

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: What the Early Christians Believed About the FREE WILL & PREDESTINATION**

**What the Early Christians Believed About the FREE WILL & PREDESTINATION - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/11/13**

The early Christians were strong believers in free will. For example, Justin Martyr made this argument to the Romans: “We have learned from the prophets, and we hold it to be true, that punishments, chastisements, and rewards are rendered according to the merit of each man's actions. Otherwise, if all things happen by fate, then nothing is in our own power. For if it is predestined that one man be good and another man evil, then the first is not deserving of praise or the other to be blamed. Unless humans have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions—whatever they may be.... For neither would a man be worthy of reward or praise if he did not of himself choose the good, but was merely created for that end. Likewise, if a man were evil, he would not deserve punishment, since he was not evil of himself, being unable to do anything else than what he was made for.”

Clement echoed the same belief: “Neither praise nor condemnation, neither rewards nor punishments, are right if the soul does not have the power of choice and avoidance, if evil is involuntary.”

Archelaus, writing a few decades later, repeated the same understanding: “All the creatures that God made, He made very good. And He gave to every individual the sense of free will, by which standard He also instituted the law of judgment.... And certainly whoever will, may keep the commandments. Whoever despises them and turns aside to what is contrary to them, shall yet without doubt have to face this law of judgment.... There can be no doubt that every individual, in using his own proper power of will, may shape his course in whatever direction he pleases.”

Methodius, a Christian martyr who lived near the end of the third century, wrote similarly, “Those who decide that man does not have free will, but say that he is governed by the unavoidable necessities of fate, are guilty of impiety toward God Himself, making Him out to be the cause and author of human evils.”

The early Christians weren't simply speculating about this matter, but rather they based their beliefs on the following Scriptures, among others:

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

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

• “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17).

• “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deut. 30:19).

So originally, it was the pagan world, not the Christians, who believed in predestination.

From Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up

by David Bercot

**Re: What the Early Christians Believed About the FREE WILL & PREDESTINATION - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/11/**

Many people have been over the writings of the early church fathers and do not side with David Bercot. This is just one article of many. I am only posting this to show that there is another side to the story and that the book Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up by David Bercot is not the "be all, end all" some folks believe it to be.

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Did Irenaeus Believe in Predestination and Election? by Jim Bublitz

This is a response to those who would appeal to the early church father Irenaeus to somehow prove that these biblical doctrines were not believed prior to Augustine. Unfortunately, many in the Emerging Church Movement today are adverse to the doctrinal precision of the last several centuries. In seeking like-mindedness, these folks often try to take shelter in what they think is the bunker of the first couple of centuries of Christianity. The believers back in those days didn't seem all of that concerned about these issues, or at least, that's how the thinking goes.

Well it is true that those first centuries were focused on fighting other errors in areas that were being attacked in those times, including the Trinity and the person of Christ. But that does not mean that these Christians were not believers in the biblical doctrines of election and predestination. Responding to a Dr. Daniel Whitby during the early 18th century, John Gill wrote his work entitled The Cause of God and Truth in 1734. In it he went through the documentation related to many of the most well known early church fathers, examining their beliefs on these doctrine. What follows is just one of several sections in that book dealing with Irenaeus. But before we hear from Gill, the reader should be reminded that John Calvin interacted a great deal with the early church fathers as well, and certainly - their writings did not convince him that these doctrines were somehow not biblical.

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IRENAEUS. A.D. 180. IRENAEUS was a disciple of Polycarp, and an auditor of Papais, who were both disciples of the apostle John; he was first a presbyter under Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, in France, and when he died, who suffered martyrdom f864 about A.D. 178, he succeeded him as bishop of that place, and became a martyr about f865 A.D. 198. He wrote five books against the heresies of the Valentinians and Gnostics, which remain to this day; from whence may be gathered his sense concerning the decrees of God. And,

1. It is evident, that he believed that all things are predetermined by God, and are overruled by him for the good of his church and people; yea, that even the fall of man is used to their advantage; for he says, f866 that "God has shown the greatness of his mind in the apostasy of man, for man is taught by it;" as the prophet says "Thy backslidings shall reform thee." Prefiniente Deo omnia ad hominis perfectionem. "God predetermining all things for the perfection of man, and for the bringing about and manifestation of his dispositions, that goodness may be shown, and righteousness perfected, and the church be conformed to the image of his Son, and at length become a perfect man, and by such things be made ripe to see God, and enjoy him."

2. He asserts a preparation of happiness for some, and of punishment for others, upon the prescience or foreknowledge of God; his words are these: f867 Deus autem omnia praesciens utrisque aptas praeparavit habitationes, etc. "God foreknowing all things, has prepared for both suitable habitations;" for them who seek after the light of incorruptibility, and run unto it, he bountifully gives that light which they desire; but for others that despise it, and turn themselves from it, and avoid it, and as it were blinding their own selves, he hath prepared darkness fitting for such who are against the light, and for those who shun being subject to it, he has "provided proper punishment." It is true, he puts this upon the prescience of God, foreknowing the different characters and actions of men; and therefore Vossius, f868 and Dr. Whitby, f869 from him, have produced this passage, with others, to prove, that the fathers before Austin held, that God predestinated men to live from a prescience that they would live piously; but I think it may very well be understood, in a sense entirely consistent with the doctrine of predestination, as maintained by us; for we readily own, that God foreknew who would live piously, and seek after the light of life, because he determined to give them that grace which should enable them so to do, and therefore prepared mansions of light and glory for them; and, to use Irenaeus's own phrase, benigne donans, of his own grace and goodness liberally and bountifully gives that light unto them which they desire, and he has prepared for them. On the other hand, he foreknew who would despise, and shun the light, and blind themselves yet more and more; because he determined to leave them to themselves, to their native blindness, darkness, and ignorance, which they love; and accordingly prepared regions of darkness, as a proper punishment for them. For,

3. He speaks of a certain number of persons chosen to eternal life, and of God's giving up others to, and leaving them in their unbelief, in much such language as we usually do. Treating of the doctrine of the resurrection, he has these words, f870 "God is not so poor and indigent as not to give to every body its own soul as its proper form. Hence pleronthentos ton arithmou ou autos par auto proorise, pantes oi engrapheetes eis zoen anastesontai, having completed the number which he before determined with himself, all those who are written, or ordained unto life, shall rise again, having their own bodies, souls, and spirits, in which they pleased God; but those who are deserving of punishment shall go into it, having also their own souls and bodies in which they departed from the grace of God." And in another place, f871 having cited several passages of Scripture which respect the blinding and hardening of the heart of Pharaoh, and others, such as Isaiah 6:9, 10, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Romans 1:28, 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12, which are commonly made use of in handling the doctrine of reprobation, he thus descants upon them, "If therefore now, as many as God knows, will not believe, since he foreknows all things, tradidit eos infidelitati eorum, he hath given them up to their infidelity, "and turns his face from them," relinquens eos in tenebris, "leaving them in the darkness which they have chosen for themselves;" is it to be wondered at, that he then "gave up Pharaoh, who would never believe, with them that were with him, to their own infidelity?" And elsewhere, f872 having mentioned the words in Romans 9:10-12, so frequently urged in this controversy, he has this observation upon them, "from hence it is manifest, that not only the prophecies of the patriarchs, but the birth of Rebecca, was a prophecy of two people, one greater, the other less; one in bondage, the other free; of one and the same father; one and the same God is ours and theirs, who understands things hidden; qui scit omnia antequam fiant, 'who knows all things before they come to pass,' and therefore hath said, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated."

4. Eternal predestination, or predestination before time, before men have a being, was not unknown to this ancient writer; for in one place he says, f873 "being predestinated indeed according to the knowledge of the Father; ut essemus qui nondum eramus, that we might be, who as yet were not, made, or were the beginning of his creation." And not to take any further notice than barely to mention his reading the text in Romans 1:1, Predestinated to the Gospel of God; and which after him is so rendered by Origen, Chrysostom, and Theophylact, who understand it not of the vocation of Paul to the apostleship, but of his eternal election, and the preordination of him of old, before he was born.

5. He plainly hints at the stability and immovableness of the decree of election, when he calls it, turris electionis, "the tower of election;" for why should he call it a tower, but because it is impregnable and immoveable, because "the purpose of God, according to election, is that foundation which stands sure, not of works, but of him that calleth?" For having taken notice of some passages of the prophets, he thus says, f875 "These things the prophets declaring required the fruit of righteousness, but the people not believing, at last he sent his own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: whom, when the wicked husbandmen had killed, they cast out of the vineyard; wherefore the Lord God hath delivered it to other husbandmen, who render him the fruits in their seasons; not now walled about, but spread throughout the whole world; turre electionis exaltata ubique et speciosa, "the tower of election being every where exalted and glorious." That is, if I understand him right, the election obtained every where, or electing grace took place, not in Judea only, as heretofore, but in all the nations of the world; for it follows, "every where the church is famous, every where a winepress is dug, and every where there are some that receive the Spirit." There are two passages cited from Irenaeus by Dr. Whitby, f876 as militating against the doctrines of absolute election and reprobation, but both of them respect the doctrine of free will; and it must be owned, that there are some things dropped by this writer, which, upon first reading them, seem to favor that doctrine, and will be considered in their proper place.

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Tom Nettles gives more background on Gill's: The Cause of God and Truth:

Gill undertook the project to refute the arguments of Daniel Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points. This grand defense of Arminianism might just as well have been a defense of popery as far as Gill was concerned, for Arminianism and Pelagianism were "the very life and soul of Popery". Beyond popery, however, the man-centered teaching of Arminianism seemed to be irresistibly drawn historically to even more sinister theological connections. In his earlier writing ministry, Whitby had refuted the Arian and Socinian errors, but, by the end of his life, according to the posthumously published Last Thoughts, he was a convinced Unitarian. Gill identified Arminianism with "other supposed rational schemes men run into, contrary to divine revelation".

The best way that I know of to get your hands on the book is to purchase it on the Ages Software CD called The Collected Writings of John Gill.

Footnotes:

- f866 -- Irenaeus adv. Haeres. 50:4, c. 72, p. 419.
- f867 -- Irenaeus adv. Haeres. 50:4, c. 76, p. 423.
- f868 -- Hist. Pelag. 50:6; Thess. 8, p. 542.
- f869 -- Discourse on the Five Points, p. 101; ed. 2. 100.
- f870 -- L. 2, c. 62, inter Fragment. Graec. ad. calcem.
- f871 -- L. 4, c. 48, p. 389.
- f872 -- L. 4, c. 38, p. 376.
- f873 -- L. 5, c. 1, p. 432.
- f874 -- L. 3, c. 18, p. 276.
- f875 -- L. 4, c. 70, p. 412.
- f876 -- Discourse on the Five Points, p. 96; ed. 2. 95.

Jim Bublitz

**Re: - posted by whyme, on: 2008/11/14 8:25**

I wonder if Mr. Bercot would be as likely to accept all the teachings of the early church fathers. While I have not studied the writings of those fathers much, I am familiar enough that if the early church fathers are our definitive guide for theology then we should all be at the Catholic Church this Sunday. There are many things they held which we in protestantism object to. By this, I don't intend to concede that free will was held by the early church but I can say that the book of Sirac (sp?) does support a free will position, a book we Protestants don't support as scriptural.

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/14 9:16**

Friend,

I'll give you the short answer: any early church father who denied the sovereign grace of God was mistaken, because the Scripture teaches that God must draw men before they can even believe.

Secondly, those aren't early Christians. Paul was an early Christian. John was an early Christian.

Thirdly, they believed all sorts of other strange teachings, which, not surprisingly, aren't mentioned.

Fourthly, quoting verses such as John 3:16, etc. do not prove the Arminian position. Why? Because those who believe in the sovereign grace of God fully agree with them. We simply believe that nobody can believe unless it is given to Him from above.

Notice this verse from James:

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

It is often quoted alone, however, notice the next verse: *"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."*

These two verses are connected.

Grace to you,  
Taylor

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/11/14 12:30

Quote:

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tjservant wrote:

Many people have been over the writings of the early church fathers and do not side with David Bercot. This is just one article of many. I am only posting this to show that there is another side to the story and that the book Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up by David Bercot is not the "be all, end all" some folks believe it to be.

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well there is always two sides of the story, the same with all people, take calvin, some put him and his teaching on a pedestal and say his writings is the best that ever was written outside scripture, others say he was a heretic and a murderer.

We chose what we believe.

same with the rest, some like Augustine and his teachings, i think he created more heresies than any other and wrought the greatest damage to christianity ever, but that's just my opinion. And i read both sides.

Also with the early church fathers so called, i read both sides. For my self the more i read the more i am convinced we have much error in our theology coming from Augustine and the reformation.

Taylor says they have a faulty theology unless it lines up with his understanding of grace.

It is funny that the early church, some of them, taught free will to such a degree we would label them heretics in a second, yet some of them was taught by the apostle Paul for many years.

Yet some claim they understand Paul better, and rather take an Augustinian monk's doctrines over people who sat directly under Paul and John.

These people not only knew greek they thought it, they spoke it and they lived in the bible age, not only read history about it.

Not saying all they wrote is accurate or i am not trying to canonise their writing.

But i take their writing any day over some of the reformation "heroes"

Their life if anything is a testimony, today most people have a doctrine but no life.

As for David Bercot's understanding of the early church fathers, i think he understands them rightly. It's just we like this German childbaptising monk so much we have a hard time looking away from his teachings. With the other predestination teachers. The ones who teach the kind of predestination that takes away man's ability to choose. Which is contrary to the word in my understanding. And it has been refreshing to see people who were taught by the apostle Paul had the same understanding.

I have recently read through much of church history, listened to the Calvinistic historians and the other side. And what a difference! one could think it is two totally different periods but they speak of the same event same time and yet so different. History is fragile.

One thing Bercot points out in his book, it was not Calvin who invented this doctrine of predestination. It was the gnostics, or a segment of them, since there was all kinds of different gnostics, but they held this doctrine, that is very similar to what we call Calvinism.

And John writes about them in 1 John and calls them antichrists.

Even if they had the right doctrine, their life was worthy of such statements.

And anyone who says "they err in their doctrine" or calls someone else heretic, better be sure their life surpasses the ones they call heretic.

shame on us if it dont.

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/14 12:41**

Quote:  
-----It is funny that the early church, some of them, taught free will to such a degree we would label them heretics in a second, yet some of them was taught by the apostle Paul for many years.  
-----

Friend, from what I know of the church fathers, that quote is untrue. Which church father that was taught by the apostle Paul for many years denied the sovereignty of God in election?

Actually, we have no extant writings of any church father that was taught by the Apostle Paul personally, much less many years of teaching.

Finally, the word "predestination" is a Bible word. It is actually in the text; we have to reckon with it.

**Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/11/14 13:04**

Quote:  
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Friend, from what I know of the church fathers, that quote is untrue. Which church father that was taught by the apostle Paul for many years denied the sovereignty of God in election?

Actually, we have no extant writings of any church father that was taught by the Apostle Paul personally, much less many years of teaching.

Finally, the word "predestination" is a Bible word. It is actually in the text; we have to reckon with it.  
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Yes brother i do recon on it, just not as calvin and luther recon on it and in doing so cancelling out mans free will.

that kind is not in the bible.

I do recon on God is the savior and giver of salvation.

But as in any gift... you can chose to accept or deny it.

We can not do anything to deserve or earn the gift, that train has left long time ago.

But God send another one, anyone who will may jump on. Some dont, a few do.

I do not see a contradiction between Gods election and mans free will to chose Him.

I am a strong believer in predestination. Not the kind that came out of Augustine and Calvin thou.

But as for people under Paul, according tradition and widely accepted throughout history Clement sat under Paul. Paul writes and says even Clement has his name in the book of life.

Now Clements letters are not in the bible, so we should not read them as such, and he speaks much on "predestination" in this letter also, but just as scripture you find much that can be related to mans free will also.

I'll give you a link here.

(<http://www.carm.org/lost/1clement.htm>) the first epistle of Clement

**Re:, on: 2008/11/14 13:09**

One thing I know for sure... this issue will **never** be settled in this life by any of us.

It has no bearing on whether or not one is saved. God does not require of any of us to be a Calvinist or an Arminian. You can be a Calvinist and be saved. You can be an Arminian and be saved. You can be a Calvinistic-Arminian and be saved. You can be an Arminianistic-Calvinist and be saved.

Who cares??

The only time I have an issue, at this point in time, is when I meet a hyper-Calvinist who doesn't believe in evangelism... and sits back and lets people go to hell without telling them of Jesus because, after all, it was God's will that they go to hell.

But other than that extreme case... who cares?

I'm not saying it isn't important to fully understand the scriptures, and want to have the Holy Spirit reveal the truth to us on all matters of doctrine and theology. You all know me, and you know I'm all about sound doctrine.

But in the end... we spend way too much time on this forum trying to prove to each other one side or the other. Nothing ever gets settled. Never will.

Krispy

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/14 13:14**

Thank you for your response.

Friend, like you said, there is really no authoritative weight to Clement's writings. However, I have read the entirety of Clement's epistle recently, and it doesn't ever deny election.

I saw the quote you produced where he stated that evil is voluntary. To this, all Reformed/Calvinist agree. All Reformed Confessions that I know of state that man voluntarily chooses sin; however, they state that man cannot voluntarily choose good, because his heart is so evilly twisted and sinful.

God simply chooses, as Ephesians says, out of the good pleasure of His will. Men can call it arbitrary if they want, I call it unmerited grace.

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/14 13:17**

Quote:

-----Who cares??  
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I would submit that the vast majority of problems in the professing church lamented on SermonIndex spring from Arminian theology.

If man's salvation is not a free, sovereign work of God, why not play emotional music to convince people? Why not twist arms? If the Spirit freely working through the preached Word is not sufficient, there will never be an end to the human innovations in the professing church.

Grace to you,  
Taylor

**Re: - posted by Miccah (), on: 2008/11/14 13:20**

TaylorOtwell wrote:

Quote:

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I would submit that the vast majority of problems in the professing church lamented on SermonIndex spring from Arminian theology.  
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Wow! :-?

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/14 13:28**

I knew that would kind of raise some eyebrows; however, I didn't just spit that out without thinking about it. I have put a lot of thought into the problems in the professing church and have seriously found most of them to be related to a lack of understanding of the Biblical sovereignty of God.

Grace to you,  
Taylor

**Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/11/14 13:35**

Quote:

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TaylorOtwell wrote:

I knew that would kind of raise some eyebrows; however, I didn't just spit that out without thinking about it. I have put a lot of thought into the problems in the professing church and have seriously found most of them to be related to a lack of understanding of the Biblical sovereignty of God.

Grace to you,  
Taylor  
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I also have thought hard on this, and i think most problems come from the fact man has no responsibility, because of all the faulty doctrines that flooded the world after the reformation, some doctrines teach one cant lose their salvation.

So this has created a mass of people professing christ but live just as the world. So the bad state of the "church" so called, is more right to lay at Luther and Calvins feet. Not Arminius.

But even here will the discussion go on forever.

I for one, will follow those who died for their faith, and not the ones that killed those who disagreed with them.

As for SI, it is not calvinism or arminianism or Gods grace or whatever that is the problem,

it is people that is the problem, we are to little like Jesus.

I think Jesus could have fellowshiped both with Calvin and arminius without having "problems".

But anyhow, Jesus preached if any man will come, so I will continue to follow that.

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/14 13:49**

Thank you for your response.

All "Calvinists" believe that any man that comes to Christ will be saved.

The Puritans weren't called Puritans because they were so stricly conscience of pleasing God. They were also all strict Calvinist. There is no merit to the claim that Reformed theology, correctly held, breeds ungodliness.

You're right, the dicussion here could go on forever, and there is really no point in continuing on this that topic, since it is not the point of the thread, and I don't wish to distract from the original topic at hand, forgive me if I already have.

Grace to you,  
Taylor

**Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2008/11/14 14:03**

Quote:  
-----I would submit that the vast majority of problems in the professing church lamented on SermonIndex spring from Arminian theology.  
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I amen your words here brother.

May I also add that the Arminian/Semi-Pelagian view of man also leads to much "law" preaching. This comes across as "12 steps to financial freedom", "18 ways to better your marriage" etc.

In this type of preaching, man is thrust upon himself to be his own "savior". There is little mention of sin, so man doesn't need the Savior from sin, he only needs a better example or moral instructor(funny, that is how Pelagius viewed Christ a s well).

Since there is an assumption of the Gospel, the Gospel goes on denied as "the power of God for salvation" and man be comes his own way of salvation. Sadly this produces either self-righteousness or despair. This sadly is the state of the v ast majority of Christians in America.

I highly recommend "Christless Christianity" by Michael Horton. It is a wonderful look into this dilemma. There is a book and a DVD of this for those who have trouble finishing a book(like me).

**Re: - posted by HomeFree89 (), on: 2008/11/14 14:08**

Quote:  
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TaylorOtwell wrote:

I would submit that the vast majority of problems in the professing church lamented on SermonIndex spring from Arminian theology.

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I would respectfully disagree.

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/11/14 14:53

Quote:

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HomeFree89 wrote:

Quote:

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TaylorOtwell wrote:

I would submit that the vast majority of problems in the professing church lamented on SermonIndex spring from Arminian theology.

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I would respectfully disagree.

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I agree

:-P

Well both sides has some bad things, but you know both RL and TO thatthe "arminian" side has some very good and godly preachers that lived and did not preach three steps to financial freedom.

or the other worthless things we see.

We have many on this site, take Tozer, Ravenhill , Sparks, Art Katz , John Wesley ect ect ect.

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/14 15:08

I completely agree. Many fiery preachers on this site would not agree with these views of salvation. Also, I respect both of your opinions that I am wrong in that matter about Arminianism being the root of much of the problems in the professing church.

However, I think one thing that is often neglected is that being godly involves believing right things about God as well as living holy. They are connected. One cannot simply believe right things about God, live wicked, and be properly called godly. Likewise, one cannot believe all sorts of wrong things about God, live very morally, and then be called godly. I think it is a dangerous habit to fall into either extreme. Often it seems like we excuse false doctrine if the preacher is moral, and then proclaim them godly, because we assume living right must be more important than believing right.

I don't mean to make either living holy and believing right things about God more important than the other, however, I think both should be properly weight when talking about godliness.

Thank you both for responding graciously and discussing these things.

Grace to you,  
Taylor

Re: - posted by HomeFree89 (), on: 2008/11/14 15:15

Quote:

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hmmhmm wrote:

Quote:

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HomeFree89 wrote:

Quote:

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TaylorOtwell wrote:

I would submit that the vast majority of problems in the professing church lamented on SermonIndex spring from Arminian theology.

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I would respectfully disagree.

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I agree

:-P

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LOL :-)

I would like to add some more quotes:

Â“In the beginning, He made the human race with the power of thought and of choosing the truth and doing right, so that all men are without excuse before God.Â” (Justin Martyr)

"God's will is especially obeyed by the free will of good men." (Clement of Alexandria)

"Believing and obeying are in our own power." (Clement of Alexandria)

"Nor will he who is saved be saved against his will, for he is not inanimate. but above all, he will speed to salvation voluntarily and of free choice." (Clement of Alexandria)

"Choice depended on the man as being free. But the gift depended on God as the Lord. And He gives to those who are willing, are exceedingly earnest, and who ask. So their salvation becomes their own. For God does not compel." (Clement of Alexandria)

EDIT: Adding a few more. :-)

"When you are desirous to do well, God is also ready to assist you." (Ignatius)

"Man was made with a free will...on account of his capacity of obeying or disobeying God. For this was the meaning of the gift of free will." (Methodius)

**Re: - posted by HomeFree89 (), on: 2008/11/14 15:28**

Taylor,

Thank you for your gracious reply too. I appreciate your response and agree that we must have a right view of God and be walking holy before Him.

I would also like to say that I have a great respect for both calvinistic and arminian preachers. That is, as long as they are preaching the true gospel, etc. :-) I just take exception to different parts of the TULIP, but this doesn't mean I take all of the arminian beliefs either.

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/14 15:40**

For clarity, it should be noted that Clement of Alexandria was born well after Paul died, same for Justin Martyr - both of which appeared to have strayed from the truth concerning salvation.

**Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/11/14 15:52**

Quote:  
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TaylorOtwell wrote:  
For clarity, it should be noted that Clement of Alexandria was born well after Paul died, same for Justin Martyr - both of which appeared to have strayed from the truth concerning salvation.  
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clement of alexandria is not same as clement of rome, thinking of clarity of first page

Alexandrian Clement lived somewhere between 150-200

Justin Martyr 110-165

so to say they lived long after is some what over the edge, to say the german monk lived long after thereof his limited understanding of salvation i can understand, a lot of things happend in 1400 something years. but seeing Justin martyr lived 20 years or so after the last apostle left this world, there where still people who was taught directly by the apostles, heard them preach, and as i said, these people read the scriptures, they read Pauls letters, in greek, thought in greek lived in the same area same time period.

Yet many think, a german monk 1400 years later understand salvation as taught in the scriptures better?

come on!

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/14 16:16**

Hi brother,

I think if you go look through the recent predestination thread, you will find we quote Luther and Calvin zero times. However, we do quote the Lord and the Apostles a lot.

Also, I suggest you speak a little more graciously of Martin Luther, even if you disagree with him. If the Lord didn't use him in the Reformation, it is likely you would be worshipping bread this Sunday in mass.

Grace to you,  
Taylor

Re: - posted by Miccah (), on: 2008/11/14 16:31

TaylorOtwell wrote:

Quote:  
-----

Also, I suggest you speak a little more graciously of Martin Luther, even if you disagree with him. If the Lord didn't use him in the Reformation, it is likely you would be worshipping bread this Sunday in mass.  
-----

That is the best thing said on this thread so far. Thanks for the goofs. :-)

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/11/14 16:39

Quote:  
-----I think if you go look through the recent predestination thread, you will find we quote Luther and Calvin zero times. However, we do quote the Lord and the Apostles a lot.  
-----

Amen.

I find the doctrines of grace in the Bible.

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/11/14 17:34

Quote:  
-----

TaylorOtwell wrote:  
Hi brother,

I think if you go look through the recent predestination thread, you will find we quote Luther and Calvin zero times. However, we do quote the Lord and the Apostles a lot.

Also, I suggest you speak a little more graciously of Martin Luther, even if you disagree with him. If the Lord didn't use him in the Reformation, it is likely you would be worshipping bread this Sunday in mass.

Grace to you,  
Taylor  
-----

I have followed the thread, it is mostly same arguments that has been flying back and forth throughout the centuries of debate.

I do apologize for my ungraceful speech about Luther. Yes we owe him some things, even though I disagree on his interpretation of scripture, or most of it. But he did some good, he did.

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2008/11/14 17:57

Quote:  
-----

TaylorOtwell wrote:

Also, I suggest you speak a little more graciously of Martin Luther, even if you disagree with him. If the Lord didn't use him in the Reformation, it is likely you would be worshipping bread this Sunday in mass.

Grace to you,  
Taylor  
-----

No sir brother Taylor, friend, I must disagree with you. The elect definitely would not worshipping bread and doing mass for the scriptures are clear concerning the elect. It would have to be only the non elect that would be still worshipping bread and going to mass.

Ro 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

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

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/14 18:48**

Well observed, Roger!

Thank you for correcting my mistake.

Grace to you,  
Taylor

**Re: Freedom in Christ alone - posted by savannah, on: 2008/11/14 23:39**

Vincent Cheung on Eph. 1:3-14

The biblical doctrine of predestination opposes the popular assumption that man has free will.

Now, in theological and philosophical literature, free will is rarely defined, and almost never defined in a correct and relevant way.

Since freedom is a relative concept— you are free from something— in defining free will, we must ask, "Free from what?"

If by "free will" we are referring to freedom from God in any sense, then we must reject it. In this sense, only God possesses free will, since he alone is free from all influences other than or outside of himself.

But if we are referring to freedom from any other thing, then in our context it is irrelevant, because we are considering whether or not we have any freedom in our relationship with God, and not in our relationship with any other person or thing.

As Martin Luther writes: "But our question is this: whether he has 'free-will' God-ward, that God should obey man and do what man wills, or whether God has not rather a free will with respect to man, that man should will and do what God wills, and be able to do nothing but what He wills and does."

With this proper definition of free will in mind, the Bible nowhere teaches that man has free will, but instead it repeatedly teaches that God has absolute sovereignty over man, including all his decisions and actions.

Nevertheless, the sinful desire for autonomy is so ingrained in sinful man's thinking that he falsely assumes that he indeed has such freedom, and at times even asserts that the Scripture also acknowledges it.

Some commentators cannot resist their sinful urge to defy what our passage teaches and implies. For example, after briefly acknowledging that this passage teaches the doctrine of predestination, Francis Foulkes adds, "This doctrine of election, or predestination—...is not set in opposition to the self-evident fact of human free will."

He offers neither biblical references nor his own arguments, but just says that free will is self-evident.

But it is not at all self-evident that man has free will; rather, what is self-evident is that if absolute predestination is true, then human free will is false.

Foulkes continues, "It involves a paradox that the New Testament does not seek to resolve, and that our finite minds cannot fathom."

There is a "paradox" now? How? Where? Why? It is "self-evident" to me that...his mind is indeed "finite" – very finite.

As Luther writes, "There is no conflict in the words of Scripture, and no need of an 'explanation' to 'cut the knot.' The protagonists of 'free-will' create difficulties where none exist, and dream contradictions for themselves."

Foulkes, like many others, insists that there is such a thing as human free will when Scripture nowhere teaches it, and then when he comes against the doctrine of absolute predestination, which the Scripture does teach, he cries, "Paradox!" and "Mystery!"

...Let it be clear, then, that Scripture contradicts Foulkes, not itself.

If God is sovereign, then man cannot be free – that is, not free from God, his power and his control. However, this does not contradict the biblical teaching that man is morally responsible for his thoughts and actions. The common confusion is that freedom and responsibility are either the same thing – so that they are sometimes even used interchangeably in theological and philosophical literature – or that one cannot be without the other. The false assumption is that if man is not free, then he must not be responsible. In other words, the assumed premise, often unstated, is that "Responsibility presupposes freedom."

However, there is no reason to accept this premise, since by definition, responsibility has nothing whatsoever to do with freedom; rather, responsibility has to do with whether one will be held accountable. The first dictionary definition for "responsible" is "liable to be called on to answer."

Since God has given his moral laws to humanity, and since he has pronounced judgment upon those who would disobey, this means that man is responsible. The issue of freedom does not enter into the discussion.

...In *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther writes as follows against Erasmus:

Wherefore, my good Erasmus, as often as you confront me with the words of the law, so often shall I confront you with the words of Paul: "By the law is knowledge of sin" – not power of will! Gather together from the big concordances all the imperative words into one chaotic heap – and I shall at once declare that they always show, not what men can do, or do do, but what they should do!

Even grammarians and schoolboys at street corners know that nothing more is signified by verbs in the imperative mood than what ought to be done, and that what is done or can be done should be expressed by verbs in the indicative. How is it that you theologians are twice as stupid as schoolboys, in that as soon as you get hold of a single imperative verb you infer an indicative meaning, as though the moment a thing is commanded it is done, or can be done? But there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip! – and things that you commanded and that were possible enough may yet not be done, so great a gulf is there between imperative and indicative statements in the simplest everyday matters!

Yet in this business of keeping the law, which is as far out of our reach as heaven is from the earth and just as impossible of attainment, you make indicatives out of imperatives with such alacrity that the moment you hear the word of command: "do," "keep," "choose," you will straightway have it that it has been kept, done, chosen, or fulfilled, or that these things can be done by our own strength!"

With Luther, we must affirm that on this subject Scripture contains no contradictions, no antinomies, and no paradoxes, but that unfaithful and incompetent theologians "create difficulties where none exist, and dream contradictions for themselves."

Scripture teaches both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and these two do not contradict each other; moreover, human responsibility does not presuppose human freedom. Then, the question becomes one of justice. The objection is that if this is the case, that is, if God gives moral laws to people who cannot obey them, then would it not be unjust for God to judge them?

Again, the objection joins together two different things by pure assumption without argument. Since when and according to whom is justice necessarily related to the freedom to obey? Just because you join them in your mind does not mean that they must be joined.

Paul anticipates such an illogical objection when he discusses divine election in his letter to the Romans. He comes to the conclusion that God sovereignly determines and controls all things, even the will of man:

"Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden" (Romans 9:18). But then he continues, "One of you will say to me: 'Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?'" (v. 19).

The objection is the same one that we are now considering. The claim is that since God controls all things, this means that no one can decide against what God has decided. And since God chooses to harden some people, this means that there is no free will to obey God's commands.

But then, God has determined to judge disobedience. Since the objector falsely assumes that responsibility presupposes freedom, he asks, "Then why does God still hold me responsible, if I do not have the freedom to obey or disobey?" In response, Paul rebukes the objector, and writes:

But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? (Romans 9:20-24)

God is the sole standard of justice, and we must submit to his standard instead of imposing our own false standard on him. Accordingly, God has the "right" to prepare some people for glory, and to prepare others for destruction. As for the charge that the doctrine of predestination encourages licentiousness, there must be something wrong with those who make this objection.

Before I heard this objection for the first time, it never crossed my mind that the grace of God could be a license to sin. It is only right that man submits to God and obeys his commands (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Yet some of these objectors speak as if sin necessarily follows grace. Whose fault is it that they think this? The objection poses no challenge to the doctrine of predestination, but it does tell us something about how these people think. In any case, Paul writes that God has predestined us "to be holy and blameless in his sight," so that predestination leads to holiness, and not licentiousness.

**Re: - posted by repentcanada, on: 2008/11/15 2:22**

Hi HmmmHmmm. Do you believe the early Church should have sided with Pelagius? You seem to have a lot of animosity towards the doctrines of grace. They don't teach that man has no free will. They just teach that his free will is tainted by sin and has no desire in and of itself to choose GOD so man, by his own free will, always prefers to reject Him. GOD respects that choice and allows them to go on in their sin as Romans ch.1 says. I always ask the question, "What about GOD's free will? Doesn't HE have the right to choose? Is HE bound and chained by our own self-determination?"

Check this out, it may clear things up a bit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKciLp1B3K0&feature=related>

**Re: - posted by HomeFree89 (), on: 2008/11/15 10:30**

Quote:  
-----They just teach that his free will is tainted by sin and has no desire in and of itself to choose GOD so man, by his own free will, always prefers to reject Him.  
-----

Do they really? That's not the impression I received.

**Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/11/15 10:35**

Quote:  
-----  
HomeFree89 wrote:

Quote:  
-----They just teach that his free will is tainted by sin and has no desire in and of itself to choose GOD so man, by his own free will, always prefers to reject Him.  
-----

Do they really? That's not the impression I received.  
-----

Check out ([http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic\\_id25092&forum34&1](http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id25092&forum34&1)) this article. I believe it may help you in your understanding.

Grace and peace

**Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2008/11/15 11:15**

2Pe 3:15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

2Pe 3:16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

**Re:, on: 2008/11/15 11:55**

Free will just means the ability to make a choice. Once Jesus says "Obey" you now have a choice. It's crucial for anyone who is concerned about their salvation to know that God has given you the choice because he loves you and wants you to be saved. God's heart is clean and pure. You don't get to blame your flesh anymore. You have to put its ungodly works to death then be baptized into Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. God grant mercy to this world!

Re: - posted by HomeFree89 (), on: 2008/11/15 14:57

Quote:  
-----  
tjservant wrote:  
  
Quote:  
-----  
HomeFree89 wrote:  
  
Quote:  
-----They just teach that his free will is tainted by sin and has no desire in and of itself to choose GOD so man, by his own free will, always prefers to reject Him.  
-----

Do they really? That's not the impression I received.  
-----

Check out ([http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic\\_id25092&forum34&1](http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id25092&forum34&1)) this article. I believe it may help you in your understanding.

Grace and peace  
-----

Thanks TJ for the link, but I read that when you originally posted it. I disagreed with it then and still do now.

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/11/16 2:51

Quote:  
-----  
repentcanada wrote:  
Hi HmmHmmm. Do you believe the early Church should have sided with Pelagius? You seem to have a lot of animosity towards the doctrines of grace. They don't teach that man has no free will. They just teach that his free will is tainted by sin and has no desire in and of itself to choose GOD so man, by his own free will, always prefers to reject Him. GOD respects that choice and allows them to go on in their sin as Romans ch.1 says. I always ask the question, "What about GOD's free will? Doesn't HE have the right to choose? Is HE bound and chained by our own self-determination?"

Check this out, it may clear things up a bit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKciLp1B3K0&feature=related>  
-----

Well depends on who's doctrine of grace you are speaking of, if you mean Paul's I believe what he says, do you mean Augustine's or Calvin's or Luther's interpretation and doctrines, I utterly reject those as dangerous deceptions and perversion of what the Scripture teaches in the whole sum of Scripture.

But I am a strong believer in doctrine of grace, as taught in Scripture.

but I don't see that God's absolute sovereignty in any way is a contradiction for the ability in man to choose to love God.

*I have proved in what has been said that those who were foreknown to be unrighteous, whether men or angels, are not made wicked by God's fault. Rather, each man is what he will appear to be through his own fault*

Justin Martyr

**Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/11/16 2:58**

Some persons decide that man is not possessed of free will. Rather, they assert that he is governed by the unavoidable necessities of fate and her unwritten commands. Such persons are guilty of impiety towards God Himself. For they make Him out to be the cause and author of human evils.

Methodius

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/11/17 8:45**

Quote:  
-----Friend, from what I know of the church fathers, that quote is untrue. Which church father that was taught by the apostle Paul for many years denied the sovereignty of God in election?  
-----

What dates are you thinking of? Augustine is a major shift and most pre-Augustine writers give full weight to human accountability and personal choice.

Quote:  
-----Actually, we have no extant writings of any church father that was taught by the Apostle Paul personally, much less many years of teaching.  
-----

I'm not quite sure what that means unless you want to leave the early church fathers out of the discussion altogether. I would be happy to leave them out but you can't have your cake and eat it.

Quote:  
-----Finally, the word "predestination" is a Bible word. It is actually in the text; we have to reckon with it.  
-----

Actually it isn't. 'predestination' is a noun which is never used in scripture. The verb 'predestinate' IS found in scripture in Acts 4:28; Rom 8:29-30; 1Cor 2:7; Eph 1:5, 11. However it is not the word but its definition which is the issue here.

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/17 13:33**

Hi Ron,

The time period/people I particularly had in mind were the "Apostolic Fathers" (those who lived during or who had direct contact with the Apostles). None of them deny the sovereignty of God in election.

Regarding Augustine bringing a major shift to the thinking of his day, I don't think that really brings anything to bear on the situation. Pelagius had gathered major influence and caused major controversy. The doctrines of grace have been fought against and denied for the majority of Christian history, even in Paul's day. What Augustine did for the doctrines of grace is very similar to what Athanasius did for the doctrine of the deity of Christ, the prevailing climate of the day really has nothing to do with the validity of what either man taught. The Apostolic teachings regarding the radical grace of the gospel had been perverted over the several centuries before Augustine, and have been perverted since.

Also, I sometimes get the impression that people believe Augustine was the lone ranger who believed any of these things and he somehow convinced a group of followers of their validity, which isn't true.

Regarding giving full weight to human accountability and personal choice, those of "Reformed" conviction do give full weight to these things. However, we believe that men's will is so depraved that men will not choose God without God opening their blind eyes.

Quote:  
-----Actually, we have no extant writings of any church father that was taught by the Apostle Paul personally, much less many years of t

eaching. I'm not quite sure what that means unless you want to leave the early church fathers out of the discussion altogether. I would be happy to leave them out but you can't have your cake and eat it.  
-----

In an earlier post (I believe it was by HmmHmm), he made reference to some church fathers who were taught by the Apostle Paul for many years as supposedly denying the sovereignty of God in salvation. I challenged that statement on the basis that we may not even have the writings of any church fathers who were taught personally by Paul. The only one that could \*possibly\* have connection with Paul is Clement (Phil 4:3), but the quote attributed to "Clement" in the first post is from Clement of Alexandria, who lived later and had no direct connection to the Apostles.

I would be fine with leaving the church fathers out of the discussion entirely. Honestly, the Apostolic Fathers give no "smoking gun" that would convince anyone either way. And, any early church father has to be considered with this in mind: "*I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.*" (Acts 20:29-30)

Thank you for pointing out my mistake regarding "predestination". Yes, the definition of the word predestinate is the question. Dictionary definition, for what it's worth: To destine or determine in advance; foreordain.

Grace to you,  
Taylor

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/11/17 14:26**

Hi Taylor,

Quote:  
-----Thank you for pointing out my mistake regarding "predestination". Yes, the definition of the word predestinate is the question. Dictionary definition, for what it's worth: To destine or determine in advance; foreordain.  
-----

The dictionary is always the last place to go when trying to understand the biblical use of a word, although I have no objection to this particular dictionary definition.

The Biblical usage of the word is as follows...

Acts 4:28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

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

1Cor. 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,

Eph. 1:5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

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

I think if you examine the list you will find that the word is not used in the sense of personal salvation but denotes God-determined events rather than God-determined destinies for individuals.

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/17 14:29**

Thanks for your response, Ron.

Perhaps the first verse that comes to mind regarding individual, personal predestination is Ephesians 1:5, which you quoted:

*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will...*

If we are predestined to be adopted as children of God, is that not predestined to be brought into the Lord's eternal Kingdom?

Grace to you,  
Taylor

**Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2008/11/17 18:28**

Thanks Ron for your posts. Doesn't the bible then make it clear that the destiny of those who don't believe in the Son is that the wrath of God abides on them already?

The bible brings out that God predestinates the "whosoever that believeth" to be formed to the image of Christ. We can't believe something that would contradict what God has said somewhere else in scripture. God knows everything from the beginning to the end.

The foreknowledge of God should not be interpreted in a way that would contradict the "whosoever that believeth" into meaning that whosoever does not mean whosoever but only the whosoever that were determined before there would even be a whosoever.

When people take "the whosoever" and make it a select people who will automatically be the only ones before they even believe then it nullifies the meaning.

The plan of salvation was decided by God before the foundation of the world to whosoever that believeth and not decided to be given to people to believe.

**Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2008/11/17 19:50**

5 point Calvinism by narrowpath

Let's watch out that this discussion does not end in total depravity.

Unconditional Election - some politicians believe in it, too.

Limited Atonement - may be we should set a limit at-one-moment (gotit?)

If the Calvinists would display some more of this irresistable grace here, you would have won the all the Arminians over into the bosom of eternal security. Wouldn't that be nice?

Perseverance of the saints - true at least in respect to our unceasing discussion.

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/17 19:50**

Hi Roger,

I think the idea of predestination that you posted, which is God predestines men because of foreseen faith,, still runs into the same "problems" you are trying to avoid.

For instance, if God foreknows all who will believe (which he does), and they are "predestined" to salvation, then nobody other than those whom God foresaw would believe can ever believe, otherwise the Lord's foresight would be incorrect.

So there would still be a select group who are the only ones who can believe the gospel. The difference between this and the Biblical teaching is that the Bible does not teach that God elects based on foreseen faith, which, at its logical conclusion, is works based.

The reason it is works based can be easily demonstrated. First, did God foresee that some would believe after being convicted by the Spirit? Then, the foreseen working of the Spirit would have had to have been equal on all men, otherwise that would have been a form of favoring some over others. So, if the foreseen working of the Spirit is equal on all men, why do some men believe? It must have nothing to do with God, otherwise God favored some to salvation and not others without regard to their foreseen personal response. Therefore, the logical conclusion would be that some men believe because of some qualitative difference in their personal virtue.

Of course, all of this is foreign to Scripture. The sole reason given for election is simply God's gracious good pleasure. Let us rejoice in this free grace that was lavished on ungodly sinners!

Grace to you,  
Taylor

**Re: Neither-Both - posted by crsschk (), on: 2008/11/17 23:45**

([http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic\\_id25079&forum34](http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id25079&forum34)) Spurgeon - Mueller - An Important Series ~ Piper's Biographies

*Meditations on the Life of Charles Simeon;*

"He did not want to be labeled a Calvinist or an Arminian. He wanted to be Biblical through and through and give every text its due proportion, whether it sounded Arminian as it stands or Calvinistic. But he was known as an evangelical Calvinist, and rightly so. As I have read portions of his sermons on texts concerning election and effectual calling and perseverance he is uninhibited in his affirmation of what we would call the doctrines of grace. In fact he uses that phrase approvingly in his sermon on Romans 9:19-24 (Horae Homileticae, Vol. 15, p. 358).

But he had little sympathy for uncharitable Calvinists. In a sermon on Romans 9:16, he said,

Many there are who cannot see these truths, who yet are in a state truly pleasing to God; yea many, at whose feet the best of us may be glad to be found in heaven. It is a great evil, when these doctrines are made a ground of separation one from another, and when the advocates of different systems anathematize each other. . . . In reference to truths which are involved in so much obscurity as those which relate to the sovereignty of God mutual kindness and concession are far better than vehement argumentation and uncharitable discussion (Horae Homileticae, Vol. 15, p. 357).

An example of how he lived out this counsel is seen in the way he conversed with the elderly John Wesley. He tells the story himself:

Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before I consent to begin the combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions. Pray, Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it into your heart?

Yes, I do indeed.

And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do; and look for salvation solely through

In the blood and righteousness of Christ?

Yes, solely through Christ.

But, Sir, supposing you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works?

No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last.

Allowing, then, that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power?

No.

What then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother's arms?

Yes, altogether.

And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto His heavenly kingdom?

Yes, I have no hope but in Him.

Then, Sir, with your leave I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it; and therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree. (Moule, 79f)

([http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Biographies/1460\\_Brothers\\_We\\_Must\\_Not\\_Mind\\_a\\_Little\\_Suffering/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Biographies/1460_Brothers_We_Must_Not_Mind_a_Little_Suffering/)) Brothers, We Must Not Mind a Little Suffering

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/11/18 10:57**

Hi Taylor

Quote:  
-----If we are predestined to be adopted as children of God, is that not predestined to be brought into the Lord's eternal Kingdom?  
-----

The answer would lie in the identification of the 'we'.

That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Eph 1:12-14 KJVS

How do you understand the switch from 'us' to 'ye' in these verses?

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/11/18 11:12**

Quote:  
-----by rbanks on 2008/11/17 23:28:50  
Thanks Ron for your posts. Doesn't the bible then make it clear that the destiny of those who don't believe in the Son is that the wrath of God abides on them already?  
-----

Which verses do you have in mind? these?

John 3:18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth come to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

If so this condemnation seems to be reserved for those who have 'not believed'. In the context of the whole of John's gospel this is speaking of those who rejected the testimony of God in Christ. This would then be a reference to those who have heard and refused the word of God.

Quote:  
-----The plan of salvation was decided by God before the foundation of the world to whosoever that believeth and not decided to be given to people to believe.  
-----

I agree.

**What the Early Christians Believed About the FREE WILL & PREDESTINATION - posted by Llewellyn (), on: 2008/11/19**

**I have also read this fine book.** I think there is a great confusion in the understanding of early Christians. Constantine and Augustine in my observation of church history were most influential in corrupting the church and from their twisted doctrines came the catholic church. The Church Fathers that David wrote about are those the first three hundred years after the Apostles.

There are differences between them and the reformers, this is well known. But there is also this difference and that is they were the ones used of God to select the authentic text of the New Testament as we know it, seeing there were many fraud manuscripts, further many of them knew the Apostles personally.

For the most part they saw man as a free agent responsible for his sin and therefore under the just condemnation of a holy and righteous God. No of this bondage of the will stuff was found with them. God sovereignty is not in the slightest challenged but exalted when man has a free will. For who but God can make a being with a free will and still know what this being shall do. This is where many run astray not knowing the power of God.

I for one will encourage any one who would like to understand more about the early Christians and why the so called church of today is so fare removed from Biblical standards, to buy your copy of The Kingdom that turned the world upsidedown by David Bercot, Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up by David Bercot and The Pilgrim Church by E. H. Broadbent today.

**Re: What the Early Christians Believed About the FREE WILL & PREDESTINATION - posted by hmmm (), on: 2008/11/19**

Quote:  
-----  
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-----

Hello, yes, i can just say amen to your post, these books are must read for all. And one thing i benefited from these book s and from the early church fathers, is that mans free will and Gods sovereignty isent in anyway contradictions or opposi tes, rather one and joined together in salvation.

**Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/11/19 16:54**

This is not a reply to anyone. . .just adding to the thread. \*\*edit for spelling\*\*

Most folks that deny the Reformed doctrine of predestination say one of their reasons is because it was not taught by th e fathers.

Lots of authors claim the idea that a doctrine must be found fully spelled out in a particular form, in the writings of the ear ly church, to count as "believed" prior to a certain time. Jehovah's Witnesses use the same line of reasoning to "prove" t hat nobody believed in Trinitarian terms before the 3rd century.

Yes, anyone who has studied the pre-Augustine fathers in context and as a whole will find it difficult to find a worked-out doctrine of predestination. That's because there were other issues dominating the theological landscape at the time: cre ation ex nihilo, the Trinity, and the person of Christ as the most significant. All of these are of salvation importance. It wa s only in the Pelagian controversy that the doctrine of predestination was hammered out.

Most who are aware of history understand that doctrines take shape over time, become more clearly expressed over the course of centuries, and usually come to full expression as the result of a controversy that forces the church to confront i t in detail.

**Re: - posted by HomeFree89 (), on: 2008/11/19 19:15**

The early church did respond to those who didn't believe in free will. The only difference was at the time, they were resp onding to known heretics, not those brothers in the church.

Please don't get me wrong, I believe that there are dear Christians on both sides of this, so I'm not saying that Calvinists are heretics. :-)

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/11/19 20:54**

Friend, To say that the early church condemned those who believed God sovereignly chose men to salvation simply isn't true. If you read the Apostolic fathers, you will find no such statements.

Also, nobody of Reformed conviction denies "free will". Every decision you make, you really made by your own will. Ever y Reformed confession of faith I know of says the same. The matter is, man's "free will" is in bondage to depraved desire s and will always choose sin, unless the Lord gives them a new heart.

Grace to you,  
Taylor

**Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/11/19 21:01**

Quote:  
-----Please don't get me wrong, I believe that there are dear Christians on both sides of this, so I'm not saying that Calvinists are heretic s.  
-----

Glad to hear it.

I was just making the point that the Bible shows the doctrines of grace to be true. I need not the early church fathers to

have fully developed all aspects of doctrine and theology for it to be accepted.

I believe there still may be some erroneous understandings held by some people on this thread as to what reformed folks believe about "free will".

Grace and peace to you

\*\*edit\*\* Just noticed Taylor trying to clear some of it up :-)

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/11/19 23:57

Quote:

-----  
TaylorOtwell wrote:

Friend, To say that the early church condemned those who believed God sovereignly chose men to salvation simply isn't true. If you read the Apostolic fathers, you will find no such statements.

Also, nobody of Reformed conviction denies "free will". Every decision you make, you really made by your own will. Every Reformed confession of faith I know of says the same. The matter is, man's "free will" is in bondage to depraved desires and will always choose sin, unless the Lord gives them a new heart.

Grace to you,  
Taylor

-----  
I guess here in is where we differ, i can not find in scripture that God denied some men this breaking free from this bondage.

Eze 18:30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord God. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.

Eze 18:31 Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, **and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?**

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

I am not saying we can save our selves , but i think its clear man is not bound in such away that she can not chose God.

I know reformed people believe in free will to a degree, not talking about the kind of free will where we chose what brand of coffee we should buy at the store. But the free choice by all to chose to repent from their sin and trust in Jesus by hearing the gospel.

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/11/20 0:20

Quote:

-----  
I guess here in is where we differ, i can not find in scripture that God denied some men this breaking free from this bondage.

I am not saying we can save our selves , but i think its clear man is not bound in such away that she can not chose God.

-----  
Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

Human beings as sons and daughters of Adam enter the world spiritually dead. They have no inclination or responsiveness toward God and no ability to please God. They are dead. Dead men make no decisions. Dead men cannot choose. Dead men are dead.

\*\*edit\*\* added quote

**I beseech you to reconsider. - posted by Llewellyn (), on: 2008/11/20 17:33**

Quote:  
-----They are dead. Dead men make no decisions. Dead men cannot choose. Dead men are dead.  
-----

I would like to say that this is not what being dead in sin means. The notion that we are not able to respond because we are dead is not scriptural. We would do well not to make God out to be a fool, why would He numerous times plead and exhort men to return to Him away from their sin, if he knows they can't unless he makes them. Come now friend lets give God more credit.

Being dead in sin is a spiritual death, a separation from God because of sin. Not an inability to reason and choose the life above death.

Jesus said "whosoever will let him come";

Would we do right to change his words to say "whosoever I will come";?

There is a great theme in New Testament Scripture that teaches us that if the Apostles didn't teach it, it is heresy or on its way to become heresy. 1 John 4:6

The Trinity is well taught in Scripture and has its foundation there; were as statements like "no inclination or responsiveness toward God"; does not find its origin in Scripture but man.

The early Christians mentioned does not guide us in the Way but often confirms that our understanding of the Scripture is correct or needs more observation. Hey they were entrusted with much more than we give them credit for.

The idea that we are further along than them to me speaks of a lack of understanding on our part and even pride.

The one thing that could be said in understanding the balance of God's will in the Scripture and His dealing with man, might be to say: "We love Him because He first Loved us";

Love is always free will!

**Re: I beseech you to reconsider. - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/11/20 18:03**

Quote:  
-----I would like to say that this is not what being dead in sin means. The notion that we are not able to respond because we are dead is not scriptural.  
-----

It is a spiritual death. It is scriptural.

+++++

**I. SALVATION IS FROM SIN (vv. 1-3)**

"You ... who were dead in trespasses and sins; in which in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom also w

we all had our manner of life in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and we are by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

There is probably no clearer statement on the sinfulness of man in the New Testament than those three verses. Paul's first point is that we were sinners and that meant we were dead.

#### A. The Alienation of Man (v.1a)

"You ... who were dead."

That phrase describes the condition of every person. We all were dead. If you're a Christian, that was but a past reality. If you're not a Christian, this is your present condition--you're dead. Ephesians 4:18 explains what that means: It's to be "alienated from the life of God." It doesn't refer to physical deadness, but to spiritual deadness. An unbeliever is dead to God.

##### 1. Physical death

Physical death is best defined as an inability to respond to stimulus. A dead person can't react to anything. For example some years ago while I was in my office, a hysterical little boy banged on my door. Through his tears he pleaded with me to come with him. I followed him as he ran down the street to his house. When I arrived, his mother met me at the door. With tears streaming down her face, she pointed to a bedroom and said, "My baby is dead." I walked into the room and lying on the bed was a lifeless little baby about three months old. I asked her if she tried to revive the baby and she said she had. Then she picked up the limp body, caressed the baby to her breast, kissed it, and cried tears all over its little head, but the baby did not respond to her. An ambulance soon arrived, and the attendants were unable to revive the infant. The baby was dead.

In terms of human relationships perhaps the strongest stimulus possible is the love of a mother for her baby. When that mother couldn't get a response out of her little infant, that was a prime example of physical death--the inability to respond.

##### 2. Spiritual death

Likewise spiritual death is an inability to respond to stimulus. God's love draws no response because a spiritually dead person is alienated from the life of God. He has no capacity to respond to God. But unlike a physically dead person, he is animate. The nineteenth-century Scottish commentator John Eadie described it as a case of "death walking" (Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, p. 121). Spiritually dead people are like zombies--they don't know they're dead and they're still going through the motions of living.

Jesus combined the concepts of physical and spiritual death in Matthew 8. He called a certain man to follow Him and be His disciple, but the man said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father" (v. 21). But Jesus said, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead." Jesus was saying, "Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead." Implied is that He had better plans for the man. In 1 Timothy 5:6 Paul refers to the widow who lives for pleasure as being "dead while she liveth."

#### B. The Activity of Man (v. 1b)

"In trespasses and sins."

Man is not dead because he commits sin but because he was born sinful. Think of it this way: A man is not a liar because he lies; he lies because he is a liar by nature. Jesus said, "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man" (Mark 7:20). Man is dead and lives in a state of sinfulness. The Greek word translated "in" is called a locative of sphere, which refers to the sphere in which we live. Thus Paul is saying that man is dead because he lives in the realm of sin.

##### 1. Sin described

a) Hamartia--This Greek word, translated "sins" in Ephesians 2:1, is a hunter's word that means "to miss the target" or "to miss the mark."

b) Paraptoma--This Greek word, translated "trespasses" in verse 1, means "to slip," "to fall," or "to go the wrong direction."

Commentators through the years have tried to make distinctions between those two words, but I believe they are two ways of looking at the same thing.

## 2. Sin defined

### a) Missing God's standard

Sin is a failure to hit God's target. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Sin is a failure to glorify God. Romans 1:21 says, "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God."

When the Bible says that every person is a sinner, it doesn't mean that everyone is at the same level of sinfulness. Twenty dead corpses lying side by side could all be at various degrees of decay. So it is with man: All are dead, but there are variances in decadence. Ultimately sin is not an issue of decay, but a question of falling short of something.

We all understand that robbers, murderers, rapists, and liars are sinners. But sin is not so much an issue of what you do, but of what you fail to do. And man is a sinner because he fails to glorify God. In Matthew 5:48 Jesus says, "Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect." Man fails at that point, too. First Peter 1:16 says we're to be that way "because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44). Man falls short of glory, holiness, and perfection. There may be different levels of morality and different degrees of decadence, but every man falls short.

### How Far Can You Jump?

Suppose we had a contest to see who could jump to Catalina Island from the beach at Los Angeles. You even could have as long a run as you want. When we jumped each of us would land at different spots in the water, but none of us would get to Catalina. The same thing is true spiritually. There are different levels of human attainment and different standards of morality, but no one can reach God's glory, perfection, and holiness. That can be attained only through Jesus Christ, whose righteousness is imputed to us when we are saved.

### b) Measuring man's failure

Men and women try to jump to perfection, but they land in the sea of sin. Behavioral sins are the result of man's failure to reach God's standard.

#### (1) The recognition of human good

There are many people in this world we might say are good. You might know a non-Christian who is a great humanitarian and a wonderful father. He loves his wife and children. There certainly isn't anything wrong with that.

(a) Luke 6:33--Jesus said, "If ye do good to them who do good to you, what thanks have ye? For sinners do the same." Indeed, sinners do good, but Jesus still identified them as sinners. In God's eyes sin isn't an issue of what people do for others. You can't claim to be righteous just because you do good to others. Doing good to others doesn't help a person live a holy and perfect life, which is God's standard.

(b) Luke 11:13--Jesus said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" People give good gifts to their children, yet the Lord characterizes them as evil. Their evil is not manifested in what they do--giving good gifts to their children--but in what they don't do and can't do--bringing glory and honor to God.

(c) Acts 28:2--Paul and company had been shipwrecked on the island of Malta. Luke said that the natives showed them "extraordinary kindness" (NASB). Ungodly pagans showed great kindness to Paul, but good works are not enough to please God.

#### (2) The conviction by the Holy Spirit

In John 16:8 Jesus says to His disciples, "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin." The Holy Spirit would com

e and convict people of sin. Verse 9 specifies what sin: "Because they believe not on me." Men don't live to the glory of God, and they are not perfect or holy. Why? Because they don't believe in Jesus Christ. No matter what else they might do, they're floundering in the ocean a long way from the goal. You can't please God if you don't believe in Jesus Christ (John 5:22-23).

Man is dead--dead because of his inability to reach God's standard. He is a death-walking zombie manifesting a total inability to accomplish God's standard, even though he manifests moral goodness from time to time.

### C. The Atmosphere of Man (v. 2)

#### 1. The course of the world (v. 2a)

"In which in times past ye walked according to the course of this world ."

Man is a victim of the spirit of the age, but he frequently claims to be doing exactly what he wants to do. One of my football coaches claimed to have become a Christian but said he was still going to do whatever he wanted. I told him that he wasn't doing what he wanted but what the world dictated. He was walking according to the course of this age.

#### a) Defined

Kosmos doesn't refer to the physical world, but to the ideological world of sin--the evil world system. The spiritual zombie indulges in the sins of the times. He lives according to the world's current standards. He is in complete harmony with the zeitgeist--the spirit of the age.

Satan, the prince of this world (John 12:31), dominates the kosmos and pressures man to succumb to what the system tells him to do. That is total depravity--dead men walking in sin according to the spirit of the age. They are walking in a circle they can't escape from on their own.

#### b) Demonstrated

What is the spirit of the age? I think three things best characterize our age.

(1) Humanism--This philosophy suggests that you do your own thing (at the expense of others). You're the boss and forget all else.

(2) Materialism--This philosophy says we live to get more money and possessions. Many Christians find it hard to resist.

(3) Sex--Everything from a to z is promoted with sex. You practically have to drive with your eyes closed to avoid billboards that contain overt sexual overtones!

One writer said that we don't have even the morals of a barnyard. Humanism, materialism, and sex are the spirit of our age.

#### 2. The prince of the power of the air (v. 2b)

"According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience."

#### a) His identity

The prince (Gk., archos) is none other than Satan. The world has its archos, but we have the kephale (head)-- Jesus Christ. Satan, the leader of the demons, rules over the world system. That doesn't mean he indwells everyone as indwelt Judas (John 13:29). But it does mean he is behind the influences and trends in the world. His demons carry out his objectives, whether they are secular or religious.

#### b) His influence

The Greek word translated "air" in verse 2 could refer to the atmosphere around the earth--the first heaven. (The second heaven is the stellar atmosphere and the third heaven is God's domain). Some people believe that Satan exists around t

he earth in the first heaven, fighting holy angels and leading his demons. Occasionally he may even enter the third heaven to accuse us before the throne of God as he did Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7).

But "air" can also refer to the realm of ideas. We often say there's a certain air in the room when we want to refer to an attitude. Just as "world" refers to an ideology, "air" is most likely the same. Satan functions not only in the physical atmosphere here, but also in the ideological realm. He promotes his concepts and breeds his ideas. He is behind the whole system, which is straight from hell.

Satan is "the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). He draws man into active disobedience against God.

#### D. The Attributes of Man (v. 3)

"Among whom also we all had our manner of life in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

The death walker meanders through a system controlled by Satan. He functions only in response to his flesh. The Greek word translated "lusts" (epithumia) refers to strong, evil passions. The Greek word translated "desires" (thelema) means "drives." So the passion turns into a drive. Men are driven to fulfill "the desires of the flesh and of the mind." So man is physically and mentally driven into active sin and trespasses. He follows the pattern of disobedience when his lusts develop into drives that compel him to fulfill what his body and mind demand. By nature he is a child of wrath, just like everyone is born as. As such he is the target of God's judgment. That concludes a vivid description of man's total depravity.

#### II. SALVATION IS BY LOVE (v. 4)

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us."

It is God who rescues man from a state of living death. He is rich (Gk. plousios, "overabounding") with mercy for the sinner. If we got what we deserved we'd be in trouble. But God is merciful, holding back what we deserve.

He does that because of His "great love with which he loved us." Salvation is based on love. God doesn't save people based on their worthiness; He chooses them based on His love. His intrinsic, essential attribute of love manifests itself to us in His grace and mercy. Love is His motive. He reaches out to vile, sinful, godless, ungrateful, unworthy, unholy, destitute, depraved human beings engulfed in sins and trespasses in the service of Satan.

#### A Sin Against Love

Man's sin is not so much a crime against God's law as it is a sin against His love. Suppose someone was driving too fast on a neighborhood street and killed a little child playing in the street. He would be charged with manslaughter and speeding. Then he would be tried and probably found guilty. If so, he would either have to pay a fine or be imprisoned. After paying his fine or serving out his sentence, the law would be satisfied. But that's true only regarding sin against the law.

What about the little boy's mother? Could he ever make up for the loss of her son by paying a fine or serving a sentence? No. From her perspective he sinned against her love, not against the law. The only way he could ever be restored to her would be if she offered him free and unconditional forgiveness. And that is precisely what God has done. Man has not only sinned against His law, but killed His Son as well. And he continues to do so by his constant rejection and open defiance of Him. Yet God reaches out and offers unconditional and complete forgiveness to those who accept it.

#### III. SALVATION RESULTS IN LIFE (v. 5)

"Even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive together with Christ (by grace ye are saved)."

The one thing a dead man needs most is life. And that's what God provides. If you ever doubt the power of God in your life, remember it is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and you from your sin. If you're not sure God can get you into heaven or that He can get you out of the grave at the resurrection, just remember that He already raised you spiritually. The physical resurrection is the easier task. We can have confidence in God's power.

When you became a Christian, you ceased being alienated from the life of God--you became alive. You became sensitiv

e to God. You could understand the Bible because the Holy Spirit was in your life teaching you. You had a reason to live. You felt God at work in your life. You knew Christ. There was an immediate brotherhood with other Christians. You became the possessor of eternal life.

When God raised Christ from the grave, He made us alive together with Him. In a sense we were with Him when He rose from the dead, and that means God's power has already been displayed on our behalf.

#### IV. SALVATION IS WITH A PURPOSE (vv. 6-7)

##### A. To Seat Us in the Heavens (v. 6)

"hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

##### 1. The fact of our exaltation

When God raised us from the dead He didn't leave us in the cemetery. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, he was still wrapped in his grave clothes, so Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go" (John 11:44). Christ first performed the miracle of resurrection for us, then He did a second miracle: He exalted us to a seat in the heavenly places. And that is a past-tense reality--we already are seated there positionally.

Philippians 3:20 says that our "citizenship is in heaven." Because we are saved we are no longer of this world. We have eternal life. We are alive to God; we just live in this dead world. But our life is in heaven, "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). That's why Ephesians 1:3 says He "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

##### 2. The focus of our exaltation

To be in heavenly places obviously doesn't mean your physical body is now in heaven. However your mind exists in God's domain. All your blessings are there. The Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are there. All believers who died are there. Heaven is your home--it's your world.

##### B. To Shower Us with Kindness (v. 7)

"That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

God saved you so He could be kind to you forever. But why would He be kind to people who don't deserve it? Because God is love (1 John 4:8), and love is kind (1 Cor. 13:4). God saved us not only to keep us out of hell, but also to shower us with the riches of His grace.

From the moment of salvation, and continuing throughout eternity, we are the recipients of "the exceeding riches of his grace." God doesn't withhold anything--He gives us everything through Jesus Christ. After pouring out His grace on us, God shows us off to the angels so that they can praise Him for His grace and give Him glory. God's glory is at stake, and He will never allow that to be diminished. If He receives glory by pouring out His grace on you, He will do it, and has done it.

#### V. SALVATION IS THROUGH FAITH (vv. 8-9)

"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God--not of works, lest any man should boast."

If we were responsible for our own salvation we would receive the glory for it. But Christ did all the work to accomplish salvation by dying on the cross. Just before He died He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). So the glory all belongs to God.

##### A. Faith Illustrated

We're all creatures of faith. We live by faith every day. Every time you pop the lid off a can of soda and drink it, that's an act of faith. You don't have any idea what's really in that can. Whenever you eat in a restaurant you can't be sure of what they are serving you. You have to exhibit faith every time you turn on your faucet and drink the water.

The faith that is basic to human nature is what God uses to draw you to Himself. If you can have faith in the things I just described, you ought to be able to trust the God of the universe. The essence of faith is believing and accepting His gift of salvation.

#### B. Faith Induced

The moment you accept God's gift is the moment you come alive spiritually. If you are a Christian, God released His power in your life to accomplish the work of salvation. You don't ever need to question God's power--you've already seen it at work. According to verses 1-3 you were dead. But now you are saved through faith. You didn't do it; it was God's gift to you. If works on your part were involved, you would boast; but the privilege of boasting about your salvation belongs to God.

You can breathe spiritually because God slapped you on the backside to make you breathe. You can hear with the ear of faith because God unstopped your ears. Salvation is not the result of your confirmation, baptism, communion, church attendance or membership, giving to the church or to charity, keeping the Ten Commandments, living by the Sermon on the Mount, believing in God, being a good neighbor, or living a respectable life. None of those things will ever allow anyone into heaven. Hell will be full of people who do those things thinking that will save them.

### VI. SALVATION PRODUCES GOOD WORKS (v. 10)

"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

#### A. The Manifestation of Good Works

The result of salvation is good works. In John 15:8 Jesus says, "In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." When God saves you He wants to see good works produced in your life because that manifests His power. His power saved you, and when your good works reveal that, He receives glory.

#### B. The Meaning of Good Works

The Bible refers to many different kinds of works. There are the works of the law, which cannot save anyone (Gal. 2:16; 3:11); the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21); the works of darkness (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:11); and dead works (Heb. 6:1). However none of those are the kind of works Ephesians 2:10 describes. Paul was referring to the works that are the result of salvation, not the works that men do in a futile effort to save themselves.

#### C. The Masterpiece of Good Works

The Greek word translated "workmanship" in Ephesians 2:10 came to mean "masterpiece." We are God's masterpiece. From the beginning His design was to conform us to Christ, our good works being the proof of our salvation. God's power is at work in your life, shaping you into the image of Jesus Christ. You are God's masterpiece!

#### Conclusion

Who is the true Christian? The one who does good works. Many people claim to be saved, but only those who do good as a result of their salvation to the glory of God are truly saved. I hope you are one of them. - John MacArthur

**Copy past John MacArthur? - posted by Llewellyn (), on: 2008/11/20 18:12**

The sinner is going to hell because he does not want God.....

**Re: Copy past John MacArthur? - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/11/20 23:42**

if being dead in our sins means we can do nothing, then being dead to sin must mean in the same way we can not sin.

so using that reasoning and interpretation of scripture we See it is faulty. I don't think being dead mens one can not seek God.

If this is the way to understand it as you do, that the result of this deadness is that we can do nothing, then after we are saved and are now crucified with him and dead to sin and the world, then it would mean we can not sin again. Since we are dead, and as you say, dead men do nothing.

Either we are not dead, in other words not saved, or this interpretation of "dead" is wrong.

Maybe there is some other way to see it?

**Re: - posted by tjsservant (), on: 2008/11/21 7:37**

Quote:

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**Can We Make an Exact Analogy Between Unbelievers' who are "Dead in Sin" and Believers who are "Dead to Sin"?  
(Excerpts From Debate in Which Synergist Attempts to Overthrow Doctrine of Total Depravity)**

Synergists often claim that since believers are "dead to sin" but can still commit sin that we can draw a direct corresponding analogy which says unbelievers who are "dead in sin" are thus morally able to believe the gospel, apart from the grace of God alone. The following are excerpts from a debate when we "rabbit trailed" on to this issue. The synergist I was debating brought this up as an attempt to prove that when the Bible speaks of a those who are "dead in sin" it does not mean "dead" to the same extent that the Reformed view believes it to. In other words it is an attempt to debunk the doctrine of total depravity (That is, to disprove the doctrine that by his fall, man has made himself incapable of obedience until life since he cannot convert Himself without the transforming work of the Holy Spirit):

(John)

OK now I wanted to make just a few comments on your missive on the analogy between unbelievers who are "dead in sin" and believers who are "dead to sin"

First the visitors comments are within the dotted lines and my answer follows:

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(Visitor)

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unbeliever's death in sin is somehow more complete than the believer's death to sin (which, I think, you'd be hard-pressed to prove).

Dead is dead, right? "How do men "dead to sin" choose pornography, marital infidelity, etc.? In other words, I think monergists take the "dead in sin" phrase too far. The unregenerate man is helpless, hopeless, and hostile, to be sure.

I propose that "dead in sin" means something less than living "as a walking cadaver in a spiritual graveyard" whose ear is deaf to any word from heaven" (Sproul). I've read monergistic articles that say things like man is no more capable of responding to God's offer of salvation than a corpse is of responding to an offer of a fine meal. I am saying that at this is "extreme." Yes, "Paul provides a graphic description of our spiritual impotence prior to regeneration" (Sproul) in Ephesians 2. But what does "dead in sin" really mean?

In the context of a series of verses that sounds much like Ephesians 2:1-3, Paul says that the Gentiles are "excluded from the life of God" (Ephesians 4:18). "Excluded" could also be translated "alienated." I propose that "dead to sin" means that man is alienated, hostile, separated from God, powerless to save himself, and void of eternal life. As the apostle John wrote, "He who has the Son has the life; he who has not the Son has not the life" (1 John 5:12). To be dead in sin means to be separated from God (and, thus, His life).

Death is separation. Not simply a termination or cessation of life. Physical death is the separation of spirit from body. The body ceases to live and decay begins, but the spirit continues to exist.

When Paul says, "The wages of sin is death," he is not simply referring to the cessation of corporeal existence, is he? Therefore, spiritual death is better understood as separation from God and not in terms like, "spiritual cadaver" or "spiritual corpse." If you use terms like that, then you have to refer to a "walking cadaver." In other words, you've got to have a cadaver who still functions somehow. It's better to just go with "separation from God."

If unregenerate man is cadaver-like and incapable of hearing from God and believing in Him, then why aren't regenerate men cadaver-like with respect to sin, Satan, and this world?

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(John)

Dear Brother

...You say, "monergists take the 'dead in sin' phrase too far" but, I would turn that around to say that you have relied entirely too much on what you believe to be the force of this ONE argument.... Here's why:

... We are all in the process of redemption. None of us will be sinless until we are sealed with Christ in glory. The passages which speak of us being "dead to sin" and "alive to God through Christ" are all obviously speaking of the already/not yet nature of the kingdom. Numerous passages around these concepts command us to "reckon ourselves dead to sin" or "count yourselves dead to sin" (Romans 6:9-11)

Your analogy fails here: There are no corresponding passages which say to unbelievers, "reckon yourselves DEAD IN SIN". Fallen man are not described as being "counted" dead in sin ... Instead they ARE dead in sin ... in the fullest sense of its manifestation. Do you see how ridiculous it would be to consider fallen man "reckoned dead"? and not actually spiritually dead? This really just means that he can contribute no redemptive good toward his salvation. He cannot save himself. Rather that is what Christ does for us on the cross that gives us this spiritual ability.

Judicially every believer has died to sin. The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 6:11, "Even so consider yourself to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." In Galatians 2:20 he wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."

Paul is not referring to a constant experience in these passages. He is referring to our position into which we have been brought through our union with Christ in His death. The "flesh with its affections and lusts" has positionally been crucified with Christ. It is a judicial fact in the past and as we appropriate it to ourselves as we abide in Christ and not a moment by moment spiritual experience. To believers Paul says, but "if by the Spirit you are putting to death (present continuous action) the deeds of the body, you will live." This means believers still experience sin and must mortify it. "without faith it is impossible to please God", so the unregenerate man sins in all he does since it is not done for God's glory. He is unable to do any redemptive good for himself. Only Christ can do that. But thanks be to God, what we are unable to do for ourselves Christ does FOR US. Your scheme unbiblically separates the work of Christ completed on the cross and your faith

h. You argue that you can believe without the power of the cross to enable you. So let me ask you point blank -- are you are claiming the ability to do some spiritual good apart from the work of Christ? apart from the work of the Holy Spirit? Furthermore, there is never any description of an unbeliever being only positionally "dead in sin". Rather, this is their actualized state. That is why his only hope of deliverance is if God does something FOR HIM. Why is it that you pray for others' salvation if God cannot do something for them? Why do you think Paul gives thanks to God for the faith of the people? (I Thess. 2:13)

Among other texts, to drive home the real condition of man prior to the new birth, Jesus Himself uses a resurrection analogy. Not only does he raise us from spiritual death but He emphasizes that this is His sovereign choice since only he gives life to "who he wishes", not just any man who convert themselves (an impossible supposition) ... the verse makes such a thought impossible:

"For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes." John 5:21

You said: "Death is separation. Not simply a termination or cessation of life. Physical death is the separation of spirit from body. The body ceases to live and decay begins, but the spirit continues to exist."

(John)

Indeed I would fully agree that the spirit continues to exist. There is no argument from me there, but this is a failure to understand what is meant by "dead" ... the purpose for using such a word is to recognize that the spirit, which is separate from the body, no longer animates it, and thus, the body is incapable of any response.

Finally, your attempt to overturn the doctrine of total depravity relies entirely too much on the one biblical concept of "dead in sin" for the unbeliever. From my standpoint, if those texts which say "dead in sin" never existed there still would be a vast number of other texts which just as clearly show man's woeful condition apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. For no one can say "Christ is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

(Among them are Rom 3:11; 8:7; 1 Cor 2:14) Aside from the obvious consequence of physical death to Adam and his descendants (Gen 2:17) there are several other curses revealing natural man's spiritual impotence including man's inability to understand God (Psalm 50:21; Job 11:7-8; ROM 3:11); to see spiritual things (John 3:3); to know his own heart (Jer 17:9); to direct his own steps in the path of life (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12); to free himself from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10); to receive the Holy Spirit (John 14:17); to hear, understand or receive the words of God (John 8:47; 1 Corinthians 2:14); to give himself birth into God's family (John 1:13, Romans 9:15-16); to produce repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9; John 6:64,65; 2 Thessalonians 3:2; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 2:25); to come to Christ (John 10:26; John 6:44); and to please God (Romans 8:5, 8, 9).

(Reminder of something the Visitor asked)

If unregenerate man is cadaver-like and incapable of hearing from God and believing in Him, then why does the Bible record statements such as this one from Jesus: "You are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life" (John 5:40)? In other words, if life precedes believing, then why did Jesus reverse the order? Shouldn't he have said, "You are unwilling to come to me because you don't have life"?

(John)

"You are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life" (John 5:40)?

...This is merely a statement of fact. All men are called to come to Christ. All men are called to believe but these are in the subjunctive

(hypothetical) mood. A grammarian would explain that this is a conditional statement that asserts nothing indicatively. In this passage, what we

"ought" to do does not necessarily imply what we "can" do. The Ten Commandments, likewise, speak of what we ought to do but they do not imply that we have the moral ability to carry them out. The commandments of God were never meant to empower us but to strip us of trusting in our own ability so that we would come to an end of ourselves. With striking clarity, Paul teaches that this is the intent of Divine legislation (ROM

3:20, 5:20, Gal 3:19,24). If anyone is tempted to argue that belief is merely an invitation, not a command, read 1 John 3:23: "And this is his

command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ..." So I believe that those who hold to the idea that since God

commands the fallen

unregenerate man to do something he therefore has the ability to do so is imposing an unbiblical assumption on to the text. A command or invitation with an open ended statement does not imply the ability to fulfill it. This is especially true in light of texts such as John 1:13, ROM 9:16, John 6:37, 44, 63-65; ROM 3:11; Matt 16-26' 1 Cor 2:14 and many more which show man's moral inability to believe the Gospel in the fallen state. In our unregenerate nature we do not want God but rather love darkness and "will not come into the light".

Furthermore, to drive home the point further, Jesus actually does say that life precedes believing in other passages. Here are two examples:

"but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:26,27)

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. "But there are some of you who do not believe." ... And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." (John 6:63-65)

Spurgeon even uses this same verse you are using (John 5:40) to prove depravity:

"Oh!" saith the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the "if they will" that is the difficulty. We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, we do not assert it, but Christ himself declares it--"Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" and as long as that "ye will not come" stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will." It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. "Now," says one, "I believe men can be saved if they will." My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer--Did you ever meet with any person who was?... "

To conclude, there is no corresponding parallel analogy between the unregenerate's "dead in sin" and the believer "dead to sin". I have showed you, that the unbeliever is not positionally dead in sin, but is, in fact, dead in sin. He does not need to thus reckon himself as such. He now experiences the fullest manifestation of it. Those who are alive in Christ are indeed called "dead to sin" but as we all know our lives do not always bear this out. This is because the Scripture bares witness that our redemption is both present and future. We still await the day when we will be without sin. But the unbeliever can do no redemptive good of himself. That is why we can only trust in Jesus alone to deliver us from all our sins, including the sin of unbelief. If Jesus did not die for unbelief then HE did not die for all sins. Your position would then believe that He died for commandments 2-10 but not the first commandment... but Jesus did everything necessary for our redemption ... even His Holy Spirit to deliver us out of our hardened disposition toward Him. All glory, honor and praise to God alone for our salvation.

Link to article is ([http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/render\\_count.html](http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/render_count.html)) here

**Re: - posted by HomeFree89 (), on: 2008/11/21 15:08**

Quote:  
-----I was just making the point that the Bible shows the doctrines of grace to be true. I need not the early church fathers to have fully developed all aspects of doctrine and theology for it to be accepted  
-----

I would disagree that the Bible shows "the doctrines of grace" as taught by Calvinism. It shows doctrines of grace of a different kind.

I also don't need the early church to back my beliefs, but this thread IS about the early church and what they believed. I came to my beliefs before reading any of the early church's writings.

Quote:  
-----I believe there still may be some erroneous understandings held by some people on this thread as to what reformed folks believe about "free will".  
-----

That may be... but the converse might be true too. :-)

**Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/11/25 10:58**

if we should interpret this word death in different ways, that the same word means different things, it might be true.... but i see a dangerous thing here, or it may develop to one.

First, one would need someone to teach you where and what words mean what they say and what words do not mean what they say. -And in what verses ect.

second, i think this is a case where we conform the bible after our doctrines instead of the other way.

if it is a right way of reading and understanding in this way, how can we be sure the word love really means love in another verse?

or predestined or whatever?

i think we should be careful doing this to the word.

some have a problem with predestined and say it dont mean that, i personally dont. Some other have a problem where the bible says all men and try work something out so that all dont really mean all. For me to use this way is a attempt to twist scripture to fit my doctrine, when it rather should be the other way around.

**Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/11/25 14:34**

The doctrines of grace (Calvinism, Reformed...) cannot be dismissed or proven wrong simply on the basis of claiming they have redefined, or attempted to redefine, certain words.

Man has sought to justify his views on everything under the sun from the Bible whether it concerned drinking, adultery, traditions or even doctrines of men. This is done in many ways, one of which you have noted. Many people go to the Bible simply to justify a practice or doctrine they already have. Their purpose is not to learn the truth. They do not go there to learn from God. (I am not accusing you or anyone else of this...just making note of it in general)

But for me the doctrines of grace are on every page, not caught up in a few simple passages that can be easily explained away. I see them in creation. I see them in the way God has dealt with His people from the beginning of time. I see them spread throughout the Bible and spanning the entirety of Christian history. Pointing out a few words that appear to be "deal breakers" or noting a time in history past where they were not taught or written about to the extent they are today makes no progress in attempting to prove them false.

Grace and peace