the name of Jesus Christ, they know nothing of His person and characteristics. The foundational truth of all truths is the absolute sovereignty of God.

The following are twelve discriminating distinctions to magnify God's sovereignty. There are (1) those God loves and those He hates, (2) those appointed to salvation and those appointed to wrath, (3) those on whom God has mercy and those whom He hardens, (4) those ordained to eternal life and those predicted to condemnation, (5) those God knows and those He never knew, (6) those who are God's people and those who are not His people, (7) those who are elected and those who are rejected or reprobated, (8) those who are not of the world and those who are of the world, (9) those who are effectually called and those who are generally called, (10) those to whom things are revealed and those from whom things are concealed, (11) those who are sheep and those who are goats, and (12) those kept by the power of God and those kept by Him for judgment.

PAUL'S SORROW FOR THE JEWS

In Romans 9:1, Paul had a positive and a negative side to his statement: "I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit" (translation). The positive side of Paul's statement was that he spoke the truth "in" (en, locative case, which means in the sphere of) Christ. He was in Christ, and he operated within the sphere of Christ. Paul's being in Christ and spiritually operating in Christ indicates that whatever we say or do must be in recognition that Jesus Christ, whose sinless human nature is a mystery beyond our comprehension, is the sphere in whom we operate. Jesus Christ manifested in the flesh is called a mystery: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh..." (I Tim. 3:16). We embrace it, accept it, apprehend it, and rejoice in it; but we can never fully comprehend it. A second mystery beyond our comprehension is our being a recipient of God's grace and our being in Jesus Christ: "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Although the depth of both these mysteries is beyond our comprehension, we can at least bathe by apprehension in the edge of the ocean of infinite proof until we grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ to the extent that we can get into deeper waters and really have appreciation for what we have in Christ.

A classic example of the use of the preposition "in" (en) is seen in its frequent occurrence in the first chapter of Ephesians and in other references. Paul's statement that he spoke the truth "in" Christ reminds us that the elect are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). We have redemption in Christ (Eph. 1:7). We are made new creatures in Christ (II Cor. 5:17). We have obtained an inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:11). We are sealed in Christ (Eph. 1:13). We have boldness and access in Christ (Eph. 3:12). We produce fruit in Christ (John 15:1-5). We make known our petitions in Christ (John 15:7). We perform good works in Christ (Eph. 2:10). As Paul expressed it here, we speak the truth in Christ (Rom. 9:1). Christians have their being in Christ (Gal. 2:20). What the Christian does is in realization of the presence of Jesus Christ. Anyone who loves Jesus Christ cannot live as though He were not present. A Christian is not an introvert who finds his satisfaction in himself because true satisfaction is found only in Jesus Christ and the message He has left His people. Conscious of His presence, how can the Christian stoop to willful misrepresentations? We must speak the truth in Christ.

Paul added the negative side to his statement: "I lie not." The negative made the positive more impressive. He had the witness of his conscience, and he had the witness of the Holy Spirit. Before he was regenerated by the Spirit of God, as a Pharisee of the Pharisees, Paul had the witness of his conscience. He lived in good conscience before men (Acts 23:1; 26:9). Asareligionisthisconscience didnot bother him, because he did not have the proper standard by which to judge it.

Paul distinguished the two voices of conscience and the Holy Spirit within himself. The Holy Spirit is blamed for leading people to do many things. But the only way one can know that the Holy Spirit is guiding him is by the word of God. The person who ignores the teaching of Scripture becomes as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. The Holy Spirit will direct one according to what he already knows. We ask the Lord to illuminate our minds that we might be able to draw upon the things that He has taught us, considering the Scriptures given to us and drawing conclusions based upon the entire word of God. Paul simply referred to himself when he said he did not lie. Many people are lying when they say they are not. But Paul turned to his conscience and listened to it until he heard his conscience affirm the fact that he was not lying. The apostle also had the witness of the Holy Spirit that he was not lying. His conscience bore witness in the sphere of the Holy Spirit that his life was not grieving the Holy Spirit.

Conscience is that state of man in which he receives and judges his own actions. This distinguishes man from animal. There is not a person who has not spent time in silence thinking about what he said or did. Thus, an honest man by his conscience is his own accuser, witness, judge, and executioner. Conscientiousness is important, but it does not make one a Christian. A person may be conscientious about what he believes when what he believes is false. Church buildings are filled with such people. Paul was conscientious before he was saved, but that did not make him a saint. It took the grace of God to make him a saint. Since Paul had been enlightened by the word of truth, his conscience rendered a judgment according to the truth he possessed. He could not perjure his conscience. The apostle exercised himself day by day to always have a conscience void of offense before God and man. Conscience in Paul was still a law, but it was enlarged and illuminated in the Spirit of regeneration. Therefore, he described himself as being without law, but he was careful to add, lest he be misinterpreted, being not without law to God but under the law of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 9:21).

Paul had great (from *megas*, which means great, intense, or consuming) heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart: "That my sorrow is great and constant pain is in my heart" (Rom. 9:2—translation). On another occasion, he said he was willing to endure all things for the elect's sake (II Tim. 2:10). Paul's grief for his kinsmen was continual. The Greek word for continual (adialeiptos) means continual, consuming, unceasing, constant, or settled. It is used several times in the Greek to mean pain of body or mind, sorrow, or grief. This word is also used in II Timothy 1:3 to express Paul's continual remembrance of Timothy in his prayers. Hence, his sorrow was not the result of some fitful emotion, but he always felt it when his thoughts turned to Israel. This is the reason for his prayer and expressed desire for the salvation of his kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 10:1). Paul was not praying like most people do when they think God is obligated to save those for whom they pray. God does not save anyone because someone prayed for him or witnessed to him. God saves a person because He chose to do so. But He will lead His people to have the correct attitude about those for whom Christ died who have not yet been brought into the ark of safety. Paul prayed intelligently because he knew there was a remnant who would be saved during the dispensation of grace. Furthermore, he believed all of national Israel would be saved in the future. Therefore, he could in all honesty have this sorrow for his people. He knew there were some among his people whom God had elected and would bring to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Paul's being reminded of the privileges of the Jews gave him an even heavier heart (Rom. 2:18 3:2; 9:4,5). God does not favor people because of who they are or for what they have done.

Paul's great sorrow prompted him to say, "For I was wishing I myself to be a curse from Christ on behalf of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3—translation). There are three major views taught on this verse of Scripture: (1) This took place before Paul was saved. (2) Paul desired to be eternally separated from Christ in order that the Jews might be saved. (3) The expression is hypothetical and conditional

Before he was saved Paul was not concerned about the salvation of the Jews. Do you believe that after his salvation Paul really desired to be separated from Christ in order that the Jews might be saved? If so, he loved the Jews more than he loved Jesus Christ. Loving his brethren more than Christ would not be perfect love.

The section of Scripture from Romans 9 through Romans 11 begins with Paul's deep sorrow concerning Israel's failure, and it closes with his joy pertaining to Israel's future. Between the sorrow expressed in chapter 9 and Paul's joy in Romans 11, we see God's purpose respecting a remnant and all Israel. Both expressions, a remnant and all Israel, are found in chapter 11. Between God's purpose concerning a remnant and all Israel, Paul recorded Israel's rejection of the Messiah in spite of the prophets, the law, and the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10). The contrast between verses 3 and 5 of Romans 9 is between Paul a man and Jesus Christ who is God over all. What a contrast! Both were Israelites. Paul, an Israelite, spoke of the Israelites, and he spoke of Jesus Christ who according to the flesh came through the Jews.

Paul's statement in Romans 9:3 that he "could wish" is the imperfect middle indicative of *euchomai*, which means to pray, to wish, or to desire. The imperfect verb signifies continuous action in past time. The Holy Spirit led Paul to use the imperfect middle indicative of the verb. The imperfect

verb may be used in the progressive sense, in the customary sense, or in the iterative sense. But it also has special uses. In this verse, the imperfect verb is used voluntatively, indicating desire of attainment but due to its impossibility it never materialized. Hence, the desire died for lack of realization. The imperfect tense shows continuous action all in the past time. Therefore, the action started and stopped in past time. Nobody knows how long Paul's wish continued. Another illustration of an imperfect tense verb used the same way is in Paul's statement to Philemon concerning Onesimus: "Whom I would have [imperfect middle indicative of boulomai, which means want, desire, wish, etc.] retained with me...But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly" (Philem. 13,14). The same inflected form is used of *thelo* in Galatians 4:20. Paul's desire could not happen because that would have defeated God's purpose, foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification of His own. No one can separate God's own from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:29-39). The grace of God begun in Paul must conclude in his glorification. Therefore, it was impossible for him to be accursed from Christ for his brethren. Paul almost expressed an impossibility while he was expressing his deep concern for national Israel. But he was restrained by the Holy Spirit from using any other inflected form than the imperfect middle indicative of euchomai. Paul's desire had actually been conceived, but it was stillborn.

Many compare Paul with Moses, and they say a few Christians come to the place where they love God's glory above their own salvation. However, we are not required to love any individual more than we love God. If we love anyone more than we love God, we do not love God. One must not minimize the strong feeling of Paul for his kinsmen, but neither should he say more than Scripture says.

PRIVILEGES OF THE JEWS

Paul described the people for whom he had such consuming grief and constant sorrow: "Who are Israelites; to whom belongs the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service, and the promises. Of whom are the fathers, and from whom the Christ according to the flesh, the one being above all, God blessed forever. Amen" (Rom. 9:4,5—translation). He acknowledged that all the blessings God had given to the Israelites belonged to them nationally. Their unbelief has for a time removed God's favor, but it does not remove God's unconditional election of national Israel. God's purpose for the nation shall be accomplished, because His election never fails. enumerated the privileges of national Israel and then concluded with the crowning fact of history: "...of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. 9:5).

The privileges belong to national Israel; but in the conclusion, Christ is said to be "from" Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ did not belong to national Israel in the same sense that

He did to spiritual Israel. Election is twofold—national and individual. National election was no guarantee that all were individually elected to salvation. God's connection with national Israel was based upon His unconditional bilateral covenant made with them, but His union with spiritual Israel is founded upon the eternal unilateral covenant of grace. Hence, they are not all Israel who are of Israel (Rom. 9:6,7). There is an election within an election, that is, there are individuals elected to salvation within an elected nation. This may be illustrated by the fact that all are not saved who belong to the local aspect of the assembly. Furthermore, God has not abandoned forever the local aspect of the assembly because of the apostasy of many. Neither has He abandoned national Israel because the nation as a whole has apostatized. God's purpose in both Israel and the local aspect of the assembly shall be fulfilled.

I. Israel "...to whom belongs the adoption...."

Israel's adoption was for a theocratic purpose. It was a peculiar privilege for the nation of Israel, because God's messianic purposes required such an arrangement. God told Moses to say to Pharaoh, "...Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn" (Ex. 4:22,23). The Greek word for "adoption" of Romans 9:4 is huiothesia, which means adoption or placing in the condition of a son. It is a compound word—made up of huios, a son; and tithemi, to set, put, or place—in the causative sense. Israel's sonship is national, not personal. Israel was brought into a special, collective relationship with God that is not enjoyed by other nations: "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deut. 14:2). "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so

nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deut. 4:7,8).

The statement "Israel is my son, even my firstborn" of Exodus 4:22 denotes one who is peculiarly near and dear to God and higher than others: "...I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven" (Ps. 89:27-29). The terms "son" and "firstborn" are used in connection with Israel (Ex. 4:22,23), Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Col. 1:15), and Christians (Rom. 8:14; Heb. 12:23). The Son of God is higher than the sons of God; the sons of God are higher than the sons of disobedience; the nation of Israel is higher than the other nations of the world. Each has a peculiar relationship to God the Father. Furthermore, the Son of God, individuals, and the nation of Israel are all said to be the elect of God (I Pet. 2:6; Eph. 1:4; Deut. 7:6,7). Election in regard to each cannot be invalidated. If one can be invalidated, all three can become invalid.

II. Israel "...to whom belongs...the glory...."

The "glory" (*doxia*, which means splendor, grandeur, praise, revealed presence of God, or God Himself) is that peculiar symbol of the Divine presence which overshadowed Israel by day and illuminated them by night in their journey out of Egypt through the wilderness (Ex. 13:20,21). It abode upon Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:16), rested upon the tabernacle after its completion (Ex. 40:34,35), and rested upon the mercy seat (Lev. 16:2). This magnificent symbol of presence, guidance, and protection was denominated "the Shekinah." It is a derivative of the Hebrew word which means to settle down or rest upon, as the cloud did upon the tabernacle. The

key phrase of the prophecy of Ezekiel is the glory of God, which means His manifested presence. That great prophecy reveals the glory of God appearing (Ezek. 1-3), departing (Ezek. 4 24), and returning (Ezek. 33-48).

III. Israel "...to whom belongs...the covenants...."

The "covenants" refer to the bilateral compacts God made with the Israelites. There is controversy over the word "covenants" (nominative plural of diatheke, which means covenant, will, or bestowment), whether it should be singular or plural. Some have concluded that it is plural in order to describe the various renewals of the covenant God made with Abraham. They say the plural form describes the renewal of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 15:18; 17:2,4,7-10) to Isaac (Gen. 26:24), to Jacob (Gen. 28:13,15), and to the whole people (Ex. 24:7,8). The major argument for this is the fact that the word "covenant" is never used in the plural in the Old Testament. However, we must not overlook the fact that the plural word "covenants" of Romans 9:4 includes bilateral covenants made with Abraham, David, Moses, etc. God's covenants pertaining to soteriology and eschatology were never made with Gentiles. Israel is the chosen channel through whom God brings the Savior and salvation to the elect among the nations of the world. Gentile believers, therefore, cannot be separated from the covenants made with Israel

IV. Israel "...to whom belongs...the giving of the law...."

"The giving of the law" refers to the Divine legislative enactments published from Mount Sinai, which constituted the code known as the moral law. The law as a covenant was never intended to be a covenant of works for salvation. The Mosaic covenant was given to intensify the awareness of sin by manifesting the weakness of the flesh. How can that which is weak and faulty be a means of salvation (Heb. 7:18; 8:7)? But how could the law be weak and faulty since it is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12)? The law was the objective standard, but it applied no subjective power to measure up to its holy standard. The law may restrain man's practice, but grace gives him a new disposition. The Jews made the law faulty by turning that which was meant to be an aid to God's people into a means of salvation. Since grace is a unilateral covenant, the covenant made at Sinai presupposes grace. The covenant God made with Israel at Sinai was related to the Abrahamic covenant (Ex. 2:24; 3:17). The new, as well as the old, covenant was made with Israel (Jer. 31; Heb. 8).

V. Israel "...to whom belongs...the service...."

"The service" of God is a technical term for Divine worship. Paul detailed the privileges of Israel. The Greek word *latreia* means the service or worship of God according to the Levitical law. It was designed not only to show what had been graciously provided by God but also to reveal what was due to God. The details are displayed in the tabernacle, priesthood, and offerings. We often think of the Levitical system as providing the pattern for the work of Jesus Christ, but this view does not give the correct perspective. The Levitical system was patterned after heavenly things, not heavenly things after earthly things (Heb. 9:23). It distinguished the Israelites from all heathen cults.

FIRST: Jesus Christ was foreshadowed in the tabernacle. He was the substance of all the shadows of the Old Testament. The terminology used concerning the shadows of the Old Testament is very important to give us the picture we must have of the work Jesus Christ accomplished at Calvary. The shadows of the Old Testament preceded the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to prepare for His offering Himself once in the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

The reality occurred when He reached Calvary and offered Himself. There is no further need for shadows. A shadow no longer exists when a person walking away from the light reaches the object toward which he was walking. No one can place the proper value on the work of Jesus Christ at Calvary unless he first understands the shadow. Without the shadow, he would not have a proper appreciation for the reality.

The tabernacle in the wilderness was erected by the hands of men, but the true tabernacle was erected by God Himself. This tabernacle was the body that God the Father prepared for Jesus Christ. The priests under the Levitical system offered gifts and sacrifices, but Jesus Christ who was not from the earthly priesthood of Levi offered Himself (Heb. 8:3). Those priests who offered sacrifices served as a copy of heavenly things. Jesus Christ, the true high Priest, is able to save forever the ones coming to God through Him. He is always living to intercede on our behalf. He has been raised to greater heights than the heavens. Unlike those priests under the Levitical system, He does not have a daily need to be offering up sacrifices for His sins and for those of His people. He had no sins, and He offered up Himself once for the sins of His people. Jesus Christ has obtained a more excellent ministry by which He is also the Mediator of a better covenant, the new covenant which has been enacted upon better promises.

The new covenant was prophesied: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts,

and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:31-33). The new covenant has a threefold superiority over the old covenant: (1) Under the new covenant, God's laws are established in the mind, which is the intellect, and in the heart, which is the affections (Heb. 8:10). (2) Under the new covenant, all shall have experiential knowledge of God (Heb. 8:11). This is not mere assent of the intellect. It is knowing God experientially (John 6:45; I John 2:27). Knowledge is no longer confined to shadows. (3) Under the new covenant, God forgives sins and remembers them no more (Heb. 8:12).

The typical significance of the old covenant and the ministry of the first tabernacle are taught in Hebrews 9:1-10. The tabernacle was a pattern of things in the heavens (v. 2). God's manifesting Himself to Israel through the tabernacle in the wilderness was a symbol during Old Testament times (vv. 9-23). It was a shadow of that which was to come. The unattractiveness of the tabernacle foreshadowed the incarnation of Jesus Christ (Is. 53:2). The tabernacle, which was called the tent of the congregation or the tent of meeting, typified the New Testament assembly of Jesus Christ. It was always in the center of the camp with the twelve tribes of Israel surrounding it, three tribes on each side. The tabernacle was the gathering place for worship by the Israelites. The assembly of Christ should be the center of our Christian lives. We are warned to forsake not the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). The tabernacle was the priests' means of access to God the Father. This foreshadowed the access by the common priesthood of all believers to God the Father (Eph. 2:13). The common priesthood of believers was typified in the sons of Aaron. Aaron's sons could go into the holy place daily, after passing by the brazen altar and the laver, where the table of showbread, the candlestick, and the altar of incense were. At the altar of incense, the prayers of the saints went up. The tabernacle was a foretaste of their dwelling in the kingdom (Rev. 21:3,4).

The tabernacle is described in Exodus 25-40. There were two rooms in the tabernacle (Heb. 9:2,3). The first, called the holy place, was twice as large as the second. It contained the lampstand, the table on which the loaves were set forth, and the altar of incense. The altar of incense is not named in the Hebrew account. The second room, called the holy of holies, contained the ark of the covenant covered by the mercy seat with the cherubim overshadowing it (Heb. 9:4,5). The Hebrew account mentions the golden censer within the holy of holies (v. 4).

The vessels of the tabernacle mentioned in Hebrews 9:2-5 were inside the tabernacle proper. The two vessels outside the tabernacle are not listed. The brazen altar and the laver are not included in the Epistle to the Hebrews because it is understood that the Hebrew believers who were addressed had already passed by the altar of brass, which symbolized Calvary, and by the laver, which symbolized personal cleansing. Each vessel has a spiritual significance. The altar of brass and the layer were inside the inner court which was surrounded by the fence around the tabernacle proper. The first vessel was the brazen altar, which is typical of the cross of Christ. The laver was the second vessel in line with the brazen altar. The sinner was first accepted at the altar of brass. This speaks of positional cleansing by blood. The laver provided conditional cleansing for the positionally cleansed ones. Union takes place at the brazen altar to prepare one for communion at the laver. This was taught by Jesus Christ when He washed the disciples' feet (John 13). Those who have been cleansed by Christ are then cleansed by the word of God (Eph. 5:26). The dimensions of all the vessels except the laver are recorded. This signifies that there is no limit to our being cleansed conditionally. Before Aaron's sons could worship, they had to pass by the brazen altar and the laver. No one can worship in the assembly of the saints until he has been positionally and conditionally cleansed.

Both the brazen altar and the laver were made of brass, which speaks of judgment. The brazen altar typifies Jesus Christ having been judged for us. The laver portrays self-judgment. The women of Israel gave their polished brass mirrors for the construction of the laver because they thought more of appearing right before the Lord than before themselves and others. Those who believe the laver typifies baptismal regeneration teach that the laver is a symbol of baptism. But one is not first cleansed by blood and then cleansed a little more by water in order to be accepted by God. The person who has been accepted by God at the altar of brass should then wash himself, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1). He confesses his sins and washes himself in order that he may worship when he enters the first room of the tabernacle.

Inside the first room of the tabernacle, which is called the holy place, were the candlestick, or lampstand, on the left and the table of showbread on the right. The candlestick had seven prongs. This number in Scripture signifies completion. The candlestick maintained light within the holy place during the time of darkness without. In the world, there is nothing but spiritual darkness. The only light we have is the light of Jesus Christ and the assembly. The lampstand was a vessel made by the hands of men. Furthermore, the priests had to put oil into the lampstand and trim the wicks because they were responsible for the light burning in the holy place. As the common priesthood of believers, we are responsible to keep the light of the assembly burning.

The table of showbread was on the right as the priests entered the holy place. It had two crowns on it, one on the table and the other on the border of the table. Since we have been washed in the blood of Christ and we have cleansed ourselves, we enter the first room as worshippers and crown Jesus Christ there. Twelve loaves were laid in order on the table, typifying our feasting on Christ. The number twelve is the number of administration, which shows our responsibility to worship after the order set forth in Scripture.

The altar of incense, which typified prayers ascending to God, was also in the holy place. It was in line with the brazen altar and the laver outside the holy place. The altar of incense was against the veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies. This vessel was not named in the account given in Hebrews 9. Instead, the golden censer is included with the vessels in the holy of holies rather than with those in the holy place. This is explained in the account of the day of atonement (Lev. 16).

Differing opinions have been given concerning the record of the censer rather than the altar of incense in Hebrews 9:4. It has been explained that the censer was not positioned in the holy of holies, but the second tabernacle had it. The truth is that the Greek word translated censer (thumiaterion) may be translated either altar of incense or censer. According to Exodus 30:1-10, the altar of incense was in the holy place. It was in the same position in the temple built by Solomon. This altar was "before the oracle" (I Kings 6:21). "So Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold. And he drew chains of gold across the front of the inner sanctuary, and he overlaid it with gold" (I Kings 6:21 NASB). In other words, the altar of incense was before the holy of holies in the holy place. David prayed that the Lord would hear him when he prayed toward the holy oracle or inner sanctuary (Ps. 28:2). The altar of incense was the place where prayers went up as a sweet fragrance to the Lord.

The truths stated in Hebrews 9:1-5 are those connected

with the great day of atonement. On that day, the incense was not burned on the altar, but it was carried by the high priest within the veil and placed on the burning coals in a golden censer directly before the ark. Thus, the censer took the place of the altar on that day. In John 17, Jesus Christ was giving His incense at the altar of incense, and it became a part of His intercessory work. The altar of incense became on the day of atonement a necessary part of the holy of holies. It denotes prayer. The day of atonement is the key to the understanding of the vessel that is missing from the Hebrew account. No mistake was made.

The sons of Aaron went daily into the holy place to worship, but they were not allowed in the holy of holies. Every time Aaron's sons went into the holy place and prayed at the altar of incense, it sent up sweet fragrances to God. As they prayed, they were looking at the veil behind the altar that would some day be split from top to bottom. A veil separated the holy place from the holy of holies. The veil was split from top to bottom when Jesus Christ died, opening the new and living way. Hence, every prayer that was prayed pointed toward the ark of the covenant. The day of atonement was the finality to all the priests' prayers. It pointed to the day when Jesus Christ atoned for the sins of the elect. The veil was rent in twain, and now all the priesthood of God has access into the holy of holies. When the high priest went in on the day of atonement, he went behind the veil that was behind the altar of incense. He left the veil open and took the fire from that altar in the censer, which must have been a temporary vessel, and carried it into the holy of holies.

There is a difference between the priests and their use of the altar of incense and the high priest using the censer to take the fire into the holy of holies when the veil was pushed aside to allow him entrance. The sons of Aaron represented all the Israelites in the holy place (Heb. 10:11). The high priest offered for himself, his household, and the Israelites. But we now have access by a new and living way (Heb. 10:19). Therefore, we may draw near to God with a true heart and full assurance of faith because Jesus Christ is our Mediator.

Behind the veil in the holy of holies was the ark of the covenant. It symbolized the eternal covenant of God: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:20,21). Thus, the writer to the Hebrews closed his Epistle on the highest note of the doctrinal scale.

The ark of the covenant in the holy of holies is the greatest type of the Lord Jesus Christ. In revealing salvation, God began where it originated, in His mind in eternity. This was the last vessel from the standpoint of man, but it was the first in God's instructions to Moses to build the tabernacle (Ex. 25:10-22). Thus, God revealed that salvation originated with Himself. Salvation is of God. God was first for the elect, and He will be the first in us before we can do anything pleasing to Him. Moses was to begin construction of the tabernacle with the ark of the covenant, which symbolized God's beginning salvation in eternity. But the sinner does not begin with the ark of the covenant. The sinner does not start by wondering if he is one of God's elect. We are to give diligence to make our calling and election sure. The Biblical principle of the sinner beginning with the last vessel and God beginning with the first is carried into the New Testament (Eph. 1).

God met with the high priest at the mercy seat, which was the same size as the ark of the covenant. It was pure gold, not wood overlaid with gold, and it covered the ark of the covenant. The mercy seat speaks of the atonement of Jesus Christ (Lev. 16; Rom. 3:25). It sets forth God's righteousness. God's mercy does not extend beyond those He chose and gave to His Son in the covenant of redemption. The mercy seat signifies that God's justice has been satisfied.

The cherubim overshadowed the mercy seat. The cherubim are seen in a different character here than they are in Genesis 3:24. God's satisfied law and not man's fate is seen here. All of God's attributes are seen in harmony with the death of Jesus Christ. The cherubim were part of the mercy seat. They faced each other looking toward the mercy seat. Thus, they looked toward a satisfied law of God, which was written on two tables of stone and contained in the ark of the covenant.

God's instruction for the different parts of the tabernacle of Exodus 25 were followed to the letter. All the parts were completed, but the tabernacle had not been set up. The faithfulness of God to His people had been manifested. Now, the faithfulness of His people to Himself must be manifested. The Israelites manifested their faithfulness to God by erecting the tabernacle according to God's instructions. In the process of setting up the tabernacle, the statement "as the LORD commanded Moses" is found times seven 40:19,21,23,25,27,29,32). The number seven designates completion. Everything must be done according to God's order in order to receive God's blessing (I Chron. 15:13). After everything was in its place, a cloud denoting the presence of God covered the congregation, and the glory of God filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34).

The tabernacle is a figure of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, and the different features and elements which make the truth of the tabernacle are now taking form by the Spirit in the saints of God. Under the ordering of Jesus Christ as Son over God's house, those elements are correctly put together. This is our

privilege under Jesus Christ.

SECOND: The atonement foreshadowed Jesus Christ. The Jews had many ceremonies which set forth the death of Jesus Christ, but the chief of those was the day of the Lord, the day of atonement. This day occurred at God's appointed time. It was not left to the choice of Moses or the convenience of Aaron. Jesus Christ went to Calvary at God's appointed time. The word "atonement" is an Old Testament term. It means to cover sin before God. That is what took place under the Levitical system on the day of atonement. The word "atonement" occurs one time in the New Testament and comes from the Greek word katallage, which means reconciliation (Rom. 5:11). Atonement and reconciliation differ: (1) In atonement, sins are covered. In reconciliation, sins are canceled. (2) In atonement, the heart could rest for one year. In reconciliation, the soul is brought before God in unclouded acceptance forever. (3) In atonement, the priest entered the presence of God, but the worshippers must remain outside the tabernacle. In reconciliation, the prodigal is brought within the Father's house. (4) In atonement, the sin was covered for one year, but the conscience was not perfected. In reconciliation, the conscience is purified by the blood of Jesus Christ.

The day of atonement was the day of all days in the life of the Israelites, and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ at Calvary was the day of all days for the elect. The day of atonement dealt with the sins of the whole nation of Israel for twelve months. It foreshadowed the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. The tabernacle and all its vessels, as well as the nation of Israel, were cleansed by the sin offering. The righteousness that demanded an atonement before it could forgive delights to proclaim that the law of God is satisfied. God is glorified thereby, and sinners are justified.

The tabernacle had been completed and erected according

to God's directions, and the glory of God filled the tabernacle. Now, Aaron was to go into the holy place with a young bullock for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering (Lev. 16:3) These offerings were for the priesthood (v. 11). The sin offering was all for the sinner, and the burnt offering was all for God. The sin offering was that which met man's need, and the burnt offering was that which perfectly maintained the Divine glory. There is no mention of either the meat or peace offerings on the day of atonement. The one grand subject now is the covering of the sins of Israel. Neither the Levitical priesthood nor the Levitical sacrifices could yield perfection (Heb. 10:1-4). Infirmity was stamped on the former and insufficiency on the latter. But imperfection was stamped on both.

Aaron, the high priest, and his sons, the priests, must be distinguished. Furthermore, the priestly family must be distinguished from the congregation of Israel. The priests were called the house of Aaron, and the Israelites were called the house of Israel (Ps. 135:19,20). There is a marked difference between what was for Aaron and what was for the people. Aaron and his house typify Christ and the assembly. The people of the congregation refer to Israel's blessings of the future.

Aaron, the high priest, was to wash his flesh in water and attire himself in the linen garments provided for the day of atonement (Lev. 16:4). He did not go into the sanctuary on that day in the garments he ordinarily wore. Aaron laid aside the robe of royalty and girded himself with the linen garment, which speaks of humiliation. The high priest's garments, each of which had typical principles related to Jesus Christ as the living Priest, are described in Exodus 28. Righteousness and holiness, not glory and beauty, were represented by the change in clothing worn by the high priest on the day of atonement. The garments typified the personal holiness of

Jesus Christ, the One Who knew no sin. White is a symbol of purity. In the linen garments, Aaron offered the sacrifices. When the sacrifices were finished, he left the linen garments in the holy of holies and robed himself in his original robe of beauty and ornament. When Jesus Christ came, He laid aside His robe of beauty and ornament and put on the white robe of humiliation and purity (Heb. 7:26; Phil. 2:5-8). After finishing the work the Father sent Him to perform, Jesus Christ put on His robe of beauty and ornament. This was Christ's request when He asked the Father to glorify Him with the glory He was having with Him before the universe existed (John 17:5).

A bullock and a ram were offered for the priestly family (Lev. 16:3,11), and two goats and a ram were offered for the congregation of Israel (Lev. 16:5). The bullock and the goats were sin offerings, and the ram in each instance was a burnt offering. The five offerings recorded in chapters 1 through 5 of Leviticus—burnt offering, meat offering, peace offering, sin offering, and trespass offering—give a complete picture of the one offering made by Jesus Christ. One offering could not foreshadow all the various aspects of the work of Jesus Christ at Calvary. The burnt offering, which was the ram, was all for God. Whereas, the sin offering was all for the sinner. Aaron offered a bullock, which denotes the largest apprehension of Christ's sacrificial work, for a sin offering for himself and his family. He offered a ram for a burnt offering for himself and his family.

Aaron must first offer for himself before offering for the congregation of Israel. He offered a bullock, which represented the largest apprehension of the sin offering and what it typified, for the priesthood. The priesthood took precedence over the congregation as a whole because the offering for the priesthood preceded the offering for the congregation of Israel. The fulfillment of this is seen in the assembly of Christ.

The assembly takes precedence over Israel. She has a greater understanding than the nation of Israel of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the sin offering.

After the offering for the priesthood, the high priest offered two goats (Lev. 16:7)—one of which was killed and the other sent away into the wilderness—for the sins of the children of Israel (Lev. 16:5,15). One goat was slain and his blood, like the blood of the bullock, was sprinkled on the mercy seat. The name for the scapegoat was *azazel*, which means goat of departure. The scapegoat was presented alive before the Lord to make an atonement for itself, and then it was let go into the wilderness. When Aaron came out of the holy of holies, after making the sin offering, he laid his hands on the head of the live goat, confessed the sins of Israel, and sent the living goat into a place uninhabited.

The altar before the Lord from which the high priest took a censer full of burning coals and two handfuls of sweet incense to take within the veil was clearly the altar of incense. The high priest put the incense on the fire before the Lord in the holy of holies so that smoke from the burning incense covered the mercy seat in order that he not die physically. He then took the blood of the bullock and sprinkled it with his fingers upon the mercy seat eastward and before the mercy seat seven times. Jesus Christ offered Himself to God as a sweet smelling savor (Eph. 5:2).

The work in the tabernacle within the veil—the holy of holies—was committed to the high priest alone. No one else could go into the holy of holies (Heb. 9:7). Aaron alone, without any help from the priests, was to do all the work on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:17). In the atonement, Jesus Christ entered alone once into the holy of holies through His own blood because He has obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). Jesus Christ is the reality; Aaron was the shadow. It has

been taught that when Jesus Christ went into the holy of holies, He took His own blood there and applied it. However, the blood of Jesus Christ was spilled on the ground, and He did not pick it up and take it into heaven. The Greek preposition *dia*, the ablative of means, proves that it was on the basis of His shed blood that Jesus Christ entered the heavenly holy of holies (Heb. 9:12).

When the offering of the slain goat for the sin offering was made, Aaron went from the holy of holies back into the holy place and made an atonement for the altar that was before the Lord—the altar of incense (Lev. 16:12,18). He put the blood of the bullock and the goat upon the horns of the altar.

When Aaron came out of the tabernacle, he brought the live goat, laid both hands on the head of the live goat, and confessed over him all the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of the Israelites (Lev. 16:20). He then sent the goat into an uninhabited land. Aaron went back into the tabernacle, took off his linen garments, which he had put on when he went into the holy of holies, and left them there. Aaron washed himself in the holy place, attired himself again in his garments of beauty, came forth, and offered the burnt offering for himself and the people (Lev. 16:24). This symbolizes Jesus Christ who offered Himself once in the end of the age, and He has sanctified us forever by one offering (Heb. 10:10-14). The sacrifice of Christ redeems not only those given to Christ by the Father but also the creation. The whole creation is groaning, waiting for the curse to be lifted so that the earth may become the dwelling place of God with men. The new Jerusalem will be here on the purified earth. On the very earth where Jesus Christ was dishonored He will be honored.

On the day of atonement, the people of Israel waited outside the tabernacle until Aaron came out of the holy place. The nation of Israel is still waiting, expecting the Messiah.

Her mistake is that she does not believe Jesus Christ has already come. However, God promised that He will pardon the iniquity of Israel and the sins of Judah (Jer. 50:20; Heb. 8:8). Only by God's grace can she be enlightened and see the error of her way.

We are seated in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 2:6), but the nation of Israel remains outside. The blessing of Israel is on the foundation of the two goats for the sin offering and the ram for the burnt offering. The slain goat foreshadowed Christ making propitiation for their sins. The scapegoat foreshadowed Christ actually bearing the sins as their substitute. The blessings of Christ's sacrifice are experienced by the assembly of Christ today, but they are future for Israel. When Christ comes out of the holy of holies, He will come to Israel. Today He is in the holy of holies, sitting on the throne of the Father. The Father will give a kingdom to Jesus Christ. Christ has gone to receive that kingdom from the Father and to return (Luke 19). After Aaron had finished his work within the tabernacle, he came out, indicating that he was alive and had finished the work. The sacrifice was completed when Jesus Christ said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). But He is continuing to perform an unfinished work. His work as Intercessor on behalf of the elect will continue until He comes out of the heavenly holy of holies. Hence, as Aaron went forth to the altar after he had finished his work within the holy place, Christ will come forth from heaven and carry Israel's sins away. Israel's penitential confession is recorded in Isaiah 53.

Two midnight experiences are recorded in the life of Israel. One was experienced on the night of the passover (Ex. 12). The second will be experienced at the return of Jesus Christ as King (Matt. 25:1-13; Dan. 9:24) The distinctive blessing of this present time is what is taken up within the tabernacle by the assembly of Christ, typified by Aaron and his sons.

The high priest burned the fat of the sin offering on the brazen altar (Lev. 16:25), the place where God was satisfied. The brazen altar typifies the place of Israel's acceptance in a coming day. The entire offering was consumed in the burnt offering because it was for God. Israel will be on earth in the favor of God during the kingdom on the basis of the burnt offering (Ps. 84:9; 72:17). We do not have kingdom circumstances now. Suffering marks the day in which we live, and Christians are bearing the scars of the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 6:17).

The bullock and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy of holies, were carried forth without the camp (Lev. 16:27). The fulfillment of this is our going outside the camp bearing the reproach of Jesus Christ.

The Christian's position today is the same as that of the priesthood inside the tabernacle in the person of our Aaron, Jesus Christ. His blood is on the mercy seat. Aaron went in with the blood of another, but Jesus Christ went in with His own blood (Heb. 9:12). Christ's shed blood has turned the throne of judgment into a throne of grace for His elect. Therefore, we come boldly to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).

What is the meaning of Christ's offering Himselfthrough the eternal spirit (Heb. 9:14)? Some say it has reference to the third Person in the Godhead. However, the eternal spirit refers to the spiritual nature of Jesus Christ Himself. (1) He offered Himself. (2) He offered Himself to God through his own eternal spiritual nature. (3) He offered Himself to God through His eternal spiritual nature forthepurpose of serving the living God. For this cause He is Mediator of a new covenant in order that, a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, the ones being called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

How could the Old Testament believers be saved, since the death of the Testator had not yet taken place and a testament is of no force until the death of the Testator (Heb. 9:16)? They were saved because in the light of the eternal covenant Jesus Christ was on His way to Calvary (Rom. 3:24,25). Although their sins were rolled forward annually on the day of atonement, Old Testament saints were not actually cleansed in the sense of being justified before God until Jesus Christ died. God was speaking at that time through shadows. He was teaching the people of Israel that Jesus Christ was on the way to Calvary for the remission of sins that are past. Jesus Christ is Mediator of a new covenant "that by means of [genomenou, aorist middle participle of ginomai, which means having taken place death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called [keklemenoi, perfect passive participle of kaleo, which means having been called] might receive [labosin, aorist active subjunctive of *lambano*, which means may or shall receive] the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15). Hence, the verse may be translated "And for this cause He is the Mediator of a new covenant, in order that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, the ones having been called shall receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."

Christ is the Testator. He made the unilateral covenant between the Persons in the Godhead. He is the One in whom the whole Godhead abides bodily (Col. 2:9). He survived death, and He is the executor of His own will. The Greek word for testament is *diatheke*. It can mean will, arrangement, covenant, promise, or testament. (1) A will names the heir. God named the heirs of this testament. The scroll is in His own mind, and the names are penned in the Lamb's book of life. The names are not written when each person believes and then erased when he sins. The names were recorded in the Lamb's book of life before the universe existed. Those names

cannot be erased. What God has written is permanently written. (2) A will describes the inheritance. We presently enjoy spiritual blessings, but we shall inherit the kingdom. The climax to our spiritual blessings is to be with Christ and to be like Him in the eternal kingdom. (3) A will must be probated. A court must rule on the validity of the will. The will of Jesus Christ will be probated by the court of heaven (Ps. 119:89). (4) A will or testament is of no force until the death of the testator. (5) A will must provide for the executor. Provision was made for Jesus Christ to be the executor of His will. He did not remain in the grave. He came forth in victory to execute His own will.

A covenant is effective only after the person who made it is dead. When an individual makes a will, he does not remain after his death to see that it is executed. He must appoint executors to see that it is carried out. The covenant God made with Israel was between God and the Israelites. There was nothing wrong with the covenant God made with Israel, but they did not keep the covenant. The law came in alongside the Abrahamic covenant, which is a type of grace (Gal. 3). It was never given as a means of salvation. The law was given to redeemed people to show forth the exceeding sinfulness of sin. God gave the old covenant to the Jews as a shadow. The first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. It was a shadow of the new covenant. Jesus Christ with the Father and the Holy Spirit brought the new—unilateral—covenant into existence. He made the will. He died, thus fulfilling the means by which it would be executed; and then He arose to execute His own will. Christ is the only Testator to make a will, survive death, and become the Executor of His will.

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness or cancellation of sins. According to Hebrews 9:23, patterns of things in the heavens had to be ceremonially cleansed (*katharidzesthai*, present passive infinitive of *katharidzo*,

which means cleanse, make clean, or purify) under the Levitical system. All the animal bloodshedding for the sins of Israel could not cancel their sins. It foreshadowed the reality of Christ's shedding His blood, without which there is no remission of sins (Heb. 9:22). Those who believe that Jesus Christ was peccable have no sacrifice for their sins. If Jesus Christ, the God-Man, is not impeccable, His blood could not atone for our sins; and He Himself needed redemption. The blood of Jesus Christ was priceless because of His Person.

The Greek noun for "remission" (aphesis) of Hebrews 9:22 means remission, forgiveness, cancellation, or release. The verb aphiemi is a compound word made up of apo—from—and hiemi—the act of sending away. Oh, the blessedness of transgression forgiven and sin covered! The only blood that was taken into the holy place was the blood from the sin offering. It was all for the sinner. That blood was applied on the mercy seat in the holy of holies. Forgiveness is the gift of God in free grace, sealed in the blood of Jesus Christ. There is no forgiveness apart from the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus. Since all sin is against God, He alone can forgive sin. There is not one instance in all of Scripture where God used a human analogy of forgiveness to illustrate His Divine forgiveness. Man cannot forgive as God forgives. Our forgiveness is based on His having forgiven us.

Forgiveness does not signify the remission of punishment. A disobedient child cannot be forgiven by his parents until he has been punished for his disobedience. God does not forgive any person on the basis of His love. His forgiveness is based on the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ where sin was paid for by Him as our Substitute. Remission is not the relinquishment of punishment. However, the elected sinner is not punished. His sins were imputed to Jesus Christ, and Christ paid for them. Divine forgiveness harmonizes with the justice of the Judge, the wrath of the sovereign God who is angry at sin and

must punish it, and the love of the Father. God's forgiveness is on the basis of sin having been punished and justice having been executed in the death of His Son.

Copies of heavenly things had to be cleansed to point to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We can understand that the things on earth must be cleansed, because everything man touches must be cleansed. Therefore, whatever Moses made had to be symbolically purified. But two problems occur in the latter part of Hebrews 9:23. The first is the plural rather than the singular word for sacrifice, and the second is the cleansing of heavenly things. The writer did not make a mistake. The seeming problem of the plural word "sacrifices" may be explained by the sacrifices of the Old Testament foreshadowing the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We already possess many of the heavenly things because Jesus Christ has blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places. We have also been raised up and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 2:6). While we have been spiritually elevated in the Person of Christ, He is our Mediator confessing our sins before the Father. He is saying to the Father that the sins are paid for.

The cleansing of heavenly things is necessary. We recall that the priest sprinkled blood on the copies of the heavenly things when he came from the holy of holies after making an atonement for himself, his household, and the children of Israel. He went to the golden altar that was before the Lord and put the blood from the sacrifice on the horns of the altar (Lev. 16:18). This was the altar of incense (Lev. 16:12), the golden altar in the holy place, not the brazen altar in the inner court on which the fat was burned (Lev. 16:25). Why did the altar need purifying? It is said that no spot had more connection with sin. Was not every sin confessed there? What a strange combination, sin and the atonement (covering) for sin.

There is nothing clean in God's sight, not even the heavens themselves: "...the heavens are not clean in his sight" (Job 15:15). Satan has access to the heavens (Job 1:6,7). We must not forget that there are three heavens. Paul was caught up into the third heaven (II Cor. 12:2). There is a sense in which the heavens themselves will be cleansed (II Pet. 3:10-12). They must be purified. This does not include the heaven, the heavenly holy of holies, where God is. The death of the Testator has taken place, and Jesus Christ has entered the heavenly holy of holies to make intercession for us. This is not the holy of holies made with hands, which was a copy of the true things, but heaven itself where Christ appears in the presence of God on our behalf.

Jesus Christ is not continually offering Himself, like Aaron annually made offerings for himself and the children of Israel. Christ is contrasted with Aaron. He is not a Priest after the order of Aaron but after the order of Melchisedec. Aaron did not offer his blood, but he offered the blood of an animal. Jesus Christ would have suffered often from the foundation of the world had He not offered Himself once at the completion of the Old Testament ages to atone for sin.

It is destined to men once to die and after that the judgment (Heb. 9:27). No one should ever scoff at the judgment of God until he can scoff at death. "So Christ also having been offered once to bear the sins on behalf of many, He shall appear a second time without relation to sin to the ones expecting Him for salvation [final deliverance]" (Rom. 9:28—translation). There is a spiritual lesson in this for us. But we must remember that the writer was addressing believing Jews, and he used Jewish terminology. The two goats, one of which was slain and the other kept alive, verify that God is not through with Israel. The common priesthood of believers are in the holy place today. We are inside the tabernacle and have access through Jesus Christ into the holy of holies into the very

presence of God. But Israel is on the outside, and the sin offering for the congregation will not be applied until the high Priest—Jesus Christ—comes out of the heavenly holy of holies. His coming will be salvation to all those who are expecting Him. This will be the salvation of national Israel (Rom. 11). They will be saved spiritually and physically. The application to us is different. It will be the completion of our salvation. Christ's appearing the second time without relation to sin for salvation to the ones expecting Him for salvation is not His coming for the saints of God in the rapture. The application here is to Jewish believers to show them that Jesus Christ is the reality to whom all the Old Testament shadows pointed.

Three appearances of Jesus Christ are foreshadowed in the atonement: (1) He is appearing now in the presence of God on behalf of His elect (Heb. 9:24). But an appearance was necessary to prepare for this one. (2) He appeared once at the completion of the Old Testament ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (v. 26). (3) He shall reappear without a sin offering to salvation for those who look for Him (v. 28). Hence, Jesus Christ has appeared (pephanerotai, perfect passive indicative of phaneroo, which means has been manifested or has appeared, v. 26). The continuing results of Christ's completed work at Calvary is demonstrated by His presence in heaven to be appearing (emphanisthenai, aorist passive infinitive of emphanidzo, which means to manifest or to appear, v. 24) on behalf of the elect. He will appear (ophthestai, future passive indicative of horao which means shall be manifested or shall appear, v. 28) without a sin offering. The first appearance was the fulfillment of that which the brazen altar, the place where the sacrifice was made, typified. The second appearance is in fulfillment of that which the holy of holies typified. The third appearance will be when He comes again, typified by Aaron coming forth from the holy of holies after the offering was completed.

We must make the proper spiritual application of the truths taught here. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to Jewish believers. This is the reason for Jewish language throughout. The writer was reminding these Jewish believers of what the things under the old covenant typified. Jesus Christ is the reality of the shadows. He offered Himself once at the completion of the Old Testament ages. He has entered the holy of holies for intercession. He will also appear without any relation to sin. The remnant of Israel will be looking for Jesus Christ for their salvation when He returns, and a nation will be born in a day. This is the primary application of Hebrews 8:28. It speaks of the completion of the salvation of the elect Jews, typified in the sins of Israel being placed on the head of the live goat, when Jesus Christ comes out of the holy of holies.

VI. Israel "...to whom belongs...the promises."

The "promises" (plural of *epaggelia*, which means announcement or promise) included blessings in general but the Messiah in particular. Some of them were fulfilled in Christ's first advent, but others will be fulfilled at His second advent. In II Corinthians 1:20, all the promises of God are "yea" and "amen" in Christ. The everlasting "yea" of established truth is in Christ. Christianity is not imagination but revelation. All the promises of God through Christ are guaranteed. Our response to the "yes" of revealed truth is the "amen" of God-given faith.

Four things must be stressed in one's consideration of the "promises": (1) They are the promises of God (II Cor. 1:20). The dignity of the promises is revealed in the fact that they are made according to God's purpose, are links between God's purpose and His acts, are immutable, and are guaranteed by the character of God who announced them. (2) The compass of the promises includes all physical and spiritual,

personal and general, and temporal and eternal promises from Genesis to Revelation. (3) The strength of the promises is given in the words "yea" (nai, which means verily, truly, assuredly, or even so—an article used to strengthen an affirmation) and "amen" (amen, from the Hebrew for firm, faithful, and true—used as a particle of both affirmation and assent, in truth, verily, most certainly, so be it; ho amen, the faithful and true one, Rev. 3:14). Therefore, the promises are established beyond all doubt and confirmed beyond all alteration. It has been said that we have a Greek "yea" and a Hebrew "amen" to assure the promises to both elect Gentiles and elect Jews. (4) The results of the promises are revealed in the statement, "unto the glory of God by us." Hence, the promises of God are made glorious by His redeemed and believing people. When these promises are experienced in cleansing us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, leading us to walk worthy of the Divine summons by which we have been called, and our counting it all joy when we encounter various trials, they glorify God in us.

"Yea" and "amen" are substantially the same thing, but Paul's use of both in II Corinthians 1:20 indicates two different things. One is God's voice speaking in Christ, and the other is the assenting voice of the regenerated to God's great promises. When the voice of God says "yea," our voice should go up, "amen."

VII. Israel "of whom are the fathers...."

"The fathers" refers to the patriarchs but applies especially to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:13,15; Acts 3:13; 7:8,9,32). The redemptive history from Abraham forward is included, as the next privilege will demonstrate.

VIII. Israel "...from whom the Christ according to the flesh...."

Paul reserved for the last, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the greatest privilege any people could ever experience. It is the greatest fact in human history. It is a fact before whose glory all other glories diminish. What a climax! "...And of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 9:5).

In the preceding statements, Paul pointed to the most important past facts of human history; but now, he described the wonder of all wonders, the miracle of all miracles—the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ. This was the stumblingstone over which national Israel stumbled. Among all the facts of history, such as the physical (flood, destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, plagues of Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, serpent of brass, etc.), political (rise and fall of empires—Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman), and religious (Levitical system), none can compare with the one mentioned in Romans 9:5—"...and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." There is not a fact better attested and more central to the world's history than the coming of the eternal Son of God from the Israelites. Furthermore, there is no fact more hated than that Jesus Christ, God's Elect (Is. 42:1; I Pet. 2:6), came into the world from the Israelites, God's elect nation (Is. 45:4), for the purpose of saving those the Father elected in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4).

According to the flesh, Jesus Christ is of the Israelites. According to the Divine nature, He is "over all, God blessed forever." The words "of whom" (*hon*, genitive masculine plural pronoun of *hos*) refer not to the word "fathers," but to the general subject of "Who are Israelites" of Romans 9:4. Christ Himself said, "...salvation is of (*ek*, ablative of source)

the Jews" (John 4:22). The special privilege of the Jews was that the Savior of the elect should come "from" them. Christ spoke in John 4:22 of "the salvation" (*soteria*), the specific salvation from the guilt and condemnation of sin. Salvation from sin is on the basis of Christ's redemptive work at Calvary, which was prophesied in the Old Testament and confirmed by Christ in His public ministry.

The gospel to which Paul had been separated by electing grace had been announced before the coming of Jesus Christ. The "gospel of God" which was prophesied in the Old Testament (Rom. 1:1,2) was personified in Jesus Christ in the incarnation (Rom. 1:3,4). It is personalized in the saints (Rom. 1:5,6). Paul had mentioned not only Israel's privileges in Romans 9:4-5, but in Romans 3:1-2, also their advantage (from *perissos*, which means over and above, superior, surpassing—preeminence, superiority, or advantage), because to them had been committed the oracles of God. Romans 1:2 identifies the Divine gospel of Romans 1:1 with the promised Son of God of Romans 1:3-4. The presence of the article "the" (ton) with the "prophets" signifies that prophecy is a unity; therefore, all prophecy speaks with one voice of the promised Son of God. The absence of the article from "scriptures" (dative plural of *graphe*) further reveals the Son of prophecy to be the essence of Scripture. Thus, "...beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

"Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" in Romans 9:5 harmonizes with Romans 1:3—"Concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh" (NASB). Hence, the promise became a Person; the prophecy became a Personality. Christianity, therefore, is not a system of theology but a Person. Two natures in one Person made Jesus Christ a unique Person. The human nature of Jesus Christ was "born," or "made to become" (second agrist

participle of *ginomai*, which means to be born of or produced by) in this case, the seed of David; that is, He came from the ancestral line of David. Both Mary and Joseph were of the tribe of Judah and of the lineage of David. Jesus Christ is spoken of as being "the son of David" (Matt. 1:1). "Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was" (John 7:42). "Of this man's [David's] seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus" (Acts 13:23).

The seed of David and the Son of God of Romans 1:3-4 must be compared. The first reveals the Lord Jesus Christ as a member of the human race. The latter proves He has a Divine nature which is superior to His human nature. Because of His human nature He can reach the elect, and because of His Divine nature He has the ability to help them. Being the Son of David proves that Jesus Christ was Man, and being the Son of God attests the fact that He is God; therefore, He is the God-Man. He is more than man, but He is not less than God. This harmonizes with Romans 9:5—"from whom is the Christ according to the flesh...God blessed forever..." (NASB).

A picture produced by a stereopticon is better than the same picture produced without the use of a stereopticon, a projector consisting of two complete lanterns arranged so that one picture appears to dissolve while the next is forming. A blending of two pictures into one by the use of the instrument is necessary to produce the stereoptic picture. Both eyes of the observer are brought into focus at the same time, looking at each picture through separate lens. One lens is focused on "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" and the other on "who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." Without the two natures of Jesus Christ, we would not have a Mediator. On the other hand, with the two natures, we have a kinsman Redeemer. Therefore, when the regenerated look at Jesus

Christ, they see the God-Man.

Christ "is over all [ho on epi panton—the one being above all], God blessed for ever. Amen [theos eulogetos eis tous aionas, amen—God eulogized—praised, blessed—for ever, Amen]" (Rom. 9:5). The participle "being" (on, present active participle of eimi, to be) refers to Christ; and the noun theos also applies to Jesus Christ, thus proving Him to be the sovereign Lord. He is over, or above, all—the visible and invisible, the minute and the vast, and the material and the spiritual. He is over things without a will—all inanimate matter. He is over the animal world with their wills. All irrational existences have volition. They do not move against their instincts. He is over redeemed and regenerated man by their wills. He works in them to will and to do by supplying them with motive. They move by their wills; yet, He governs them. Finally, He is over wicked men, demons, and Satan against their wills. He makes their wrath to praise Him.

THE PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE ELECTION

The principle of Divine election is taught by Paul in Romans 9:6-13. There is no subject in all of Scripture more neglected, hated, and misinterpreted than that of Divine election. Depraved reasoning seeks to harmonize what appears to be inconsistency in God's character with the following false interpretations: (1) God who loves the world of mankind cannot hate anyone. Therefore, God loved Jacob but loved Esau less. God is no respecter of persons. (2) The passage refers to the nation of Israel. It has nothing to do with the election of individuals to eternal salvation. The election of Jacob and the rejection of Esau are not personal but national. Election is not to eternal salvation but to earthly privileges. Therefore, the choice of Jacob and the rejection of Esau are not intended to establish the doctrine of unconditional election to eternal life and the appointment of others to damnation for their sins. However, it does refer to the election of the Gentiles to receive the benefits of the gospel and the national rejection of the Jews.

Many religionists embracing such false interpretation as

that in the preceding paragraph become angry when confronted with the truth of Divine election to salvation. They charge that everyone who believes it is a heretic. These persons willfully neglect the passages that mention individual election to salvation (Ps. 65:4 NASB). No effort is made by them to study the subject because they are blinded by Scripture used out of context.

Arminians make themselves to differ. They incorrectly answer all the following questions: (1) Are all the members of the human family potentially elected to God's plan of salvation? (2) Was Christ the only Person ever elected? (3) Does election take place at the moment of salvation? (4) Does election indicate that God's plan for your life continues as long as you live regardless of how you may fail? (5) Are regenerate Jews a part of God's elected plan? (6) Does election involve a God who is love and a man who is morally responsible? (7) Does election ever appear in the Bible as a violation of the human will? (8) Did God elect a people to make known His elected plan of salvation? (9) Does the free will of man determine the final result of God's elected plan to both salvation and evangelism? (10) Can man elect himself to both salvation and fruitfulness? Thus, they respond to Jesus Christ the same way the Pharisees responded to Him as the Bread of life, the Light of the world, and the good Shepherd.

The Pharisees' Response To Christ As The Bread Of Life

The response of people to the truth of Divine election is evidenced by the reaction of some of the followers of Christ to the proclamation of this great truth by Jesus Christ in John 6. The Lord's discourse on the bread of life included all five points of grace—depravity, election, limited redemption, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. Those who heard Christ speak regressed from murmuring at Him (v. 41),

to quarreling among themselves (v. 52), to accusing Him of an offensive saying (v. 60), to turning back and walking no more with Him (v. 66). These people were objecting to the truths of grace.

The Lord Jesus emphasized depravity when He said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw [helkuse, aorist active subjunctive of helko] him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). The Greek word for "draw" (helko) is used two ways in Scripture. In this instance, it does not mean to be drawn forcibly against one's will. Here, it is used metaphorically of being drawn by the inward power of grace. The will of the regenerated person has been changed by grace, and he is willingly drawn. Salvation is appropriate for the sinner's need, but it is not palatable to his natural taste. The unregenerate person cannot come until he is regenerated and drawn by the irresistible grace of God. He has a darkened mind (Eph. 4:18), deceitful heart (Jer. 17:9), defiled conscience (Titus 1:15), weak character (I Cor. 6:9,10), and hatred for spiritual light (John 3:19-21). He also loves the world and the pleasures of sin (II Tim. 3:4). He loves money, which is the root of all evil (I Tim. 6:10). Hence, the inability of the unregenerate person to respond to anything spiritual displays his depravity.

The Lord Jesus spoke of election when he said, "All that the Father giveth [didosin, present active indicative of didomi, which means gives or is giving] me shall come to me..." (John 6:37). The giving here is in the present, but the reason the Father is giving the elect to Christ in time is because He gave them to Him in eternity: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given [dedoken, perfect active indicative of didomi, which means has given] me I should lose nothing..." (John 6:39). The fact that the Father has given some to Christ in eternity forms the basis for His giving them to Him in time. The Father gives because He gave.

The Pharisees asked what they should do that they might work the works of God (John 6:28). They were interested in "doing." Their question should have been, How may we obtain the capacity to perform good works? There is a difference between the works of which the Pharisees spoke and the work of God (John 6:29). The work of God is that the elect believe on Him whom the Father sent. Whatever a person does apart from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). How could those Pharisees perform any good works? They must have faith, but they could not have faith if God did not work that faith in them. Faith "is the work of God" (John 6:29). "Buried with [suntaphentes, agrist passive participle of sunthapto, which means having been buried together with] him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen [sunegerthete, aorist passive indicative of *sunegeiro*, which means were raised together] with him through [dia, ablative of means, which means by the means of] the faith of the operation [energeias, genitive of energia, which means working] of God, who hath raised [egeirantos, agrist active participle of *egeiro*, which means has raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12). The Father gives and draws. The Son receives and casts not out. The Holy Spirit guickens. Believing is from the Father through the Son and through the Holy Spirit to the elect; and then in the power of the Spirit, through the Son back to the Father, completing the perfect circle. It is all of God.

Limited redemption is taught in John 6:40—"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." The elect were given to Christ by the Father, and Jesus Christ redeemed them. His redemption is limited to those for whom He died. It is not for every person without exception: "...As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

Efficacious grace is taught in John 6:63—"It is the spirit

that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Christ had just been discussing His two natures in His reference to the incarnation. His quickening power is not the result of His human nature, but it is from His Divine nature. The flesh in this verse has reference to Christ's human nature, and the spirit refers to His Divine nature. What is the human nature of Jesus Christ apart from His Divine nature? When the angel announced to Mary that she would give birth to Jesus Christ, he said, "...that [the] holy thing [hagion, adjective, nominative neuter singular of hagios] which shall be born [gennomenon, nominative neuter singular present passive participle of gennao, which means being born] of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The neuter gender is used to show that the nature is inseparable from the Person. Christ's Divine nature without the human body could not die.

The incarnation and its purpose are taught in John 6:63. Therefore, the word "spirit" (*pneuma*) in this verse refers to the Divine nature of Jesus Christ and not to the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Godhead. This corresponds with I Peter 3:18. The spirit—Divine nature—makes alive. Christ's flesh is meat indeed; and yet, by itself, it is nothing. In the flesh, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:10; I Pet. 3:18), reconciled us to God (Rom. 5:10), became the Author of eternal salvation (Heb. 5:7-9), etc.

Preservation, which insures perseverance, is taught in John 6:40—"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." No one can persevere apart from God's preservation (I Pet. 1:1-9). It is not in the best interest of truth to substitute the title "the eternal security of the believer" for perseverance. One would be incorrect to tell people that they are secure when they give no evidence of persevering grace. The believer perseveres to

the end because God preserves him. Anyone who has been born of the Spirit will have ups and downs on his graph, but there will be a gradual incline. Perseverance has no affinity with antinomianism. Admonition, consolation, fear, and faith are all connected with perseverance: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" (Jer. 32:40). Jesus Christ is the Mediator between the Father and the elect, and the Holy Spirit is the Mediator between Jesus Christ and the elect. Therefore, Jesus Christ will lose none of the family of God (John 6:39).

The Jews had witnessed the miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fishes to feed more than 5,000 people, after which the Lord Jesus used the illustration of the manna provided for Israel in the wilderness as a comparison with Himself. The bread coming down from heaven points to the incarnation. Throughout His discourse on the bread of life, Christ emphasized the incarnation.

The Jews first responded to Christ's declaration of the truths of grace by murmuring at Him (John 6:41). They then quarreled with one another because of Christ's teaching (John 6:52). They were as blind as Nicodemus was before he was regenerated. They saw no spiritual application of the Lord's teaching. The Lord told them that without their appropriating His life and death they had no life in themselves (John 6:53). Next, they accused Him of a "hard" (*skleros*, which means hard, severe, or offensive) saying (John 6:60). The Lord had been discussing election, depravity, and His incarnation by using symbols. If this offended them, they would surely be offended when He ascended to the Father after finishing the work the Father sent Him to perform (John 6:62). The Jews concluded by departing from Jesus Christ (John 6:66). From what did the complainers depart? They departed from the

basic truths of salvation in Jesus Christ. The truths of depravity, unconditional election, limited redemption, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints are not independent units of truth. They constitute an interrelated system in which God's purpose for saving the elect is displayed. They mutually explain and support one another. The murmurers found Christ's declaration concerning His incarnation, death, and ascension offensive. People today react the same way to these truths.

The Pharisees' Response To Christ As The Light Of The World

Jesus Christ declared that He is the Light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5). In John 9, He manifested this truth by healing the man who was born blind. The Lord Jesus' healing of the man who was born blind also revealed the spiritual blindness of the religious Pharisees. The man's blindness was attributed not to the sins of nature but to the nature of sin. His blindness was not caused by some act or acts of sin which he had committed in his life, but his blindness was because of his depravity. Natural generation is not the reason man is depraved. Man does not inherit his depravity from his parents. Men are depraved because Adam's sin was really, not judicially, imputed to them. We die because of our solidarity with Adam in his sin, not because of inherited depravity. Every person comes into this world spiritually blind. He can be given spiritual light only by the grace of the sovereign God.

The result of the miracle of the impartation of sight was obvious to those who saw the now regenerated man. One cannot be a Christian without that transformation being manifested in his lifestyle. Therefore, the man was interrogated by his neighbors. They led him to the religionists to be interrogated by those spiritually blind instructors who were leading the blind, and all of them were falling into the ditch

together. To the Pharisees, Jesus Christ was a lawbreaker because He had performed this miracle on the sabbath day. They accused Him of not being of God. After interrogating the healed man, the Pharisees called his parents and interrogated them. The Jews had determined that anyone confessing Him to be the Christ would be excommunicated from the synagogue. Therefore, the parents shifted attention back to their son. The Pharisees then interrogated the healed man the second time. Since they had already determined what they would do, the Pharisees told the man to give God the praise, because they made a display of their self-assured pretended knowledge by accusing Jesus Christ of being a sinner.

The healed man's testimony in reply to the Pharisees' interrogation is given in John 9:25—"Then that one answered, If he is sinful I have not known; one thing I have known, that being blind I am now seeing" (translation). The man's knowledge was God-given, whereas the Pharisees' knowledge was pretended. The man said he had already told them how Christ had opened his eyes and they would not listen. He asked if they were interested in becoming His disciples. Since the Pharisees had no answer and had already determined what they would do, they thought they were insulting the man by accusing him of being a follower of Christ while they were following Moses. When they said they had known that God had spoken to Moses but they did not know where this One came from, the healed man responded by saying that this is a marvelous thing that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. He had recognized Christ as the Light of the world. He reminded them that they, as well as he, knew that God does not hear sinners, but He hears the person who is a worshipper of God and does His will. Furthermore, no one had ever heard of any man opening the eyes of anyone born blind. If this man were not of God, He could do nothing. The blind man's response was a great theological statement because he had been taught of God. The reply of the religious instructors is found in John 9:34 —"...You were born entirely in sins and you are teaching us?..." (translation). Then they cast him out of the synagogue. Paul described such religious instructors in Romans 2:17-29.

After the man was excommunicated from the synagogue, Jesus Christ found him and interrogated him. He asked the man if he believed on the Son of God. No one can believe on the Son of God unless he has been quickened by the Spirit of God and given spiritual sight and hearing ears. The man's answer to the question was, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" (John 9:36). The Lord Jesus told the man that he had seen Him and that He was the One talking to him. Hence, Jesus Christ had taken the initiative in quickening him, and now he took the initiative in his conversion experience. The man said, "Lord, I believe [present active indicative of pisteuo, which means I am believing]" (John 9:38). Jesus Christ replaces all religion and religionists in the heart and life of His elect. The Lord Jesus turned on the religious teachers and told them He had come into the world for judgment. This statement in John 9:39 does not contradict John 3:17, which states that God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world. All contradictions are in the thinking of men and not in the word of God. The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. The same principle applies to the gospel (II Cor. 2:14-16). Christ's coming, His life, and His proclamation of truth would result in the salvation of some, but also result in the hardening of others. Therefore, these Pharisees were judged as a result of His coming. It is true that the purpose of Christ's first advent was salvation and not iudgment as stated in John 3:17, but the "moral" result of His first advent was judgment. He will come as Judge when He comes the second time. The Greek preposition eis occurs twice in John 9:39, but it cannot be translated the same in both instances. The first is the accusative of result. The religious Pharisees refused Christ's teaching; therefore, the result was

judgment. The second use of the Greek preposition *eis* is the accusative of measure. Jesus Christ came from heaven "into" the world. The first use was illustrated in the blind man who was made to see. The second was demonstrated in the Pharisees who thought they could see, but they were spiritually blind.

The Pharisees' question "Are we blind also?" was insincere. The Lord Jesus told them that they would have no sin if they were blind. But they claimed to be able to see; hence, their sin remained. If they had known they were blind, their sin would have been under the blood; and they would have desired light and knowledge. Thus, they evidenced that they did not have the grace of God. They were not justified before God because they were self-righteous. They, like the Laodiceans, boasted of themselves and their possessions, but the Lord said they were miserable, blind, and naked. No person can know he is blind and ignorant unless he is a recipient of the grace of God.

The Pharisees' Response To Christ As The Good Shepherd

One of the greatest doctrinal passages of the New Testament and also a Divine commentary on Romans 9:6-8 is John 10. Verses 1 through 5 contain an allegory spoken by Jesus Christ to the religious Pharisees. Verse 6 describes their reaction: "This parable [allegory—from the Greek noun *paroimia*, which means allegory, extended metaphor, or figure of speech] spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them." The antecedent of the pronouns "you" in verse 1, "they" in verse 6, and "them" in verse 6 is found in verses 39 through 41 of the preceding chapter. It is the religious Pharisees. These are the same Pharisees who had debated with Jesus Christ in chapter 8, where He declared what He is objectively—the

Light of the world. What Jesus Christ is subjectively, in the subjective realization of Himself manifested by the blind man who had been healed, is taught in chapter 9. Chapter 10 shows what Christ has done to make the subjective experience a reality in the hearts of the elect. Another proof that chapter 10 is a continuation of the preceding chapter is that it begins with the words, "Verily, verily." This statement is never used at the beginning of a discourse. It is found in either an answer to a question or in the continuation of a discourse. In this instance, it is the continuation of a discourse with the Pharisees after the Lord Jesus had performed the miracle of healing the man who was born blind.

I. The Allegory

These blind religious teachers, who rejected Jesus Christ as the Light of the world, were the ones to whom the Lord Jesus spoke the allegory of John 10:1-5, but they did not understand what He was saying to them. Verse 6 explains that the first five verses record an allegory. Hence, the Lord explained His purpose for using this figure of speech. He knew these Pharisees could not understand what He was talking about because they did not have a spiritual mind. He was making a contrast between a true shepherd and a false shepherd. The very persons who had said "we see" were denounced by the Lord as being thieves and robbers. False teachers have no spiritual understanding because they have no unction from God.

The characteristics of the sheep, the elect, are contrary to those of false teachers: (1) They recognize the voice of the true Shepherd. (2) They believe all spiritual truth. (3) They are sensitive to the truth. (4) They have the spirit of discernment because their senses have been exercised to discern good and evil. (5) They have the mind of Christ. (6) They try the spirits to see if they are of God. (7) They will not follow false

teachers. (8) They do not attack the undershepherd. (9) They recognize that undershepherds do not make a practice of going ahead of the true Shepherd, Jesus Christ. (10) They know that Christ is the exit out of all human religion.

The sheepfold was an uncovered fenced area with a gate, within which was an enclosed area for the protection of the sheep while the shepherds were sleeping. The sheepfold does not symbolize heaven, Christ's assembly, the kingdom of God, or Judaism. It is true that Jesus Christ was born a Jew, entered Judaism lawfully, was born under the law, lived under the law, and paid the penalty of the law. But that is not what John 10:1 teaches. We must remember that Christ was speaking to the religious Pharisees. Therefore, the only interpretation that harmonizes with the context is that the fold figuratively represents an enclosure where the various flocks of those who were true elect ones from among the nation of Israel were being protected. Hence, the fold represents the enclosure for the protection of several flocks of sheep within national Israel. The enclosure around the chosen from among the Israelites was God's unconditional covenant of grace which includes all the elect of God. There was an elected remnant from within the chosen nation.

The Greek preposition *dia* translated "by" in John 10:1 is the ablative of means, which means through. The sheep would pass through by means of the gate into the sheepfold. But when Jesus Christ represented Himself as the door in John 10:9, *dia*, the ablative of agency, is used. Jesus Christ is the personal Agent through whom we come and have access into this grace wherein we stand. But an ordinary door in an ordinary sheepfold would not be by "agency" of the door but by "means" of the door. It is an impersonal means. The Pharisees did not enter by means of the Shepherd. They tried to climb over another way without the proper introduction.

In the literal sheepfold, the door was simply a gate. It was opened by a shepherd to let the sheep in and out. The Greek word for "door" (*thura*) means door, gate, or entrance. The door in the allegory represents the word of promise that God had given to the elect within the nation of Israel. The children of promise are counted for the seed (Rom. 9:7-9).

The doorkeeper of the literal sheepfold was another shepherd who knew the shepherds (John 10:3). He was responsible to know the shepherds who presented their sheep for entrance into the sheepfold at night. He would open the gate to the true shepherds, and they would lead their sheep into the fold. The doorkeeper represents the properly appointed shepherd who was concerned about the protection and care of the children of promise. The Lord Jesus was giving a contrast between true and false shepherds in Israel.

II. The Allegory Explained

In John 10:7-18, the Lord Jesus explained the allegory He had used. The only two figures in the allegory the Lord used to represent Himself were the Door and the good Shepherd. The shepherd-sheep allegory is now viewed from a different perspective than in John 10:1-6, different in respect to their relative positions and interrelationships. Christ represented Himself as the Door, which is the entrance into safety. As the Door, He is the only Mediator between God and men. He also represented Himself as the good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep. No man could take His life from Him. He laid it down voluntarily. He had the authority to lay down His life, and He had authority to take it again. Hence, Jesus Christ is the entrance into safety, and He gives us assurance.

Three Old Testament chapters deal with the shepherd-sheep relationship (Ps. 23; Jer. 23; Ezek. 34). The Psalmist had exalted the Saviorhood of Christ in Psalm 22. He extolled

Jesus Christ as the good Shepherd in Psalm 23 and as the chief Shepherd in Psalm 24. The Saviorhood of Jesus Christ is understood in the good Shepherd.

Jeremiah contrasted false shepherds, who destroy and scatter the sheep, with the Lord who is the true Shepherd (Jer. 23). The Lord will gather the remnant of His flock and bring them again to their folds. He will set up shepherds over them. Jesus Christ will return to reign, and the sheep in Israel will be saved and dwell safely.

Ezekiel described the condition of national Israel. Their shepherds had fed themselves and not God's sheep. Therefore, the Lord spoke against Israel's unfaithful shepherds. In all ages, God has placed upon certain men the responsibility of caring for His people. These people were God's sheep from a national covenant relationship, because God had not relinquished His right to any undershepherd. The shepherds of Israel lacked the qualifications of special knowledge of God, willingness to endure hardship, and affection for the flock. Their self-indulgence led them to neglect to feed and care for the people. The national condition of Israel ever since the dispersion is described in Ezekiel 34:1-10. There is a striking contrast between the faithlessness of men and the faithfulness of God. Jehovah is the true Shepherd of Israel (Ps. 80:1). He shall keep His flock like a shepherd (Jer. 31:10). National Israel was literally dispersed, and national Israel will be literally restored by the true Shepherd (Rom. 11). The Shepherd—Jesus Christ—of Israel shall supply all of Israel's need in providence, protection, and peace. Hence, the treatment of the flock by the true Shepherd is opposite to that of wicked, unfaithful shepherds. The true Shepherd delivers His sheep out of all places where they have been scattered (Ezek. 34:12). This signifies a contest. The deliverance will be by power and by His eternal purpose. The true Shepherd shall cause His sheep to lie down in the cleansed earth of the kingdom (Ezek. 34:13-15). The true Shepherd shall judge the Israelites. Once the Lord has dealt with the rulers, He will judge between the individuals of the flock of the Israelites. Israel shall have one Shepherd over them (Ezek. 34:31). This Shepherd will be David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Rev. 22:16).

John 10:9 attests that Christ's sheep have privileges: (1) We have safety. Anyone who enters through Jesus Christ is safe. This is in keeping with the allegorical speech He was using. (2) We have freedom. The salvation which Jesus Christ gives is not into bondage but into freedom. Being in the enclosure was freedom because Christ has not given His sheep the spirit of bondage but the spirit of adoption by which we cry "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). (3) We shall have sufficiency of all things. We find pasture. God makes us lie down in green pastures. Paul told us "...all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:21-23). We may have nothing and yet possess all things (II Cor. 6:10).

The Christian life has two sides. Christians enter the fold for worship, study, prayer, and meditation. They go out for service. The life of the children of Israel illustrates this going in and out. They offered the passover lamb, roasted it, and ate it in view of their going out. They feasted on the ram of consecration in view of their going in (Ex. 29). The initial going in and the continual going in and out may be compared with the initial believing and continual believing and an initial coming to Christ and a continual coming to Christ. There is also an initial going out and a continual going out.

John 10:10 states that Jesus Christ came that the sheep may have life: "...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." It is a half-truth to say that life begins with the new birth. Eternal life comes from God who is eternal life. The peculiar quality of this life that Jesus Christ has been appointed to give to the elect is that it issues in quantity of life. From our perspective, this life reaches back into the eternal past and forward into the eternal future. We are so conscious of our mortality that we think of life in terms of quantity. We have endless life in Jesus Christ. But this eternal life would be impossible without its quality. The beginning of the new life in regeneration cannot be engineered by persuasive eloquence that produces nothing more than a mental assent. Religious institutions are loaded with people who have done no more than give a mental assent to life; hence, they do not have life.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was more than His merely dying on the cross. His thinking, feeling, and suffering from the moment of His existence in the flesh was a sacrifice. His whole human life was a sacrifice. We think of His death as a sacrifice because it was the termination of His life in "flesh and blood." It was not the consummation of His life in "flesh and bones." Christ, by His sacrificial death, did not purchase salvation conditionally. He purchased it absolutely and perfectly. Therefore, there are no conditions on the part of man for its application. Once life has been bestowed, the recipient has the ability through a conversion experience to repent and believe

The life the good Shepherd gives His sheep is received by us legally (Rom. 8:1). Jesus Christ paid the penalty that we deserved to pay because we had been given to Him by the Father in the covenant of redemption. He gives not only natural but also spiritual life. We have been made alive and have been raised up to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 2:5,6). A person in possession of this life is elevated by the grace of God above the peoples of the world (Col. 3:1-3). The life Jesus Christ gives to His sheep is eternal (John 10:28).

The good Shepherd not only gives life but He also gives it in abundance. The Greek word for "abundantly" of John 10:10 comes from *perissos*, which means more, greater, beyond measure, vehemently, much more, more abundantly, advantage, more abundant, overmuch, or superfluous. Three times it is used in its compound form to mean exceeding abundantly (Eph. 3:20), exceedingly (I Thess. 3:10), and very highly (I Thess. 5:13). The life the sheep have in abundance is explained in Romans 5:20 and 21. The law entered in beside grace in order that trespass might abound, but where sin abounded grace superabounded. The God of all grace gives everything to His people in abundance. However, He does not give judgment in abundance because judgment is according to justice. Every person who dies in his sins will be judged according to God's righteous judgment. He will deserve the judgment and, like the thief on the cross, will confess that he deserved it.

Life in abundance may be viewed by making a comparative estimate of the loss and gain as we live out our lives here on the earth. As we live, we lose the vigor of youth, the ability to carry the heavy burdens of mid-life, and some mental capacity and vigor of physical life in old age. But a Christian does not lose his moral principles. In our gain, we progress from the lower to the higher. There is no pressing to higher ground apart from study and growth in grace and knowledge of the Lord. Only those who are interested in the flesh and the satisfaction of the flesh will prefer the vigor of youth at the expense of maturity. Furthermore, the Christian does not want the strength of manhood at the expense of Divine wisdom which he has gained through the years.

In John 10:11, Jesus Christ said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." In contrast to the hired persons who would seek to enter the fold some way other than by means of the door, true shepherds entered

by means of the door. The true shepherds in Israel would defend their flocks at all cost, even to the point of death. Jesus Christ is the good Shepherd who laid down His life "for" (huper, genitive of advantage, which means on behalf of) the sheep. Christ's shepherd character may be illustrated by seven great shepherds in Old Testament Scriptures, each of which is a type of the good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. Abel was the providing shepherd (Gen. 4:2). Abraham was the separating shepherd (Gen. 13:9). Isaac was the peaceful shepherd (Gen. 26:19-22). Jacob was the purchasing shepherd (Gen. 30-31). Joseph was the prophetic shepherd (Gen. 37:2). Moses was the protecting shepherd (Ex. 3:1). David was the powerful shepherd (I Sam. 17).

The Father brings all of His shepherds (the word pastor comes from the Latin word for shepherd) and all of His sheep to Jesus Christ, the good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. Jesus Christ represented Himself in John 10 as the door and as the good Shepherd who provided access through this door into safety. All the sheep brought to Jesus Christ, the good Shepherd, are also brought to Him as the great Shepherd who cares for and protects the sheep. Furthermore, we are brought to Him as the chief Shepherd, who shall come and reign with His sheep.

John 10:12-14 explains that a true shepherd of Jesus Christ must know the sheep committed to his charge. The shepherd who wants to know the sheep is not interested in going to a religious institution to use it for a stepping stone to a larger one. He is not concerned about a greener pasture. He and the sheep he pastors must realize that he is where God would have him to be. That relationship between sheep and shepherd is the next thing to the relationship between a man and his wife. As the shepherd must know the sheep, the sheep must know their shepherd. The sheep hear the voice of their shepherd. They will by no means follow a stranger. Their not knowing

the voice of a stranger does not necessarily indicate that the stranger is a thief or a robber. The stranger could be another shepherd. A number of shepherds would lead their flocks of sheep into the fold, but each flock would follow its own shepherd when he called it by name. There was no transference of membership from one flock to the other in order to have another shepherd. Hence, Christians should not be looking for a more commodious place. They could never learn their shepherd in that manner. Children of God are exhorted to know those who labor among them (I Thess. 5:12,13). Sheep will find the place God would have them, and they will be satisfied in that place.

Jesus Christ knows His own; and in John 10:15, He said, "...I lay down my life for the sheep." God's choice of the sheep in Christ before the foundation of the world is election. Jesus Christ purchased salvation absolutely and perfectly for them. He did not provide salvation for everybody contingent upon the fact that they might or might not believe. Everyone for whom He died will, without the loss of one, become a Christian. The infinite love that moved the Lord Jesus to lay down His life on behalf of the sheep also moves Him to reveal Himself to all of those for whom He died. He reveals Himself to the elect but conceals Himself from the nonelect (Matt. 11:25-27).

John 10:16 is a clarification of Romans 9:6-8. As all who were of the nation of Israel were not the spiritual seed of Abraham, all who profess faith in the Lord are not genuinely saved. Sheep and Israelites are not equivalent terms. "...For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). All of Abraham's natural descendants are not his spiritual descendants. The three divisions of Abraham's seed must be viewed as his natural descendants (Rom. 9:6,7), his spiritual descendants, and his spiritual seed who are not his natural seed (Gal. 3:29; John 10:16). All people are divided into three

categories: Jews, Gentiles, and the church [assembly] of God (I Cor. 10:32).

The "other sheep" of whom the Lord spoke in John 10:16 refers to sheep who are not "of" (ek, ablative of separation, which means from) the Jewish fold. His elected ones extend further than the nation of Israel. Jesus Christ already has sheep other than those from among Israel who have not yet been born of the Spirit of God. He had them by covenant relationship at the time He spoke. The Father had given them to Him in the covenant of redemption (Heb. 13:20,21). The Greek verb "I have" (echo) is present active indicative. In the Greek, the tenses of the verbs are divided into present, imperfect, future, aorist, perfect, and pluperfect. But they are all smelted into the eternal present. Jesus Christ eternally has sheep who are not found within the sheepfold of the true remnant among national Israel (Rom. 9:6-8). It is as necessary that He bring in those not of the remnant of Israel as it was that He go through Samaria (John 4:4) to bring into the fold the woman of Samaria for whom He died.

Since the other sheep were not yet regenerated, in what sense did Jesus Christ have them? They were His because the Father had given them to Him in the covenant of redemption. There is no time with God; therefore, Christ at that time had other sheep not from the fold in Israel. It is necessary that He bring them also, and these elected ones from among the Gentiles shall hear His voice. They—elected Jews and elected Gentiles—shall become one flock with one Shepherd. The word "fold" which is used twice in John 10:16 is not the same in both instances. The first is from the Greek word *aule*, which means fold. It refers to the fold of elect Israelites from within the nation of Israel. The second is from *poimne*, which means flock. The Lord promised that elect Jews and elect Gentiles shall hear His voice, and they shall become one flock with one Shepherd.

III. The Allegory Concluded

In verses 17 and 18 of John 10, Christ concluded His explanation of the allegory by declaring His absolute sovereignty. He emphasized the Father's love for Him because He was laying down His life that He might take it again. He declared that He had authority to lay it down, and He had authority to take it again.

Christ's explanation of the allegory in John 10:1-6 resulted in another division among the Jews. There are three times in the Gospel of John where it is recorded that there was a division among the Jews. The first was over the Person of Christ (John 7:43). The second was over the power of Christ (John 9:16). The third was over the work Jesus Christ accomplished for those the Father had given Him in the covenant of redemption (John 10:19). The reaction of the Pharisees to the Lord's explanation verifies His statement that He did not come to send peace on earth, but He came to send a sword (Matt. 10:34). The Lord told these religious Jews not to "think" (nomisete, aorist active subjunctive of nomidzo, which means think, assume, or suppose) that He came to bring peace. Luke's account reads, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division" (Luke 12:51). This does not contradict the announcement by the heavenly host at the birth of Jesus Christ when they praised God and said, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased" (Luke 2:14 NASB). Peace on earth is impossible except among people who are of good will. Only the children of God are people of good will.

Jesus Christ came to bring individual, not universal, peace at His first advent. This peace is the result of regeneration. There is no universal peace on earth during this dispensation. The glory of God does not presently cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. The sword, or division, was not the primary purpose of Christ's first advent, but it was the result of His coming. He did not come the first time to judge, but the result of His first coming was judgment (John 9:39-41). The Greek word for "sword" is found 29 times in the New Testament and is translated "sword" in each place. It is used to speak of the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), the sword of the executioner (Acts 12:2; Rom. 8:35; Heb. 11:37), the power of civil government (Rom. 13:4), and the person who lives by the sword shall die by the sword (Matt. 26:52). It is impossible for truth and error, light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness, and love and hate to coexist in harmony. The ungodly want peace at any cost. Therefore, they will readily accept the antichrist when he comes offering peace. When truth compromises with error, truth always suffers because error has no truth to surrender.

Divisiveness always results from proclaimed truth. Wherever there is light, there is division; and wherever there is grace, there is division. Jesus Christ was not the aggressor in the war that resulted from His teaching. As a result of the coming of Him who is the way, the truth, and the life, war broke out. The degree of divisiveness the Christian encounters is determined by the degree of truth he embraces and practices. A Christian does not deliberately cause trouble, but his stand for truth will cause division. The reason many families are not divided is because Christians in the home do not take the proper stand for truth. The division begins between believers and nonbelievers, but it does not stop there. It continues between mature and immature Christians, Immature and carnally-minded Christians shy away from those who desire to discuss the things of the Lord. One's degree of finding life is proportional to his degree of losing life (Matt. 10:39). Losing life must be for Christ's sake in order to find the life referred to in this text.

The Jews did not believe Christ's explanation of His allegory because they were not part of Christ's sheep. "But ye believe not, because ye are not of [ek, partitive ablative, which means from] my sheep..." (John 10:26). The partitive ablative signifies that the divided part is derived from the whole and in some sense is separated from the whole. Reprobation is taught in this verse of Scripture. These Jews were not believing because they were not from God's people whom He already possessed in covenant relationship.

In contrast to the reprobates, Christ's sheep hear His voice, He knows them, and they follow Him (John 10:27). Election is taught in this verse of Scripture. The sheep are Christ's by the Father's choice. Election is the first moving cause of God's grace looking to salvation (Rom. 11:5). This grace was given the elect in Christ before the world began (II Tim. 1:9). Irresistible grace will seek, find, and save all the chosen ones. The only person who seeks God is one who has been regenerated. The Lord said through Isaiah, "I AM sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not..." (Is. 65:1). Where are the elect found? Zacchaeus was found and delivered from a place that had been cursed. Abraham was found and delivered out of idolatrous Ur of the Chaldes. Paul was found and delivered from corrupt religion. Dionysius and Damaris were found and delivered from Athenian intellectualism. The woman of Samaria was found and delivered from a life of adultery.

Christ's sheep hear His voice. This is the effectual call of God. Christ's sheep were known from eternity, and they are effectually called by means of the gospel of Jesus Christ (II Thess. 2:13,14). Man is capable of repenting apart from the grace of repenting, but he cannot repent savingly. His repentance needs to be repented of. God calls the elect at His appointed time.

Justification is taught in the Lord's statement in John 10:27, "I know them." He not only knows the elect, but He has always known us. He is the eternal God, and He gave us grace in Christ before the world began. God knew us on the basis of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ which would be accomplished. That too was in the eternal mind of God. There is eternal justification as well as justification by faith in time. Both are based on the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. A person cannot believe one without believing the other.

John 10:27 continues with the Lord's statement "they follow me," which teaches satisfaction. The Greek word for "follow" (akolouthousin, which means are following) is the present active participle of akoloutheo. The Bible does not teach that Christians will not sin, but it does teach that we will repent and return to following Christ. People who are the sheep of God will genuinely repent when we hear the truth. Our repentance will not be forced. It will come from the heart because the grace of God within us prompts it. This is progressive sanctification. Seeking assurance of election outside of holiness of life is nonsense. Election is inseparable from holiness of life: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). There is too much literary grace and not enough experimental grace among professing Christians. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). Sanctification is not like a pump which sends forth water only when primed from without. It is like an artesian well from which a stream is ever spontaneously and naturally flowing.

Jesus Christ is giving eternal life to the elect. In John 10:28, the Greek verb for "give" (*didomi*) is present active indicative. It means that Christ is giving uninterrupted life. Life purposed in eternity becomes life in the bud that shall blossom into the perfect flower in eternity. God is continuing to give

physical life to His creatures (Acts 17:28). The creatures He created are subject to His giving them life. There is a time to be born, and there is a time to die. Life cannot be prolonged beyond God's appointed time. As God is continuing to give physical life, He is continually giving eternal life. Is He doing less in the spiritual realm for His elect ones than He does in the physical realm for all of His creatures?

In verses 28 and 29 of John 10, the security of the believer is taught in the Lord's promise that those to whom He gives eternal life shall never perish and no one can pluck them out of His hand. The Father is greater than all, and no one can pluck them out of the Father's hand. If it were possible for one to get in Christ by his own will, it would also be possible for him to take himself out of Christ. But neither is possible. The wolves may scatter, but they cannot seize. They cannot by force take the elect out of the crucified and omnipotent hand of the sovereign God.

John 10:30 teaches that the Father and the Son are one in preserving the elect. Although the elect were lost in Adam, they cannot be lost in Christ or the Father. In Colossians 3:3 and 4, we find these words: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." We have died, and our lives have been hidden with Christ in God. The Greek verb for "hid" (kekruptai) is a perfect passive indicative of krupto, which signifies a completed transaction in the past with a continuing state of result. Since it is in the passive voice, the elect did not participate in it. We are continually hidden; we will always be hidden in Christ; and Christ is in God. No one can get God out of the way, and no one can get Jesus Christ out of the way to get to the elect. Therefore, when Christ who is our life is manifested, we also shall be manifested with Him in glory.

INDIVIDUAL ELECTION

The unbelief of Israel, in spite of her glorious history (Rom. 9:4,5), does not contradict the unconditional promises of God. God's word has not failed (Rom. 9:6,7). From the inspired pen of Isaiah, we have a fourfold "shall" concerning God's word: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Is. 55:11). Therefore, God's word concerning both the chosen nation and individuals will not fail. Both will be brought to a knowledge of God's will in their respective times. Paul carefully distinguished the natural from the spiritual descendants of Israel: "...For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel" (Rom. 9:6 NASB). For the Jews who relied solely on their national descent, the Bible clearly states, "I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.... If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.... Ye are of your father the devil..." (John 8:37,39,44). These verses state the same truth Paul stressed in Romans 9:6-8.

Knowing that there is a little flock who believe all Scripture is inspired and is for the admonition of God's sheep is refreshing (Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:11; II Tim. 3:16,17). This little flock fears no Biblical subject. God's sheep are not embarrassed by any Scripture, and they never feel that they must give their own version of what they think God means in certain instances to keep God from being misunderstood. Contrary to the thinking of many that they must better explain what God has said to make Him more easily understood, the sheep believe that God has explained Himself, His purpose, and His work. Therefore, He needs no one to try to do what He has perfectly done.

A superficial inspection of God's actions leads men to false conclusions. Nothing is more natural than that the actions of the infinite God should present mysteries to finite minds. Apart from grace, men are in no position to form a correct estimate of God's proceedings. Neither His thoughts nor His ways can be compared to the thoughts or ways of man. The reasoning of the natural mind has been expressed in the statement that either God has the power and does not care, or God cares and does not have the power. Contrary to that statement, God's sheep believe God cares and has the power to fulfill His purpose in all of that about which He cares. When did God's concern begin? It began in His electing grace, grace given to the sheep in Christ "before the world began"—before the times of ages (II Tim. 1:9).

"It is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants" (Rom. 9:8 NASB). This passage is speaking of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But a principle that cannot be ignored is that a natural connection with spiritual parents is no guarantee that the descendants are either saved or shall be saved. What about Ishmael and Isaac? What about Esau and Jacob? Salvation is not by the will of man; it is by

the will of God (John 1:13). To be a descendant of Abraham's flesh is insufficient because "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Rom. 9:7).

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are all mentioned in this section of Romans 9. God is represented in Abraham as the electing God (Gen. 12), in Isaac as the redeeming God (Gen. 22), and in Jacob as the loving God (Gen. 25). In Abraham, God called the nonexisting as though they already existed: "...God...calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). In God's election, the Father sees the nonexistent elect already in Jesus Christ because He gave them to the eternal Son before the world began (John 17; Eph. 1:4; II Tim. 1:9). There is no time with God; He is the eternal "I Am." Isaac is a type not only of the Father offering up Christ but also of life from the dead (Gen. 22; Heb. 11:17-19). Jesus Christ was literally put to death by the elect. Our sins crucified Him. But He has been raised from the dead, and He is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). All spiritual blessings have been provided for the elect in Jesus Christ.

Isaac was the child of promise: "For this is the word of promise, ...Sarah shall have a son" (Rom. 9:9). God's promise to Sarah was unconditional. There was nothing, naturally speaking, in either Abraham or Sarah that was capable of assisting God in the fulfillment of the promise. They were past the age of procreation. Neither of them could contribute to the promised son. No person can make any contribution to his salvation. "The children of the promise are counted for the seed" of Romans 9:8 is also an unconditional promise. The seed of promise shall come to Christ (John 6:37). Christ was telling the Jews, many of whom despised and rejected Him, that their unbelief could not hinder the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose. Thus, we see why the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to say, after his stated concern for his kinsmen, "But it is not as though the word of God has failed..." (Rom. 9:6 NASB).

Jacob manifests God's electing love in a person who by nature was no different than Esau. God could love nothing in Jacob above Esau but His own grace given to Jacob in Christ before the times of ages. This is a stronger case than that of Ishmael and Isaac who represent two nations and two manner of people (Gen. 25:23). By the election of grace, this intriguer became a wrestler with God.

Let us seek to make an application of this rich section of Scripture. When witnessing for Christ, it would be interesting to ask professing believers why they came to Christ. Some of the answers would no doubt be amusing, but there is no doubt that most of them would be unscriptural. After listening to different answers, a recipient of irresistible grace should give his testimony of why he came to Christ. There are two main reasons why anyone comes to Jesus Christ: (1) One comes because the Father gave him to Christ (John 6:37). (2) He comes because the Father drew him (John 6:44). How many who claim to be Christians will accept such a testimony as being Biblical? Christians are shut up to faith in God. When they go to the word of God, they learn that salvation is of God in its planning, provision, and application (Eph. 1:3-14).

Individual Election Demonstrated

Esau and Jacob, the two sons of Isaac and Rebecca, demonstrate God's election of one and His passing by the other (Rom. 9:9-13). God chose Jacob, and He passed by Esau. This is individual, not national, election. God loved Jacob and hated Esau. Scripture does not state that He loved Esau less than He loved Jacob. God could love nothing in Jacob above Esau but His own grace which He gave Jacob before the world began. There is no difference between any Christian and any nonchristian other than God gave the Christian grace before the world began. The reason many dislike this truth is because they do not understand grace. God

has given grace to everyone He chose in Christ before the world began (II Tim. 1:9). This is why God loves those He chose with an everlasting love.

Esau was the older son, and Jacob was the younger. A new history began with the generations of Isaac (Gen. 25:19). This is a new chapter in the exercise of faith in connection with the promises of God. Like Isaac and Rebecca, believers must be constantly reminded that we are not debtors to the flesh in any way (Rom. 8:12). Paul continually gave his flesh severe treatment to bring it under subjection (I Cor. 9:20-27). At every step, God's people are shut up to faith. Isaac, Abraham's son, entreated the Lord for his barren wife, Rebecca. The Lord heard him and Rebecca conceived. The twins within her womb jostled one another (Gen. 25:22). Rebecca perceived that the conflict did not arise from natural causes. This was a little early in the pregnancy, was it not? But do not forget how John the Baptist leaped for joy in Elisabeth's womb when he heard that Mary would give birth to Jesus Christ. Rebecca felt more than mere movement of the fetus. The conflict in Rebecca's womb was an early conflict for mastery. The natural mind cannot understand this early strife between Esau and Jacob. They were already depraved. The strife in the womb continued until the time of birth and extended further than these two persons.

Rebecca became disturbed over the prenatal conflict and enquired of the Lord concerning it. Before her conception, Rebecca was troubled for the want of children. Her anguish now was the conflict between her children before they were born. The comforts we desire often bring with them trouble and anxiety. Believers are prone to be discontented with blessings because of the troubles the blessings bring. The Lord answered Rebecca's inquiry: "And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall

be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23). (Study Matt. 21:43; I Pet. 2:9.) God in His eternal purpose destined Rebecca to bring forth two nations or two manner of people. This was the reason for her living.

The Lord affirmed that the order of nature would be reversed by the older son serving the younger. The firstborn child always had access to the inheritance and was given a greater portion of the inheritance. He had certain authority in the family that those younger did not have. But in this case, the order was reversed. Esau was the firstborn but he would serve his younger brother. There is a spiritual lesson in this for us. We were all in Adam by physical birth. When we were born again, we became new creatures in Christ Jesus; and the new nature controls the old nature.

The births of Esau and Jacob were as extraordinary as their conflict in Rebecca's womb. Esau was the first to be born. He represents what we are by nature as the children of Adam. Jacob represents what we are by the election of God's grace. Regeneration is the consequence of election. The birthright was Esau's by providence, not by God's eternal purpose. The birthright was Jacob's not by inheritance but by promise. As the firstborn, Esau had the right of the first child—first place in the home and a double portion of the father's inheritance (Deut. 21:17). This was a kind of supremacy over one's brethren and his father's house (Gen. 27:29). The conflict continued in their births because Jacob seized his brother by the heel in an attempt to get out before Esau (Gen. 25:26).

Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the world. Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his venison, but Rebecca loved Jacob. Esau and Jacob were two different persons. The Lord testified by Esau's being firstborn that the effect of His election does not immediately

appear, but rather that the intervening path was filled with troubles and conflicts.

Jacob was chosen by the sovereign God before his birth, even with all the contemptible faults which lay in his character. God chooses whom He will according to His good pleasure. The whole human race deserves the same destruction. The only difference between men rests solely in the will of God and not in any distinction in the persons of men. No man spiritually excels another by means of his own virtue. Two nations and two manner of people were spoken of in the prophecy (Gen. 25:23). But Paul applied this to two individuals—Esau and Jacob—not to their posterities (Rom. 9:11-13). Moses made the application to the whole seed of Jacob, but Paul turned the words into a particular election. Esau and Jacob were not partakers of the same calling. A general call goes forth to all, but there is an effectual call to the elect. For this reason, one person responds to the truth; and another rejects and despises it. Paul contended in his argument that not all who descend from Isaac according to the flesh are true Israelites. According to His own good pleasure, God chooses whom He will to be saved. Every person He has chosen will be quickened by the Holy Spirit, thus enabling him to embrace the gospel in a saving experience.

God's love for Jacob is everlasting. (Study in the light of their contexts Jer. 31:3; Deut. 7:6-9; Hos. 14:4; I John 4:8; Rom. 5:8.) The reason for God's love for Jacob was not in Jacob but in God who is love (I John 4:8). One who tells a sinner, even a child, that God loves him before he sees any manifestation of grace in his life speaks heretically. In their proclamation of truth in the Acts of the Apostles, the apostles never said, "God loves you." The Roman Christians evidenced that they had passed from death into life before Paul spoke of the love of God having been shed abroad in

their hearts (Rom. 5:5). One who tells people who have not manifested that they are the children of God that God loves them assumes authority he does not possess. To tell a Christ rejector that God loves him is to give him a sense of security in his sin. Furthermore, to tell people that God loves everybody is to tell them that God loves the Devil. There is no love of God outside of Jesus Christ; therefore, a person has to be in Christ before he experiences the love of God. God chose us in Christ, and He loves us in Christ. Unlike human love, which may be extended to a person today and turn to hatred tomorrow, God's love is eternal. God loves His people—the elect. The cause of God's love must be found in Himself. If God's love were not found in Himself, He would have to love by rule or by law. God is His own law and exercises His love as the sovereign God.

God's hatred for Esau belongs to the transcendent realm of His sovereignty (Rom. 9:13). There is no human analogy for God's hatred for the nonelect, and there is no human analogy for God's love for the elect. The hatred for Esau cannot be interpreted to mean loved less. It must be interpreted to mean positive disfavor. Esau was not merely excluded from what Jacob enjoyed. He was permanently excluded. Holy hatred for evil cannot be defined as loving less. The text does not state that God loves the sinner but hates his sin. The sinner cannot be separated from his sin. It is impossible to punish sin without punishing the sinner. The text does not say that God hated Esau's deeds. God did not love some of the deeds of Jacob, but His love is not based on our deeds. His love is based on His choice. God's wrath comes on the children of disobedience, not on their disobedience. Hatred in itself is not sinful. Holy love necessitates holy hatred for everything contrary to that holy love. Therefore, God's choice of Jacob and His rejection of Esau revealed that His purpose according to election should stand not of works but of Him who calls (Rom. 9:11).

Isaac loved Esau. Esau was the firstborn, and the firstborn prefers a natural claim to the chief place in the family in the parents' affection. But the father was not at liberty to exalt him above his brother. Isaac was induced to give Esau this place in his affection because of his indulgence in his palate—the flesh. Esau knew how to please his father with venison (Gen. 27:1-10). In displaying his election, God permitted Esau to be preferred by Isaac before his brother. There was an element of weakness in Isaac's character that teaches us to beware of people who minister to our natural tastes. This is one thing in which Paul instructed Timothy when he said the time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine; but according to their lusts, they will multiply teachers to tickle their ears (II Tim. 4:3). People are not reached spiritually by pleasing their flesh.

Rebecca loved Jacob. There were two elements opposing each other of which Rebecca had to take account. She turned to God, and the answer given was that the elder shall serve the younger. Hence, Rebecca walked in the light of the revelation of God. Unlike Rebecca, Isaac denied his relationship with his wife, stood not in a place of dignity before the Philistines, and allowed his taste for natural things to attach his affections with the wrong man.

The characteristics of Esau and Jacob were opposite. Esau was a cunning hunter, a man's man. He chose to imitate Nimrod, not his grandfather, Abraham. He was marked by self-gratification. He was a man of the field—world. He showed cunning and worldly wisdom, despised his birthright, and was profane (Heb. 12:16,17). He prostituted to common use things that were sacred. Profanity and fornication are linked together in the Hebrew passage. These are sins that are seldom forsaken unless there is a work of grace. Esau's appetite was stronger than his ability to reason (Gen. 25:29-34). Thus, he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. In

contrast to Esau, Jacob was a quiet, plain man desiring what Esau despised, not acting cruelly toward Esau, taking nothing from him, and desiring a confirmation of that which had been Divinely granted to him. This supplanter was not naturally attractive, but he was God's chosen person.

The real proof of life is personal character, which is continually growing and not static. When a crisis comes in one's life, he acts not according to what he desires for the moment but according to what he really is. His desires are an expression of his actual character. Therefore, the supreme test of character is found in little things. A person who is little in little things will be small in big things. The natural heart places no value on spiritual things. It values only what is seen. It is governed by sight, not by faith. A mess of pottage is better to it than a title to Canaan. Jacob had many faults, but his faith was genuine. He learned by grace the necessity of right principle. Jacob's desire was genuine, but his method of obtaining it was wrong. Patience goes along with faith and must be learned by experience (Rom. 5:1-4). Correct objects must be brought about by correct means. Be sure your sins will find you out. Retribution is certain. Jacob did not possess the birthright until he acknowledged Esau as his master (Gen. 33:11-15).

The following statements are assumptions by those who believe Romans 9:10-13 applies only to national Israel and not to individual election: They assert that the passage should not be studied except in the light of Israel's history (Mal. 1:1-5). They believe that the doctrine of Divine preference of Israel over Esau appeared only after the respective characters of the nations were manifested in history and that the Old Testament doctrine of election is to service only. They contend that as Paul tried to teach the Christians in Rome, God chose Israel not for the sake of Israel alone but for the sake of the whole world; thus explaining the apparent arbitrariness

of the choice and the narrowness of the groove within which Israel moved. Also, there may be a great deal to be said for the doctrine of election in the abstract; but when it is couched in the language of "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," it is difficult to avoid a sense of favoritism. They further contend that when one looks behind the words to see the conclusion, such a thought is unwarranted, because behind the words there is a principle that God loves those who love Him.

Contrary to the preceding assumptions, we have already shown that the nation of Israel was chosen to a theocratic position, but among the members of national Israel some were elected to salvation (Rom. 9:6,7). It is true that the character of the nation was manifested in history. Furthermore, Israel was chosen not merely for her sake but also for the good of the elect among the nations of the world. However, one must deny that the Bible teaches a principle that God loves those who love Him. Such a view is pleasing to natural minds, but the teaching of Scripture proves that God loved Israel with an everlasting love: "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people" (Deut. 7:7). "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3). The word for "everlasting" comes from the Hebrew word owlam, which means continuance, eternal, perpetual, endless, and unlimited whether past or yet to come. Men in actual existence are not everlasting, but in the mind of the Infinite, they are eternal.

The understanding of election is endangered by (1) those who teach that election is based on foreseen faith; (2) those who teach that election takes place at the point of faith; (3) those who teach the freedom of God to the exclusion of means; (4) those who teach an elected plan; (5) those who

take their election for granted so that it becomes an occasion for self-justification; (6) those who think that election releases the nonelect from all responsibility to God; (7) those who think that election prevents the salvation of some who desire to be saved; (8) those who attribute arbitrariness to God in His election because they do not understand arbitrariness as it relates to God; (9) those who say election makes God a respecter of persons, that is, gives to equal persons unequal things; (10) those who say election makes God guilty of partiality—injustice.

The major argument used against Romans 9:10-13 teaching unconditional election to salvation is that it should be understood in a national rather than a personal sense. The following are six points from that argument: (1) God's loving Jacob and hating Esau is to be understood comparatively, not absolutely. (2) They are representatives of a race, not of individuals. (3) Love and hate refer to earthly, not heavenly, privileges. (4) The election depended on neither their repentance nor their faith; therefore, it is not true that this was an election to salvation of Jacob, nor was it eternal reprobation of Esau. (5) The matter in question concerned Jacob as a member of the theocratic family to which Esau could never attain because he spurned the birthright. The record states that "Two nations are in thy [Rebecca's] womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23). (6) The conclusion of the argument is that God was dealing with nations and peoples rather than electing one to salvation while passing by the other

No one can deny that Paul was discussing the subject of Israel in Romans 9-11, but neither can he deny that Jacob and Esau were individuals. Two very important questions should be discussed: Did God love only Israel and hate only Edom

without first loving Jacob and hating Esau? Did not God make a distinction between one man and one nation over another man and another nation? No one can dismiss the idea of individual election by saying Romans 9 speaks of national election. Technically speaking, what difference is there between one nation being chosen from among the nations and some individuals being chosen from among mankind? The principle is the same in both cases.

The question of election or no election is the question of the testimony of Scripture on one side and the opinions of depraved men on the other. Holy Scripture instructs us in things that human reason can never know. Why would God give us a revelation of things we already know? Election is used in several ways in the Scriptures: (1) Sometimes it refers to choosing persons of excellent or superior ability. When persons choose, they select the best (Judges 20:16). (2) Sometimes it signifies the temporary designation of persons to a particular office. Thus, the disciples were chosen to go and bring forth fruit (John 15:16). (3) Election is used in the sense of God taking a whole nation into covenant with Himself: "...the LORD thy God hath chosen thee [Israel] to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6). (4) Sometimes election refers to that eternal, sovereign, particular, and immutable act of God where He selected some from among mankind to be redeemed by Jesus Christ (John 10:15,16; II Tim. 2:9,10). There is no such thing as God eternally electing some to be His own and not determining who they will be: "...The Lord knoweth them that are his..." (II Tim. 2:19). "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest..." (Ps. 65:4). Unlike men, God does not choose men simply because they are superior to others in any way. He chooses the foolish, weak, base, and despised things and things that are not that no flesh should glory (I Cor. 1:26-29).

The first instinct of depraved man is to rebel against God's

sovereignty. Nevertheless, election is unconditional, and its result is the unconditional surrender of the elect to the will of the sovereign God. This must never be expected apart from the grace of God. The word "grace" conveys three ideas: (1) It conveys the idea of power. Power is necessary to save. Men who are dead in sin need power, not instruction. How can a dead person be instructed? The first act of grace is to make man alive. Then his understanding is enlightened that he might know the internal working of God's mighty power (Eph. 1:18-20). In the creation of man, God began externally; but in regeneration, He begins internally. Hence, there can be no external change that will abide until grace works an internal change. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is required to make men dead in sin alive in Christ. (2) The second idea is that of love. Grace is not merely power, but it is power directed by love: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" (Eph. 2:4,5). We have not only been saved, but we are also presently in a state of eternal salvation because our salvation is a product of God's everlasting love. (3) The third idea of grace is that it is gratuitous. Therefore, it is not only undeserved, but it is also unearned: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:5,6). Grace, therefore, is all from God in its purpose, provision, and application. In whatever dunghill God's jewels are hidden, election will find them and bring them out from thence.

One can never understand election by considering the opinions of men. That would be like a person going to a factory that makes a useable product and seeing only raw material in the department where he begins his investigation.

He is told to go to the next department, and there he can see the raw material being processed. Finally, he is told to go to the office building, and there he will see how the idea was developed and the plans completed. The reason men do not have a correct concept of election is because they do not go to the sovereign God. The one who begins with God will say, "....Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). We must all learn the lessons learned by Eve, Sarah, and Rebecca. Concerning Cain and Abel, Eve learned that a spiritual seed is "not of blood." Concerning Ishmael and Isaac, Sarah learned that a spiritual seed is "not of the will of the flesh." Concerning Esau and Jacob, Rebecca learned that a spiritual seed is "not of the will of man."

God Is No Respecter Of Persons

God shows partiality to no one. Peter was well-qualified to declare this truth which he had learned experientially: "...Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). Peter, a Jew, had been prejudiced against the Gentiles until the Lord gave him a vision to show him his responsibility to preach to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. Peter was sent to preach to Cornelius, a Gentile man prepared by God for the message Peter preached. God alone can prepare a person for the message that He has committed to His men to proclaim. Cornelius was not prepared merely because God had set Israel aside and had turned to the Gentiles. He had been prepared by the grace of God. This prepared man had been praying, and his prayers were going up as a memorial before God. Therefore, Peter had a prepared man for the message. The message of God will never take effect until the hearts of people are prepared by God for it. Contrary to the opinion of most religionists, neither prayer nor music will prepare one for the message of God. Confession of sins in order to cleanse ourselves "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1) enables Christians to worship.

Peter's true spirit was manifested when he refused homage from Cornelius. Peter's message to his prepared audience manifested that he had been taught what favoritism is. On the basis of truth, he understood that God does not show favoritism (Acts 10:34). Partiality indicates injustice, against which Christians are warned (I Tim. 5:21). Wisdom from above is without partiality (James 3:17).

No sinner has a right to favor with God. (1) God's choice is for no other reason than His own pleasure. God does what He pleases and answers to nobody. (2) God's election is not an act of justice. It is an act of sovereignty. Justice is God's condemning those whom He passed by for their sins. (3) God's justice presupposes debt, but God is indebted to no one. Man is indebted to God. God is God, and we are His creatures. (4) Election is not a matter of right and wrong. Election is God's free favor. (5) God does not show favoritism in His not choosing persons for their works' sake (Rom. 9:11). (6) God does not value a person on the basis of his nationality, whether Jew or Gentile. There are only three classifications of people in the world—Jews, Gentiles, and the church [assembly] of God (I Cor. 10:32). The Gentiles include all who are not Jews, and the assembly of Christ includes those who are Christ's through election by the Father, redemption by the Son, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, whether Jews or Gentiles. (7) God is not unjust to choose some, because He would have been just to have passed by everyone.

What appears to be favoritism or partiality in providence, such as circumstances, the condition of one's health, the condition of one's body, natural abilities, external advantages, etc., all await that time for the solution of some of peoples' doubts. Man's future alone can determine him happy or unhappy on the whole. His present condition is perpetually changing. All men pass through vicissitudes of what we call good and evil. Even temporal happiness depends on more

than externals. A Christian may be having all kinds of problems, but he has joy in Christ. Possessions do not bring happiness. In spite of the loss of possessions and other adversities, Habakkuk said, "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:18). Such things as poverty, pain, disappointments, real calamities, etc., that take place in the lives of God's people are chastenings, but these things are judgments to the unsaved.

What is respect of persons? Respect of persons is to look with favor upon persons with regard to their external privileges without any real concern about their internal state. This is what Jude had in mind when he said concerning false teachers, "...having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 16). "...It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment" (Prov. 24:23). There is a tendency in all ranks beneath the wicked man who is great in wealth and exalted in social influence and political power to overlook his wickedness for the sake of advantage. James condemned such respect of persons in James 2:1-9. Favoritism was being shown in the assembly, and James condemned it. Discriminating against the poor man in favor of the one appearing to be prosperous is sin. God chose "the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him" (James 2:5). But some in the assembly had dishonored the poor (v. 6). One is correct to love his neighbor as himself; but if he shows favoritism, he commits sin and is convicted by the law as a transgressor (v. 9). Respect of persons was forbidden in the Mosaic law, particularly in judicial decisions. (Study Lev. 19:15.) James was not referring to a regular assembly meeting here but to meetings that were appointed for deciding matters of difference among the members of the assembly.

All respect of persons is not sinful. If it were, there would be no place for authority in the assembly or in civil government. There is a holy respect of persons even by God Himself. God is said to accept the faces of His people (Gen. 19:21) and to respect persons first and then their services (Gen. 4:4). The reason Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain was that God first had respect to his person, and then He respected his offering. There is a justifiable respect of persons by man for one's age, calling, office, gifts, and graces. It is lawful to respect him because of the difference God has given him (I Cor. 4:7). All are equal in salvation (Jude 3). The respect of persons by men is not so much for their sakes but for the grace of God in them.

There is a sinful respect of persons. Judgment corrupted by some external appearance or advantage is a heinous sin (James 2:1-9). The Lord told Moses, "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour" (Lev. 19:15). There should be neither special kindness shown to the guilty poor nor flattery or overlooking of the guilt of the guilty rich. Respect of persons is manifested by making external things the ground of respect and affection. One must never make greatness a cover for baseness and excuse sin by human honor. Sinful respect of persons is to respect anything besides matter and cause itself. Hence, it is going from matter to the man, from the thing to the person, and swerving from righteous judgment and a true estimation of things. This evil cannot stand with Christian profession. One who defends others at the expense of truth is in error. A man is to be judged by his character and not by what he professes.

God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). This refers to His righteous judgment. Impartiality is one of the chief qualifications of a judge. Without it no amount of knowledge or ability can inspire confidence on the part of people. God is absolutely impartial. The natural man would think that for the sake of God's honor He would conceal the sins of His favorite servants. But He showed that Abraham lied. David committed adultery, Peter lied, etc. Although the name of God is blasphemed because of the sins of His people, payday is coming. God does not have judicial regard for any of the characteristics that aid man in distinguishing one from another. He is not limited to human means of making distinctions of dress, color, habit, nationality, etc. God makes inner distinctions of character without reference to anything external. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. God sees man's nature; man sees the nationality. God has respect to the robe of righteousness; man has respect to fine clothes, culture, etc. God regards the riches of His grace; man regards earthly riches that will soon fly away. With God, there is only black and white, good and bad, pure and vile, saved and lost, and truth and error. Man has respect to many colors. God distinguishes character; man distinguishes by characteristics.

ANTICIPATED QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Paul did not try to satisfy the objectors. He simply rebuked them. No matter how reasonable an argument from Scripture is, it will not meet the satisfaction of the reasoner. A doctrine that is agreeable to the natural man can never be the doctrine of Holy Scripture, because Scripture is contrary to human reasoning. Knowing that questions would be asked and criticism would be made against the absolute sovereignty of God, in Romans 9:14-21, Paul raised the following anticipated questions and answered them before his opponents had the opportunity to ask the questions.

1. Is there unrighteousness with God (v. 14)? The thought of injustice with God was so intolerable to Paul that he dismissed it with a decisive denial, "absolutely not." Since Paul had been unregenerate, he knew from experience what would go through the minds of unregenerate people. Depraved minds accuse God of being unequal or unjust (Ezek. 18:25-29). Paul knew that when the unregenerate were subjected to the truth of God's election of some and His passing by others, they would accuse God of not dealing

equally with all people. In contrast to the depraved minds of the unregenerate, Christians know that God is just and true in all His ways (Rev. 15:3). He is not unequal. All inconsistency is in our minds and not in God. How can man on such a low level of depravity sit in judgment on God? Persons who have been raised up by grace and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Jesus Christ, like Paul, dismiss any thought of injustice with God.

The apostle appealed to Scripture in support of his decisive denial (Rom. 9:15; Ex. 33:19). The favor shown to Moses proved the sovereignty of God in showing mercy. God's sovereignty is the foundation of all rights. It is the foundation of Christianity. If God is not God, who is He? The root of the questions is, Is God to judge man or is man to judge God? God judges man. A man would be ignorant to bid the sun good morning, and then point out to the sun the course it should take for the day. However, this ignorance is not as contemptible as the foolishness of one who seeks to dictate the course God should take in providence by summoning the sovereign God to his own bar and dictating to Him how He should deal with mankind. The thing that men argue with God about is the thing they love in themselves. Men want to blame God for doing what He does, but they want the right to do what they please with what they think belongs to them. However, everything is under God. He has a right to do what He pleases with His own. Sovereignty rests at the foundation of all Christian theology. Any aspect of theology that does not have sovereignty at the foundation is not a true theological concept. An unscriptural conception of God leads to erroneous views of all the other Biblical sciences. The purpose of the Bible is to reveal to God's elect their Creator, Redeemer, and Preserver.

2. If one being saved and another being lost depends on God, how can the lost be blamed (v. 19)? This question arose

from the assertion that God has mercy on whom He will and hardens whom He will (v. 18). Responsibility without freedom in the thinking of natural men is despotic and unjust. The natural mind objects to being responsible if one can do nothing to change his destiny. Those who make the frequently repeated statement "your faith can change your destiny" believe that by their faith they are born of God. They reason that if man's faith cannot change his destiny, that would be like charging the rivers with guilt for their inability to run uphill when God's decree of gravitation forbids it. However, no person's natural faith can change his destiny. His destiny is changed before he can exercise faith.

- 3. Who has resisted His will (v. 19)? This objection seems to be based on God's hardening Pharaoh's heart (v. 17). A God on His throne is not the God the religionist loves. One with a natural mind wants God on his own throne so that he can manipulate Him. However, a manipulative God is not the sovereign God of the Bible. These people are described as rebellious, uncircumcised in heart and ears, and always resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). They resisted the Holy Spirit by resisting the message that had been given by the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit acts sovereignly on the passive sinner when He regenerates him, how can anyone resist the work of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit works where He pleases and when He pleases according to the will of God (John 3:8). Who can frustrate the plan of God? God's purpose will be fulfilled.
- 4. Who are you who contradict God (v. 20)? Paul reminded the objector of who God is. Man has no right to dispute with God. A person is impious to contradict God, to arraign God the Creator before man's judgment. Man is not only a creature but he is also an ignorant, guilty, and condemned creature. Therefore, the sinner is not qualified to understand the infinite mind of God. He has only natural understanding to a point of

supernatural things, but he cannot understand spiritual things (I Cor. 2:14). A spiritual mind is necessary to understand election, reprobation, imputation, justification, sanctification, glorification, etc. Man's so-called free will denies sovereignty. At this point, the Arminians say the Bible does not say concerning Pharaoh "for this purpose have I made thee" but "for this purpose have I raised thee up." They overlook Scripture as a whole. The Lord said through Solomon, "The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov. 16:4). God's original creation was good, and man was very good. However, since the fall, God forms men out of a corrupt seed and rules over men that have been made out of corrupt seed. God is not the author of the corrupt seed. He is the Author of original creation. Man is the author of his own corrupt seed because man is the author of his sin (Ps. 51:5; Job 14:4). God does not make sin, but He does not cease to form and multiply the nature that has been defiled by sin. Hence, when man argues he argues to the dishonor of God. Man must not question the justice of God when his own depraved mind cannot understand God's justice.

5. Why did God make me thus (v. 20)? Paul showed that God is robbed of His right if He is not free to deal with His creatures as He pleases. Paul knew this would not silence all the critics of God's absolute sovereignty. Ignorant men quarrel with God about reprobation. They raise the question, Did God make man to damn him? Furthermore, if God determined that some go to hell, did not such determination lay a necessity on the reprobates to sin? As God foresaw that none would believe and elected some to obtain salvation, He foresaw that those He passed by would continue in sin and be punished for their sin. God appointed no man to wrath merely from His sovereignty but from the rule of justice. Positive determination is not grounded upon what God will effect but on what the creature will do through the instigation of sin. I might

determine to cut down a fruitless tree and cast it into the fire before it is actually cut down. Did my determination necessitate the fruitlessness of the tree? When God passed by, He simply left those He passed by in their state of depravity to go on and continue operating in their state of depravity. But God is not the author of their depravity. Do the objections from men to such truths as election and predestination make them better theologians than Paul? Paul believed and preached these great truths, and He was inspired to write them.

6. Does not the potter have authority over the clay (v. 21)? Man must either acknowledge the absolute sovereignty of God or he must make the preposterous assertion that the clay has power over the Potter. In defense of God's righteousness, Paul withdrew from the vindication of God's will and entered into a discussion of God's authority. This finalizes his guestions in Romans 9. God has authority over all His creatures. The Greek word translated power is not *dunamis*, which indicates the ability to do, but it is exousian, from exousia, which is the right to do. God has not only the power but also the right to do what He pleases with whom He pleases. God is under no obligation to confer equal honor or dishonor on all. The prerogative of the Potter is absolute (Is. 64:8; Jer. 18:6). However, God's absolute authority does not shield Him from criticism by His creatures. Truth cannot be shielded from criticism. The more truth one knows and witnesses, the more criticism he will receive because men are not spoken of as creatures but as sinners.

The potter has made some vessels to honor and some to dishonor (Rom. 9:21). Those made to dishonor were fitted (*katertismena*, perfect passive participle of *katartidzo*, which means having been designed, made, or prepared) for destruction (v. 22). These were no longer in the clay stage, but they were in the vessel stage. God created man upright, but the

vessel stage is the fallen stage. Hence, men prepare themselves for destruction because they are in the stage of depravity. In contrast to the vessels of wrath, the vessels of mercy were prepared beforehand; they were given grace in Christ before the world began.

THINGS TO CONSIDER IN ELECTION AND REPROBATION

In response to the Lord's declaration of His loving Jacob and hating Esau, Paul asked "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" (Rom. 9:14). There is absolutely no unrighteousness with God in either election or reprobation. Election and reprobation are the two most hated subjects in Scripture; however, one cannot believe one without believing the other.

Election is hated because it is contrary to the opinion, judgment, estimate, or view of man in his depraved condition. That is why man counts the election of grace a strange thing (Luke 4:18 5:26). The word "strange" (from *paradoxos*, which means uncommon, unexpected, or incredible; and which is a compound word—*para*, contrary to and *doxa*, opinion, judgment, estimate, or view) is used only in Luke 5:26. Election particularizes grace, and it is what the natural mind hates.

The world hates the doctrines of election and reprobation.

God has chosen us out of the world "therefore the world hateth [misei, present active indicative of miseo, which means is hating] you" (John 15:19). Hence, the world is presently hating God's people. Nevertheless, every person chosen by the Father to salvation will be saved. God is longsuffering toward them until all of them come to repentance: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). "...The longsuffering of our Lord is salvation..." (II Pet. 3:15). Therefore, every person the Father chose, the Son redeemed; and that person will be regenerated by the Holy Spirit at God's appointed time. Furthermore, that individual will come to repentance. The Lord chooses whom He pleases and in His prevenient grace protects everyone He chose: "...preserved in Jesus Christ and called" (Jude 1). That one at God's time will come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and manifest it by repentance and faith. One of God's elect will not be aborted.

The world's hatred and persecution vented upon God's people who are walking in the truth is because of ignorance of Christ's Person: "But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know [oidasin, perfect active indicative of oida, which means have known] not him that sent me" (John 15:21). They are in a permanent state of ignorance.

The Lord Jesus said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had [eichosan, imperfect indicative of echo, which means they were having] sin: but now they have no cloke [prophasin, accusative of prophasis, which means actual motive, reason, or valid excuse] for their sin" (John 15:22). The word "sin" in this verse cannot be taken absolutely. The particular sin, in the light of the context, was the rejection of both Christ's Person and His Work. The haters of

Christ rejected Jesus Christ, His sayings, and the miracles He performed (John 15:22, 24). Therefore, they rejected the twofold testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result, the haters of Christ's Person and Work had no excuse. Although we do not have miracles today to which those haters of Christ were exposed, we have the completed word of God and the manifestation of the miraculous power of God in every recipient of God's grace. Furthermore, we can see His power manifested in providence.

The one who hates Jesus Christ also hates the Father (John15:23). Every unregenerate person hates God and His truth. There is no neutrality. One either hates God or he loves God. Every person hates God until the love of God has been poured out into his heart by the Holy Spirit of regeneration. A nonchristian may claim that even though he is not a Christian, he does not hate God or the Bible. But when the word of God in its purity is proclaimed to him, he will soon manifest his arrogance, rebellion, and hatred. Those who reject Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life also reject the Father because no one can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ.

The same terminology is used in John 15:24 as that of verse 22. In verse 22, the world had rejected Christ's words, and in verse 24, they had rejected His works. They were in a permanent state of seeing and hating Jesus Christ and God the Father. Those who reject the message of the faithful man of God who proclaims the word are rejecting Jesus Christ, and they are rejecting the Father who sent Him.

The Lord said, "They hated me without a cause [dorean, which means without cause, freely, for no reason, or needlessly]" (John 15:25). God loved the elect and chose us out of depraved mankind to be His own without a cause. Both the world's hatred for Jesus Christ without a reason and God's

love for the elect without a cause defy all human logic. The disciples' lamenting and weeping and the world's rejoicing when Christ went back to the Father were predicted by Jesus Christ (John 16:20). The world will rejoice when Christians are caught up to be with the Lord.

The following are some things that are wrong with the world which hates Jesus Christ and His people: (1) Its sight is wrong. There is selfishness within and materialism without. This condition is vividly described in II Timothy 3:1-3. The nonchristian cares nothing about God or others. He is self-centered. (2) The world's slogan is wrong. Human attainment and not Divine atonement is the slogan of the world. (3) The world's spirit is wrong. It is antigod and antichrist. This world system is against everything of value. (4) The world's service is wrong. People of the world work diligently to save the surface and are unconcerned about anything beneath the surface. (5) The world's head is wrong. Its head is Satan who is the god of this world system (Eph. 2:1-3). (6) The world's supporters are wrong. The unregenerate are supporting the world.

Consideration should be given to the following things concerning election and reprobation:

- 1. Election is the manifestation of God's sovereignty. Passing by others is a manifestation of God's justice. Giving grace to the elect is apart from merit; therefore, it is a choice of grace (Rom. 11:5). God's refusing to give grace to those He passed by reveals what all men deserve. This is negative reprobation. The positive side of reprobation is that God condemns because of sins committed.
- 2. Both election and reprobation took place before the creation of man. God determined the end before the beginning: "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from an-

cient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Is. 46:10).

- 3. All men were decreed, created, and begun upright in Adam. The Potter, of His own will, made both the vessels of honor and the vessels of dishonor out of the same lump. In this sense, God created all men upright. But the elect are the vessels of honor, and the nonelect are the vessels of dishonor.
- 4. Since both the elect and the nonelect come from the same lump of depravity, distinction between them cannot be known by us prior to the effectual call of the elect. Before regeneration and conversion, there is no difference between them because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The elect are not found willing when grace regenerates them. God first quickens them before they are made willing. Hence, grace given in regeneration makes the elect willing (Rom. 9:16). Some significant things about the will of man should be observed in John 5:39 and 40. The Lord was speaking to unsaved Jews, the religionists of His day, when He told them that they searched the Scriptures because they were thinking that in them they had eternal life. But these same Scriptures bore witness concerning Jesus Christ who they rejected. The Jews to whom our Lord was speaking were content with a mere human understanding of Divine truth. These Jews, like all unregenerate people, could not have a proper estimate of either Jesus Christ or the great Biblical principles. Five things concerning those to whom Christ spoke are mentioned in the context: (1) They would not come to Christ; therefore, they could not form a true estimate of Him (v. 40). (2) They did not have the love of God in them (v. 42). (3) They received only him who came in his own name, not Jesus Christ who came in the Father's name (v. 43). (4) They did not seek the honor that comes from God (v. 44). (5) They would not believe the writings of the One they claimed to trust (vv. 46,47).

These Jews would not come to Christ that they might have life (John 5:40). The will of the natural man is in bondage to Satan. He is not dead to the things of nature, but he is dead to the things of God. The will of man is not self-determined. If the will of man determined itself, the action would be both cause and effect. Every effect has an uncaused cause. The uncaused cause is by necessity self-existent and must therefore be eternal and unchangeable. No act of the will can come into existence without a cause. Therefore, every act of the will is determined by a superior will which goes before, thus determining it (Phil. 2:13). Once a person indicates that God's will is subordinate to man's will, he is on the way to disaster. He classifies himself with the atheist who denies the first cause. To say that God has no power over the will of man is false. God does not save people against their wills. They are made willing after God has quickened them; then they are willing to have a conversion experience.

- 5. God's unchangeableness or immutability is one of His attributes. Whatever He does is forever: "...whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him" (Eccl. 3:14). His purpose is according to His wisdom, and His wisdom is guided by His justice and power: "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut. 32:4).
- 6. Election does not make the chosen ones Christians, and passing by does not condemn the nonelect. The nonelect, as well as the elect, became sinners in Adam whether we were chosen or passed by.
- 7. There is a difference between God's infallible foreknowledge and the necessity of the nonelect to sin. Many object to the subject of reprobation by asking, "If God deter-

mined that some must perish, does not this determination put a necessity upon the nonelect to sin?" This kind of questioning indicates that the interrogator is using human reasoning and does not know the Lord. The child of grace does not question God. He knows he is a sinner and has been saved by the grace of God; therefore, He does not sit in judgment on God. God foresees everything. This is God's foreknowledge. He knows the end from the beginning. Nothing is hidden from Him (Heb. 4:13). The hearts of men lie open before the Lord (Prov. 15:11). He understands our thoughts afar off (Ps. 139:2). He declares the end from the beginning (Is. 46:10). This is infallible foresight.

- 8. Positive determination of what the sinner will do is not based upon what God, the primary cause, will effect but on what the sinner, the second cause, will effect. God does not infuse an evil desire into the nonelect to sin. He simply leaves the sinner in his depravity to operate under the influence and authority of Satan (Rom. 1:24-32). He is a slave to Satan. The false statement that predestination appeals to the arrogant and the proud and tends toward spiritual ruin for individuals indicates that Arminianism is as destructive as atheism. What is the difference between the atheist who denies the first cause and the Arminian who relegates God to the position of second cause? Assigning God to the second cause is a denial of the sovereignty of God, and the one who does not believe in the sovereignty of God does not know God. God who created all things either directs all things or He has assigned them over to chance. Chance is a denial of providence, and the denial of providence is a denial of God.
- 9. In grace God chose some, and He left the others to the justice we all deserve. The first part of reprobation is God's passing by certain individuals. Suppose you were told you could select a dozen apples from a bushel of them. Your selection of the dozen from among the remainder of them was

no injustice to the ones you did not take. When God chose some and passed by others, He did no injustice to those He passed by.

10. The will of God is the cause of predestination of some to salvation, and the sin of man is the cause of predestination of all others to condemnation. Double predestination is a term that has caused much trouble and great anger. Distinction does not need to be made between the cause of predestination to salvation and the cause of predestination to condemnation. The will of God is the cause of the first, and the sin of man is the cause of the second. The second cause became the first cause in sin. God is the first cause. There is no effect without a cause. Without the first cause there is no cause. God created all things. When He created man, He created him upright. God did not cause sin. He chose to permit sin, but He did not make sin. Some say that unless a second cause can act as a first cause, there can be no self-inducement because self-inducement requires no antecedent cause; thus, Adam was the cause of his own sin. However, since God cannot induce, influence, persuade, or excite man to sin (James 1:13), He purposed to create man capable of being seduced. Why did He not create us incapable of being seduced? The only Person who is incapable of being seduced is the first cause who is without a cause, and God cannot create God. Whatever God creates is inferior to Himself. Therefore, the statement that self-inducement requires no antecedent cause was true in the case of Lucifer, but Adam was induced by an antecedent cause. Therefore, sin began not with Adam but with Lucifer. Selforiginated sin would have made Adam a satan. If Adam had been a satan, there would be no hope for anyone. We would all be reprobates.

Why did God create Adam capable of sinning? Although Adam was not created a sinner, he was created capable of sinning. The creature is lower in position than the Creator.

Immutability is an attribute belonging only to God. God did not create Adam inferior to the animals over whom he was given dominion. He planted in Adam two kinds of principles: (1) an inferior kind which may be called natural, and (2) a superior kind wherein consisted uprightness (Eccl. 7:29). The first principle was associated with Adam's flesh. The second was associated with his fellowship with God. When Adam sinned, his superior principle, which enabled him to have fellowship with God, was lost. His flesh became the reigning principle in his life. The flesh is the reigning principle in the life of every person who comes into this world. That which comes from God's creatures is a secondary, not a primary, consideration. Human beings are not puppets in the hands of God. Puppets operate mechanically. Life is not physiochemical. Human actions are not by the laws of physics, the science that deals with matter, energy, motion, and force. Men are as lumps of clay in the hands of the Potter.

Although God sustained Adam's physical life, His withholding good influence is not the same as infusing an evil influence in him. God sustains all men—elect and nonelect. In Him we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). When someone asks how God could make man as he is and the world as it is, the simple answer is that He did not. God made the world with all its creatures before He made man. He pronounced all things good. When He made man, He pronounced him very good. The world, creatures, and man are not as they came from the hand of God. We see what God created with a curse upon it because of man's sin. Man, creatures, and creation are groaning. The Holy Spirit is also groaning as He makes intercession for us. The Holy Spirit interceding in us is groaning for our deliverance. Science has accomplished more in the last fifty years than in the nearly 6,000 years of human history. But in the world of science, events go in one direction, disorder increases, and order is being destroyed.

A summary of what we have observed will show that reprobation is negative and positive. When God chooses some, He passes by others. A person is condemned or judged because of his sin. God leaves him in his depravity. If sin came by reprobation, then only reprobates would have been tempted and would have fallen. However, the temptation and fall were universal, but the act of reprobation was particular. We all fell in Adam; we did not inherit our depravity (Rom. 5:12). Both elect and reprobate are under sin. Man fell by sin, not by reprobation. If Adam had been reprobated, the elect would have been reprobated in him because we all sinned in him; but all mankind are not reprobated in him.

REPROBATION DEFINED

Reprobation is the counterpart of election. The Bible teaches that some men are ordained to salvation (Acts 13:48; I Thess. 5:9), but it also teaches that others are ordained to condemnation (I Pet. 2:8; Jude 4).

Many object to the truth of reprobation by asking this question: If God determined that some must perish, does His determination not put a necessity on the reprobates to sin? We must justify God and condemn men. Theodicy is the theological term for the justification of God. God saw all men in sin, but in grace He chose some. He passed by the ones He did not choose. He did no injustice to those He did not choose. They deserved nothing. God foresees everything. "Hell and destruction are before the LORD [lie open before the Lord]: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?" (Prov. 15:11). "...All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). "...Thou understandest my thought afar off" (Ps. 139:2). God is omniscient. He knows all and declares the end from the beginning (Is. 46:10). Nothing takes God by surprise.

Distinction must be made between sin in anticipation and sin in actuality. Foreknowledge of sin does not indicate that sin is eternal. That would be dualism. Dualism is the belief that as there has always been a principle of right there has always been a principle of wrong. When God created the angelic hosts, He created them perfect. Furthermore, when He created man, He created him in an upright condition. God's creation of the angelic hosts was the beginning of time. Prior to that everything was eternal. Sin is not a thesis; it is an antithesis. For example, the Greek preposition *anti* is used in the sense of against. The name antichrist (*antichristos*) is made up of the noun Christ (*christos*) and the prepositional prefix anti (*anti*). The prepositional prefix is not a thesis, not a proposition stated for consideration; but it is only an antithesis, a direct opposite.

If condemnation of sinners for their sins were based on God's foreknowledge, reprobation would have been the fate of all, including the elect. All were in a state of depravity. The elect and reprobate are under sin. All were tempted and fell in Adam (Rom. 5:12). Temptation and sin are universal. Election and reprobation are particular. Jesus Christ paid the price of the sins for those the Father gave Him out of this state of sin. He did not pay the price for those the Father passed by. God in His foreknowledge knew we were all in sin. The fall in the garden of Eden was universal. When Adam fell, we all fell in him. Both election and passing by are particular, but sin is universal.

Reprobation must be considered generally and particularly. Its cause is the nature of God and His willingness to show His wrath and make His power known. Negative and positive reprobation must be distinguished.

General reprobation means disapproved, void of sane judgment, or rejected. A reprobate mind does things that are

inconvenient, or improper, in faith and morals. The inconvenient things enumerated in Romans 1:18-32 resulted from the inability of men to make sensible judgment. Immorality indicates God's general reprobation. He generally reprobated the nation of Israel, and His general reprobation of professing Christendom is evident.

Particular reprobation is known only to God. Individuals cannot discern that one is absolutely reprobated to the extent that he cannot be saved by the grace of God. A person may, like the apostle Paul prior to his regeneration and conversion, evidence reprobation but be one of God's elect.

The chief cause of reprobation is the nature of God. No cause is higher than the grace of God in the salvation of the elect and the just severity of God in the destruction of the reprobate. All things have their origin in God by His eternality in general and by His attributes in particular. As the eternal God, He was before all things. By His attributes, He created all things. The self-evident fact that nothing can have being separate from God's knowledge renders election or reprobation impossible apart from God's will. The being of a person or thing does not administer knowledge or foresight to God. The perfection of His knowledge and power gives all things their being. God did not decree that there would be a universe because He foresaw that there would be one. Conversely, there is a universe because God decreed that there would be one. The same principle applies to reprobation. All things are known to Him eternally.

God may elect and give grace to some without abusing those He refuses. Every man's involvement with Adam in his sin makes him a sinner. He sins responsibly. Reprobation is God's act. It is the negative of election. Election does not make a person a Christian, and reprobation does not make one a sinner. Election and reprobation occurred before the foundation of the world.

A person cannot condemn God for His selections or accuse Him for His rejections. No sinner deserves favor. God is obligated to none. His election is an act of mercy and not of merit. His reprobation is an act of justice. God does not wrong one person by showing mercy to another. Every reprobated person will receive his due and acknowledge it. The saved have God to thank. The unsaved have themselves to blame. They will testify that they are sinners and God is righteous in His judgment.

Another cause for reprobation is God's willingness to show His wrath and make His power known (Rom. 9:19-22). God is not unjust to give one mercy and another justice. No one complains about God treating the devils as a criminal class. The determinative will of God is connected with Romans 9:18—"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will...."

Reprobates are ordained to condemnation. A special gift of discernment is required to know who they are. The Lord Jesus Christ knows them and called them children of the Devil (John 8:44). The apostle Paul possessed the gift of discernment. He referred to a particular person as a child of the Devil (Acts 13:10). No man possesses that gift today; therefore, he cannot determine who are the children of the Devil.

Man fell by sinning and not because God reprobated him. Adam fell by his self-determination to sin. He sinned by disobeying the command of God. Adam was not reprobated. Man sinned in Adam, but man was not reprobated in Adam. Sin is universal, but reprobation is particular. Adam did sin. He was saved by the grace of God; so he did not die in his sin. The Lord sought, found, and clothed him.

Negative and positive reprobation must be considered. The Bible distinguishes negative from positive reprobation. Negative reprobation is preterition—passing by. Positive reprobation is condemnation of a man for his sins. Christians praise God for their salvation by grace. None can blame God for either passing by any person or positively condemning him for his sins. Every sinner sins responsibly and is responsible for his sins.

Man rebels at restriction, but he wants God confined to his depraved reasoning. Man's understanding is not the measure of God's justice. God's will is the cause of election and of preterition. God chose some and passed by others. His passing by some is negative reprobation. He did no harm to those He passed by. I did not say God's will is the cause of election and predestined damnation. God's justice is the cause of predetermined condemnation or damnation for sin. That is positive reprobation. His predestined damnation is based on His infallible foresight. God appointed some to stumble at the word (I Pet. 2:8). Jude wrote of certain men slipping in unnoticed, having been predicted to this judgment, godless men perverting the grace of God for indecency and denying the only Master and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 4).

Negative reprobation—preterition—is an act of the sovereign God. God chose the nation of Israel and passed by all the other nations. He explains neither His reason for negatively reprobating the other nations nor His reason for passing by some individuals. Positive reprobation, which is appointment to wrath for sin, is a judicial act. God positively condemns individuals for their sin. The reason for preterition is unknown to us. It is known only to God. But the reason for condemnation is known to us. It is because of man's sin. We do not question God because He could choose whom He would and pass by whom He would. On one hand, He could choose Rahab the harlot, and on the other hand, choose one on a high moral plane if He so desires (I Cor. 1:26-31).

Negative reprobation is from eternity (Rom. 9:11-13).

Before Jacob and Esau were born or had done any good or evil, God chose Jacob and passed by Esau. God elected Jacob in eternity, before time. Election is not salvation, but it guarantees the salvation in time of every person elected in Jesus Christ. God negatively reprobated Esau in eternity, before time. He positively reprobated him in time for his own sin. He was a responsible person and sinned responsibly. Punishment for sin is not involved in negative reprobation. Nonelection guarantees the positive reprobation of every negatively reprobated person for his own sins.

Sin is not an outward sign of reprobation in the same way that salvation is of election. Election and reprobation do not result from one causality as two parallels in the ways of belief and unbelief. In election, faith is the gift of God. In positive reprobation, unbelief originates from within man. God ordained faith in His elect as the means of their salvation. Unbelief was not ordained by God as He ordained faith. It is suffered by God in the reprobate as the cause of final damnation.

Paul did not teach a parallel between election and positive reprobation. Vessels of wrath are not "...afore prepared..." (Rom. 9:23). They are "...fitted to destruction" (Rom. 9:22). Whereas, the vessels of mercy are "afore prepared" for salvation. God is neither the author of sin nor the creator of men for destruction. Positive reprobation is God's answer to sin. Sin, not God, causes positive reprobation (I Sam. 15:23; II Kings 17:19,20; Lam. 5:22).

God does not harm reprobates by preterition. They will receive God's just judgment. In His presence, they will be defenseless. God's positive reprobation is His condemning them for their sins. Positive reprobation is God's action against man's sinful action of determining to sin. Reprobates treasure up wrath until the day of wrath and the revelation of

the righteous judgment of God (Rom. 2:5).

Preterition, like election, is national and individual. God chose Israel out from among other nations to be His peculiar people. He passed by other nations. Preterition is also within the chosen nation. Although the nation is now set aside while God calls the body of Christ, the elected ones within the chosen nation are brought to salvation. All who were nationally chosen are not individually chosen to salvation by the grace of God (Rom. 9:6-8). Individual election is within national preterition, or passing by. National reprobation does not imply that every individual is reprobated. Other nations were not chosen, but individuals from among the unchosen nations were elected to salvation.

God's judicial act of positive reprobation is explained in Romans 11:1-10. National Israel has not obtained that for which they sought, but the elect among them have "...obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day" (vv. 7,8).

National Israel is dispersed throughout the nations of the world. Spiritual Israel is never dispersed. Paul's testimony throughout Romans 11 is that God is not through with the nation of Israel. When the times of the Gentiles, which is the present dispensation of grace, shall be filled, the Lord will return to Israel. A nation will be born at that time (Is. 65,66; Ezek. 36,37).

Israel's glory has not been consumed in their shame. Their heritage has not been lost by their apostasy. National Israel's blindness is not (1) total regarding themselves, (2) fatal pertaining to God's purpose with the Gentiles, or (3) final concerning God's purpose with the nation of Israel.

During the present time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace (Rom. 11:5), as there was during the times of Paul and Elijah. There is neither Jew nor Gentile in Jesus Christ. When either is saved, he becomes a part of the family of God (Gal. 3:28; I Cor. 10:32).

Those who were not elected were blinded, or hardened (Rom. 11:6-8). The elect are not the objects of hardening. The election is all of grace; therefore, the elect deserve the same hardening as the nonelect (Rom. 9:1-8). They have not made themselves to differ. Grace is the reason the elect are not hardened, and unbelief is the ground of judicial hardening.

IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS

Some important distinctions must be made in order to avoid serious mistakes of interpretation which would misrepresent the sovereign God.

Things Unfolded Versus Things Unfolding

God sees things unfolded in contrast to His seeing things unfolding. The former is past, and the latter is continuous. This may be illustrated by the difference between the Greek aorist indicative verb—point action in past time—and a Greek present active participle—continuous action. It is the difference between eternity and time, between a stop action camera and a moving camera, or between a preview and a review. Although there is successive order in God's purpose, He sees all things simultaneously; whereas we see them only as they occur. He sees the end from the beginning.

Preterition Versus Condemnation

God's passing by—preterition—must be distinguished

from condemnation. God passed by but did not condemn those He did not choose. This might be called negative reprobation. God did no more harm to those He passed by than a man who passes by others to choose the one he loves to be his wife harms those he passed by. Christians have no problem with God doing what He pleases.

It is a foregone conclusion that reprobation is the antithesis of election and necessarily follows it. Furthermore, reprobation includes preterition and condemnation, but preterition must not be confused with condemnation. God's passing by a person is not the same as His condemning a person because of his sin. The hardness of depravity and then the hardness that is brought about by the practice of sin necessitates God's hardening an individual. This is punishment, not final condemnation. There is a difference between passing by a person—negative reprobation—and then condemning that person for his sin—positive reprobation.

Preterition is negative. It is God refusing to elect some. Appointment to wrath for sin is positive. The truth that God has not appointed the elect to wrath indicates that He has appointed others to wrath: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:9). There are those to whom Jesus Christ is a stumbling stone who "stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (I Pet. 2:8). Certain ungodly men "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" were ordained to this condemnation (Jude 4).

Hardening Versus Determinism

Hardening must be distinguished from determinism. Hardening is an act of God's judicial judgment on man's selfdetermination. Failing to distinguish between God's sovereignty and determinism, man assumes one of two erroneous ideas: (1) He will make man the sovereign of history and salvation. (2) He will make history a Divine game in which human beings are moved about like checkers, void of responsibility. Determinism is the doctrine that all events, including human choices, are decided by antecedent causes. Some say that this destroys personality and voluntary sinning. Voluntariness is something undertaken, done, made, or brought about by one's own accord or free choice. The voluntary actions of a depraved person are to be understood in the sense of water flowing freely in one direction—down. The Niagara River flows freely over the Niagara Falls, but it freely flows down. Likewise, the freedom with which the unregenerate person moves is away from, not to, God. He is going downhill; therefore, Christ said, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). The only true freedom is in Christ Jesus (John 8:32,36). The unsaved person can no more get into Jesus Christ by the freedom of his depraved will than the free flowing Niagara River can reverse itself and flow up the Niagara Falls. The tendency of both depraved men and water is down.

Indeterminism is the teaching that man's will chooses the motives which shall influence him rather than their being strictly determined by antecedent causes. This cannot be applied to man regarding salvation. Therefore, indeterminism cannot declare personality sovereign as well as free. Man is not sovereign. The sinner is free to choose sin because he has a natural attraction from within himself for it. He is always tending toward sin because he has no attraction for the things of God. Every person who has not been quickened by the grace of God is living in sin, continually practices evil, and hates the Light. However, everyone who has been quickened by the grace of God continually practices the truth and comes to the Light in order that his deeds may reveal that they have been produced by God (John 3:18-21). In salvation, the sinner

is not the initiator; he is the initiated. He is not the one who sets the process in motion. He is the one on whom the blessing has been bestowed by the work of the Holy Spirit who is the Determiner.

The sinner whom the sovereign God passed by was self-hardened by the fall (Rom. 5:12). God's judicial hardening is His reaction to the sinner's life of self-hardening. Although God does not infuse hardness in a sinner, He does lead and guide him while he is sinning. God infuses grace, but He does not infuse hardness. However, He does give men up to their own hearts' lusts: "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels" (Ps. 81:12). This same language used in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28 states that God gave them up to the lusts of their hearts to indecency to degrade their bodies among themselves, to passions of dishonor, and to reprobation. Furthermore, God is sending strong delusion to those who receive not the truth that they should believe the lie (II Thess. 2:11).

The alternatives of determinism and indeterminism are true alternatives only on a horizontal, anthropological level. They pose a dilemma which is resolved in the relationship man sustains to God. This vertical relationship alone between God and man gives the possibility of the correct understanding of the problem of freedom.

Providence In Sustenance Versus Providence In Government

The differences between creation, sustenance, and government are related to God's providence in sustenance and His providence in government. These things must be understood and clarified in one's mind in order to answer many questions relative to God's hardening the hearts of men.

FIRST—There are important differences between creation and sustenance which are considered in the following questions:

- 1. Is creation that which comes into existence out of nothing? This question lays the foundation for the questions that follow. Nothingness is forever behind us.
- 2. Is providence God's continuous upholding of what God has already created? There is no self-sustained person or thing that God created. Everything He created, whether animate or inanimate, must be sustained by Him. Nothing through inherent being exists apart from God: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36). God is the One who gave and continually gives cohesion: "And he is before all things, and by [en, instrumental of personal agency] him all things consist [sunesteken, perfect active indicative of sunistemi, which means are held together]" (Col. 1:17). He sustains all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). Nehemiah stated the sustenance of God: "Thou alone art the LORD. Thou hast made the heavens. The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them. Thou dost give life to all of them And the heavenly host bows down before Thee" (Neh. 9:6 NASB).
- 3. Is the reformed—puritanical—use of "continuous creation" correct when speaking of sustenance? We would not say that existing things become nonexistent and God is continually bringing things into existence out of nothing. Man, heaven, earth, etc., will never become nonexistent. The earth will be renovated, and Christians will dwell in heaven on the renovated earth throughout eternity. Those who are outside of Jesus Christ will eternally exist in hell. Therefore, sustenance cannot correctly be called continuous creation.

- 4. What about the "new creation" used to describe regeneration? Regeneration is bringing into existence something that did not previously exist: "...God...calls into being that which does not exist" (Rom. 4:17 NASB). Regeneration is forever; one who has been regenerated does not become unregenerate. There is something in the way of creation out of nothing in regeneration; hence, the similarity is emphasized in soteriology. The Hebrew does not have a word for sustenance of what God created; therefore, it indicates by the word *bara* both creating and sustaining.
- 5. What about the "new creation" to describe the origin of the soul? Was the soul brought into being by procreation or by creation? Three different views of the derivation of the soul are taught. The view of the preexistence of the soul is unscriptural and unworthy of discussion. The two major views are traducianism and creationism. Traducianism signifies that the soul is derived from parents by procreation. This theory denies that the soul is created and then after the original creation God works mediately. In order to substantiate the truth that Jesus Christ was perfect, one must believe the creation theory. This theory teaches that the body is formed by the parents mediately, but the soul is formed immediately by God. Hence, according to the creation theory, the origin of the soul is to be viewed in the same sense as the new birth. No part of the human nature of Jesus Christ came by procreation in the sense of man being the seed of man. He is not the seed of man.
- 6. Does the Hebrew word *bara* include the Divine origination of each moment as well as the original creation out of nothing? The Hebrew word *bara* means to bring into being, to produce, to put in form, or renew. The leading import of this word is twofold: (1) In some instances, it is effectuation of something new, rare, and wonderful. It is bringing something to pass in a striking and marvelous manner (Num. 16:30;

Jer. 31:22). (2) In other places, it refers to the act of renovating, remodeling, or reconstituting something already in existence. Does this mean we have the providence of sustenance within perpetually repetitive creative acts? Study Psalm 51:10; Isaiah 4:5; 45:7; 65:17 and 18. In Genesis 1:1, 21, and 27 the word for create means to make something out of nothing. There were no preexisting materials. God just spoke, and that which did not exist became existent. In connection consider Genesis verses. 2:3-4: Deuteronomy 4:32; Isaiah 45:18; and Jeremiah 31:22. The first group of Scriptures are explained by the parallel clauses. For instance, creating and refashioning are included in Psalm 51:10—"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

There is more to sustaining than mere holding together. It is more than mere preservation. God is the fountain of life. Nature does not continually remain the same; therefore, providence is more than preservation. God sustains the universe that is progressively fulfilling His eternal purpose. Therefore, sustenance is directed toward a conclusion. This means that God's providence of sustenance is moving and unveiling His eternal purpose in every sphere of creation as everything is being held together. Deism is refuted by the word of God. God did not create something and then just leave it alone. He is in the midst controlling all that He created. Creation, the children of God, and the Holy Spirit are waiting for the redemption of the bodies of the children of God (Rom. 8:22,23,26). In the meantime, Christians look through circumstances and see God's hand in providence. Unsaved people do not recognize that God is progressively sustaining everything until its consummation.

7. Can sustenance and government be separated? They are distinguishable but inseparable. Fathoming God's rule is impossible (Ps. 77; 78; 96:10; 146:10; 121:8). The Psalmist

recognized God's rule: "My times are in thy hand..." (Ps. 31:15). A man may make plans and follow them for a time, but he is soon diverted: "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps" (Prov. 16:9). "...The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

God's rule does not follow a common path of operation. He kills, makes alive, brings down, raises up, makes the poor rich, makes the rich poor, and raises up the beggar from the dunghill (I Sam. 2:6-8). God did not restrain Adam from sinning (Gen. 3), but He restrained Abimelech from sinning (Gen. 20:6). He restrained Laban from harming Jacob (Gen. 31) and Balaam from cursing Israel (Num. 23), but He did not restrain Shimei from cursing David (II Sam. 16:7,11). God thwarted Pharaoh's fury against Israel; yet He hardened Pharaoh's heart. God gave the evil spirit a commission to go forth and do what he purposed, which was to be a lying spirit (I Kings 22:21,22). God did not kill Peter for lying about being Christ's disciple (John 18), but He killed Ananias and Sapphira for lying (Acts 5). God gives up some (Rom. 1:24-28), and He sends a working of error to others for the purpose of their believing the lie (II Thess. 2:11). God used Caiaphas, an unsaved person who did not know the truth, to speak the truth (John 11:51,52). God makes the wrath of men to praise Him. Conclusively, God rules and overrules for His glory.

SECOND—Providence as sustenance must be distinguished from providence as government. The word providence comes from the Latin word *provideo*, made up of *pro*—before—and *video*—I see. The Bible never speaks of God's providence in its relation to human sin except in the historical actuality of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Hence, the Bible never speaks of God's leading Judas to his act of betrayal. Christ's enemies are represented as men characterized by great initiative and energy, but they are

unable to escape what God predestined to come to pass: "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles. and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined [proorisen, aorist active indicative of prooridzo, which means to limit or work out beforehand, to design definitely beforehand, or to predestinel before to be done" (Acts 4:27,28). (See Rom. 8:29,30; I Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5,11.) The compound word prooridzo is made up of the preposition pro, which means before, and the verb horidzo, which means to appoint definitely (Acts 17:26), to fix determinately (Acts 2:23), or to appoint (Acts 10:42; 17:31). Scripture does not allow us to penetrate the harmony between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, nor does it seek to explain guilt in any way other than out of man's own depraved heart.

The prediction of John 12:37-41 concerning the Jews not being able to believe because God had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts did not free them from the guilt of their unbelief. But it does show that the event came to pass according to the prediction. A comparison of the prediction with the event shows the providence of God, without which nothing comes to pass in history. God overrules opposition to His own advantage. Therefore, He is so infallible in His providence that His purpose cannot be frustrated.

Providence is God's foreseeing sustenance, and government is His direction and control of the life of the creatures He created. God governs whom He sustains, and He sustains whom He governs. Paul spoke of God's sustenance in his message to the Athenians: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being..." (Acts 17:28). Sustenance and government cannot be separated; they must be viewed as two aspects of one act of the sovereign God (Neh. 9:6; Ps. 93:2-4; 104; 146:10; Prov. 16:9; 21:1; Matt. 10:29; Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:17).

Who can deny that God sustains the life of the sinner while he is sinning? Pilate, an enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ, told the Lord that he had the power to crucify Him or release Him. The Lord replied that Pilate could not be having any authority at all unless it was given him from above (John 19:11). Hence, God sustains the sinner while he is sinning (I Sam. 25:29; Job 12:9,10; Ps. 36:9; 66:9; Col. 1:17).

Who can deny that God is governing the sinner while he is being sustained? God turns the king's heart wherever He desires (Prov. 21:1). He makes the wrath of man to praise Him (Ps. 76:10). He directs man's steps (Prov. 16:9). God did not infuse the hatred in the Egyptians' hearts to hate His people, but He turned them in a direction where they were subjected to them till they manifested their hatred for them (Ps. 105:25). While Shimei cursed David, God was directing his steps (II Sam 16:5,6,10). Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that he would know "that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:25). God is controlling all that takes place.

Who can refute that God in His providence is fulfilling His purpose? There is no contradiction between the relation of sin to God's providence and to His holy character. God's creatures are second causes whom God uses to fulfill His purpose. Neither Satan nor the unregenerate are devoid of power to act for themselves; but through their hardness, caused by their respective falls, their affections are misplaced. God's entrance into second causes neither destroys responsibility nor makes God an accomplice by concurrence with sin.

In providence, it is proper to distinguish between a good act and an irregular act, which is caused by the good act. God gave the law which is holy and good, but sin taking opportunity through the law produces every kind of sinful desire (Rom. 7:8). Commanding a child to stay out of the street is a

good command, but the child thus commanded inches closer and closer to the street. God sending His eternal Son into the world was a good act, but He became a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense (I Pet. 2:8). God sends the good news concerning Christ's Person and Work into the world, but this good news is foolishness to the ones who are perishing (I Cor. 2:14). They despise God's message. God places in the way of persons things that are good in themselves, but they become the occasions for drawing out the corruptions of their hearts (II Cor. 2:14-16). The sun is only the occasion of the foul odor coming from the dunghill; it is not the cause of the dunghill.

In God's providence of government, He sometimes punishes sin with sin. On the other hand, He overrules sin for good. He overruled Adam's sin for Adam's perfection in grace, and He overruled the sin of Joseph's brethren for the saving of many alive. He overruled the wicked hands that crucified Jesus Christ for the redemption of the elect.

HARDENING

Reprobation itself makes no man a sinner. Sin, not God, makes man unreasonable. Sin, not reprobation, renders man incapable of salvation. Every sinner's depravity causes his unreasonableness. No one who feels he does not deserve hell desires salvation. One who feels he has some good of his own is unwilling to accept Jesus Christ. Belief in man's free will, thinking one has the ability within himself to come to Christ and embrace Him as Savior, renders one unable. He denies man's depravity. Because he does not believe Jesus Christ is faithful, he will not trust Him as Lord and Savior.

The way God dealt with the fallen angels and the way He deals with fallen mankind differ. The fallen angels are reserved in chains until the judgment: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). From one point of view, the person elected to salvation and the one ordained to condemnation do not differ. By nature, both are under sin. All mankind is under a reprieve—respite from impending judg-

ment. The Lord Jesus Christ died for sinners, but no man will of himself come to Christ. He has neither the ability nor the will to do so. His will is bent toward Satan and not toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Unless the Lord regenerates him, his naturally hard heart will grow harder by a life of sin.

Arminians claim that the references to hardening of Exodus 4:21 through 14:17 and Romans 9:17 and 18 refer to nations and not individuals. They say that God makes one nation unto honor and another unto less honor. Their argument is that when Israel rejected Christ, God brought in the Gentiles. Jeremiah's prophecy is used by them to substantiate their argument that the references to hardening speak of God's predestination of both Jews and Gentiles who voluntarily believe in Christ.

Some theologians have tried to solve what is termed the problem of God's hardening whom He desires by the use of the term permission. This term suggests that God allows or permits man to decide in freedom against God's command. It is suggested that God's permitting sin is not the same as His committing sin, or His not preventing evil is not the same as His doing evil. Some say that although sin is contrary to the nature of God, He may permit sin for the sake of the good that shall come from it. Is this the correct way to handle the term permission?

If permission suggests that God permits man to decide in freedom against God's commands, then God in providence is no more than a balcony observer with no control over a contest that is uncertain as to its outcome. God controls providence: "THE king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1). According to this verse, kings and rulers are not only ruled but also overruled by God who is higher than the highest (Eccl. 5:8). God's heart is not in the hands of rulers,

politicians, or religionists. The truth that the sovereign God is in control is misunderstood by many sincere believers because men see persons acting by knowledge and choice, sometimes governed by principle, sometimes by example, sometimes by fancy, and sometimes by malice. Since they are unable to distinguish between the first cause, the chief Agent, and the subordinate cause, His instruments, they see only the action without ascending to God who rules over all. They fail to see through providence and observe the sovereign God who rules and overrules. Providence is something we see through like a window and observe that God is in charge of everything. God does not allow man to make his choices in total freedom without guidance.

The rivers continue to run according to their natural tendency but not apart from God's guidance and pleasure. One must state that Pharaoh acted according to his own depraved nature but under God's guidance to the fulfillment of God's purpose, or he leaves God out. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Ps. 76:10).

The following are some questions for consideration with reference to God's creating evil: (1) Did the Lord make the wicked? "The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov. 16:4). (2) Why did He make the wicked? He made them for the day of evil, which refers to the evil of judgment (Prov. 16:4). (3) Are there two kinds of evil? There is natural evil, like that in the storms (Nahum 1:3; Ps. 148:8), and the evil of depravity. (4) Does this make God the author of evil? No (Job 2:10; Amos 3:6). (5) Does this contradict the statement "behold it was very good" of Genesis 1:31? No, it does not. (6) Could evil be a noncreated thing? God said, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things" (Is. 45:7). (7) Did evil originate in man? Sin

originated in Lucifer who did evil before man was created.

Pharaoh's Heart Hardened

Some theologians have tried to explain and solve what they consider to be a problem with God's hardening whom He desires (Rom. 9:17,18; Ex. 4:21-14:17). Some Arminians explain that God gave some of the plagues and the Israelites hardened their hearts, and God hardened them because they hardened their own hearts. But this does not explain God's hardening whom He will.

There is an element of truth in the statement that God permits man to harden himself. With each plague sent upon Egypt, Pharaoh's heart became harder. The king hardened his own heart, but God also hardened it. Obedience was required by commanding. Disobedience was punished by hardening. God sends punishment on men because of their own sin (Rom. 1:24-28). Commanding is the right of the sovereign God. Obeying is the obligation of man.

God raised up Pharaoh (brought him into being) that He might show His power in him and that God's name might be declared throughout the earth. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18). The process of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is recorded in Exodus 4:21-14:17. There are 18 references within these verses to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Observe in the following references the number of times that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, that God hardened his heart, and that his heart was hardened: (1) God said, "I will harden his heart" (Ex. 4:21). The Hebrew word for harden (*khawzak*), which means to make hard, harden, or stoutly resist, is in the future tense; hence, it is predictive here. (2) God said, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" (Ex. 7:3). (3) God hardened Pharaoh's heart that he would not listen to Moses and Aaron

(Ex. 7:13). (4) God told Moses that Pharaoh's heart was hardened; so he refused to let the people go (Ex. 7:14). (5) The Egyptians copied the miracles performed by Moses with their enchantments, and Pharaoh's heart was hardened (Ex. 7:22). (6) When Pharaoh saw that there was relief from the frogs that had covered the land, he hardened his heart (Ex. 8:15). (7) When the magicians could not bring forth lice (gnats) because they could not produce life, they told Pharaoh that the plague was the finger of God, and Pharaoh's heart was hardened (Ex. 8:19). (8) In response to the plague of the insects, Pharaoh hardened his heart (Ex. 8:32). (9) When all the cattle of Egypt died and Pharaoh found that not one of the cattle of the Israelites died, the heart of Pharaoh was hardened (Ex. 9:7). (10) When the plague of boils was sent on Egypt, the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh (Ex. 9:12). (11) When Pharaoh saw that the rain, hail, and thunders were ceased, he sinned more and hardened his heart, both he and his servants (Ex. 9:34). (12) The heart of Pharaoh was hardened (Ex. 9:35). (13) The Lord told Moses He had hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 10:1). (14) The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let the Israelites go (Ex. 10:20). (15) The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 10:27). (16) Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 11:10). (17) The Lord said He would harden Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 14:4). (18) The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh (Ex. 14:8). In one other reference, the Lord said He would harden the hearts of the Egyptians, which included Pharaoh (Ex. 14:17).

The Plagues— A Means Of Hardening Pharaoh's Heart

God sent ten plagues on Egypt as a means of hardening Pharaoh's heart: "And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go" (Ex. 4:21). God gives the wicked over to a reprobate mind, gives them up to vile affection, blinds their minds, and hardens their hearts (Rom. 1:26,28; John 12:40). Since judicial hardness is a judgment from God, it should never be brought in as an accusation against God. Judgments are not without reason. They are called "a great deep" (Ps. 36:6). God can do what He pleases, and He has reason for doing so.

There are three divisions in the first nine plagues; the tenth stands alone as the conclusive judgment or calamity that God sent upon Egypt. The first series of plagues was on the water. These plagues teach that all the sources of life in the world are filled with what is morally dead. The second series was on the land, and the third series was in the air. The plagues are arranged in regular order. They advance from that which is external to that which is internal and from the mediate to the immediate hand of God. In the first three, the warning was given to Pharaoh in the morning (Ex. 7:15; 8:20; 9:13). In the first and second of each three, the plague was announced beforehand (Ex. 8:1; 9:1; 10:1). But in the third, there was no announcement (Ex. 8:16; 9:8; 10:21). At the third plague, the magicians, to whom Pharaoh had gone for help, acknowledged the finger of God (Ex. 8:19). At the sixth plague, they could not stand before Moses (Ex. 9:11). At the ninth, Pharaoh refused to see the face of Moses any more (Ex. 10:28). In the first three plagues, Aaron used the rod, but the rod is not mentioned in the second three. In the third three plagues, Moses' hand is mentioned in the seventh and eighth, and the rod is mentioned in the ninth.

The plagues were characterized by increasing severity. Each judgment was worse than the preceding one. The Egyptians would be brought to a realization of the Lord by these severe judgments (Ex. 7:5). Like the plagues characterized by increasing severity, the judgment that God will send through

the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls of wrath, which are recorded in Revelation, will also be with increasing severity.

The Egyptians were plagued in all the things wherein they most delighted and in all their senses: (1) Their seeing was affected by the plague of darkness. (2) Their smelling was affected by the stench of the frogs and the corruption that ran from their ulcers. (3) Their tasting was affected by the water being turned to blood. (4) Their hearing was affected by God's uttering His terrible voice, a voice of judgment. (5) They felt pain in their bodies, had sin in their souls, and had accusing consciences.

The plagues that God sent upon Egypt were primarily against the gods—rulers—of Egypt (Ex. 12:12). The gods of Egypt were the unseen demonic powers headed up by Satan. Hence, the Egyptians suffered because of their league with Satan. To Egypt, God's workings were calamities; but to Israel, they were signs. God put a distinction between the Egyptians and His people. While the calamities were sent upon Egypt, the Israelites were spared. Every plague was intended to strike at some form of pagan worship by the Egyptians. The conflict in Egypt was between the God of heaven and the gods of Egypt. (Study Ex. 15:11; Num. 33:4.) The plagues which follow suggest different features which mark the world under judgment. They also reveal that elements of nature are under God's control.

FIRST PLAGUE—In the first plague, the waters were turned to blood; hence, the springs of Egypt were filled with that which was morally dead (Ex. 7:14-25). Nevertheless, Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he refused to let Israel go.

SECOND PLAGUE—In the second plague, God sent frogs from the river throughout the land of Egypt (Ex. 8:1-15). The frogs symbolize the evil influence which swarms in the

world. The heart of man is under the influence of evil and unclean spirits. Frogs are used in Scripture to represent unclean spirits (Ex. 8:1-15; Ps. 78:45; 105:30; Rev. 16:13). The frogs of Revelation 16:13 describe God's future judgments on the earth. The magicians, like false teachers today, could not remove the frogs or the evil influence. They could do no more than increase the evil influence.

During the plagues, Pharaoh offered Moses a number of compromises, the first of which occurred between the second and third plagues (Ex. 8:10). Pharaoh offered to let the children of Israel go "tomorrow." Knowing that tomorrow never comes, Moses refused his offer. Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to listen to Moses and Aaron when he saw there was respite from the frogs.

THIRD PLAGUE—In the third plague, the dust of the earth became lice (gnats) in man and beast (Ex. 8:16-19). The magicians of Egypt could not duplicate this plague. Although wicked people are made to acknowledge the power of God, apart from the grace of God, they will continue to oppose that power. False religion may copy the truth of God from fragments of Scripture and incorporate the fragments into various erroneous systems of theology, while recognizing that Scripture is from God (Ex. 8:19); but they do not have the message that declares that salvation is of the Lord. Pharaoh continued to harden his heart.

FOURTH PLAGUE—In the fourth plague, God sent flies, which refer to various insects, throughout Egypt (Ex. 8:20-32). This mixture is man's substitute for unity. God has put redemption between His people and the people of the world: "And I will put a division between my people and thy people..." (Ex. 8:23).

Between the fourth and fifth plagues, Pharaoh offered a

second compromise. He offered to let the Israelites sacrifice to their God in the land (Ex. 8:25). But Moses refused because the children of Israel had been commanded by God to leave Egypt. No one can worship the Lord in the world system. We are in the world but not of it; hence, we must be separated from the world of which Egypt is a type. This second compromise would have placed God on the level with the gods of Egypt. There is no worship of God apart from separation. The world will not tolerate the whole counsel of God; therefore, man-made religion will not tolerate true teaching of Holy Scripture.

Pharaoh also offered a third compromise between the fourth and fifth plagues. He said he would let Israel go that they might sacrifice to the Lord in the wilderness, but they should not go very far (Ex. 8:28). Satan suggests that if there must be separation, the line must be drawn very dimly so that there would be no clear line of demarcation. Moses refused this suggestion, because the people of God must be completely separated. Pharaoh continued hardening his heart.

FIFTH PLAGUE—In the fifth plague, God sent a murrain (pestilence) upon the livestock of Egypt (Ex. 9:1-7). All the cattle of Egypt died, but the cattle of the Israelites were unaffected. Men by nature use all their possessions for themselves, but Israel's cattle were spared in order that they might be used as sacrifices in Israel's worship of God. Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

SIXTH PLAGUE—In the sixth plague, God sent boils upon man and beast in all of Egypt (Ex. 9:8-12). Heretofore, Egypt's water and livestock had been affected, but this was the first plague to attack the persons of the Egyptians. It is also the first plague not preceded by a warning. The magicians could not stand before Moses in this plague. Corruption of heart is openly displayed in this particular plague. Thus the

Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.

SEVENTH PLAGUE—In the seventh plague, God sent grievous hail (Ex. 9:13-35). Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail (Ex. 9:26). Pharaoh's first so-called confession was uttered after this plague (Ex. 9:27,28). He called for Moses and Aaron and said, "I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." The tragedy is that his was a repentance that needed to be repented of (II Cor. 7:10).

EIGHTH PLAGUE—In the eighth plague, God sent locusts which would eat everything growing and would fill the houses of the Egyptians (Ex. 10:1-20). This plague foreshadows the time when not one green thing that is pleasant to the eyes or is good for food shall be left. This refers to God's judgment (Rev. 8:7). Men have dreamed of a good time coming, and politicians have politicked for it. But that time will not come until Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom.

Pharaoh's fourth compromise was offered between the eighth and ninth plagues. He offered to let the men go, but they must leave their families in Egypt (Ex. 10:11). After the plague of the locusts, Pharaoh confessed that he had sinned against Moses' and Aaron's God and against them. He asked forgiveness for his sin and requested that they "intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only" (Ex. 10:17). Many assemblies today would have rejoiced in the King's confession, thinking they had won the King to the Lord. But Pharaoh's repentance lacked the ingredients of Spirit conviction. As soon as the pressure was released, he returned to his rebelling and hardening.

NINTH PLAGUE—In the ninth plague, God sent darkness over the land of Egypt (Ex. 10:21-23). The darkness was so

dark that it could be felt, and the Egyptians were unable to see one another or go from their dwellings. But the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. What a contrast between the darkness of Egypt and the light that God shines into the hearts of His people! Darkness speaks of the withdrawal of Divine light. Nothing but the darkness of apostasy will be left when the candlestick is removed from the assemblies. All seven assemblies of Revelation 2 and 3 existed at the time John recorded the Revelation, and they all existed and continue to exist while Christ is continuing to build His assembly. We are living in the last days, and the time of apostasy is here. During the Laodicean age, expressed in Revelation 3, the Lord Jesus is not inside but outside the assembly. That is true of many assemblies today that call themselves assemblies of Christ. The day may come when God's elect may find themselves having to depart from assemblies that are not adhering to the truth of God's word to find a small group with whom they can fellowship together in order to worship the Lord. God will leave men for a season to the darkness they love (John 3:19).

The plague of darkness prophetically sets forth a darkness that will come upon the world in the future at the second advent of Jesus Christ (II Thess. 2:8-12). Satan and the lawless one will be very active during the tribulation period, at which time "God shall send [pempei, present active indicative of pempo, which means is sending] them [nonelect] strong [energeian, accusative singular of energeia, which means working, power, or activity] delusion [planes, genitive singular of plane, which means error, deceit, deception, or delusion], that they should believe a [the] lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:11,12). In the light of the context, verse 11 describes what will take place during the tribulation period. Wonders will be performed by Satan, and God will send to the nonelect, who have no love for the truth

and are unwilling to accept it, the inworking of deception. This is God's judicial sentence upon them because their hearts are already hard by depravity and then are made harder by practicing sin. The inworking of deception will manifest itself outwardly.

Pharaoh responded to the plague of darkness by offering to let the children of Israel go, but they must leave their flocks and herds (Ex. 10:24). But Moses told him that not one hoof would be left behind. God's people must be completely separated, not only the men but also the women, the children, and all their possessions. The world system is under judgment; therefore, the people of God must be separated from it. Personal witnessing and public preaching must include separation in order for one to bear testimony. Without separation, we fail to declare God's message. It is impossible to worship or witness for the Lord in the spirit of the world. They do not mix.

The Christian is crucified with Christ, and Christ's cross is an offense to the world system. The cross is the judgment of the world and of man in the flesh. If we can worship God in the world, the cross is not needed. There is an irreconcilable difference between the world and the believer. By the cross, the believer is crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to him (Gal. 2:20; 6:14). This world, like Egypt, is under judgment. When we grasp the things of this world, we embrace nothing but smoke which wrings tears from our eyes and soon vanishes into nothingness. The man of faith sees the world under God's judgment. Vanity fair presents an endless diversity of things in self-gratification and self-display in things mechanical, commercial, intellectual, political, social, scientific, artistic, and religious. However, the Devil is the head of the whole system. The whole system of the world lies and moves at a distance from God. It is a fading flower (Is. 28:1-4), a passing fashion (I Cor. 7:31), and for only a season

(Heb. 11:25). We must worship God in separation, and then we have the ability to let our light shine in public. Alone with the Lord, Jacob found out his crookedness and the patience of God; Job was made conscious of his vileness and the glory of God's holiness; Moses learned his personal unfitness for God's service and the secret of God's plan; Isaiah had his own uncleanness and the sufficiency of God's atonement revealed to him; Peter owned his self-confidence and learned the blessedness of God's love; and John saw the evil of man and the greatness of God's purpose.

TENTH PLAGUE—In the tenth plague, God killed all the firstborn of man and beast of the Egyptians (Ex. 12:29-36). God had already told the Israelites, "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD" (Ex. 12:12). Before the tenth plague came upon Egypt, the Lord gave the following predictions through Moses: (1) This last plague would be solemn in its advent—about midnight (Ex. 11:4). (2) It would be fatal in its issue—all the firstborn in the land of Egypt would die (Ex. 11:5). (3) It would be comprehensive in its design—from the firstborn of Egyptian families to the firstborn of all their beasts (Ex. 11:5). (4) It would be heart rending in its cry—a great cry like there had never been nor would ever be throughout the land of Egypt (Ex. 11:6). (5) It would be discriminating in its infliction while it would be inflicted on the Egyptians, not even a dog would move his tongue against man or beast in Israel that they might know how the Lord put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel (Ex. 11:7).

The Lord is the One who makes the difference between men. As there was originally no difference whatsoever between Egypt and Israel, there is no difference between the elect and nonelect prior to the Spirit's regenerating the elect. All are depraved. Both Egypt and Israel descended from the same source—Adam. The reason for the difference between them was not any merit on Israel's part or sin on Egypt's part. The difference was because of God's grace. Both were corrupted with original sin. Therefore, the difference between Israel and Egypt was God's choice; furthermore, the difference between the nonelect and the elect is that God chose the elect. The nature of the difference was God's choice. God did not choose national Egypt, but He chose national Israel: "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deut. 7:6-8).

Since God's choice of a nation or an individual is not visible, the election or nonelection of the nation or individual is not immediately visible. But the invisible choice will be made visible by the repenting of the chosen persons because God gives them repentance (II Pet. 3:9). The election of the Thessalonian Christians was made known to Paul by their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope (I Thess. 1:3,4). They were examples to other believers.

The nonelect or reprobate continue in sin (II Thess. 2:11). Since election and nonelection of persons is not immediately visible to us, we must proclaim the gospel to sinners as sinners. God's election is known to us only after God's grace is manifested in one's life. Faith is the fruit of election (Eph. 2:8; Titus 1:1; II Pet. 1:10; Acts 13:48; etc.). But the elect must first be given faith before they can know they are the elect of

God. The person with God-given faith will embrace the truth of the gospel and through studying God's word come to a fixed knowledge that he is a child of God.

Judas' Heart Hardened

Although reprobates are ordained to condemnation (Jude 4), one cannot easily determine who they are. Judas was a reprobate, but the other disciples did not know that he was. Like Pharaoh, the reprobate is condemned by his own sin, not because God passed him by. God's judicial action is His reaction to the reprobate's action. The reprobate is justly condemned because of his sin. God is not the author of man's sin.

The Lord Jesus Christ identified Judas as a reprobate when He was asked who would betray Him: "Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon" (John 13:26). Judas was the first reprobate named in the New Testament (John 13). Throughout Christ's personal ministry, Judas had been hardened by exposure to the Person, Work, and Teachings of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, he had been in the company of the other disciples and had occupied the office of apostleship like the eleven true disciples. This hypocrite was an apostate (II Pet. 2:20-22). With His personal ministry concluded, Jesus Christ was in the presence of His twelve disciples. Judas was present in the beginning of the chapter; but before the chapter is concluded, he was no longer with them.

The last supper was already in progress. The Devil had put in the heart of Judas Iscariot that he should betray Jesus Christ. This traitor sat at the table with the eleven unsuspecting true disciples. He was one of the disciples in number (John 13:18-20), but he was not one of them in heart. All this was in the

purpose of God. The Lord Jesus identified Judas (vv. 21-26) and then dismissed him (vv. 27-30). The next time Judas and Jesus Christ met following the supper was in the garden where Judas betrayed the Lord (John 18). From our perspective, the final time they will meet will be at the great white throne judgment. Judas was a disciple outwardly in office. He was unclean because he had never been bathed. Since Judas was not yet identified, the Lord evidently did not single him out by not washing his feet (John 13:4-11). The disciples did not at that time know that Judas was a traitor.

In verses 10 and 11 of John 13, our Lord referred to the disciples as a whole, not to individual disciples, when He singled out one of them who was not clean. One among them had not been bathed. The Devil had put into Judas' heart to betray the Lord (v. 2). Christ had known who was betraying Him. Judas was not one whom Christ had chosen for salvation (v. 18). He was the one of whom the Lord spoke in verse 21 when He said, "One of you shall betray me." There is a distinction between being "in" Christ and being "of" Christ. Judas was in Christ in the sense of being in the sphere of Christ's influence without being of Christ positionally. He was in the sphere of Christian profession, but he did not possess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Jesus Christ predicted His betrayal by Judas (John 13:18-30). When the Lord told the disciples that one of them would betray Him, they looked at one another, being uncertain about whom He spoke. Judas asked, "Master, is it I?" (Matt. 26:25). He addressed Jesus Christ as Master, or Teacher. He did not acknowledge His Lordship. The Devil gave Judas the ability to choose his words. The Lord's reply to Judas was, "Thou hast said" (Matt. 26:25). The disciples one after the other raised the question, "Is it I?" (Mark 14:19). Hence, Judas had deceived them. A religious hypocrite deceives many people. An interrogative Greek particle (*meti*) is used in the disciples'

question. The question implies self-inspection by the true disciples. Not a one of the true disciples was confident of his self-purity in personal cleansing. Even Judas, who was planning the Lord's betrayal, asked the same question as the others. Here the difference between the honesty of true believers and the deceptiveness of hypocrites is displayed. Their question also implies that the disciples desired to know the worst about themselves. The desire to know the worst about oneself is found only among true believers (Ps. 139:23,24). On the contrary, hypocrites close their eyes to the worst and with seared conscience, like Judas, outwardly pose as disciples. But the eleven were disciples inwardly as well as outwardly.

None of the disciples at the table knew that Judas was the one to betray the Lord, even after the Lord pointed him out (John 13:26-28). Some were thinking that since Judas was holding the purse, Christ was telling him to go buy the things they needed for the feast, or that he might give something to the poor. However, Judas was not interested in the poor. He had just previously objected to the using of expensive ointment by Mary to anoint Christ's feet, saying that the ointment should be sold and the money given to the poor. However, John 12:6 tells us that he did not care for the poor but objected because he was a thief. He kept the money box, and he had stolen from the box. He was a humanitarian reprobate trying to make an impression. He was a thief because he was receiving for himself the things being deposited. An evil person gives to a depraved society out of what appears to be a good motive to cover up an evil work. Was the Lord Jesus Christ worthy of the expensive ointment? Many people spend money to help the poor in preference to exalting Christ. Thus, they manifest their attitude toward the Lord.

Hardening—A Fact Of Depravity

When Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh that the Lord said he should let the people go, Pharaoh replied, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go" (Ex. 5:1,2). Pharaoh's heart was already naturally hard.

Hardening must be considered as a fact of depravity, which is the result of the fall. It is not the correlate (next in orderly connection) of passing by. Hardening stands in relation to the fall, not to creation. Both the elect and the nonelect were hardened by the fall. Hardening can never be changed by depraved men. Since every person born into this world has by nature a hard heart, his heart of stone must be removed, and he must be given a new heart (Ezek. 11:19). Power to remove the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh lies in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36; Zech. 4:6; John 3:8).

Hardening Ascribed To God And Man

Hardening is ascribed to God and man. The solution to the problem of hardening is not that man hardens himself and God reacts to man's action. The Bible clearly states that God hardens hearts (Rom. 9:18; John 12:40). God's hardening men's hearts is not by mere permission; it is a punitive action. This infliction of punishment is described by the words "God gave them up" (Rom. 1:24,26,28) and "God shall send [pempei, present active indicative of pempo, which means appoint, send, or commission] them strong delusion [energeian, accusative of energeia, which means energy or operation] that they should believe a lie" (II Thess. 2:11). God is not the author of man's hard, unyielding heart. Hardness of heart is the result of man's own disobedience. God hardens a man's heart to punish him for his sin (Rom. 1:24-28; II Thess. 2:11). He forces an individual, as He did Pharaoh, by subjecting him

to truth. Hardening is attributive to God as His punishment upon man for his self-hardened condition.

The Lord gives time for the manifestation of human opposition, even to the utmost of creaturely freedom—free agency. He continues the operations of power which drive the already hard heart to a greater degree of stubbornness. Pharaoh's heart became increasingly calloused with each of the ten plagues. God hardened his heart which was already hardened by depravity and by the practice of sin. When God withdrew His providential blessings from the Egyptians, Pharaoh became more hardened. He not only refused to let the Israelites go but threatened to kill Moses, God's representative (Ex. 10:20,27,28). The measure of the king's iniquity was filled. God's judgment will not come upon mankind until the measure of iniquity among mankind in general is filled (Rev. 6-19). When iniquity is filled, God will speak in judgment and not in grace. He speaks silently now in grace to those for whom Jesus Christ died. However, the time will come when He will roar out of Zion and will not keep silence (Ps. 50:3).

Wicked men are not always benefited by contact with the best of men. Pharaoh received no benefit from Moses. He rejected the message of God's servant, refused to hear his plea, and became harder with each judgment God sent upon the Egyptians. Influence by men alone will not change the hearts of wicked men. The grace of the sovereign God changes a person's heart.

Pharaoh's hardening of his own heart was only the manifestation of his wicked nature. God neither put sin into Pharaoh's heart nor enticed or led him into sin. God tempts no man to sin (James 1:13-15). However, He did control and direct the wickedness that was already in Pharaoh's heart to fulfill His own eternal purpose.

God is not morally responsible for the existence of sin. On the other hand, His actions do arouse the evil which is inherently in evil men. He aroused Shimei to curse David to fulfill His purpose in David's life (II Sam. 16). God turned the Egyptians' hearts to hate His people: "He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants" (Ps. 105:25). God did not put the wicked hatred within the Egyptians. The wickedness was already in their hearts.

Hatred for God is inherently in the heart of every unsaved person. Initial hardness is in everyone by nature. God turned the hearts of the Egyptians by withdrawing His common gifts. His blessings of providence were removed, and they were left to their own evil passions. The same truth is taught in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28. God left them unrestrained from their course of evil passions. Unreasonable actions among men demonstrate that God has withdrawn His common gifts from them and allows them to manifest their hardness of heart in various ways.

To say that God merely permits the good or evil actions of men is assuming that man is capable of operating independently of God. That assumption would deny God's sovereignty. The relation between man's moral acts and God's sovereignty is such that on God's part it is absolute sovereignty and on man's part it is total dependence. Man's creaturely freedom is never sovereign; therefore, he is dependent. Unsaved persons live and move in God (Acts 17:28). God endows them with every breath of their physical lives. Everything a Christian does is through the strength and power of God who works in him to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12,13). He is enabled by the Spirit of God: "...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

Man hardens his own heart. By nature, man possesses a

hard, unyielding heart. He is depraved: "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" (Eph. 4:18). Self-hardening is man doing that which leads into sin: "...He that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief" (Prov. 28:14).

There are three kinds of hardening: (1) Natural hardening is the result of depravity. The heart of every unsaved person is hardened by depravity. The Lord told Israel that they had a heart of stone, but He would give them a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26). (2) The already hard heart is additionally hardened by continuance in the practice of sin. (3) Judicial hardening is punishment inflicted by God on those whose hearts are hardened by depravity and additionally hardened through continuing to practice sin. God did not put sin in Pharaoh's heart, neither did He entice him or lead him to sin (James 1:13). However, God did control and direct the wickedness that was already in Pharaoh's heart for the fulfillment of His purpose: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Ps. 76:10). "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18).

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

The parable of the potter and the clay cannot be restricted to Israel and the Gentiles as nations. As the nation of Israel sprang from an individual, Gentiles also spring from individuals. Esau and Jacob as individuals represent reprobation and election. Pharaoh as an individual represents reprobation in a positive judicial sense, whereas Esau viewed in his solidarity with Adam in the fall, depicts reprobation in the negative sense. The parable of the potter and the clay pictures God's absolute sovereignty in regard to both vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath.

There has never been a time in the history of mankind when the discussion of God's sovereignty is more needed than the present. Few people today recognize that man lives moment by moment and breath by breath according to God's will. Although the sovereignty of God needs to be proclaimed, this truth can never be known apart from the revelation of Scripture. Therefore, no one, for fear that men will not accept the truth of the subject in its inspired form, has the authority to water down what Scripture says. The truth of God is falsified when it is mixed with human reason. This is why Paul said he did not falsify the word of God; but by an open disclosure of the truth, he commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God (II Cor. 4:2). Truth must be proclaimed in this way because those born of God intensely yearn for the uncorrupted (without mixture) spiritual milk in order that they may grow with regard to progressive salvation (I Pet. 2:2). When anyone corrupts the word of God by admixture out of regard for men, he becomes an enemy of God.

Paul knew that any doctrine (teaching) agreeable to the natural man is not the teaching of Scripture; therefore, he raised the second question, which he knew would be asked, on the basis of Romans 9:18. "Why does He still find fault?" (Rom. 9:19 NASB). The apostle knew that the natural man would conclude that if one being saved and another being lost depends on God alone, the lost cannot be blamed. To the lost man, responsibility without freedom of the will to choose life (Deut. 30:19) makes God not only domineering and arbitrary but also deficient in justice and fairness. Furthermore, since every lost person is an Arminian by nature, he resents the truth that he is not free to choose or not choose life. Hence, he asks how a person can be responsible if no effort on his part can change his destiny; and if one is not free, how he can be called into account and held responsible. Human reason leads one to say that such questions would not occur if God elected those whom He knew would believe and reprobated those whom He foreknew would reject the offer of the gospel.

Objectors who find fault with God are rebuked. The Potter has power over the clay and can do as He pleases with it (Rom. 9:19-24; Jer. 18:4-6). Religionists do not love God on the throne. Desire for a god who can be manipulated by man is manifested by those who suppose that if sin follows God's withholding grace, God must properly be the author of sin.

Those who make the previous assumption should explain "the author of sin." If they intend by the term that God is the actor or performer of a wicked thing, they are blasphemous. God cannot be charged with willing sin as sin. God is the author of man's sin no more than He is of the Devil's pride and malice (Is. 14; Ezek. 28). Sin is not the fruit of any positive agency or influence by God.

Sin's entrance into the world came through imperfection which properly belongs to the creature. God orders sin for the sake of the good that shall come from overruling it. Men will sin as sin, and they love sin as sin. Unsaved men sin because they desire to do so. Therefore, men are the actors in sin. They love sin for its evil purposes and ends.

In Roman's 9:19, the question anticipated by Paul, "Why does He still find fault?" is based on what God said concerning Pharaoh (v. 17). God raised up Pharaoh in order that He might give indication of His power in him and that God's name might be proclaimed in all the earth. Therefore, God is justified in showing mercy on whom He desires and in hardening whom He pleases, because He is not accountable to man for His actions.

Human reasoning, however, influences one to say that God's exclusive right is not unconditional. Thus, the conclusion drawn is that since men have a right to be treated equally, they must have the ability to do what God is now declaring (Acts 17:30). A further conclusion from this reasoning is that since God has made salvation possible for all men through the death of His Son, men cannot be held responsible if they do not have the ability to enter the door that must be opened from man's side (John 3:16; Rev. 3:20).

The Arminian philosophy impresses one to further reason that men must have some ability to become vessels of honor if they are to be blamed for being fitted for destruction. This being the case, they say God's power over the human clay is not absolutely unconditional. They claim that even though God has the authority to do as He pleases, He has never reserved the right to do wrong by dealing unjustly with His creatures. Responsibility without freedom strikes Arminians as God being characterized by absolute authority and injustice. Therefore, they conclude that it is never right to magnify Divine sovereignty to the exclusion of justice, righteousness, goodness, wisdom, mercy, and love. Arminians say this passage in Romans 9 is used in such a way by some that they become fatalistic by reasoning that if God elected them they are saved, and if He did not choose them they are lost. They conclude that these people believe there is nothing they can do about their salvation, and it matters not how they live.

The Arminian philosophy on "the potter and the clay" concludes that Paul was discussing the relation of his countrymen according to the flesh to the gospel. Arminians explain that since the Jews believed they would be the vessels of honor, the Gentiles would be the vessels of dishonor. Therefore, Paul corrected their philosophy by showing that God desired to fashion both Jews and Gentiles into vessels of honor if they would repent and believe, but all who did not repent and believe would become vessels of dishonor. Arminians state that the vessels are marred not because of any imperfection in the Potter's work but because some foreign matter inserted by the enemy caused the vessels to turn out to be dishonorable. Their application is that God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (II Pet. 3:9). They further state that Christ told the impenitent Jews, "how often would I have gathered thy children together...and ye would not" (Matt. 23:37). According to Arminians, men spoil the clay that is in the Potter's hand because they will not repent and believe.

Before giving an exegesis of Romans 9:19-24, let us investigate the so-called proof texts that have been used by those who embrace the Arminian philosophy of salvation. The reference in Deuteronomy 30:19-20 concerning "choosing life" must be viewed in the light of its context: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." Deuteronomy 30 is a chapter of deep interest and vital importance because its prophetic message presents some of the secret things that belong to the Lord our God (Deut. 29:29). Israel is viewed as having come under God's curse and having been driven from the land. Spiritually, this corresponds to the present state of professing Christendom. Who can deny that there has been a great departure from the "old paths"? An abiding principle that must never be forgotten is that God's revealed will shall be of no value to His people in any age unless they are guided by it.

Life and death, with respect to temporal good or evil, are to be understood in a civil sense. To choose life is to choose liberty, prosperity, and blessing: "In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it" (Deut. 30:16). However, to choose death is to choose slavery and everything that is miserable and destructive: "But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest

over Jordan to go to possess it" (vv. 17,18).

The two principles of the flesh and the Spirit in God's people are revealed in Romans 7. Every phase of departure from God is the result of our giving in to the flesh in some way. However, those who have been "permanently crucified with [sunestauromai, perfect passive indicative of sustauroo, which means to crucify with Christ" (Gal. 2:20—translation) have been born of God, and they have the ability to destroy the flesh with its unnatural affections and desires (Col. 3:5) Our crucifixion with Christ of Galatians 2:20 refers to our legal death with Christ at Calvary, thus guaranteeing our regeneration by the Holy Spirit at God's appointed time. Some uninformed in Biblical doctrine may ask how nonentities could have been crucified with Christ two thousand years ago. The only Scriptural answer is that apart from the doctrine of election and the representative nature of Christ's death it can never be understood.

Man in his unregenerate state is alienated from God, enslaved to sin, and therefore incapable of choosing between good and evil. Before the fall, man was free; but since the fall, he is enslaved to sin. Therefore, he not only loves darkness rather than light but he also hates the light and will not come to it (John 3:19,20). Who ever heard of someone choosing what he hates and coming to what he despises? The "choice" of Deuteronomy 30:19 cannot be choosing the new birth because the passive sinner has nothing to do with his being quickened by the Spirit of God (John 1:13; 3:8). Although some use the "choice" of the passage as a strong reason for upholding the doctrine of man's free will, there is nothing here to substantiate man's participation in his new birth.

The combination of John 3:16 with Revelation 3:20 is another demonstration of using verses that, according to their contexts, do not fit the same subject. John 3:16 is in the

context of Christ's discourse with Nicodemus, but Revelation 3:20 was given by Him to the assembly at Laodicea. Nicodemus was one of Christ's sheep for whom He died (John 10:11,15; 19:39). The difference between Christ's message to the teacher of Israel and the message proclaimed by the apostles in Acts is that Christ knew His sheep, but the apostles did not know who were Christ's sheep. Therefore, Christ could speak of God's love when preaching indiscriminately. All the Epistles where "love" is mentioned speak of love in connection with the redeemed. (See Rom. 5:1-8; Eph. 1; Eph. 3; Gal. 5; II Cor. 5; I John 4). This brings us to Revelation 3:20 which speaks of Christ who has taken His stand (hesteka, perfect active indicative of histemi, to stand) at the door knocking. Christ's knocking is not at the door of persons with unregenerate hearts but on the door of those with regenerate hearts, commanding them to repent and come out as witnesses against the apostates of the Laodicean assembly. Christ had just said that as many as He had deep feelings for (philo, present active subjunctive of phileo) He would be disciplining. God does not discipline the unregenerate.

Paul made no attempt to answer the question, "There is no unrighteousness with God, is there?" (Rom. 9:14—translation). The thought of injustice with God was so intolerable to Paul that He dismissed it with a decisive denial, "Absolutely not" (Rom. 9:14—translation). Contrary to human reason, men do not have the ability to do what God declares. God "now is declaring [apaggellei, present active indicative of apaggello, which means to tell, proclaim, or announce], that all men everywhere to be repenting [metanoein, present active infinitive of metanoeo, which means to repent or turn from one's sins]" (Acts 17:30—translation). How can man on the low level of depravity rise to a level high enough to make any judgment about God? Who is in a position to judge why or how a person is saved? The whole process of salvation is attributed to the will of God (Rom. 9:15-18). Although man

both wills and runs as a regenerated person, his willing and running have nothing to do with his being made alive in Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES TO THE METAPHOR OF THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul had something in common in their use of the metaphor of the Potter and the clay. They believed that sovereignty is the foundation of God's rights. Since God can do as He pleases, He is not the object of judgment. How can man who is made of clay contradict God? Human effort had nothing to do with God's eternal purpose. The controversy between man and God is not whether any or all the human race shall be saved, but who shall have the glory of man's salvation—God or depraved man? The whole process of man's salvation is attributed to God's desire in (1) purpose (Rom. 8:28), (2) redemption (Eph. 1:7), (3) the new birth (John 1:13; 3:8), (4) progressive sanctification (I Thess. 4:3), (5) preservation (I Pet. 1:4,5), (6) perseverance (Matt. 10:22; Heb. 10:39), (7) resurrection (John 6:37-44; I Cor. 15), and (8) eternal glory (I John 3:2). There is no higher cause in the salvation of the elect than the goodness of God's grace, and there is no higher cause in the destruction of the nonelect for their sins than God's just severity.

The elect remnant out of the chosen nation is manifested by its acknowledging God during the time of the Lord's withdrawal of His presence (Is. 63). Those constituting the remnant confessed, "But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Is. 64:8). The Hebrew word for "potter" means to mold into a form. It frequently means to determine, fashion, make, or purpose. The appeal that God would have mercy on them in their present trials is recorded in Isaiah 63. They wanted God to bless them as He had in the past. (See Is. 63:15-18.) Having acknowledged a sense of relationship to God (Is. 63:16), they confessed their uncleanness, righteousnesses, which were as filthy rags, faded holiness, and iniquities, which had taken them away, resulting in God's hiding His face from them (Is. 64:6,7). However, while in that condition, they continued to acknowledge that God was their Father (Is. 64:8). In spite of Israel's state of oppression at that time, because their adversaries had trodden down God's sanctuary (Is. 63:18), they had deep conviction of sin. This is because they recognized that God had caused them to stray from His ways and had hardened their hearts from fearing Him (Is. 63:17).

God's ways toward us are the ways of His providence, and our ways toward God are obedience and holiness of life. His people may stray in both, either from inward principle or outward influence. God may for a time withdraw His presence from His people and suffer us to be deceived by our desires or led astray by incorrect teaching in order to teach us valuable lessons. During the absence of God's recognized presence, the very things formerly cherished by God's people may be destroyed (Is. 63:18). Although God's essential presence can never be absent from His creatures in general or His spiritual presence from His own in particular, He may be absent in His conscious or discernible presence in the manifestation of His favor and blessing. This was demonstrated by Job when he

said, "Oh that I knew where I might find him..." (Job 23:3). The one thing worse than the loss of the consciousness of God's favor is insensibility to one's need of His presence, which describes the unregenerate.

Often under some great trial of affliction, like Job, one will have a painful sense of distance from God and cry for the restoration of a conscious presence of Him. Job desired to go before God to (1) present his case in defense against those who were accusing him, (2) make his argument to prove his accusing friends wrong, and (3) know and understand God's answers (Job 23:3-5). A desire to go before God is much better than saying with the unregenerate, "Depart from us! We do not even desire the knowledge of Thy ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, And what would we gain if we entreat Him?" (Job 21:14,15 NASB).

Another great example of God's people having a conscious loss of His spiritual presence of favor is the backslidden bride of Song of Solomon 5:1-8. Christians out of fellowship with Christ (the Beloved) are in ill favor and disrepute in three areas of fellowship—with other believers, professing believers, and people in general. The bride of the Song of Solomon soon forgot her communion with her beloved of the first verse. Her backsliding is described by sleep, putting off the coat of practical righteousness, and washing her own feet. Hence, her beloved withdrew himself. She sought him but could not find him. She called him, but he gave no answer. The consequences of Jesus Christ's withdrawing His spiritual presence of favor are lost fellowship, unanswered prayers, and lost testimony.

God's hardening the hearts of His people from fearing Him should be frightening to the elect in all ages: "Why, O LORD, dost Thou cause us to stray from Thy ways, And harden our heart from fearing thee..." (Is. 63:17 NASB). The Hebrew

word used for "harden" means to harden or treat harshly. Therefore, the harsh treatment by the Lord was His withholding, upon just provocation, those supplies of blessing which formerly were enjoyed in order to make them realize their disobedience. Such hardening contained in it the want of a due sense of sin, which the fear of God alone gives. Christians must thank God that such hardening is not judicial, in the sense of Romans 1:24-28, but partial, in the sense of chastening. God's people in every age can identify with the statement "But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Is. 64:8).

Jeremiah gave a different point of view than Isaiah of the potter and the clay. Isaiah's representation was more from the viewpoint of those constituting a remnant who confessed they were clay in the hands of their Potter. The Lord told Jeremiah to go down to the potter's house and see what the potter was making on the wheels to show Jeremiah how God would deal with marred, sin-disfigured Israel. Jeremiah saw the vessel that the potter made marred (corrupted) in His hand; hence, the potter remade it into another vessel. In this metaphor, God is viewed as the Potter, Israel as the vessel, and providence as the wheels.

Beginning with Abraham, God made a new vessel of the chosen family. Israel became marred in the hand of God's providential dealings with her from the exodus to the exile. Beginning again at Sinai, God made the same clay into another vessel. This time it was the chosen nation, but that vessel was broken in the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles. Beginning again at the restoration under Zerubbabel and Ezra, God made the same clay into another vessel in the returned remnant. This vessel was marred and had to be destroyed by the providential dispersal under the Romans in 70 A.D. Israel cannot be made whole again (Jer. 19:11) because the holy One of Israel "shall break it as the breaking

of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces" (Is. 30:14). There shall not be found in the breaking of it a shred (fragment of pottery) large enough to take fire from the hearth or scoop water from a pond. As there is a difference between marred and broken vessels, there is a difference between remaking a marred vessel and burying the broken vessel. However, this does not mean that God is through with national Israel.

Isaiah used another metaphor to refer to Israel's future. The life germ within Judah will cause her to survive. As a living seed does not perish when buried in the earth, Israel shall never perish, even though she is buried among the nations of the world: "Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, And it will again be subject to burning, Like a terebinth or an oak Whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump" (Is. 6:13 NASB). (See Rom. 11.)

Paul used the metaphor of the potter and the clay in Romans 9:21 to demonstrate God's right over His depraved creatures. The exercise of the sovereign God's right in making some vessels of mercy and others vessels of wrath merits no criticism from His vessels, because it is nothing more than a reiteration of "Shall the thing formed say to the one having formed, Why did you make me thus?" (v. 20—translation). The word "lump" (*phurama*, a Greek noun meaning a substance mixed with water and kneaded, a mass, or lump) is used in Romans 11:16, I Corinthians 5:6-7, and Galatians 5:9 and in its inflected form (*phuramatos*) in Romans 9:21.

There are differing opinions of the meaning of *phurama* in Romans 9:21. Some believe it refers to depraved humanity because all have sinned and are coming short of God's glory (Rom. 3:22,23). Hence, they say that elect and nonelect are alike by nature. Others believe that since *phurama* is the unformed clay, the form refers to the object—man—predestined to be but not yet existing. They explain that since it refers

to unformed man, it cannot refer to created and fallen mankind. This theory is the supralapsarian view of God's decree.

We acknowledge that the Divine decree transcends our finite minds; therefore, finite man cannot comprehend it except after the manner of men. Such statements as "before" and "after" the fall of man are not in the Divine understanding as they are in ours. For example, one act follows another in our way of thinking; but with God one single act orders all things. One act following other acts necessitates the entrance of the word "time" into man's vocabulary. Time, in this context, is defined as the abstract possibility of the "before" and "after" relationship in succession. However, there is no succession with God because God's eternality is such a perfect, independent, and unchangeable comprehension that the Divine constancy embraces all things at once. This means that the eternal decree is just as alive and relevant today and tomorrow as it was vesterday. The Divine decree accompanies and follows as well as precedes its fulfillment; therefore, it can never be regarded as a lifeless foreordination.

The Divine decree being without succession brings up an important issue. We must distinguish between God's timeless decree and the execution of the timeless decree in history. If there is no future in God's thought, the message of Ephesians 1:4 and II Timothy 1:9 is without significance. What about the verb foreknow of Romans 8:29? The inflected form of the Greek verb is *proegno*, aorist active indicative of *proginosko*, a compound verb made up of pro, a preposition meaning before, and the verb *ginosko*, meaning to know. Hence, the verb means foreknow or know beforehand. What about the verb predestinate of Romans 8:29? The inflected form of the Greek verb is *proorisen*, aorist active indicative of *prooridzo*. Here is another compound verb made up of *pro*, before, and the verb *horidzo*, meaning to decide, determine, or designate.

Therefore, the verb means to determine from the beginning or beforehand—to predestine. What about the expressions "in the fullness of time," "in due time," "it came to pass," etc.? If there is no past in God's thought, Christ has not come and gone; and we are yet in our sins.

The history of the dispute between persons who hold the supralapsarian view and those who embrace the infralapsarian theory of God's decree indicates that much more is involved than a mere question of order. There is a difference in the interpretation of predestination and reprobation.

Serious questions can never be set aside by appealing to the "simplicity of the gospel." The only gospel that is simple is the one that originates in the minds of simple men. Both supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism are compound words. The word "lapsarian" refers to one who believes in the Bible teaching that man is a fallen creature. "Supra" is the prefix, which means above or before, and "infra" is the prefix which means below or subsequent to the fall of man. Hence, the word lapsarian has been prefixed with "supra" and "infra," thus giving different views concerning the order in God's decree. The serious student of Scripture does not try to pry into the secret things of the Lord. But he does try to ascertain the relation of one truth to another that has been revealed in Scripture. (See Deut. 29:29.)

The controversy concerning Romans 9:21 is whether God decreed to elect some to salvation and reprobate all others before He decreed to create both elect and nonelect, or whether He decreed both to create and permit the fall before He chose some and passed by all the others. Is it Scriptural to say that God created some for salvation and others for destruction? The purpose to save or condemn must, in order of thought, follow the purpose to create. God's original creation is never represented in Scripture as a means of executing the purpose of either election or reprobation.

VESSELS OF WRATH— PREPARED FOR DESTRUCTION

The statement "vessels of wrath having been prepared for destruction" of Romans 9:22 (translation) has been interpreted two ways. Some say the vessels of wrath have been prepared by God, and others say they have prepared themselves. Those who take the former position believe that this is nothing more than a reiteration of "Shall the thing formed say to the one having formed, why did you make me thus?" (v. 20—translation). This brings up the question, Why does God blame the ones whom He has made vessels of wrath? The answer to this question is that God does not make men His objects of wrath apart from their own wickedness. All men without exception became wicked by their fall in Adam (Rom. 5:12). Their natural wickedness by their solidarity with Adam is increased by their sinful lives. However, no one can deny that God hardens the nonelect because the context proves it: "For the scripture says to Pharaoh, for this very thing I raised you up in order that I may give indication of My power in you, and in order that My name may be proclaimed in all the earth. So therefore He is showing mercy on whom He desires,

and He is hardening whom He desires" (Rom. 9:17,18—translation). God's hardening is His judicial reaction to man's natural hardness caused by his fall in Adam and his self-hardening by a life of sin, which makes him the object of God's destruction.

In order to see more clearly the truth of the "vessels of wrath having been prepared for destruction," one must consider the immediate context of Romans 9:22—"But if God desiring to show forth the wrath [orgen, accusative feminine singular of *orge*, which means anger, wrath, or punishment], and to make His power known, endured [enegken, aorist active indicative of *phero*, which means endure, put up with, or bear patiently] in much longsuffering [makrothumia, a feminine singular locative of sphere noun, which means God's forbearance or longsuffering the vessels of wrath [orges, genitive of description of orge] having been prepared [katertismena, perfect passive participle of katartidzo, which means prepared for [eis, a preposition, which is the accusative of purpose] destruction [apoleian, accusative feminine singular of apoleia, which means destruction, utter ruin, or one destined for hell]" (translation).

Having translated and parsed some of the key words in verse 22, let us look into this terribly abused and neglected verse. Not only do we want to see the inflected form of the words parsed but also to know their meaning and the way they are used. Furthermore, we want to observe how the vessels of wrath are prepared for utter destruction in hell and why God puts up with them. Since God is not the author of the initial wickedness of the vessels of wrath, He does not restrain them by the inward influence of grace but by providence. Therefore, they are hardened when the restraints of providence are removed and they are left to act according to their depraved minds, affections, and wills. "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own

counsels" (Ps. 81:12). (See Rom. 1:24,26,28.)

No one can deny that God's providence has removed some restraints within the last fifty years. Homosexuals are coming out of their closets and manifesting their pride. Gay pride was not in our vocabulary fifty years ago. The degree of sexual promiscuity manifested today was unheard of then. The sanctity of the home and family was not violated then as it is today. There were no human laws giving women the right to murder their unborn babies. People were not marching as they are now for what they call "their rights." By rights every human being deserves hell. The answer to why God is putting up with all this is not difficult from the Biblical perspective. God is longsuffering for the sake of the elect who have not been brought by the Holy Spirit into the actuality of His grace in Christ. (See II Pet. 3:9,15; II Tim. 1:9; Eph. 2:1-8.)

God's providential restraint of judgment is vividly described by Solomon: "Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11 NASB). The silence of heaven today disturbs only the uninformed. They are like Asaph who judged things rationally rather than spiritually. A great principle is given to Christians in Psalm 73. Nothing that man does in this life is without consequences. Every effect has a cause, and every cause produces an effect. Asaph was corrected in his thinking about the ungodly, God, and himself. When Asaph saw the prosperity of the wicked, heard their blasphemy, and witnessed their skepticism with regard to God, he was envious; that is, his mind burned with jealousy. His jealousy continued until he went into the sanctuary of God, and there he understood their latter end. Having understood that the wicked prosper only in this world and their latter end is one of endless misery and torment, he said, "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I

was as a beast before thee...Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Ps. 73:21,22,25). When believers question God's providence, which involves His silence, as far as judgment on the wicked is concerned, and the withdrawal of His restraint, they are in great need of God's house which has been appointed for their instruction. (See II Tim. 3:15.) Asaph learned the truth about the wicked, God's judgment at His appointed time, and himself.

Although God's longsuffering is abused by the wicked, it never excuses them for turning God's forbearance into a reason to persevere in their wickedness. Paul warned that the wicked will be punished according to their accumulated wickedness: "Or are you treating with contempt [kataphroneis, present active indicative of kataphroneo, which means despise, treat with contempt, or look down only the riches of His kindness, and the forbearance, and the longsuffering, not knowing that the kindness of God is leading you to repentance? But on the basis of your hardness [skleroteta, accusative feminine singular noun from sklerotes, which means hardness or stubbornness] and unrepentant [ametanoeton, accusative feminine singular adjective from ametanoetos, which means unrepentant or obstinate] heart you are storing up [thesauridzeis, present active indicative of thesauridzo, which means to store up] for yourself wrath [orgen, accusative of object from orge, which means wrath, anger, or punishment] in a day of wrath [orges, genitive of description from orge, which means punishment or retribution] and revelation of a righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:4,5—translation).

There are different interpretations of the perfect passive participle of *katartidzo*, translated "having been prepared" or "who have been prepared" for destruction (Rom. 9:22). This compound verb is made up of the preposition *kata*, meaning

down, and the verb *artidzo*, meaning to make ready or prepare. Some say the perfect passive participle accusative neuter plural of *katartidzo* can be understood to emphasize the adjectival aspect of the participle—fit or ready for destruction. They assert that this leaves undetermined the agency by which the fitness or readiness was effected, and they cite the change of expression in Romans 9:23 plus two other verses where the perfect passive participle is used as proof (II Cor. 10:10; I Pet. 1:8). Others assume that the reference is to God, and the perfect passive participle carries its verbal force, which means prepared for destruction. They believe the context demands this interpretation; but it is not to be understood in a supralapsarian sense because God did not create some men in order to destroy them. They say the preparation intended is illustrated by Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17).

In the light of the perfect passive participle used by Paul in Romans 9:22, "having been prepared," we know that the vessels of wrath were in a permanent state of preparation for destruction. Moreover, they were in a fallen state. Having fallen in Adam, they were sinful; and their sinful condition was compounded by their sinful lives. However, their permanent state of preparation for destruction had been consummated by God in the withdrawal of His providential restraints, thus allowing them by His judicial act to sin unrestrained. The Greek text is a great help in coming to a better understanding of this or any other controversial passage. Theologically, the aforementioned conclusions cannot be refuted.

Paul's theodicy is taken from God's dealing with the vessels of wrath in time. They are said to be vessels, signifying that they are not nonentities but creatures having been brought into being by natural generation. They were vessels of wrath, showing that they were depraved and thus objects of justice. Although all without exception are by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2:3), Paul told the Ephesian saints that they were

not children of wrath by a process of development. Unlike the saints at Ephesus, Paul showed the Roman believers that the vessels of wrath of Romans 9 were natural vessels of wrath who had been prepared for destruction. This was positive reprobation. Their preparation was a process which included their sinful lives plus God's judicial restraint. As the chosen vessels of wrath at Ephesus could speak of undeserved grace, the nonelect vessels of wrath of Romans 9 must speak of deserved punishment. Where there was only a single act of grace on the elect in Ephesus, there is a process of acts on the nonelect of Romans 9. God as the Potter takes nothing from either the elect or the nonelect vessels; but in grace, He gives eternal life to the elect, thus leaving the nonelect as they are in their natural condition of wrath.

VESSELS OF MERCY— PREPARED FOR GLORY

The vessels of wrath of Romans 9:22 are perceived as being in a permanent state of preparation for judgment, but the vessels of mercy of Romans 9:23 are viewed as "prepared in advance" by God for glory. The two verses together show that God's purpose is regarded as twofold: (1) On one hand, He shows His wrath and makes His power known. (2) On the other hand, He makes the riches of His glory known. Two differing views of "prepared in advance" of verse 23 must be considered. Some teach that how much is covered by "prepared in advance" is not clear, but they do not believe it refers to God's eternal decree. Others advocate that "prepared in advance" has reference to God's decree in the sense of Romans 8:28-30.

Since Romans 9:23 is so controversial, let us translate the Greek text and parse some of the key words: "And in order that He [God] may make known [gnorise, aorist active subjunctive of gnoridzo, which means to make known, reveal, or disclose] the wealth of His glory [doxes, accusative feminine singular of the noun doxa, which means glory, splendor, or

excellence] on [epi, accusative of relationship] vessels of mercy [eleous, genitive neuter plural of the noun eleos, which means mercy or compassion], which He prepared beforehand [proetoimasen, agrist active indicative of proetoimadzo, a compound verb made up of pro, meaning before, in front of, or in advance of with the genitive, and hetoimadzo, meaning to prepare or make ready] for [eis, accusative of purpose] glory" (translation). Since the agrist indicative verb in the Greek expresses an action in past time, "prepared in advance" refers to a preparation preceding the effectual call. Paul did not complete his sentence in verse 23; therefore, he went on to say, "whom [hous, accusative masculine singular of the relative pronoun hos, meaning who, what, or which] also [kai, conjunction used as an adverb, meaning also] He called [ekalesen, aorist active indicative of kaleo, which means to call or summon]" (Rom. 9:24—translation). Hence the preparation preceded the effectual call. This call by God is effectual, which means it is capable of producing an intended effect, as proved by Romans 8:28-30.

The elect being called according to God's purpose (Rom. 8:28) and God's purpose (prothesin, from prothesis, which means a predetermined plan) itself are explained in Romans 8:29-30. Persons not included in one of the five agrist active indicative verbs of verses 29 and 30 are not included in any of them because they are not in God's plan of redemption. The persons included in God's plan of redemption of verse 28 are the number God foreordained, predestined, called, justified, and glorified (the five agrist active indicative verbs of verses 29,30). The true lovers of Jesus Christ climb by God-given faith (Eph. 2:8) the rainbow of God's very great and priceless promises in Christ (II Pet. 1:4), which are "yes" and "amen" to the glory of God through us (II Cor. 1:20). We discover that climbing the rainbow of God's promises through the rain and storms of life makes disasters of judgment and the calamities of personal afflictions become the way to absolute knowledge of God's sovereignty (Rom. 8:28). In our social lives, we first know before we love; but in our spiritual lives, we love in order to know because God's love is poured out into our hearts in regeneration (Rom. 5:5).

One who says salvation begins with the new birth states only half-truth. Salvation is eternal with respect to God because He is its Author. Therefore, with Him salvation has neither beginning nor ending. However, salvation has an experiential beginning in the elect, but it has no ending. Following Paul's discussion of God's eternal provision for the elect, he challenged all doubters and opposers to endless salvation in its recipients with a series of questions (Rom. 8:31-35). (1) "What then shall we say to [pros, accusative of reference, which means with reference to] these things?" (v. 31). (2) "Since [ei, first class condition] God is for [huper, genitive of advantage, which means on behalf of] us, who is against [kata, ablative of opposition, which means down or against] us?" (v. 31). (3) "How shall He [God the Father] not also with [sun, instrumental of association] Him [Jesus Christ] freely give us all things?" (v. 32). (4) "Who shall bring a charge against [kata, ablative of opposition] God's chosen ones?" (v. 33). (5) "Who is the one condemning [katakrinon, can be either future or present active participle]?" (v. 34). (6) "Who shall separate us from [apo, ablative of separation] the love of Christ?" (v. 35). (7) "Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword separate us?" (v. 35) (vv. 31-35—translation). Paul was great at asking questions and then answering them before his critics could ask them, as Romans 8 and 9 prove.

God's purpose is eternal; all parts were known to Him intuitively. However, the execution of its parts is successive in time. Future things in time do not coexist with God, but the eternal "I Am" coexists with them. Since God's decree of natural law is necessary to hold our physical creation together,

His decree of spiritual law is absolutely necessary to hold our spiritual creation in a state of fixed purpose and progress until it reaches its consummation in glorification. The salvation of the elect in Christ Jesus was begun in a Divine purpose; it will be consummated by a Divine process; and it shall be eternally a Divine product in the kingdom. Having been lifted to Paul's greatest spiritual height, let us seek to live and die on this mountain of spiritual altitude until we reach the sphere of Christ's unmediated presence. Who can deny preparation by God's eternal decree in advance of the effectual call in time, and who can deny the preparation in time in advance of the eternal kingdom?

Paul's Epistle demonstrates that his altitude of spiritual thinking was not occasional. He thought, lived, and spoke from a high spiritual level, a characteristic absent from the lives of most "church members" today. In his second letter to Timothy, this apostle told Timothy to "not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but suffer with [sugkakopatheson, agrist active imperative of sugkakopatheo, a compound verb with the prepositional prefix sun, meaning with, and the verb kakopatheo, meaning to suffer afflictions, or to show endurance in trials and afflictions] me in the gospel according to the power of God. The one who has saved [or 'having saved'] us and who has called [or 'having called'] us with a holy calling, not on the basis of our works, but on the basis of His own purpose [prothesin, accusative feminine singular of the noun prothesis, meaning God planned or prepared before time] and grace [charin, accusative feminine singular of the noun charis, meaning grace, free favor, or gift] having been given [dotheisan, aorist passive participle accusative feminine singular of the verb didomi, meaning to give, grant, or bestow] to us in Christ Jesus before [pro, which means before or prior to] the times of ages" (II Tim. 1:8,9—translation). Grace "having been given" is the same principle which Paul used in Romans 9:23

when he spoke of God making known the wealth of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He "prepared beforehand [in advance]" for glory.

The question now is, How can one be sure that he is one "having been given" (aorist passive participle) grace in Christ Jesus before the creation of the world or "purposed in advance" (aorist active indicative) for glory? Those who believe in free will make the following assertions: (1) Faith is not an effect of election. (2) Faith is a necessary requisite in those who are elected. (3) Faith is foreseen by God in the persons to be elected. They maintain that anyone who holds to free grace can never be sure of his salvation, because no matter what one believes or feels he can never be sure his name is written in the Book of Life. Believing in free will, their claim is "We can be sure of our salvation because by faith we are elected and we feel it."

Contrary to the preceding assertions, persons who embrace the Biblical teaching of free grace discover that salvation is according to God's purpose and grace having been given us in Christ Jesus before the creation of the world. This gives more assurance than the strength of man's so-called free will by which men assume they can receive Christ and afterward reject Him. One of the two groups of Arminians teaches that believers can of their free will reject Christ after choosing to receive Him thus losing their salvation. The other teaches that by their free will they elect to receive Christ and are eternally secure. In their choice, the latter group loses the freedom of will. Therefore, they would have the free will to change their destiny but would become less than they were before.

The order of salvation from God's perspective is as follows: election, redemption, regeneration, calling, progressive sanctification, and glorification. There is order not only in God's purpose but also in its execution. As the parts of God's eternal purpose were known intuitively and simultaneously to Him, the parts of His purpose were and are executed in time in the same order that they were eternally known. The vessels of the tabernacle illustrate order. Moses' blueprint for the tabernacle began with the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies and concluded with the altar of the burnt offering. Hence, the same order appears in these vessels as that of Romans 8, II Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 1, etc.

As there is order from God's perspective, there is order in the assurance of salvation from the Christian's point of view. The Biblical truth of free grace does not give instant and absolute assurance to every believer. The new birth and assurance are not concurrent. Regeneration takes place in the subconsciousness of man, but assurance is in his consciousness.

Faith and assurance are not one and the same, and natural faith and supernatural faith differ. Assurance is not faith in one's faith, but it is faith in Jesus Christ and His Work objectively revealed and subjectively experienced. This necessitates three important distinctions: (1) Objective and subjective faith must be distinguished. The first is the testimony of Scripture, and the second is the fruit of regeneration. Objective faith does not bestow reality where subjective faith is wanting because God-given subjective faith is the channel through which the objective system of truth flows. Man's mere subjective faith—human faith—does not save. If it does, all cultists are saved. Objective faith concerning the Person and Work of Jesus Christ gives assurance, power, and victory to one with subjective God-given faith (Heb. 11:1-3; I Thess. 1:4-10). (2) Objective and subjective assurance must be distinguished. One can have assurance that the gospel is the objective message of Jesus Christ without having subjective assurance (James 2:19; John 2:23,24). Apart from objective assurance of God's message, there can be no subjective

assurance. Therefore, one with God-given subjective faith must appropriate the objective faith—the true gospel of Jesus Christ—in order to have subjective assurance (John 6;10). (3) Subjective assurance and experienced subjective assurance must be distinguished. The first is not as strong as the latter. There are intellectual wrestlings with the mysteries of God, such as those recorded in Colossians 1:27, I Timothy 3:16, etc., without fully comprehending their truths. In other words, one may apprehend what he does not comprehend; however, his lack of comprehension does not prevent his apprehending the truths with which he is wrestling. Ephesians 3:17-19 exemplifies "that Christ may dwell through faith in your hearts, in love having been rooted and having been grounded in love, in order that you may be fully able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ which is surpassing knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God" (translation).

The order in assurance is from calling to election, the brazen altar to the ark of the covenant, the trespass offering to the burnt offering, and the holy calling to salvation designed by God. Hence, one must follow the stream of progressive sanctification to the effectual call, from the effectual call to regeneration, from regeneration to redemption, and from redemption to God's eternal purpose. In this manner, we have order in understanding, but we begin with the result and not with the cause. (See II Pet. 1:10.)

VESSELS OF MERCY— NOT RESTRICTED TO THE JEWS

The vessels of mercy "prepared in advance" (Rom. 9:23) are not restricted to the Jews. Therefore, Paul said, "Whom He also called, not only out from Jews, but also out from Gentiles. As also He says in Hosea, I will call those not my people, My people! And those not having been loved, having been loved! And it shall be in the place where it was said to them, you are not my people; there they shall be called the sons of God" (Rom. 9:24-26—translation). This quotation by Paul has brought about a great controversy in the science of eschatology. The issue involves hermeneutics, the science of interpretation. Some favor a "spiritualizing" hermeneutic but others a "literalizing" hermeneutic.

Amillennialists apply the following quotation by Paul of Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 to the situation which is represented by the assembly age of the New Testament: "...Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God....And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I

will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." They say "not my people" may mean two things: "no longer my people" and "not yet my people." However, Paul used Hosea's prophecy as referring to Jews, and James quoted the prophecy of Amos regarding the tabernacle of David when speaking of the conversion of the Gentiles in the assembly age. (See Amos 9:11,12; Acts 15:13-17.)

Historical premillennialists are not far removed from amillennialists when it comes to spiritualizing Old Testament prophecies. They maintain that Paul deliberately took the prophecies of Hosea and claimed they are fulfilled in the Christian assembly. Thus, both amillennialists and historical premillennialists spiritualize Hosea's literal prophecies. Research on Romans 9:25-26 reveals that some advocate that Paul was embarrassed by the position he had embraced. Others think the verses give a transition in interpretation.

No one has the authority to take literal prophecies and spiritualize them out of their intended meaning. Those who do may as well take the prophecies concerning the virgin birth, the incarnate Word, Christ's sacrificial death, His resurrection, His assembly, David's throne, the kingdom, and the new heavens and the new earth and spiritualize them out of their intended meaning. The very persons who criticize the materiality of the kingdom believe the kingdom is already established. While claiming to believe the kingdom is spiritual, they are building more buildings for religious, educational, and health purposes. Is anything carnal about all the buildings and man-made programs? What about carnal persons trying to build the absolutely spiritual kingdom? The spiritual nature of the kingdom in no way excludes the idea of a material, earthly kingdom. The inner nature of the kingdom shall be manifested outwardly and visibly, as the inner nature of grace is revealed outwardly in Christian living.

Amillennialists teach that the purpose of Christ's second advent will not be to "set up" His kingdom but to "deliver it up" to God the Father (I Cor. 15:24-28). They use II Corinthians 6:2, "...now is the accepted time...," to substantiate their statement that since God offers salvation today, eternity is next. Their conclusion is that there will never be a future kingdom as premillennialists claim.

A serious study of Romans 9:25-26 will demonstrate that some theologians believe that Paul changed Hosea's intended meaning to fit the assembly age, and others contend that Hosea's prophecy should be understood in its literal sense. Paul quoted from Hosea, a contemporary with Amos, Isaiah, and Micah; but he never intended to spiritualize the literal prophecies concerning Israel's spiritual condition at the time of Hosea's prophecy.

Hosea and Gomer constitute a picture lesson for the house of Israel (Hos. 1-3). Therefore, Hosea dramatized the history of Israel in her relation to her covenant God, represented by himself as Gomer's husband. Gomer in her marriage to Hosea represented the nation of Israel. Jehovah had married Israel in His covenant of relationship; but Israel, like an unfaithful wife, had become unfaithful to her covenant God. Hosea's marriage to Gomer enabled him to understand the meaning of Israel's sin, which was spiritual adultery, even harlotry. Adultery means seeking satisfaction in unlawful relations, and harlotry is the sin of prostituting high privileges for the sake of personal gain. Israel had gone after other gods and had prostituted her high privileges to lascivious indulgence in idolatry. Can anything be worse than infidelity in love? Hosea has been correctly called the prophet of persevering love.

Israel's sad history is wrapped up in the first three chapters of Hosea. God's command to Hosea to take Gomer, a woman

of ill fame, to be his wife may seem strange to the untutored believer. However, Scripture relates the historical truth that no lesson on faithfulness can be better displayed than on such a dark background of unfaithfulness. This relationship taught Israel that God's choice of persons is not on the basis of any worthiness in themselves, because all are as unworthy in themselves as Gomer.

Paul's quotations in Romans 9 from the prophets of the Old Testament are not restricted to Hosea. He quoted Isaiah in verse 20 (Is. 29:16; 45:9), Hosea in verse 25 (Hos. 2:23), Hosea in verse 26 (Hos. 1:10), Isaiah in verse 29 (Is. 1:9), and Isaiah in verse 33 (Is. 8:14; 28:16). The analogy between the ten tribes and the Gentiles, made by those who spiritualize the kingdom, will not stand the test of Scripture. Romans 9 is not the first time Paul made reference to both Jews and Gentiles in the Roman Epistle. The apostle had previously described the Gentiles in their relation to creation and conscience in chapter 1, and he had described the Jews in their relation to promise and covenant in chapters 2 and 3. Subsequent to chapter 9, Paul described the Gentiles in relation to restored Israel.

The national blindness of Israel is shown in chapter 11 to be neither total (vv. 7-10), fatal (vv. 11,12), nor final (vv. 13-32). Under the protection of the sovereign God, there was an elect remnant (v. 7) while the rest were judicially blinded (v. 8), a blindness about which they had been warned. Their blindness was not fatal because God directed their stumbling to fulfill His purpose of ingrafting the Gentiles into them (v. 17). Furthermore, Israel's blindness is not final because the natural branches will be grafted back into their own olive tree (v. 24). Hence, the stream of salvation that turned to the nations, until the fullness of the Gentiles, shall turn again to the Jews (vv. 25,26). Therefore, the remnant of Israel is at the present time merged in the assembly and participates in

assembly blessings and privileges. (See Eph. 2 and 3.)

Although Paul mentioned the Gentiles in Romans 9:24, his reference to Hosea in verse 25 does not prove the prophet was giving a prophecy concerning the Gentiles taking the place of national Israel. It is true that God pronounced judgment on Israel. He assured with equal clearness His grace toward some (Hos. 1:10; 2:23). As Hosea and Gomer were not to live together for a time after Hosea bought her out of slavery (Hos. 3:1-5), Israel and God are not living together during the age of the assembly. Compassionate Hosea bought Gomer out of slavery, but there could be no reunion without a process of discipline (Hos. 3:3). Hosea 3:4 describes the present state of Israel: "For the children shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod [garment belonging to the high priest which was worn over his other garments], and without teraphim." Israel's glorious future is described in Hosea 3:5-"Afterward shall the children return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days."

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