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5 Studies on the *'Doctrines of Grace'*

'The Faith Once Delivered'
by Terry Arnold

The Faith Once Delivered

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TA Ministries is a non-denominational and non-profit faith ministry founded in 1989 when the book '*To Catholics Whom I Love*' was written by Terry Arnold. This book went through several re-prints and served as a fruitful outreach to Roman Catholics.

In 1996 the ministry became a full-time operation with the introduction of a free newsletter, later named '*Diakrisis (Australia)*'.

Diakrisis is published bi-monthly to *teach, inform* and *equip* the church of Biblical truths and to warn of false teaching. It has also been a valuable reference aid to hundreds of pastors/elders.

Martyrs'), etc. The list of such great leaders, evangelists and teachers is simply too numerous to list here.

The child of **God** must remember it is God who elects, predestinates, justifies, sanctifies and glorifies!

'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 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. 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' (Romans 8:28).

Against all 'logic', this passage is all in the *PAST tense!*... God has, from the beginning of the world, well protected his elect from loss and any failure to procure '*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*' (Ephesians 1:3). This is why God's Word says: '*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies*' (Romans 8:33).

Finally, Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said:

'Men hate election just as thieves hate Chubb's patent locks. Because they cannot get at the treasure themselves, they therefore hate the guard which protects it. Now election shuts up the precious treasure for God's covenant blessings for his children - for penitents, for the seeking sinners. These men will not repent, will not believe; they will not go God's way, and then they grumble and growl, and fret, and fume, because God has locked the treasure up against them. Let a man once believe that all the treasure within is his, and then the stouter the bolt, and the surer the lock, the better for him.

Oh, how sweet it is to believe our names were on Jehovah's heart, and graven on Jesus hands before the universe had a being! May not this electrify a man of joy and make him dance for very mirth? Chosen of God ere time began!

Come on slanderers! Rail on as pleases you. Come on thou world in arms! Cataracts of trouble descend if you will, and you, ye floods of affliction, roll if so it be ordained, for God has written my name in the book of life. Firm as this rock I stand, though nature reels and all things pass away. What consolation then to be called; for if I am called, then I am predestined.'

('Predestination and Calling' by Charles Spurgeon)

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'The Faith Once Delivered'

(Study No. 1)

'...dig again the wells of water' (Geniuses 26);

'ask for the old paths, where is the good way', (Jeremiah 6:16)

Who Chose Who?...Defining Grace

In today's modern evangelism we often hear of people '*choosing*' or '*deciding*' for God in salvation. But just how scriptural is this? If we can 'choose' or 'decide' to have the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation, then where does that ability to choose come from? - from ourselves, or from God ('monogism'), or a combination of both ('synergism')?

In our regeneration did we choose God or did He choose us?...'*You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...*', (John 15:16). Some might object to this use of Scripture since the immediate context may be seen as Jesus speaking to His disciples. But is this also not a future application to all disciples that would follow, including ourselves who are now his disciples? If one answers in the negative, then what do we do with the 'Great Commission' (Matthew 28:19,20) which was spoken to the Disciples at the time? (Is there no application from the 'Great Commission' for the future...for *all* disciples to come?)

Whatever the reader would judge here, the Scriptures are further *consistent* with numerous references that should leave no doubt as to who seeks who, who chooses who, or who 'wills' who.

Did we ever seek him?: '*There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God*', (Romans 3:11).

Did we will to be saved?: '*He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*', (John 1:11-13).

So, who chose who and when?: '*According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*',(Ephesians 1:4).

It was God who chose us and sought us for salvation... ***‘For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost’***, (Luke 19:10).

There is not one single Scripture that teaches that man *can* or *wills* to *choose* God as His personal Lord and Saviour in salvation. This silence is ignored by most popular Evangelists today who continue to emphasise to their audiences what they must *do* to acquire salvation - i.e. pray the ‘sinners prayer’, walk the isle, etc. Yet the Gospel should never be filtered through such understanding. The Gospel is not what man can *do* for God but what God has already *done* for mankind on the cross of Calvary! Anything man can do *interferes* with the sinner’s understanding of themselves as hopeless and helpless in judgement before a holy and just judge!

Some quote the following passage as unsaved man being able to choose God: ***‘Choose you this day whom you will serve’***. But they do not complete the verse!... ***‘whether the gods which your fathers served which were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell’***, (Joshua 24:15). The passage is clearly referring to Israel *believers* who had turned to idolatry. The context is not salvation at all, but *idolatry*.

The reader may well ask: If man in his unsaved state cannot seek after God and does not choose God, then how can he ever be saved? Jesus answered this very question when a rich young ruler, who claimed to keep the commandments, came to Jesus and asked how to be saved. Jesus knew his heart and told him to sell his goods and follow him. The rich ruler could not do this. Jesus then stated: ***‘It is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God’***, (Luke 18:25). His disciples were troubled and ***‘they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? Jesus replied: ‘The things which are impossible with men are possible with God’***.

The question asked by the disciples here is surely the very question that further defines GRACE! - the unmerited favour from God to a man who is totally unable to seek after or do anything for His salvation. *Anything less than this is not Grace!*

Do we really trust the Holy Spirit to work effectual and unfailing grace in the hearts of those He chooses as we preach the Gospel? Or do we, because of *preconceived notions of the ability of man*, feel it necessary to go further than preach the Gospel and have man *do* something - to ‘decide’, to make a ‘confession’, a ‘profession’ or a ‘commitment, to say the ‘sinners prayer’, walk the isle, etc?

Today many people say *‘I believe in the sovereignty of God’*, yet when it comes to the doctrine of election this belief is found to be a stronghold of words with conditions attached, rather than a real belief in God’s unconditional electing action that well may violate their human understanding. Such people wrongly give man some ability in aiding God in this election. If this were true then this is not ‘Grace’ and it muddies the *unmerited* favour of God. If there is any ability, merit or works of man, then it is no longer ‘Grace’! (Romans 11:6)

That great man of faith, George Mueller, once also struggled with the Biblical doctrine of election: *‘Before this period I had been much opposed to the doctrine of election, particular redemption, and final persevering grace; so much so that, a few days after my arrival at Teignmouth, I called election a devilish doctrine. I did not believe I had brought myself to the Lord, for that was too manifestly false; but yet I held that I might have finally resisted.*

And further, I knew nothing about the choice of God’s people; and did not believe that the child of God, when once made so, was safe for ever. In my fleshly mind I had repeatedly said, ‘If once safe I could prove that I am a child of God for ever, I might go back into the world for a year or two, and then return to the Lord, and at last be saved.’

But now I was brought to examine these precious truths by the Word of God. Being made willing to have no glory of my own in the conversion of sinners, but to consider myself merely as an instrument; and being made willing to receive what the Scriptures said, I went to the Word, reading the New Testament from the beginning with a particular reference to these truths. To my great astonishment I found that the passages which speak decidedly for election and persevering grace were about four times as many as those which speak apparently against these truths; and even those few, shortly after, when I examined them, served to confirm me in the above doctrines.’

(*‘The George Muller Treasury’* edited by Roger Steer, P .33; *‘A Narrative of some of the Lord’s Dealings with George Muller’* by Muller, Nisbet Volume 1, 1869)

The teaching of unconditional election is not new, for it has been held to by most of the great leaders, teachers and evangelists down through the running centuries. But it is only in the last one or two centuries that the church has apostasised from this truth. Here is a list of leaders who adhered to the same teaching of Biblical election and the Doctrines of Grace: Spurgeon, Newton, Wycliffe, Luther, Knox, Owen, John Bunyan, William Carey, Tyndale, Jonathan Edwards, Whitefield, Strong, Matthew Henry, JC Ryle, D. L. Moody, Martyn Lloyd Jones... and the many martyrs who all held to the doctrines of Grace: Huss, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, Foxe (he wrote the ‘Foxe’s Book of

...Let's close our eyes for a minute and blot out my voice, the voice of Calvin, the voice of Edwards, the voice of Arminius and everybody else. Listen to the Apostle Paul. Imagine if you would that the Apostle Paul is in here speaking right now and you've invited him to unpack this difficult doctrine of election. And you heard him saying it's not of works, but of God who calls according to His purpose (Romans 9:11-13). And now you hear the Apostle Paul asking you a rhetorical question. And he asks this question, 'What then, is there unrighteousness in God?' (Romans 9:14a).

I've been teaching the doctrine of election for 35 years or more, and I've never spoken on the issue without someone coming up to me and saying, 'It just doesn't seem right. It doesn't seem fair that before all eternity -before anybody's done any good or evil - that God determines sovereignly that some of these people are going to be saved, and others are not going to be saved. That's not fair.' It certainly would seem that the doctrine of election would indicate that there is some kind of unrighteousness in God. Now let me say this: no advocate of the Arminian view of predestination and election has ever had anyone come up to them after they have given their view and said to them, 'Hey that's not fair. That doesn't seem right.' Because it seems eminently fair, doesn't it? If God's election is based upon our choice, right or wrong, who's going to quarrel with that? But the very fact that the apostle raises this hypothetical objection says to me...that Paul was anticipating certain objections from his readers. And he pulls the plug on the objection. Before they can raise it, he raises it for them: 'What then, is there unrighteousness in God? It sure seems like it.' What does he say? 'Well, maybe a little bit'? That's not what he says. There are various translations for his answer to this. One translation says, 'By no means!' I like the stronger version: 'God forbid that there's any unrighteousness in God!'

Understand this, ladies and gentlemen, that election from all eternity is election that takes place prior to the fall, but in light of the fall. God is selecting His people from a mass of fallen humanity. And He says, 'From that mass of fallen people, I am going to exercise My saving grace that the purpose of My election might stand, and I'm going to save some of them. I'm not going to save all of them.' Again if God elected to save everybody, nobody would murmur, nobody would complain... But for reasons we don't know, God chooses to limit salvation to the elect. So, do some people get this magnificent grace about which we're speaking, and the others get injustice at the hands of God? No. Again, you have a whole universe filled with guilty people - God gives some grace, and the rest He gives justice. Nobody gets injustice.'

(R.C. Sproul, President of Ligonier Ministries, at the 2002 Truth and Life Conference at the Master's College)

Spurgeon once said: 'When I was coming to the Lord, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me...the thought struck me: How did you come to be a Christian? I sought the Lord. But how did you come to see the Lord? The truth flashed across my mind in a moment - I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence on my mind to make me seek Him...I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me...I desire to make this confession, 'I ascribe my change wholly to God'.

(C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, 1:168-69)

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‘The Faith Once Delivered’

(Study No. 2)

‘...dig again the wells of water’ (Geniuses 26);

‘ask for the old paths, where is the good way’, (Jeremiah 6:16)

Who Chose Who? Part 2

I often have had people make statements to me such as: *‘I don’t believe in Predestination’*... or... *‘man has to choose, decide for his own salvation’*; etc.

My reaction is one of surprise and a questioning of whether they have read and understood those so called ‘difficult’ Scriptures dealing with this subject.

The word ‘predestination’ has a clear and precise meaning. *‘Predestination’* comes from the Greek word *‘proorizo’* (*‘pro’* - *‘before’* / *‘orizo’* - *‘to determine’*). It clearly means *to determine or decree beforehand*. Some examples of the word are in Acts 4:28; Romans 8:29, 30; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:5, 11. The Greek word is also translated **‘ordained’** in some passages.

Acts 4:28 : **‘For to do whatsoever your hand and your counsel determined before [‘proorizo’] to be done’**

The action of Herod and Pontius Pilate in crucifying Jesus Christ is said to have been *predetermined* or *foreordained* by the hand and will of God. This shows that Christ’s mission and His death was not the result of human will but originated in the eternal counsel of God which *decreed beforehand* the event.

Romans 8:29,30: **‘For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified’.**

The word ‘Predestination’ is used to show God’s actions in decreeing *beforehand* both the objects and goal of His plan of salvation. The goal of predestination is expressed in the phrase, **‘to be conformed to the image of his Son’**- this is the doctrine of ‘Sanctification’.

The word *‘foreknow’* can be viewed in different ways. It has a general meaning - a general knowledge of things before they come into existence. This meaning is *not* specifically employed in Romans 8:29, since it is *limited* to only those whom God predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. Another view is a foreknowledge which is a knowledge accompanied by a decree such as in Acts 2:23: **‘Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God’**. Foreknowledge is used here to show God’s determinations, because the foreknowledge of God necessarily implies His purpose, or decree, with respect to the object foreknown.

Not satisfied with God’s rebuke in Romans 9, some test the patience of both God and ‘the faith once delivered’ by building a strawman hypothesis belonging more to ‘hypercalvinism’: *‘But if God elects and predestinates some to Heaven, then he must also predestinate the rest to Hell... so this is not a loving God...’*

Such *extrabiblical* logic might sound reasonable to the natural mind but again ‘reverse logic’ can also be used: *...all were destined (not predestined) to the everlasting punishment of God from the fall of Adam and Eve; ...would he not have still been a ‘loving’ and ‘just’ God if he passed over this mass of sinful humanity and allowed them just judgement?...It is mans *sin* that is the cause of him going to Hell. That is justice, not injustice! When it comes to predestination, no deserving people miss out - because there are no deserving people at all! We have all sinned and the wages of sin is death, which we all deserve. If God has the right to save none of us, then why does He not have the right to save who He wants to ‘show mercy’ on (Romans 9:19)?*

...The Word of God again answers this human logic with a **‘what if’**: Romans .9:20-22 **‘Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? 21 Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? 22 What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction’.**

The **‘what if’** is hypothetical too but here it is in the *Word of God*. The point being made is that God is *sovereign* in who He chooses and who He might not choose!

Another writer puts it this way:

‘Everybody knows that the Bible speaks of predestination, that the word wasn’t invented by Calvin or Edwards or Luther or Augustine. And so if a Christian wants to be biblical, that person must have some doctrine of predestination. It’s unavoidable. It’s par t of the text. It’s par t of the content of the Scriptures. It’s a doctrine, by the way, that I fought against more strenuously than any other doctrine of the Bible for the first five years of my Christian life, and ever since then God’s been getting even with me. I remember as a seminar y student I had a card on my desk, and I had written on that card these words: ‘You are required to believe and to teach what the Bible teaches, not what you would like it to teach’. And it was finally Paul’s letter to the Romans that not only convinced me of my errors with respect to this doctrine, but also dusted off the spot where I had previously stood...’

I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy... 18 Therefore has he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens' (Romans 9:15,16,18).

2 Timothy 1:9 sums up the eternal counsel in Gods calling and choosing and clearly refutes any attempt to put conditions on God's election: ***'Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began'*** .

Many would question why we should preach the Gospel at all if God will elect anyway. But we preach the Gospel because it is a *command* (Mark 16:15), rather than any other reason. It is His method of bringing in the elect, and we do not know who the elect are.

It is in our natural thinking to question why this election might be of some and not others. But our own reasoning has been damaged by sin from the Fall of man. It is not perfect or reliable. The emotive logic of man might naturally even question the motive of God and the mystery of why God has chosen to operate in this way. But 'reverse logic' can also be used: *...all were destined to the everlasting punishment of God from the fall of Adam and Eve; ...why did God save or elect any at all?; ...why did he not destroy the human race?; ...would he not have still been a 'loving' and 'just' God if he had destroyed the whole world?...*But all this too is still only *human* logic.

All this logic and questioning is foreseen by God and specifically answered in Scripture!: Romans 9:14-22 ***'What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. For the scripture says unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore has he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens. You will say then unto me, Why does he yet find fault? For who has resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?'*** (Romans 9:14-22).

Do we trust God as the 'Potter' who has the right and power to elect who He wants? Do we have enough faith in this sovereign King to accept *His* unconditional election even when our logical natural thinking would grapple with this?

In Scripture, something foreknown is presented as that which God gave prior decree to in His own will and pleasure. Hence, this term 'foreknow' is used for matters which God deliberately chose and predestinated. In 1 Peter 1:19,20 Christ is the Lamb of God ***'foreknown from the foundation of the world'***. God had planned and determined to provide His Son as a sacrifice for His people. Obviously more than just general foreknowledge is meant here. God's foreknowledge is not given here as the cause for His Son's sacrifice - but rather, His plan and decree for that event.

God foreknows what will be, by determining what shall be. God's foreknowledge is not the sole cause of any event. Events are produced by His decree and His will. It is not because God foresees a thing that it is decreed. He foresees it because it is ordained by Him to happen according to His sovereign plans. ***'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world'***, (Acts 15:18). It is obvious that God has a plan and that he did not begin that without a knowledge of how that plan would succeed. You cannot have foreknowledge without a prior decree, foreordination. If so, God would not be truly be both omnipotent (all powerful) and omniscience (all knowing). Foreknowledge and foreordination are extricably linked, otherwise God is not sovereign.

Thus, although there is a distinction between *foreknowledge* and *predestination*; like the doctrines of Justification and Sanctification, predestination and foreknowledge cannot be separated rigidly. One implies the other.

Some interpret Romans 8:29,30 as meaning that God predestinates those *who he foresees will believe or choose God for salvation*. Thus this foreknowledge becomes the cause of the predestination. But this is actually part of a serious heresy (the 'Pelagian' heresy of early centuries)! It results in God's predestination being based on a *work* or an *ability* of man. The foreknowledge here is not about actions but about *people* and that is how it is always used in Scripture to do with salvation. The passage actually says *nothing* about man choosing and *nothing* about 'free will'. Man *cannot come to God of his own ability* ...Romans 8:6,7 ***'For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be'***; John 6:44 ***'No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day'***...vs.65 ***'And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.'***

The word 'also' in Romans 8:29 (***'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate'***) links foreknowledge to predestination. Thus neither one is based

or conditional on the other. God does not predestine only because he foreknows 'who would choose' - there is nothing about man choosing salvation in this text or any other Biblical text. If anyone would say that predestination is based on foreknowledge here, then they must still acknowledge it is God's decision and choosing. *Every* action in Romans 8:29,30 is *by God* and taken *before* the foundation of the world. The tenses of the verbs in verse 30 - the predestinating, the calling, the justifying and the glorifying are all a snap shot of something that God sees as already happened in the past and at a set time (Greek aorist indicative). The action is being done by God alone (Greek active voice).

There are no conditions here for God to predestinate but only his wilful purposes which is said to be the ***'mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself'***, (Ephesians 1:9).

Some also use 1 Peter 1: 2 in an attempt to isolate foreknowledge from Predestination: ***'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied'***. Note here that again the election precedes the working of the Holy Spirit in any act of faith or obedience. Thus the salvation here (in *'sanctification'*) is originally by the election (the choosing) of God *in the beginning*, (Ephesians 1:4,5). It simply does not say here that God foreknew that any would believe or that's why He chose them apart from any predestination or election.

2 Timothy 1:9 sums up the eternal counsel in Gods calling and choosing and clearly refutes any attempt to put conditions on God's predestination: ***'Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began'***.

Faith is the effect of predestination, not the cause of it. ***'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed'***, (Acts 13:48).

Any good work we do or any ability we have is an after effect of predestination: ***'We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; which God has before ordained that we should walk in them'***, (Ephesians 2:10). Calvin rightly says: *'It is a foolish inference of these disputants, who say that God has elected such only as He foresaw would be worthy of grace. For Peter does not flatter believers, as if they were elected for their own individual merits, but refers their election to the eternal counsel of God, and strips them of all worthiness'*.

The basis of God's prior decrees is ***'the good pleasure of His will'***. It is what seems good to God - not because of any choice of man. Similarly, in Ephesians

Hence the nation could never forget that it was the chosen ('elect') people of God.

The same phraseology is brought into the New Testament in 1 Peter 2:9: ***'But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light'***.

The word *'election'* (*'ekloge'*) means a choice or special selection done by the free will of God. The purpose is to bestow the grace of God so that He alone would be glorified.

God is the active one. Man is the passive one. This election is not in any way tied to *any ability or will* of man but rather in the will of God alone: ***'For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them; even so the Son quickens whom He will'*** (John 5:21).

There are four groups that are God's 'elect': *Israel* (Matthew 20:16; 22:14; 24:22,24,31; Mark 13:20,27; Luke 18:7; Romans 11:5,7); *Jesus Christ* (Luke 23:35; 1 Peter 2:4,6); *angels* (1 Timothy 5:21) and *individuals* predestined to salvation (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22; John 5:21; 6:37,44; Romans 8:33; 9:15-18; 16:13; Galatians 1:15,16; Ephesians 1:5,9,11; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 John 1:1,13; Revelation 17:14).

The word 'elect' (*'eklektós'*) is also translated ***'chosen'***.

In Ephesians 1:4, (see also 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 2 Timothy 1:9) tells us that we were 'chosen' by God before the world was for a salvation to be realized in holiness.

Ephesians 1:4 ***'According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will... 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will'***.

God elects, chooses His people of His own determination. The sovereignty and assurance of this election is seen not only in the phrase ***'before the foundation of the world'*** but also in the resolution that Christ will not reject any of these that the Father gives: John 6:37 ***'All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out'***.

God's choice in this has no regard for any ability, merit or works in man: ***'For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and***

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‘...dig again the wells of water’ (Geniuses 26);

‘ask for the old paths, where is the good way’, (Jeremiah 6:16)

Divine Election

Many doctrines have their foundation in the Old Testament. For example, the ‘blueprint’ for the doctrine of separation can be seen in Leviticus 20:23 *‘And you shall not walk in the manners of the nation... I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people. 25 You shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean... fowls... that creep on the ground... 26 And you shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that you should be mine.’*

So too with such doctrines as Divine Election. *The foundation is seen in God’s election of Israel out from among all other nations.*

For many centuries Israel *was the only nation* to whom God gave any intimate revelation of Himself: *‘You only [Israel] have I known of all the families of the earth’* (Amos 3:2).

A divine election is prominent in:

Deuteronomy 7:6-8, *‘For you are a holy people unto the lord your God, the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all the people that are on the face of the earth. The Lord has not set his love upon you or choose you because you were more in number than any people, for You were the fewest of all people, but because the Lord loved you’.*

Deuteronomy 10:15, *‘Only the Lord had a delight in your fathers to love them, he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day’.*

Psalms 65:4 *‘Blessed is the man you choose and cause to approach you.’*

Psalms 135:4 *‘For the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure’.*

Isaiah 44:1-2 *‘Yet now hear O Jacob my servant whom I have chosen... and you Jerusalem whom I have chosen’.*

Isaiah 45:4 *‘ For Jacob my servants sake and Israel’s mine elect, I have called you by your name’.*

It is with this Old Testament foundation we can more easily view the doctrine of divine election of the saints. Out of all nations, God chose Israel to be specially His own. From this divine choice resulted all the peculiar blessings for the Jews.

1:11: *‘In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will’.* Here again predestination is according to the decision of ‘His will’. ‘His will’, ‘His pleasure’ and His choice are very much linked to predestination! The word ‘predestinated’ in this verse 11 is also used without ‘foreknowledge’ being mentioned.

Because it is not possible nor wise for us to question God’s secret counsel, it is not for us to reckon who the predestinated are. Lovers of truth will just meditate on the glories of what they are predestinated to - Salvation, Adoption, Sanctification and ultimate Glorification! It is surely this that enhances our understanding of ‘Grace’ as unmerited favour and nothing ‘of ourselves’, (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Finally, in light of what the word ‘predestination’ means, consider carefully this passage of Scripture in Ephesians Chapter 1 and 2:

‘Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8 Wherein he has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will...

...Ephesians 2 And you has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation 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. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when

we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved;) 6 And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them’.

It is interesting to note that the context of Ephesians 2:8,9, a passage we so often quote for ‘grace through faith alone’, is set in the previous teaching of God’s calling, election and predestination. Grace is thus well defined by the study of Ephesians 1 and election and predestination, etc.

Praise our Lord for His choosing, for His Will. Praise the Lord, the Saviour and Lord of our souls, who has *‘predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself’.*

Terry Arnold

(‘ Ages Library’ Exposition for Romans 8:7 by R. Haldane)

We must address the human will in Gospel preaching and pray that the Holy Spirit turns that will. Unless GOD does something in the sinner, unless GOD creates a clean heart and renews a right spirit within man, there is no hope of salvation. As Spurgeon once said: *‘I do not come into this pulpit hoping that perhaps somebody will of his own free will return to Christ. My hope lies in another quarter . I hope that my Master will lay hold of some of them and say, ‘You are mine, and you shall be mine. I claim you for myself’.* My hope arises from the freeness of grace, and not from the freedom of the will’.

Terry Arnold

dividing to every man severally as He will.' It is God 'who hath delivered us,' says the Apostle, 'from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.' 'Who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.' 'If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed... And let it not be said that the view the Scriptures give of the natural depravity of men, and of the sovereign and efficacious grace of God, reduces them to the condition of machines. Between men and machines there is this essential difference, and it is enough for us to know that man is a voluntary agent both in the state of nature and of grace. He wills and acts according to his own dispositions, while machines have neither thought nor will. As long, then, as a man's will is depraved and opposed to God, his conduct will be bad, - he will fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and, on the other hand, when God gives the sinner a new disposition, and a new spirit, his conduct will undergo a corresponding change... God, in giving a new heart and a new spirit, takes away these obstacles; and, in removing them, far from depriving a man of liberty, He removes that which hindered him from acting freely, and from following the light of his conscience, and thus, as the Scriptures express it, makes him free. The will of man, without Divine grace, is not free but enslaved, and willing to be so.'

Is it objected, that if a man be so entirely corrupt that he cannot do what is right, he should not be blamed for doing evil? ...if any one shall proudly demand, who hath resisted His will? Why hath He made me thus? -the only proper answer is that of the Apostle, 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?'

Some, indeed, taking a different and the most common view of this matter, deny the innate depravity of their nature, and, in spite of all that the Scriptures declare on this subject, persist in maintaining that they have not an inclination to evil, and are under no moral incapacity to do what is right. To such persons the same reply should be made as that of our Lord to the ignorant young man who asked Him what he should do to inherit eternal life. 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' You cannot refuse to admit that this is your duty. You ought to love God with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and in all things constantly to obey Him. Have you done so? No! Then, on your own principles, you are justly condemned, for you say that you can do what is right, and yet you have not done it. The whole, then, resolves itself into this, that all is according to the good pleasure of God. 'Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit. Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Ye shall know them by their fruits.' Every man, then, being by nature bad, must be made good before he can do good.'

‘The Faith Once Delivered’

(Study No. 3)

‘...dig again the wells of water’ (Geniuses 26);

‘ask for the old paths, where is the good way’, (Jeremiah 6:16)

John 3:16 - How Do You Read It?

‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’
(John 3:16)

As mentioned in Study No. 2, I often meet people who say they do not believe in ‘Predestination’ or say *‘how can anyone be predestined for salvation when there are verses like John 3:16 which contain words like ‘whosoever believes’... Don’t we have a choice to believe or not to believe?’*

First, the *context* of John 3:16 is important. The transitive article **‘for’** (‘gar’) links the information from previous verses. These previous verses are about a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. The immediate context is taken from the Old Testament passage of the brass serpent in the wilderness for those who would look upon it with faith (Numbers 21:8). The larger context is about Regeneration, being ‘Born Again’. Jesus teaches clearly that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit and not of the ‘flesh’ (vs. 6); and that it is a ‘heavenly thing’ not an ‘earthly thing’ (vs. 12). He teaches that no man knows how this operates - it is like the ‘wind’ that ‘blows where it wills’ and no one knows ‘where it comes from or where it goes’ (vs. 8). The word **‘wind’** here is literally the word for the Holy Spirit (‘*pneúma*’).

Again, the **‘for’** that begins John 3:16 is immediately connected with the objects of the last verse - everyone who believes should not perish because God sent His Son to those who believe.

What does John 3:16 literally say? *‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’.*

The text states:

1. God loved the world (his creation). (1)
2. He gave His only Son.
3. Those that truly believe in him would not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16 *says nothing* about man choosing *or* predestination. It says *nothing* about any process that caused the ‘whosoever’ to believe. It simply says *those that believe* will be saved!

upon a level; We have none of anything that we can stand to recommend to God; and if the spirit shall choose to operate in our hearts unto salvation, He must not be moved to do it by any good will, good desire, or good deed, that dwells in us by nature.

In summary, let the able commentator, R. Haldane, separate truth from error in regard to the ‘will’ of man: (emphasis in the original): *‘That an unconverted man cannot be subject to the law of God, appears to many a hard saying; but it is the uniform doctrine of the word of God. All men in their natural state, though they boast that they are free, are the slaves of sin... Jesus, addressing the Jews who professed to believe in Him, but who understood not His doctrine, said to them, ‘Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,’ They answered, ‘We were never in bondage to any man; how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?’ In the same manner the unconverted boast of their freedom. They affirm that their will is free; and that, as they can choose the evil, so they can choose the good. If, by this freedom, they intend that they can choose without any external force constraining or preventing them, it is true that, in this sense, they are free. But a moral agent chooses according to his inclinations or dispositions... A fool judges foolishly; a wicked man judges wickedly; a good man wills that which is good... the wicked and condemned spirits cannot choose what is holy. When the devil ‘speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.’ Man, therefore, in his carnal state, chooses what is evil; but he cannot choose what is good... He is inclined to do evil, and evil he will do. ‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.’ ...It is thus that ‘wickedness proceedeth from the wicked.’ ‘Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.’ ‘Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ ‘Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’... ‘No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me, draw him.’ ‘Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me except it were given unto him of My Father.’ ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ ‘Their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken.’ ‘How can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.’ ‘The Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive ...According, then, to Scripture, the natural man is entirely incapable of choosing what is good, although it is his duty... He is ‘ungodly,’ a ‘sinner,’ an ‘enemy to God,’ and ‘without strength’, Romans 5:6,10... From this slavery they cannot be freed but by means of the word of God... granting to those to whom it seemeth good to Him the blessing of regeneration; ‘distributing His gifts, and*

does not receive a 'free will'. Rather, his will is now bent in another direction - towards the holiness and the righteousness of God - the very opposite of it's position prior to salvation. Now the believer lives in the freedom of God's will for he is *free from the slavery of his fleshly will!* Our mind is now not so much ours but Christ's. It is now **'God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure'** (Philippians 2:13). Similarly, when the saints are in heaven, are their wills 'free' to sin? This is deemed as impossible by God Himself who says clearly there will be no sin in heaven (Revelation 21:27). Again, the will' is bent towards the *nature* of the person.

Interestingly, many of those who believe in 'free will' for the unsaved man - that his will is entirely free to choose God in salvation - these also believe that man cannot be lost once he is saved. But if he has 'free will' to be saved then why does he not still have this same 'free will' to be lost? The logic of this should not escape those who teach man's will is 'free' to be saved and yet at the same time teach an inability to lose that same salvation.

The same reverse logic can be applied to God - does God have 'free will' - even to sin? Obviously His will is not 'free' in that direction because of his nature, otherwise he would not be God.

What is taught in this treatise on 'free will' is not just from Scripture but is attested to by almost all the church leaders down through the running centuries. J. N. Darby wrote: ***'This re-appearance of the doctrine of Free Will serves to support that of the pretensions of the natural man to be not irremediably fallen, for this is what such doctrines tend to. All who have never been deeply convicted of sin, all persons in whom this conviction is based on gross external sins, believe more or less in free will.'*** ('Man's so called Free Will' by J.N.Darby)

Spurgeon, in a sermon entitled 'Free Grace' (Jan 9th, 1859), said clearly that it is not of any will of man that any are saved: *'Now the calling of the Holy Spirit is without any regard to any merit in us. If this day the Holy Spirit shall call out of this congregation a hundred men, and bring them out of their estate of sin, into a state of righteousness, you shall bring these hundred men, and let them march in view, and if you could read their hearts, you would be compelled to say, 'I see no reason why the spirit of God should have operated upon these. I see nothing whatever that could have merited such grace as this - nothing that could have caused the operations and motions of the spirit to work in these men'. For look ye here. By nature men are said to be dead in sin. If the Holy Spirit quickens, it cannot be because of any power in the dead man, or any merit in them, for they are dead, corrupt and rotten in the grave of their sin. If then the Holy spirit says, 'come forth and live'... it must be for some reason in His own mind, but not in us. Therefore know ye this, men and brethren, that we all stand*

Unfortunately in recent centuries the word '*whosoever*' has derived a meaning of '*anyone who chooses*' or '*anyone who decides*'. However, this was not the original English meaning when originally translated, nor is the Greek meaning, nor historically what the church has taught or the great evangelists such as Spurgeon or the Reformers... and it certainly contradicts the bulk of Scripture! Unsaved man does not choose God for salvation. God chooses man, (John 15:16; Ephesians 1:4,5; John 1:11-13; Romans 3:11; etc).

I address this Scripture (John 3:16) because today far too much humanistic logic has been employed in interpretation of this verse. The 'whosoever' is being grossly misread today because of *preconceived* ideas developed mostly in the Twentieth Century.

The verse says nothing about free will, free choice, or man choosing the Lord!

This is the literal Greek for John 3:16:

'For so loved the God the world that the His son the unique [only begotten] He gave that all the believing ones in [on] Him no perish but have life eternal'

I appeal to the Greek as a tool here partly because the original English for '*whosoever*' has been somewhat corrupted in the minds of modern Christians to something that now has man deciding with his own 'free will' to choose God. But this is *not* what the original language says, nor the original English meaning conveyed, nor what was in the mind of the original translators. To read 'free will' into this verse is to add something that is literally *not in the text*. It overthrows the doctrines of Grace and that God in Jesus is truly the **'author and the finisher of our faith'** (Hebrews 12:2).

Strictly, there is no word 'whosoever' in the Greek text. The '*whosoever believes*' is literally translated '*all the believing ones*'! The same Greek phrase '*the believing ones*' ('*o pisteuon*') is also used in the verses preceding and following verse 16 (vs. 15 and 18).

So, who are these '*believing ones*'? The Greek has '*the believing ones*' with the definite article '*the*'. The Greek '*pas o pisteuon*' is literally '*all the believing ones*'. The KJV English has translated '*pas*' as '*whosoever*'. The literal translation is actually '*all*' or '*everyone*'. The Greek '*pas*' is translated over 1,000 times in the New Testament and in only a few places is it translated '*whosoever*' in comparison to the many hundreds of times it is translated '*all*'; '*every*'; '*every one*'. As in John 3:16, very often '*pas*' has the definite article '*the*' after it and referring to a *definite number, quantity or entity*. The common misconception is that '*whosoever*' is an indefinite phrase, but this is plainly

refuted by the definite article 'o' ('the') which is attached to 'believing ones'. The definite article modifies a particular object - the object here is the 'believing ones'. (2)

This is a definite group of people, not an indiscriminate or indefinite group! John Newton wrote that God in John 3:16 has 'opened the Kingdom of God to all believers'. (3)

John 3:16 is not about 'anyone' but about 'the believing ones'! The verse here is directed to those who believe and to no more. Those believing, whosoever they may be, are the ones actually saved. There is also the telling confirmation of much Scripture which says there was, is, and will be, a definite group of people (Scripture calls these the 'elect' - Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter :2; etc) who are the 'whosoever' or literally 'the believing ones', as in John 3:16. These are the ones 'predestinated' from 'the foundation of the world'. Ephesians 1:4,5,11 ***According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will... In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will***'.

We do not know who these 'believing ones' or who the 'whosoever' are, as this is a 'mystery' to us (Ephesians 1:9), yet known by God from the beginning. Our commission is to preach to all and by this means God will draw those being saved. God has predestinated, He calls, He justifies and He Glorifies His 'believing ones' (Romans 8:29,30), the 'whosoever', the elect of God 'chosen before the foundation of the world'.

Spurgeon preached: 'Our Lord has come to save His own elect, and He will save every one of them. No soul for whom He stood as Surety and Substitute shall ever be cast away. The sheep shall pass again under the hand of Him that telleth them, and they shall all be there. He shall not fail nor be discouraged'; but He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied... Then the Scripture adds this very significant word, 'Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth'. The chosen of God, the most choice one that God knows, shall He prove a failure?...'
('Christ' s Work No Failure', Jan 30th 1887)

Many have brought preconceived ideas to John 3:16. The passage does not speak of an indefinite group choosing of their own capacity, but a definite group, literally 'all the believing ones'. It is imperative that John 3:16 is understood as the writer intended: God loves His creation; He gave His only son; that the 'whosoever' - 'the believing ones', will surely believe in Him and not perish, but have everlasting life.

freely will'. However, this is not what the original Greek nor the English sentence is saying. Translated literally 'whosoever believes' reads 'all the believing ones'. It is a great tragedy that Arminian 'free willism' is read into this Scripture when that very notion contradicts so much other Scripture. This heresy stems back to early centuries ('Pelagianism') and was refuted strongly by the church at the time as a heresy and is not a part of 'the faith once delivered' (Jude 3).

Others also use a most deceptive argument: that if man has no 'free will' to choose God as redeemer then God has man as 'puppets' or 'robots' who are 'forced' and dragged 'against their wills' into the kingdom of God, while others are consigned to the punishment of Hell. This may well be deduced from logic but it is a logic that is unbiblical and extra-biblical!

Firstly, let us use logic against this logic: If a man is drowning and cannot save himself but is rescued - is he a 'robot' or 'puppet' dragged backed to life? Does he resist such attempts to save him? Which so called 'freedom' would you want - 'free will' to only choose sin and drown; or God's will to be saved?

Secondly, this foolish logic of man as 'a puppet' humanly violates the very 'mystery' of God's sovereign election 'before the foundation of the world' (Ephesians 1:1-9). But this proud folly is most assuredly answered by God Himself!: ***What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. For the scripture says unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore has he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens. You will say then unto me, Why does he yet find fault? For who has resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory***' (Romans 9:14-23).

The inability of man to will salvation for himself does not mean his intellect, emotions or power of will are destroyed. It simply means that man's 'will', by means of the fall, is bent away from God; and it could even be said too that man wills this direction 'freely'! (This is 'free agency'). Even at the new birth, man

This does not deny that man has a will and is responsible for his sin. But the Scriptures above show the unsaved will is not 'free' in the sense to choose salvation. The unsaved 'will' is simply not independent or free of all influences and consequences from the sin of Adam and Eve!

Man is responsible for his sin. Man is a sinner because *he* sins. No one can blame Satan or God (Romans 9:19,20). If we owe a sum of money and cannot repay it, whose fault is it? Are we not still responsible to pay the debt even though we might be unable to? Many at this point wrongly attempt to reconcile two truths - 1. The *inability* of fallen man to will salvation (called by some 'total depravity') and 2. The *responsibility* of man for his own sin. This is a mystery, an 'antimony', which the great evangelist Charles Spurgeon said was like '*two friends*' that could not, and did not need to be, reconciled. Indeed, the Bible does *not* reconcile these truths. So, why should we?

Man is responsible for his sin. The problem here is that many see 'responsibility' as 'ability'. Their logic says that if there is responsibility then there must be ability. But this is a grave error to the Doctrines of Grace. Responsibility does not give ability according to Scripture.

Fallen man simply does not have 'free will' to seek or to choose Jesus Christ as his Redeemer. If that were so, then the Scriptures would not be true. Fallen man simply cannot will to seek after God's will (Romans 8:7,8; Romans 3:11; John 1:12,13).

The Bible clearly says that in our unsaved state we were '***fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were BY NATURE the children of wrath***' (Ephesians 2:3). Our 'wills' were in the '***desires of the flesh***'! We are only 'free' to act *according to our nature!* Our Adamic natures are sinful. A cow might be 'free' to eat Pork but it will not, because it is not in its nature to eat Pork! Unsaved fallen man is not 'free' to seek after God but rather is a 'slave' to sin (Romans 6:9,14; 7:1). Therefore, how can we possibly say fallen man has 'free' will? Yet this false teaching today is so prevalent in the teaching of the doctrines of salvation and is evident in the current methods of evangelism.

One of the definitions of 'grace' must surely be that God 'draws' us and turns our will from one direction to the opposite direction... and this when we had no hope or will to do this in ourselves! The Bible says we were 'elected' by God's will '***to obedience***' (1 Peter 1: 2; Ephesians 1:11), effectively overturning the inability of fallen man to will the same as God (Romans 8:7,8).

Some cite John 3:16 as evidence of 'free will': '***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life***'. They read the '*whosoever*' as 'anyone who

(1) There are different views on what the '*world*' here refers to. John in his Gospel and letters deals with the word 'world' in a variety of ways. The word is likely used here in John 3:16 in a general way, as it is used in many places. When the brethren of Christ said '*Show yourself to the world*' (John 7:4), it was obviously not meant to all mankind. When the Pharisees said '*Behold, the world is gone after Him*' (John 12:19), it obviously does not mean the entire human family. Similarly, in John 6:33 the passages states: '*For the bread of God is he which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world*'. But not everyone in the world has or will have God's 'life', for we know the 'world is condemned already'. We cannot say here in John 6:33 that the 'world' is every person, just as we cannot emphatically say that in John 3:16 that the 'world' is every person. There are many other passages which could be quoted to show that the word 'world' in most cases has a general rather than an absolute use. The 'world' here can hardly mean the entire human race, for at least half of the human race was already in Hell when Christ came to earth. Regardless of how the word '*world*' is exegeted, what is unmistakable is that the phrase '*whosoever believes*' is literally translated '*all the believing ones*'. This must define the subjects spoken of in this verse, rather than what, or who, the 'world' is. Added to this is the overall context of the passage restricting salvation to only those who are born from above - 'born again'.

(2) The plural 'believing ones' ('pisteuon') stands with the article 'the' ('o') when a definite number is implied, or without the article when the number is indefinite. In John 3:16 it stands beside the definite article 'the', so a definite number is implied.

(3) 'Works of John Newton', Vol.2, P.285-286; Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, PA: 1988.

‘The Faith Once Delivered’

(Study No. 4)

‘...dig again the wells of water’ (Geniuses 26);

‘ask for the old paths, where is the good way’, (Jeremiah 6:16)

The Doctrine of ‘Free Will’ and ‘Free Agency’ Defined -

What is Biblical?

There are many today who would say unsaved man has ‘free will’ to choose Christ for salvation. But what do they mean by ‘free will’ and is it in Scripture - that unsaved man can by ‘free will’ choose Christ for salvation?

The term ‘Free Will’ is one of the most misunderstood terms today. ‘Free will’ in its literal sense means to be able to choose one thing from another or one way from another, *without any forces or any influences whatsoever*. But there is a difference between ‘Free Will’ and ‘Free Agency’. ‘Free Agency’ means we can voluntarily choose, but *according to our desires or our nature*.

The ‘will’ could be defined as the faculty of choice, the immediate cause of all action. The influence that most determines the will is that which causes it to choose. This motive influence in the mind will be what affects the will. A sinner chooses a life of sin because he *prefers* this and is thus motivated by the flesh. This bias is irreversible unless God intervenes. *‘We were by nature the children of wrath...’* (Ephesians 2:3); *‘But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned’* (1 Corinthians 2:14); *‘Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God’* (Romans 8:7,8). Does this sound like a will that is ‘free’?

All men have ‘free agency’, that is, we can *voluntarily* choose *according to our desires*, but because unsaved man’s desires are in bondage to corruption of his nature, his will is not ‘free’ in the Biblical sense. The turning of this will occurs when the Holy Spirit acts to free the man who is *by nature* a child of wrath (Ephesians 2:3) and who *cannot* understand spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:7,8).

J.N.Darby wrote: *‘If Christ came to save that which was lost, free will has no place. Not that God prevents men from receiving Christ - far from it... so decided is his will not to submit to God... that nothing can induce him to receive the Lord, and to give up sin. If by the words, ‘freedom of man’, they mean that no one forces him to reject the Lord, this liberty fully exists. But if it is said that on account of the dominion of sin, of which he is a slave, he cannot escape from his condition, and make choice of the good - even while acknowledging it to be good,*

and approving of it - then he has no liberty whatever . He is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be; hence, they that are in the flesh cannot please God’.

As far as we know the first exercise of ‘free will’ was performed by Lucifer, a created being, who set his will against God the creator when he said *‘I will be like the most high’* (Isaiah 14:14).

Similarly, the first exercise of ‘free will’ by unfallen man was to sin against God in accepting Satan’s suggestion to *‘be as God’* (Genesis 3:5).

Both Satan and man retained their power of ‘choice’ or ‘will’ but the *direction* of their wills was then always set on a course *contrary* to God. Their wills were no longer ‘free’. Does Satan now have ‘free will’ to choose God or to choose right from wrong? The answer is of course ‘no’. If Satan has any so called ‘free will’ it is only in *one direction*- to choose evil! Is this really ‘free will’ as we define it today? Did God set any hope or ‘free will’ for Satan when in judgement he said *‘you are cursed’* (Genesis 3:15)?

But what of man? When man fell in sin, was he able to use his ‘free will’ to choose God for salvation from sin? Logic and even experience might say ‘yes’. But what do the Scriptures say?: *‘Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God’*(Romans 8:7,8); *‘There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God’* (Romans 3:11); *‘But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God’* (John 1:12,13); *‘So then it is not of him that wills...’* (Romans 9:16).

Before we were saved from sin’s penalty *‘the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not...’* (2 Corinthians 4:4). We were not able to choose God of any ‘free’ will. Jesus Himself unequivocally said: *‘No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him...’* (John 6:44). The Scripture describes men as those who love darkness (John 3:19), are in bondage to sin (Galatians 4:3; Romans 6:17, 20), and taken captive by Satan to do his will (2 Timothy 2:25)...until the Son sets them *‘free’* (John 8:36). When Jesus said He will set people ‘free’, He means he will set them free from the bondage of sin. And where there is bondage, by definition there is no ‘freedom’ of will to choose what is spiritual. *‘But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned’* (1 Corinthians 2:14). Why would the Son need to set them free from sin if they were free to turn from it themselves? Were they not ‘slaves’ to sin? (Romans 6:9,14; 7:1).