

"For it is by grace that you have been saved and not of any works lest anyone should boast"

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands--that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.~ **Ephesians 2:8-13***

I want to share something with you, that most likely will astound most of you, if not all of you. This is something that will shatter all that you believed to be true and understood in the past. At the present time, you probably believe that what I'm about to share with you is false based upon the logic you developed throughout your entire life.

The reason why we've gravitated to this particular study, and that is to give you a reason to be grateful to God. To give you a reason to praise the Lord with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind, and with all of your strength. I don't expect you to be grateful to Him and to praise Him just because I say it's something that you should do as a Christian. I hope to present compelling truth to you, that will result in you willfully and enthusiastically being grateful to God and praising Him with all that's within you.

Before I developed this thesis, let's first explore the condition we were in before we became saved. We must be equipped with the knowledge that we were dead to the Spiritual Realm of God, and unable to respond to His influences and arouses. In the same way a physically dead person will not, and cannot respond to any influences originating from the land of the living. It is virtually impossible for a dead person to obey any command that's given to it. No matter how much you talk, or what you say. Regardless of how eloquent your speech is. No matter how inspirational you are, and the message could even be the best motivational message of all time. In spite of all the above, a dead person cannot respond to any of the influences and inspirations of your message.

Likewise, it was also virtually impossible for us to respond to the stimulus of God unless, He performed something within us first, to enable us to respond to His calling. That something was not based on our own works, or efforts, or desires. It was based solely on His eternal purpose and according to His good pleasure.

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you ***He made alive, who were dead*** in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, ***just as the others***.

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves ***were also*** once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

We were all "*by nature children of wrath just as the others*". There was nothing different about us that distinguished or separated us from them. In essence, we were no better or no worse than the others, whom have not received the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. To this day, and forevermore, there will always be only one thing that separates us from the unsaved. That one thing, may seem at first glance to be most unfair and unjust based on our own knowledge and understanding.

During our brief existence as a ministry, we have dealt with some difficult doctrine to understand and even harder to teach. I believe however, that we are about to enter into probably the most difficult and controversial segment of the Bible. This portion is so difficult to comprehend, that it even has its own name "theodicy" which means an attempt to vindicate the justice of God and His action.

The topic that we're going to explore is called the *doctrine of election*. In dealing with the doctrine of election, you also have to deal with its counterpart which is called the doctrine of reprobation which is "the passing over of those who are not elected to salvation".

In order to rightly divide Gods Word of truth, I will not attempt to defend this thesis by using reasonable opinions or philosophical arguments. I will rely directly on Gods own Word, just as Paul did, because God Himself determines what is justice and righteousness. Remember what Paul wrote in Romans 3:4 "*let God be true but every man a liar*". As a result, let's not debate over the justice of God in His election of the saints, and thus passing over the others.

Not by the will of man or buy mans efforts:

Ephesians 2:4-9 **But God**, who is rich in mercy, *because of His great love with which He loved us*, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised *us* up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,* 9 *not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Titus 3:4-5 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared. 5 *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...*

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

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

Some still may feel they took the initial step, and the decision was theirs alone based on their own desire. When we accomplish anything on our own, we take full credit for the accomplishment, and praise our self effort that led to the achievement. Likewise, when we fail to understand that it was God, who not only initiated our salvation, but accomplished it for us, we tend to minimize God and view our salvation as something of a favor to God from us.

Romans 9:11-24 (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the **purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls**),¹² it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." 13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." 14 What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! 15 For He says to Moses, "**I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.**" 16 **It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy (NIV).** 17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." 18 **Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.** 19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" 20 **But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God?** Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? 22 *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath **prepared for destruction**, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had **prepared beforehand for glory**, 24 *even* us whom He called, ...

We are not in the least better than the worst of the worst of sinner. Our only distinction is the fact that we have received mercy and grace from God. The sins we committed before we received salvation did not terminate or cancel the plans God had for our lives regarding His mercy and compassion being extended to us, His redeemed.

Now some would say that's not fair because the others don't have a chance. How can God find fault with them and not the ones how are saved. In response to that accusation, we must know beyond a shadow of a doubt what Abraham stated "**shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly**"? In God alone is the very essence of righteous judgments as stated in;

Psalms 119:137 " Righteous *are* You, O LORD, And upright *are* Your judgments.

God will always be righteous, and has always been righteous. He can never be anything other than righteous and that extends to His judgments. His judgments are also righteous, in spite of mans opinion to the contrary (remember, let God be true and every man a liar).

In actuality, God is fair and righteous in his judgment of the wicked because, He does actually give them that which they deserve. They are fairly and accurately given the just punishment they deserve for their sins. All men are sinful and deserve condemnation, and it is not considered wrong or unjust if God condemns them for their sin. Besides, we're His to do with as He pleases!

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death...

Ezekiel 18:4 Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die

Others will say that God knew the saved would respond to his calling and therefore He chose them based on the fact they would eventually come to Christ. That though however, is also refuted throughout the pages of scripture.

Again, Paul states "*not of works but of Him who calls*" in verse 11. He also says "***It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort***" in verse 16. John states in 1:13 we "*were born, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*". In Titus 3:5 it says "*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us*".

As a result, our salvation could never be based upon anything we do for ourselves (whether God looked into the future or not). Our salvation is something that could never be earned, we could never work hard enough to achieve eternal life. Our salvation had absolutely nothing to do with our desire or effort.

Our salvation through the death of Jesus is solely based on God having mercy upon us, end of story. There is no other way of express this truth. If God did not show mercy to us, we would not have received the free gift of salvation.

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

2nd Corinthians 4:6 For God, ... made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (NIV)

Our understand of this fact is woefully inadequate. This knowledge is far beyond our ability to comprehend His purpose in the matter.

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Before we think that we match wits with God's wisdom, and compare our understanding with His understanding let's go to Job 38 & 39 and settle the matter once and for all !!!

Job 38:2-11 Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. Who determined its dimensions and stretched out the surveying line? What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone as the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? Who kept the sea inside its boundaries as it burst from the womb, and as I clothed it with clouds and wrapped it in thick darkness? For I locked it behind barred gates, limiting its shores. I said, "This far and no farther will you come. Here your proud waves must stop! (NLT)

These few verses represent a small sample of the type of questions God ask Job in chapters 38 & 39. The bottom line is "***who are you to reply against God***"? Any questions?

The choice was not our own. We have been chosen by Jesus Christ:

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

John 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him;....

John 15:16,19 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, 19 ... I chose you out of the world....

Ephesians 1:4-5,11 ...He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 11 ...being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

Our ability to even believe and repent comes from the Father:

Matthew 16:17 Jesus ... said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

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

Romans 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

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

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

2nd Timothy 2:25 In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.

Predestined before the foundation of the world:

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

2nd Thessalonians 2:13 ... God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. (ref John 17:17)

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

Ref: Ephesians 1:4 above "***just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world***"

Now that we have come to terms with election by grace, it's necessary for us to deal with the doctrine of reprobation which if you remember, is the passing over of those who are not elected unto salvation by the grace of God, which seems so unfair at first glance. We always have to remember what it says in;

Romans 3:10-12 ...There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."

As a result, we should never view the unfaithful from the perspective of God being unfair or unjust to them. Our attitude should always be that of great thankfulness and gratefulness to God for extending His mercy and grace upon us.

Before we go any further with this discussion, let me say that God does not take pleasure in anyone's demise. He does not desire that anyone should perish, and He does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked.

Ezekiel 18:32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!"

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

We can be assured of the fact that;

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

However, it is true that there are those who will not receive mercy from God and will be eternally damned as a result as revealed by the following scriptures;

1st Peter 2:5-7 For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 6 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, 7 and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message--***which is also what they were destined for.***

2nd Peter 2:12 But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, ***born only to be caught and destroyed***, and like beasts they too will perish.

2nd Thessalonians 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason ***God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.***

Romans 11:5-8,25 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. 6 And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. 7 What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, 8 as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day. 25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: ***Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.***

John MacArthur wrote in his commentary on Romans "It is not, of course, that we can fully understand what God reveals about His sovereign election and predestination. It can only be accepted as faith, acknowledging its truth simply because God has revealed it to be true. As believers, we know that, in ourselves, we deserve only God's rejection and condemnation. But we also know that, for His own sovereign reason, God has elected us to be His children and, in His own time and way, brought us to saving faith in Jesus Christ."

I know by now, some of you may be thinking about you own child with the thought of him or her not being part of the elect of God. Fear not, based on what the Bible says, I don't think that any of our children are counted in the number of those who will not receive mercy from God. That's not to say however, that all our children will go to Heaven just because they are our children. If they refuse to receive the free gift of salvation, there remains only one destination.

Psalms 103:17-18 But the love of the LORD remains forever with those who fear him. His salvation extends to the children's children 18 of those who are faithful to his covenant, of those who obey his commandments!

That's why it's so important for parents to pray always for our children. We must pray continually that God will shine His mercy upon them, and that He will draw them to Jesus Christ. As we stated earlier, they can't do it by themselves, or earn their own salvation. They need us (their parents), to stand in the gap for them and intercede on their behalf. We must consider what the prophet Samuel said;

1st Samuel 12:23-24 ... as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. 24 "Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.

This is the desired effect of this entire message, that we would "***consider what great things He has done for us***".

Psalms 100:1-5 ... ***Shout for joy*** to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Worship the LORD ***with gladness***; come before him ***with joyful songs***. 3 ***Know that the LORD is God***. It is he who made us, and we are his ; ***we are his people***, the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates ***with thanksgiving*** and his courts ***with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name***. 5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

2nd Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because ***God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth***

Hebrews 12:1-3 Therefore, ... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.