

Doctrine of the Divine Decree

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I. Glossary.

A. Calling.

1. A call is the extension of a divine grace offer to any individual. It is also divine guidance.
2. There is a general call of the salvation offer, which is given to all mankind;
3. There is a specific call of salvation at the moment that anyone hears the gospel or identifies God consciousness.
4. There is a call to the ministry that includes the awareness of divine guidance to a specific ministry.
5. There is a general call to the ministry that is the identification of the spiritual gift of evangelism or pastor-teacher.
6. A divine calling is therefore divine communication into the life of a human being.
7. We are called to salvation, holiness, and faith, (2 Thessalonians 2:13f.), to an eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15), to fellowship (1 Corinthians 1:9), and to service (Galatians 1).
8. Galatians 1:15 makes it clear that the means of the calling is grace, and the content of the call is truth (2 Thessalonians 2:14 cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:4f.; Romans 10:14ff.).

B. The Divine Decree.

1. This is the sum total of the expression of divine sovereignty in human history.
2. The classic definition comes from R.B. Thieme, Jr.: “The decree of God is His eternal (always existed), holy (perfect integrity), wise (the application of omniscience to creation), and sovereign purpose, comprehending simultaneously all things that ever were or will be in their causes, conditions (status), successions (interaction with others that leads to certain decisions), relations, and determining their certain futurity.
 - a) This definition begins by expressing the source of the decrees. “Comprehending” refers to divine omniscience.
 - b) The definition also expresses the attributes of God in terms of divine will in human history.
 - c) The definition emphasizes that the omniscience of God knew simultaneously in eternity past everything that would happen in human history (the thought, action, and decision of every person in his life), furthermore, everything in relation to all of the things pertaining to it.

3. But has God given all the events in human history certain futurity? That is, did He decree everything beforehand? And if so, then how can man ever have free will? This is a very ancient question indeed, and one we will answer fully below.
4. Note this distinction: God has given the conditions of human history certain futurity. Not the events.

C. Election.

1. Election is the choosing action of God toward certain individuals in the human race.
2. There are four elections in the Bible: Humanity, Israel, Jesus Christ, and the Church.
3. Election is the expression of Divine sovereignty, and God is sovereign over all.
4. Election never violates the integrity of God, and it never violates the principle of human free will.
5. Election is synonymous with predestination. Just because God has chosen you before the foundation of the world does not mean that you are compelled to accept His choice.
6. There is no special election of believers.

D. Foreknowledge.

1. God knows all things from eternity past; He knows all possibilities of human history before they exist.
2. He knows every consequence and condition of human history; He knows the courses of our lives, should we take any option.
3. He knows how every possible option and combination of options will turn out.
4. In foreknowledge, the pre-set conditions of the decree are combined with the knowledge of human events.

E. Kenosis.

1. God is perfect and infinite; He is omnipotent, and has the power to perform any act.
2. But His perfect character limits the function of His omnipotence, because He will not do anything that violates His perfect sense of integrity.
3. Kenosis is God's self-limiting action, due to integrity. It operates under all conditions and at all times.
4. Kenosis acts as the protection for all of God's interaction with His creatures.

F. Lapsarianism.

1. Lapsarianism is an observation of the logical order of the conditions of human history, as set forth in the divine decree.
2. It concentrates on the principles of kenosis, providence, and election.
3. Lapsarianism, from the word "lapse," refers to the fact that man is a fallen being.

4. Lapsarianism, then, deals with the order of the decrees. It deals with the logical rather than with the chronological order of the decrees. By logical is meant that although the entire decree is one thought in the mind of God, the principle of cause and effect is involved.

G. Law of Volitional Responsibility.

1. This is one of the primary conditions of human history, as set forth by the divine decree.
2. God determined that all decisions made by human beings would have their consequences, good or bad, according to His justice.
3. God promised from eternity past that humanity would receive justice according to their decisions, all in good measure.

H. Predestination/Foreordination.

1. This is synonymous with election. In eternity past, God set forth His desire of the highest and best for every human being.
2. Every human being has a highest and best destiny; with divine foreknowledge, every human being has a highest and best destiny from any point in their lives.
3. Every person's destiny waits for fulfillment through the function of free will. Many do not fulfill their destinies because of their bad decisions in life.
4. In predestination, God chose certain conditions which would result in the function of His justice toward. As a result, you can always be confident that your good decisions will leave in in His direct will.
5. Predestination always sets God's highest and best for you from your current position, morally, spiritually, and physically.

I. Providence.

1. The is the anticipation of grace for all the possibilities of our lives.
2. Because of foreknowledge, God can anticipate all of the possibilities of our lives, and account for it with grace.
3. Providence is the divine provision of grace to us at any given moment. It is the provision of what we need, logistically and spiritually to fulfill our destinies.
4. Providence is infallible and all-powerful, surpassing all human limitations.

J. Sovereignty.

1. This is the infinite and perfect divine volition.
2. His decisions are based on His perfect thinking.
3. His decisions are motivated by His perfect love.
4. His volition is supreme over all others, and completely independent of any outside factor.

5. Whenever God makes a decision, it is perfect and infinite, and it supersedes and overrules all creature volition.
6. God has the right exercise His sovereignty because of His infinity and perfection.
7. God is fully qualified to exercise His sovereignty because of His infinity and perfection.

II. The Integrity of God in Interaction with Mankind.

A. The divine responsibility toward creatures and creation.

1. Sometime in the distant past, God created angels. As a part of His conflict with angels, he created man.
2. God is always completely responsible and just toward all His creatures.
3. The Bible makes it clear that the character of God acts with perfect consistency toward His creatures.
4. So now the question is this would God have been completely fair to the fallen angels by resolving their conflict through what amounts to a morality play.
5. If human history is a puppet show, then there is no need for the puppets to have consciousness. The very fact that we have consciousness, and that we are here to resolve the angelic conflict makes it clear that we are not puppets.
6. This builds an approach to the scriptural passages on the foreknowledge and foreordaining of God.
7. What we must look for in Scripture are passages that demand the foreordination of all the specific events of our lives. If we cannot find them, then we must prefer an alternative, due to the character of God approach.

B. Motive.

1. God's motive is always love; He wants the best for all of His creatures, and that is to have a relationship with Him.
2. But more than that, God wants reciprocal love, and true love from the creatures. This love can only come from true free will. If there is any meddling on the part of God, then it is not true love at all, but just the expression of robots or puppets.
3. Therefore true love can only be expressed toward creatures with self-consciousness and awareness; it can only be expressed from a creature who has a soul, and true free will.
4. Human ignorance is not a very complete answer; for even with ignorance plus foreordination, there is still puppetry from the viewpoint of the angels.

III. Reasons why foreordination violates the integrity of God.

- A. Because it violates the principle of free will.
- B. Because it violates a proper angelic conflict, with demonic interaction. It is a sham if there is no free will.
- C. Because if it is a puppet show for the angelic conflict, then there is no need for the puppets to be conscious.
- D. Because there is no true worship on the part of puppets or robots.
- E. Because God cannot truly love a puppet or a robot.
- F. Because God does not need to in order to remain in control of the angelic conflict.
- G. Because it violates the principle of self-esteem; God does not need to control us for His happiness.
- H. Because it completely eliminates the need for God to interact with us in time, yet Scripture portrays an interventionist God.
- I. Because it makes God the author of evil; He designates sins; He condemns people to hell on an arbitrary basis; His criteria for salvation are not based on justice.
- J. Because it destroys any sense of responsibility.

IV. Important Passages Related to the Concept of Foreordination.

A. Psalm 139:15-16.

1. New New American Standard translation: “(15) My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; (16) Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.”
 - a) Alright, that does it. The theory is dead. Foreordination of all the events of our lives is quite obvious from this translation.
 - b) It does say in this translation that God has a book, and that He writes all the days of our lives in it, ordaining them before they ever were.
 - c) This appears to be decisive, but just in case, and just to be thorough, the original Hebrew should be checked.
 - d) Principle: behind every deceptive translation there is a marvelous principle. This is no exception.
2. Accurate translation from the original Hebrew, “(15) My frame was not hidden from You when I was being made in secret; I was intricately woven in the depths of the earth. (16) Your eyes beheld my unformed substance, and in Your book every one of the days were written, but not one of those days were formed.”

- a) Since this is such a serious departure from a usually decent English translation, some explanation should follow. Verse fifteen is fine; verse sixteen must have some work done.
- (1) But one comment on verse fifteen; it is a parallelism on the matter of the formation of the human body.
 - (a) Line one describes the formation of the body in the womb - in secret.
 - (b) But line two is different - what is the depths of the earth? This stands in parallel to the secret place of the first line, and so is a synonym for the womb. The inside of the womb may as well be the depths of the earth, it is so secret.
 - b) The first phrase of verse sixteen should stand without question. "Your eyes beheld my unformed substance." It lays out rather nicely as subject-verb-object.
 - (1) This describes again the making of the human body. The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon has the word NOLAM as embryo. It is actually 'wrapping' or 'garment' - what we would call the house for the soul, but the Jews called the clothing for the soul. It is obviously the human body.
 - (2) So God looked into the womb and saw the embryonic form of David's body. The power of God was so great that He could look into the secret place - the depths of the earth.
 - c) But now there is departure with the rest of the verse.
 - (1) The pattern for the first phrase is this: conjunction-preposition-noun (with pronominal suffix) -adjective (with pronominal suffix)-verb-noun (with pronominal suffix). This is a complete phrase; there is no way you can add verbs or nouns or adjectives without starting a completely new phrase.
 - (2) WEAL-MIPHRAQA KULLAM YIKKATHEBHU YAMIM.
 - (3) "And in your book / all of them / were written / days"
 - (a) Days is the subject. YAMIM is the masculine plural noun, and since it is the only noun not otherwise qualified by a preposition, it is clear just what its function is.
 - (b) In other words, there is no other noun in this phrase that may function as a subject; the only other true noun is in a prepositional phrase.
 - (c) The niph'al passive verb YIKKATHEBHU portrays an uncompleted past action.
 - (d) If this were to depict the action of foreordination, you would certainly expect the Hebrew perfect tense.
 - (e) So the portrayal here is that God did not finish this job of writing all of David's days.
 - (f) God has a book where He writes the story of our days on this earth; that story is not complete.
 - (g) David then goes on to the last phrase, where he explains.
 - (4) YUTSARU WELO EHAR BAHAM.
 - (5) "were formed / and not one / of them"
 - (a) Here we have a pretty basic sentence in the Hebrew.
 - (b) The subject is WELO EHAR 'and not one.' This again is the only noun that qualifies - the other has a preposition again. That David is taking up some new phrase is also indicated by the presence of the conjunction WAW.
 - (c) The negative adverb LO works together with the conjunction WAW to form a hybrid adversative conjunction. This should be translated 'but not.'

- (d) The subject is modified by the preposition BA plus the third masculine plural pronominal suffix. This is translated 'of them.' It refers back to the last use of a noun - which is YAMIM. So this subject is about the days of David's life.
- (e) Now we have the perfect verb, in fact the intensive passive pual perfect. YATSARU indicates several things.
 - 1) That the action is intense.
 - 2) That the subject 'not one of those days' receives the action of the verb.
 - 3) That the action is complete.
 - 4) The verb itself describes the action of the potter in forming clay into a pot.
- (6) Let's summarize.
 - (a) God wrote the days of David's life in His book, but He did not complete the writing of it.
 - (b) In fact, not only did God refrain from completing that, He definitely did not form them. The negation is completed by the perfect tense of the verb.
 - (c) The NASB rendering 'when as yet there was not one of them' is not only unacceptable, but somewhat insidious. The inclusion of the adverb 'when' has no basis whatsoever in fact. To make this final phrase adverbial is not only wrong grammatically, but misleads the reader into thinking that God has written all of his days into His book.
 - 1) Part of this confusion comes from something misleading in the Masoretic Text - a pause immediately after the verb YATSARU, which would place it with the preceding words, and isolate the last two words. This is how the translator justified his translation.
 - 2) But if you will notice. The system of pauses in the Hebrew text is noncanonical. They are the product of the Masoretes, who scribed the Hebrew manuscripts from about 500-1000 A.D.
 - 3) This cantillation, or system of pauses was added so that the text could be chanted or sung by Rabbis. It was added more than 800 years after the last writer of the Old Testament was gone. It cannot be entirely trusted, because it is a commentary!!! It was a commentary and nothing more. Sometimes commentaries are good, and sometimes they are not. This time the latter is true.
 - (d) This turns out to be a little more than misleading; it present a completely opposite world-view than what occurs in the original Hebrew.
 - (e) So David says:
 - 1) Your eyes beheld my embryo;
 - 2) and in Your book were [incompletely] written all the days;
 - 3) but not one of those days were formed.
 - (f) This is a song of worship to God, and thus David worships God for this principle of doctrine.
- (7) God writes our days in His book - He sets before us a destiny, a magnificent plan of blessing.
- (8) But God never ordains those days! He cannot force us into living those blessings at all!!!
- (9) God ordains a plan of blessing for us; at the same time, He honors our free will.

- d) In fact, if you return to the beginning of the Psalm, you will see God acting during time, and not in eternity past: “(1) O Lord, You have searched me and known me. (2) You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. (3) You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways.
- (4) When not a word is on my tongue behold, Lord, You know it completely.”
- (5) But wait a minute: that verse four sure sounds like God knows what we will say before we say it.
- (6) Exactly. That is a perfect example of divine foreknowledge. But foreknowledge knows all possibilities without the requirement of foreordination.
- (7) God can foreknow every word we speak without ever having to preset them; He just know them all because He is omniscient.
- (8) When God set forth the world, no better yet, when God set forth your life in this world, He did not pre-set every decision you would make. But He did know all the possibilities, and His grace accounted for them.
- e) The word order is confirmed by the Greek translation of the Septuagint, which preserves the pre-cantillation word order and translation. The verse really and truly had been changed by the Masoretes!

3. Other ‘book’ passages of the Psalms:

- a) Psalm 40:6-8, “(6) Sacrifice and offering You have not desired; You have dug ears for me; burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. (7) Then I said, ‘Behold, I come. In the roll of the book it is written for me. (8) To do Your will, my God, I delight and Your Law is within my heart.’ ”
- (1) David says, ‘In the roll of the book it is written for me.’ But notice the preposition AL. AL indicates purpose or target audience.
- (2) Have you ever said of a particular verse - “that was written for me.” Well this is David’s intent here.
- b) Psalm 56:8, “My wanderings You have kept count of; You put my tears in Your bottle; are they not in Your book?”
- (1) This verse portrays God’s interaction with David; specifically, what actions God took on behalf of David.
- (2) God took account of David’s wanderings, when he wandered.
- (3) God put David’s tears in His bottle when he shed them.
- (4) And now those tears are in God’s book. In other words, God writes His book as we live it, and not before.
- (5) Therefore, the purpose of the book of God is to record our lives. His book is the perfect book of His memory. He remembers all of our travails and tears.

B. Romans 9:1-33 (see separate doctrine).

C. Romans 8:28-30, “(28) But we know that all things work together unto good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to His purpose. (29) Because whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He would be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) And whom He predestined, these also He called; and whom He called, these also He justified; and whom He justified, these also He glorified.”

1. Introduction.

- a) This little passage is unique to the Bible in that it includes the sequence of the logical thinking of God in eternity past.
 - b) It therefore contains all of the past decisions of God concerning all mankind.
 - c) Just preceding this is the brief mention of the common grace ministry of God the Holy Spirit related to believers who are out of fellowship (v.26), and the advocacy of Jesus Christ toward our post-salvation sin (v.27).
 - (1) Those ministries were a part of the plan of God as prepared from eternity past.
 - (2) So those two verses are a small part of what is revealed here; they are one element of the plan of God, while the rest is revealed in a general sense in verses 28-30.
2. Verse 28: “And we know that all things work together unto good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to His purpose.”
- a) The verse begins with the postpositive conjunction DE, which is simply transitional here, and translated ‘and.’
 - b) The verb OIDAMEN is in the first person plural; Paul gathers all of his readers together with himself in order to cause the action of knowing. This is something that everyone knows, because it has its foundation on the perfect character of God.
 - c) The adjective PANTA puts all of the events of our lives into one basket. It is ‘all things.’
 - (1) This ‘all things’ may include things that we do not like. It may include personal disasters of various calibers and intensities.
 - (2) ‘All things’ may also bring prosperity for our good. But whatever the events of our lives, they are parlayed into good by the grace of God.
 - d) The verb SUNERGEI is the basis for our English word synergy. It shows many parts working together toward a common goal.
 - (1) This verb is here in the present tense, showing an ongoing action of working together.
 - (2) All things work together at all times. This is not in eternity past at all, but rather in time. This is the intervention of God on our behalf, according to the Law of Spiritual momentum.
 - e) The prepositional phrase EIS AGATHON depicts the result of the working together.
 - (1) EIS is the preposition, and it points to the tangible result of all things working together.
 - (2) The result is good of intrinsic value. All things go into a kind of machine that weaves together good. That machine is the intervention of God.
 - f) But the qualifier for all of this comes in the phrase TOIS AGAPOSIN TON THEON.
 - (1) The present active participle AGAPOSIN defines the action as occurring simultaneously with the main verb SUNERGEI. So at the same time that all things are working together, there must also be love for God.
 - (a) There are two possibilities for this: the state of being in fellowship with God, or the state of spiritual maturity. And perhaps a third - all those who are positive and maintaining spiritual momentum.
 - (b) At a basic level, anyone can love God. From the least mature to the most, there may be love for God.

- (c) The more mature love God more deeply and more richly because of the doctrinal content of their souls, but nonetheless all love God.
 - (d) And this verse gives no clue about the depth or intensity of the love expressed toward God.
 - (e) This narrows it down to two categories. Fellowship and general momentum.
 - (f) The present tense of the participle also has aspect - it is the continuous aspect of the present that comes forth here.
 - (g) Principle: you cannot worship God while you are out of fellowship; but you can develop a desire to return to fellowship. That at least is an abstract form of love for God. Conclusion: love for God is not completely dependent on fellowship. Just because we are sinners and occasionally (or more often) sin does not mean that we are devoid of love for God.
 - (h) Principle: even when you are out of fellowship, discipline works for your good. God brings tough things into your life so that you will shape up and recover.
 - (i) Therefore we come down to the principle of spiritual momentum; but some care must be taken with this.
 - (j) Positive volition after salvation is a basic honesty about your spiritual needs.
 - 1) Therefore if you are out of fellowship, it is an honesty about the need for a divine solution to your sinful state. This has been provided in confession.
 - 2) And generally it is honesty about your need for spiritual growth in the word through the power of the Spirit.
 - (k) So spiritual momentum is not sinless perfection, but rather a persistent honesty about your spiritual needs at any given time in life.
 - (l) It is more than just someone who takes in truth - it is someone who is consistently applying it as well.
 - (m) Now everyone who has spiritual momentum has all things work together for good in their lives.
- g) The final phrase of the verse is TOIS KATA PROTHESIN KLETOIS OUSIN.
- (1) The present participle of the verb EIMI plus the definite article TOIS makes the follow up explanation to the preceding participle.
 - (2) So this is an exact parallel statement to 'to the ones who love God.' It is intended to further explain the love for God.
 - (3) The calling is KLETOIS, the predicate of the participle OUSIN.
 - (4) The calling occurs after a pattern: the pattern is the purpose of God, as portrayed in the word PROTHESIN.
 - (a) This noun means to 'put in place beforehand.' It means to plan, or more informally, to have a purpose in mind for something or someone.
 - (b) But here it is God's purpose. God has a purpose for our lives - a certain destiny that He has in mind. And of course He has the perfect power to bring that purpose about within the framework of our freedom of choice.
 - (c) So we are called according to the purpose of God. And this is the parallel explanation of 'to the ones who love God.'
 - (d) Now an immediate question comes to mind: who does this calling? Let's go on to the rest of the passage before we make this determination.
3. Verse 29 begins to display the logical thinking of God from of old: "Because whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He would be the firstborn among many brethren."

- a) The first word to reckon with is HOTI; it points to the reason for the preceding statement - to the ones who are called according to a purpose. It is translated 'because.' Let's be clear: this phrase explains the cause of the preceding one - we are thus in for a history lesson here. Paul is going to show us how we get to the point where we love God.
- b) The relative pronoun OUS is translated 'whom.' It picks up the thread from what has gone before. This 'whom' is in reality the one who loves God.
- c) The first verb is PROEGNO, the aorist active indicative of PROGINOSKO. It means to know beforehand.
 - (1) The aorist tense of this verb summarizes a past action. This action took place in eternity past.
 - (2) There never was a time when God did not know you. He always has known you through and through - better than anyone else ever could.
 - (3) The indicative mood of the verb designates the situation as real. He really did know you completely in eternity past.
- d) Added to this first statement is the adjunctive use of the conjunction KAI, translated 'also.' There is going to be added a logical progression of truth to the function of the first verb.
- e) The second verb is PROORISEN. This is the aorist indicative of PROORIZO. It indicates that at some time in the past, God gave you a destiny.
 - (1) The constantive aorist tense summarizes the moment of time when God decided on your wonderful destiny.
 - (2) The indicative mood makes this not a hypothetical destiny, but a real one.
 - (3) The word itself means to determine beforehand; but not necessarily to preordain in the sense of making human history into a puppet show.
 - (4) God has given us a destiny in respect of our free will; and some do not fulfill their destinies.
 - (5) But God never preordains anyone to failure.
- f) The nature of the destiny is contained within the verse itself. God desires all to be conformed to the image of His Son.
 - (1) The adjective SUMMORPHOUS means 'conformed.'
 - (2) EIKONOS is 'image.' It is the reflection of the real, an exact representation of the original.
 - (a) This is the image of God, as given in His own Son.
 - (b) This is not the power, nor the essence of God, but rather God's own character.
 - (c) Christ was the perfect example of divine character in a human being.
 - (d) God has certainly destined us to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.
 - (3) This conforming process is to take place through the faith perception of the truth: Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
 - (a) This is a command; therefore it is a proposition toward human volition.
 - (b) In other words, it is an option in the Christian life.
 - (c) And since it is truly an option, there is no foreordination toward holiness for anyone.
 - (d) God has predestined every believer to conform to the image of His Son; obviously, Christians run the spectrum of spiritual growth, from immature to mature.

- (e) The conclusion is that predestiny does not imply foreordination. You are not ordained beforehand to conform to the image of Christ. PREDESTINATION IS WHAT GOD WANTS FOR YOU. You must choose for yourself to follow that destiny.
 - (f) We might therefore define predestination as the most ancient expression of the divine will toward all human beings; the direct will of God for our lives.
 - g) The first-born among many brethren brings a spotlight on the maturity of Jesus Christ.
 - (1) Perhaps a more understandable way to put this phrase is this: God did not want Christ to be the only one conformed to His image.
 - (2) He wanted Christ to be first born among many brethren, and therefore He set a common destiny for all believers, and really, for all human beings.
 - (3) As Christ conforms perfectly to the image of God, God wants all of us to conform to the image of Christ.
4. Verse thirty reads thusly: “And whom He predestined, these also He called; and whom He called, these also He justified; and whom He justified, these also He glorified.”
- a) There are four verbs here, portrayed in sequence; they are PROORIZO, KALEO, DIKAIIOO, and DOXAZO.
 - b) They are all in the aorist tense, active voice, and indicative mood.
 - (1) In each case, the aorist tense summarizes a past action.
 - (a) This places the action not in our lives, but in the divine decrees of eternity past.
 - (b) Paul would have used a present of general truth had he wanted to communicate what happens every time God predestines someone.
 - (2) The active voice means that God produces the action in each instance; human volition is not directly in view here; only the sovereign decisions of God.
 - (3) The indicative mood in each case shows a 100% correlation to reality; God really did do this in eternity past.
 - c) These four verbs depict a logical progression of decrees. Indeed, they extend from the fifth mentioned in the previous verse:
 - (1) First is foreknowledge;
 - (2) Second is predestination;
 - (3) Third is calling;
 - (4) Fourth is justification;
 - (5) Fifth is glorification.
 - d) The question here is important: does Paul mean these things to be automatic, with reference to the sovereignty of God?
 - (1) Let’s work backwards: are all saved? No. Not all are saved. So when Paul says ‘whom He called He justified’ it is understood that not all are justified.
 - (2) But wait: if not all are justified, and whom He calls He justifies, then not all are called. It seems true by the same logic!
 - (3) But let’s follow that logic; if not all are justified and not all are called, then not all are predestined; and if not all are predestined, then by the very same reason, not all are foreknown!
 - (4) Let us also examine the issue of divine sovereignty vs. human free will within the context of this very chapter.

- (a) In our own verse, it sounds like our glorification is the choice of God alone; that we have no effect at all on what God does for us.
- (b) But listen closely to verse seventeen of Romans eight: “and if children, then heirs; heirs on the one hand of God, and fellow-heirs on the other hand of Christ, if indeed we suffer together in order that also we might be glorified.”
 - 1) Pay special attention to that last part - it is a Greek first class conditional sentence.
 - 2) The first class has the author or speaker getting his readers or listeners to assume the condition to be truth for the sake of argument; he realizes that they may not accept the truth of it, but nonetheless it is a device of rhetoric that is employed in debate.
 - 3) In this verse, Paul is not convinced that his readers will believe what he has to say about their glorification.
 - 4) He says very clear that their glorification is dependent on their conduct during their undeserved suffering.
 - 5) This final glorification is not the reception of the resurrection body, but rather the above and beyond reward of the mature believer in Jesus Christ.
 - 6) So now here is a verse that says our own glorification is quite dependent on our volition - on our Christ-like attitude during our undeserved suffering.
 - 7) Which view is correct? They are in the very same chapter, separated by some thirteen verses. Is this a true Biblical contradiction? Should we say that it is not so much a contradiction as a mystery that is not intended to be known by us?
 - 8) Well, neither. In this very famous chapter, Paul is attempting to get the Roman believers out of their morass of sin. There are many Roman Christians who are mired down by their own sin, and who live the life of Romans seven, verses 15-24.
 - 9) The solution is in chapter eight, and the key is verse six: “The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.” This is the option of every believer - to stay in fellowship and pursue truth, or to stay out of fellowship and pursue darkness and lies.
 - 10) Now we know from this chapter that God chooses for us to be glorified by Him, and at the same time we have the option to receive that glorification, and the possibility that it will not come about.
 - 11) Since verse seventeen precedes verse thirty, shouldn't we say that it provides an important context for the latter verse?
 - 12) It is simple, really. God desires for us to be glorified; every single one of us. But not all of us are, because He allows us to choose.
- e) Paul intended for his readers to understand that God in eternity past had made certain expressions of His desires for every human being.
 - (1) That He wanted all to be justified, and all to be glorified.
 - (2) And indeed if He desired these good things, then He would provide so that they would occur through the intermediate means of human free will.
 - (3) That is, God would make available everything that individuals would need in order to be justified and glorified.
 - (4) Each would be a function of His grace; each would be fully provided for by the power of God as an expression of His love.
 - (5) Each would be fully provided for as an expression of His love.

- (6) But each must be taken hold of through human free will. It is only free will that truly expresses love for God.
- f) Many theologians and laymen are confused about the distinction between God's will and God's sovereignty.
 - (1) God can want something for us without forcing it on us.
 - (2) He never violates His own righteousness in order to get something that He wants.
 - (3) And the fact of human negative volition points out very clearly that God does not always get what He wants.
 - (4) If He is not willing (wanting) that anyone should perish, and yet some do perish, then it is clear that He has not gotten what He wanted.
 - (5) But when God chooses something and expresses His sovereignty, that thing always comes about, and there is no resisting His will. We have studied Romans 9:19: "For who resists His will?"
- g) So now when verse thirty says "And whom He predestined, these also He called; and whom He called, these also He justified; and whom He justified, these also He glorified." we have to hack in our own understanding of the role of human free will.
 - (1) God foreknew us all; He know every detail of our lives from the beginning - even the consequences of decisions we didn't make.
 - (2) God predestined us all: He wanted us to believe in His Son and advance to maturity so that the glory of His Son could be shared.
 - (3) God called all of us to that great destiny;
 - (a) The divine call
 - (4) And when we use our free will to heed that call, He justifies us. We are justified on the basis of Christ's sacrificial work on the cross and the imputation of His righteousness to us.
 - (5) But there is more to this life than salvation: there is the plan of God, which includes undeserved suffering for blessing. That suffering is the basis for our glorification at the judgment seat of Christ.
 - (6) But of course there is a dependency on human volition for that glorification; we must suffer with the same mental attitude of Jesus Christ.

D. The Foreknowledge Passages:

1. Jeremiah 1:5, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."
 - a) This is clear: God knew Jeremiah from eternity past. He knew of his existence even then. He employed His omniscience to know of Jeremiah.
 - b) Specifically, this was before the conception of Jeremiah. This was a knowledge of the soul of Jeremiah, the true person.
 - c) Even before Jeremiah's birth, God had consecrated him. That is, God set him apart and intended him for holy use. But God would certainly honor Jeremiah's free will.
 - d) Cf. Jeremiah 1:10, "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."
 - (1) Because God did not appoint Jeremiah until this moment in his life as a young man, it is plain that He was honoring his free will.

- (2) God could not appoint Jeremiah until first the man chose to follow in the path of his calling.
 - (3) God calls us all to a holy calling. Not all choose to follow it, and therefore not all receive the appointment.
2. Acts 2:23, "...this man, a betrayed man by the plan which had been determined and the foreknowledge of God, after a beating down through the hand of lawless men, you killed [Him]."
- a) This is from the Pentecost sermon of Peter. He is speaking of Jesus Christ to a Jewish assemblage.
 - b) He communicates that Jesus Christ was betrayed by a determined plan and by the foreknowledge of God. These two elements work together in the passage, showing that God knew beforehand what would happen, and also that someone other than God had a determined plan. These historical personages are left unnamed by Peter.
 - c) The exact Greek phrasing is important in the first half of the verse: TOUTON TE HORISMENE BOULE KAI PROGNOSEI TOU THEOU.
 - (1) TOUTON is the demonstrative pronoun, and here it designates Christ as the one who will receive the evil described by the clause.
 - (2) Then comes TE HORISMENE BOULE. This is an articular participle in the dative case, and it points to a certain thing defined by BOULE. It is translated "by the plan which had been determined."
 - (3) This is connected to the next phrase by the conjunction KAI, and so we know that what comes next is an adjunct to the determined plan. PROGNOSEI TOU THEOU, the 'foreknowledge of God.'
 - (4) So in addition to a determined plan, there was also the foreknowledge of God in operation. God knew it was going to happen.
 - (5) The plan which had been determined is separate from the foreknowledge of God; it was the plan determined by the Pharisees and by Judas to betray Jesus Christ.
 - (6) So God knew about the betrayal of Christ; Peter was there just a few weeks ago relative to this sermon. He was there when Christ revealed the presence of a traitor in their midst. God foresaw this plan, but He allowed human volition to operate freely.
3. Acts 4:27-28, "(27) For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, (28) to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to become."
- a) This one is a little more straightforward in its translation.
 - b) The evil unbelievers are portrayed as following in the hand of God, and God predestines their actions toward Christ.
 - c) Herod, Pontius Pilate, Jews, and Gentiles are arrayed against the Anointed One of God, and God is seen as orchestrating the entire matter.
 - d) They are gathered together to do whatever the hand of God and His will predestined to occur.
 - e) But think about this: the book of Acts contains the historical record of this prayer; it records it with perfect accuracy. But can this prayer be the basis for theology and doctrine?

- f) It was God's intent that we have a perfect record of this prayer, there is no doubt of this. But we must measure its theological content from other Scriptural sources.
 - g) There is a prayer in Acts chapter one that is also recorded. It even sounds pretty good. But the bottom line is that it is against God's will and based on faulty theology.
 - h) Acts 1:24-25, "(24) You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen (25) to occupy this ministry and apostelship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."
 - (1) Yet God was going to choose Paul, and not between the two present there that day. The disciples had made a grave mistake in assuming that their choice was going to be right.
 - (2) So this prayer cannot ever be used to choose between two options for filling a ministry position.
 - (3) Likewise, the prayer of the disciples in Acts chapter four must be considered the same.
4. Acts 26:4-5. This is an excellent defining passage for the verb PROGINOSKO.
- a) "(4) So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem; (5) since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion."
 - b) So foreknowledge in this case is the knowledge that the Jews had about Paul long before he became a Christian and an apostle.
 - c) There is no magical prophetic sense to this; no foreknowledge of every event of Paul's life. Rather, they knew of his person and character, especially as a Pharisee.
 - d) It is not like the Jews had predestined Paul's life, and as a result they had perfect foreknowledge of him.
5. Romans 8:28-30 we have already covered previously. Please refer back to it at this time.
6. Romans 11:1-7, "(1) I say then, God has not rejected His people, has he? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. (2) God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?" (3) 'Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.' (4) But what is the divine response to him? 'I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' (5) In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. (6) But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. (7) What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened..."
- a) This does not indicate a foreknowledge in eternity past, instead, it gives indication that God knew the Jews in the former times of history - like the times of Elijah.
 - b) This is the reason for the reference to Elijah - to demonstrate that the survival of Israel depends on God.
 - c) Elijah was in a jam; other prophets were dead; there was a general rebellion against the ritual plan for the Jews, and altars were torn down. Elijah was the last man standing.

- d) God's response to Elijah was that He had kept one thousand for Himself, a remnant of men who did not worship Baal.
- e) The time of Elijah is similar to Paul's present as he writes this letter to the Romans. Paul probably feels like he is one of the last of the true Jews during this time. And he is writing to other Jews who probably feel the same way.
- f) During Elijah's time there were other Jewish men who kept the faith, and during Paul's time the same was true. Paul's resounding message to these Romans Jews is "Stop feeling like you are the last true Jew on the earth; you are not."
- g) The present remnant of Jews is according to God's grace choice. The exact Greek phrase is LEIMMA KAT' EKLOGEN CHARITOS GEGONEN - 'a remnant has come into being according to a gracious choosing.'
 - (1) The word 'God' does not appear in the original. It has been added in by the translator.
 - (2) EKLOGEN may be either a 'choosing' or what is chosen. It here denotes the operation of grace in God's calling for all who would follow Him.
 - (3) The remnant, or LEIMMA, follows a pattern as it comes into being - the pattern of the gracious choosing.
 - (4) It is God's pleasure that we follow the pattern of His gracious choosing. That is His choice for us. But that does not mean we must follow, for He has given us freedom to choose.
 - (5) So the gracious choice of God is not a person or people, but a destiny. A wonderful destiny chosen by God for everyone, but only chosen in turn by a remnant, a very few people.
- h) Verse six goes on to describe the foundation for God's choice of Israel - it is grace and grace alone. No works on the part of Israel could ever bring them to the point where God would choose them. The criterion is grace and grace alone.
- i) The seventh verse is crucial indeed: "What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened" This is not a good translation.
 - (1) How about this: "Therefore what? What Israel seeks, this they did not obtain, but the selection obtained [it]; and the rest were hardened."
 - (2) It is impossible to construe 'those who were chosen' from a feminine singular noun. This is simply not a possibility from the original.
 - (3) So it is better to observe this as an act of selection. God's act of selection obtains what Israel seeks.
 - (4) You will notice that there are two sides to this: Israel's seeking and God's selection. Israel seeks and fails because they seek by means of works.
 - (5) The selection obtains what Israel seeks because it provides it in a gracious manner. What they seek is blessing from God, both temporal and eternal. The selection of God is His gracious choice for all men to receive these blessings. But men must seek what He chooses and provides in the right way.
 - (6) Men must seek by means of humility and grace orientation. This is the only way that the offer of God may be obtained - the only way that He allows it.
 - (7) The final clause - 'the rest were hardened' - is a theme of Old Testament theology. God hardens the hearts of men who reject Him.
 - (8) But of course the rejection precedes the hardening. The hardening is simply the way that God made the souls of men.
 - (9) When they reject Him, they must create rationales to protect themselves from internal dishonesty.

- (10) Verse eleven calls the hardening ‘their transgression.’ It is therefore accountable to them through volition.
- j) So to review: this passage is about God’s choice for Israel, and how it is the same as for the Gentiles of the world. God wants the highest and best for them, and chooses grace as the means to attaining that. Those who accept the grace receive the blessings, and those who do not are hardened under a system that is a part of the essence of the human soul.
7. Ephesians 2:10, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we might walk in them.”
- a) So here Paul reminds his readers that God has a plan for their lives, and they have the freedom to accept or reject that plan.
- b) But there is a mistranslation of even the most simple element of grammar here. The New American Standard certainly muddles things up by translating, “so that we would walk in them.”
- c) There is the indefinite particle HINA plus the aorist subjunctive PERIPATOSOMEN, which represents a potentiality, but not a certainty. As Dr. Wallace says, ‘The subjunctive is used to grammaticalize potentiality.’ (Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, p. 463).
- d) So even though God has a plan, it is dependent on our free will as to whether we will fulfill it, and not on His.
8. Philippians 2:12-13, “(12) So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; (13) for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”
- a) So Paul calls on the Philippians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling; that is, to think through what had happened at salvation, and to work out all the implications.
- b) This is a command, as evidenced by the imperative mood of the verb KATERGAZESTHE. Since this is a command, it is up to the Philippians to obey. There is only potential here, not certainty.
- c) So again, God prepares works for them beforehand, and then works in them, willing and working His good pleasure.
9. 1 Peter 1:2, “(1) Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the elect refugees of the dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, (2) according to the foreknowledge of Father-God by the Holy Spirit into obedience and a sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; grace to you and may your peace be multiplied.”
- a) Here is another passage that does not hold up to examination when translated from the original.
- b) Peter was an apostle according to the foreknowledge of Father-God by the Holy Spirit...
- c) The noun PROGNOSIS as the object of the preposition KATA tells an interesting tale.
- (1) His apostleship came after a pattern; the pattern itself was the foreknowledge of God.
- (2) So first God knew what was going to happen, and it happened exactly as God knew that it would.

- (3) But wait a minute. God knows every possibility of our lives according to His omniscience. He knew every possibility of Peter's life, and even the bad ones.
 - (4) And Peter says this here with a sort of sense of humor. He was an apostle according to the foreknowledge of God; God knew, but there were plenty of times when he did not.
 - (5) Peter here looks back over the panorama of his life and is honest. He lived through such spectacular failure that he certainly must have thought there was no possible way for him to recover and glorify God.
 - (6) Now the foreknowledge related to the gift of apostleship had a need in mind. God looked at this period of history, and especially the death of Paul, and He knew that someone would need this gift.
 - (7) And God in His great sense of humor gave the gift to Peter. Peter would be the star of this most difficult period of Neronian persecution. He was the right man for the job in this period.
- d) And he was an apostle by means of the Holy Spirit.
- (1) The preposition EN plus the instrumental of means of HAGIASMO PNEUMATOS makes clear the agency of God the Holy Spirit in the appointment of Peter as an apostle.
 - (2) By His sovereignty, God the Holy Spirit gave Peter the spiritual gift of apostleship.
 - (3) This could not possibly have been based on the personal merit of Peter. There is a lesson here. A spiritual gift is really a gift. It is not a reward for service rendered, or earned like a boy scout merit badge.
 - (4) A spiritual gift fits a need, as determined by the foreknowledge of God. Personality, education, Your Past... none of these are taken into consideration by the Spirit.
 - (5) Since it is a sovereign decision, it is really not something to be argued with or denied.
 - (6) The spiritual gift is a duty and responsibility. Functioning under your spiritual gift can be very rewarding, but it is not for your edification; it is for the dissemination of the word of God in some direct or supporting function.
10. 1 Peter 1:18-20, "knowing that you were not redeemed with the perishable, with silver or gold from your empty inherited conduct (19) but with the precious blood of Christ like an unblemished and spotless lamb, (20) having been known before the foundation of the world and revealed in the last of times because of you..."
- a) This is all about God knowing Jesus Christ in eternity past. There is certainly no prophetic foreknowledge indicated here. Instead, God knew Christ in eternity past in His person and His character.
 - b) Now we can define this foreknowledge easily. God knew Christ before we knew Christ. He knew Him in eternity past as the second person of the Godhead.
 - c) Christ was revealed in the last of times because of all of us. He needed to enter into history to pay for our sins.
11. 2 Peter 3:17 is another great passage for defining PROGNOSIS: "You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness..."
- a) We too can have foreknowledge, just like God! Here PROGNOSIS is defined as understanding a principle of Bible truth before coming to a test. Now that's a novel idea!

- b) There is contingency at work here. Foreknowledge on our part certainly does not add up to certainty. Just because we know a principle beforehand does not mean that we

E. The Election Passages.

1. Deuteronomy 7:6, “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”
 - a) Here there is clearly a choice made. God examines all the nations of the world and chooses Israel. This is the national election of Israel.
 - b) The national election of Israel is said to be the pattern for the individual election of church age believers.
 - c) The crucial question about this election is the criteria. What are the criteria for this election, or why has God chosen this nation over all the others.
 - d) Verses seven and eight tell the tale: “(7) The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, (8) but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”
 - (1) Moses identifies the criteria as twofold: love and fealty.
 - (2) Love - and this love must be beyond the impersonal love that God has for every nation.
 - (a) Because in an objective and virtuous sense God loves all the nations just as He loves all people. Virtue love always wants the best for people, even when they participate in evil, Like Pharaoh.
 - (b) Therefore, God sees something in Israel that He sees in no other nation. And what causes God to have this personal love, this attraction toward Israel?
 - (c) There can only be one thing: this nation Israel loves God; they depend on Him, and reproduce His character when under the burden of responsibility.
 - (d) Now this is interesting, because it demonstrates that the election of Israel has come about because of something that Israel has done in time, and not because of some arbitrary decision of God’s in eternity past.
 - (e) This reinforces what we have already studied in Romans chapter nine - that the foundation of election is faith. God must see faith before He will elect.
 - (3) Fealty - based on the oath which He swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 - (a) This also connects with Romans 9. In that chapter, the resounding message is that God elected the founding fathers of Israel because of their faith.
 - (b) God is faithful to the promises He made to the first generations of this nation. His promise is founded upon the heritage of their faith.
 - (4) Here is a good summary of the heart of that passage, verses ten through thirteen: “(10) And not only this, but also Rebecca holding [twins] in the womb from one man Isaac our father; (11) For not yet being born, they could not practice anything good or bad, in order that the purpose of God

according to free will [EKLOGEN] might remain, (12) not from works but from the one who calls, it was said to her 'The greater will serve the lesser.' (13) Just as it has been written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'"

- (a) This passage begins with the twins in Rebecca's womb, but by the time it gets to verse thirteen, it is commenting on God's attitude toward the two nations that came from those men.
 - (b) The last two Old Testament quotes are certainly from the standpoint of the nation, as exegeted in the original passage.
 - (c) Here is the proper perspective:
 - 1) Jacob and Esau were free to choose.
 - 2) Jacob believed in the Messiah, and he was saved. Esau rejected the Messiah and he was not saved.
 - 3) Because of the belief of Jacob, the promise of God through Abraham went through him.
 - 4) Jacob's belief came after all the shifty and deceptive behavior. None of Jacob's deception brought him the promise. That was all human viewpoint baloney. The mess of pottage, the deception of his blind father Isaac - none of it accomplished anything. It was not because of his own works that he gained the birthright, and those things were certainly his own works.
 - 5) But when Jacob believed, he gained that birthright, and that is what the change of his name represents.
 - 6) This resulted in God's love toward him and his nation, Israel.
 - 7) Esau's persistent unbelief caused God to come to a conclusion toward him: hatred - an anthropopathism designed to describe God actions toward the unbeliever. Esau and his nation did not receive the blessing of God.
 - e) Clearly there was an election of Israel, and clearly it was not arbitrary. That could hardly be so from a God with perfect character.
 - f) Instead, the election of Israel came because of the faith of their generation, and also God's fealty to His oath concerning the previous generations.
 - g) If our election is after this pattern, then it happens when we believe in Christ. But more on this later.
2. Ezekiel 20:5-6, "(5) On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the Lord your God, (6) on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands."
- a) This little passage serves well to support our assertions that the election of Israel did not occur in eternity past, but in time.
 - b) You can see for yourselves that the election of Israel occurred on a certain day in human history and not before.
 - c) This day was during Israel's sojourn in Egypt, and not at some time in the distance past before mankind existed. The election occurred in time.
 - d) And not only in time, but after something significant had happened that allowed God to do so.
 - e) For God can only choose what is good, and someone who has demonstrated good. Good means belief in the savior, the grace offer of God.
 - f) It is also good to notice that God chooses good things for his elect.

3. Mark 13:19-20, “(19) For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. (20) Unless the Lord had shortened those days [of the tribulation], no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days.”
 - a) So there will be elect during the tribulation, and God does the choosing.
 - b) But we should consider these elect as all others: they are the ones who are elected according to their choice of God’s grace offer.
 - c) The proper of election is this: grace offer, choice of acceptance, election.
 - d) So now we have election in three dispensations. It is trans-dispensational, and quite possibly a dispensational constant since the fall of man.

4. Romans 8:31-34a, “(31) What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? (32) He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (33) Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; (34) who is the one who condemns?”
 - a) Verse 33 contains a reference to the elect. This is an eternal security passage that follows on the heels of verses 28-30, that great passage on universal calling and unlimited atonement.
 - b) Because of the atoning work of Jesus Christ, we have full justification when we believe. That justification is available because of Christ.
 - c) So if we have been justified by God, who could possibly bring a charge against us? The answer is that no one can stand against the supreme court decisions of the Father.
 - d) This gives no definition to election, so again we must depend on the timing of other passages.

5. Ephesians 1:3-5, “(3) The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is blessed, the one who blessed us in every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ, (4) just as He selected us in Him before the foundation of the world, for us to be holy and blameless before Him in love (5) after He predestined us for an inheritance through Jesus Christ into Him, according to the good intention of His will...”
 - a) Paul begins by telling the Ephesians that they are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. This is the grace portfolio for the believer, intended so that there is a fulfillment of the plan of God.
 - b) The spiritual realm is the realm of the angelic conflict. All of the blessings are for that reason, to fulfill the purpose of the human race.
 - c) All of our blessings are in Christ:
 - (1) By way of His work on the cross, which is salvation.
 - (2) By way of the example of His lifestyle, which for us is the post-salvation life.
 - d) God selected us in Christ before the foundation of the world.
 - (1) Now the question is this: is this selection selective or universal?
 - (2) That is, does this reflect unlimited atonement or a limited election of believers only.
 - (3) We know that this occurred before human history. We know that it was an election. We know that the object of the election was ‘us.’
 - (4) The aim of that election is crucial: it was for us to be holy and blameless before Him in love.

- (5) God wanted us to be holy and blameless before Him in love, and so He elected us in Christ.
- (6) But in respecting our free will, God does not always get what He wants. Ultimately He does get what He wants, which is a fair forum for the angelic appeal trial. But He has great plans for our lives.
- (7) The selection in Christ Jesus came after the predestination for an inheritance, so that:
 - (a) First He predestined us to an inheritance, then;
 - (b) Selected us in Christ Jesus.
- (8) The predestination was according to the good intention of His will.
 - (a) The words are EUDOKIAN TOU THELEMATOS.
 - (b) The first is translated 'good intention.' The idea is that of having good things in mind for someone or something.
 - (c) The second part is the TOU THELEMATOS, the definite article plus the noun which points to the volitional ability of God.
 - (d) So God sets our destinies after the pattern of the good thinking of His volition.
 - (e) The inclusion of the sovereign will of God here is very important. God has a plan for our lives after the good intention of His sovereign will.
 - 1) The weak point of the plan is its weakest member, man.
 - 2) But God accounted for the weakness of man by means of His grace. He found a way to make His power and thinking and merit available to man by means of faith.
 - 3) This is a perfect reflection of God's holy character in His sense of responsibility toward His creatures.
 - 4) But God is going to bring about what His good will intends. This is the nature of His sovereignty.
 - 5) But He will never violate principles of integrity; He therefore never wills or intends anything that is evil.
 - 6) An example of evil would be the destruction of free will in His creatures. God would never do anything that would violate that principle of freedom.
 - 7) He may intervene, inform, discipline, and bless in order to influence our decisions, but He never violates the principle of our freedom.
 - 8) That is the reason for the existence of evil in the world; God allows freedom of choice.
 - 9) So predestination is a sovereign decision of God from eternity past in which He chooses the highest and best for us in the form of a destiny.
 - 10) But He never forces us to follow in that destiny, for that would be wrong.
- e) So to review this passage:
 - (1) Before the foundation of the world, God selected us in Christ to be holy and blameless before Him. This is a universal selection - it covers the entire human race.
 - (2) The key to this is the phrase 'in Christ.' It is a reference to the work of Jesus Christ in time. Christ accomplished the justifying work for all, and the prototype postsalvation life for all. 'Holy and blameless' is a phrase related to the judgment seat of Christ, and not just the Great White Throne.
 - (3) This unlimited atonement, this selection of every one of us occurred after He predestined us into an inheritance through Jesus Christ.

- (4) In other words, first there was predestination, then there was selection based on the work of Jesus Christ.
 - (5) The idea preceded the work.
 - f) The next passage surely sheds light on the first.
6. Ephesians 1:9-12, “(9) He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (10) with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him (11) also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will (12) to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.”
- a) Verse eleven is the most relevant part of this passage to our study. You can see for yourselves the distinct similarity to parts of our previous passage, verses 3-5 of the same chapter.
 - b) So this is designed to amplify what has gone before.
 - c) “We have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”
 - d) Compare this to: “after He predestined us for an inheritance through Jesus Christ into Him, according to the good intention of His will...”
 - e) The two are just alike, with a simple transposition of basic elements, and minor changes in vocabulary.
 - f) Paul’s purpose in this reiteration is to ‘praise His glory.’
 - (1) But this last phrase is the key, for it shows a purpose clause.
 - (2) The exact Greek phrasing is EIS TO EINAI; The combination of EIS TO plus the infinitive verb is a common Greek idiom which shows intent.
 - (3) It is the intent of God to bring about praise to His glory. The glory of God is the perfection of His person.
 - (4) But if this shows intent, we must also take into account that not all who are in Christ accomplish this thing.
 - (5) In other words, although God intends this, human beings are free to accept or reject it.
7. Colossians 3:12-13, “(12) So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; (13) bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”
- a) This builds on the foundation of election.
 - b) If you are chosen of God, then you should act a certain way.
 - c) The very fact that this is a command (imperative mood of ENDUSASTHE) makes it clear that there is the possibility of rejection. Any parent will tell you this; anyone who has held a position of authority.
 - d) The choice of God is here the salvation choice - the choice that God the Father makes at the moment you believe.
 - e) The choice of God should motivate you to put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.
 - f) But it is we who put on this heart through the acquisition of grace.

8. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5, “(2) We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; (3) constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, (4) knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; (5) for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.”
- a) Here also is very clear teaching on the subject of election.
 - b) Verse four makes it quite clear that God has chosen the Thessalonians. As believers, they were chosen by God.
 - c) God’s salvation choice of these good Christians had to do with the Gospel, which came not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.
 - (1) The power had to do with the Spirit-inspired preaching of Paul and associates.
 - (2) The Holy Spirit had to do with the common grace ministry.
 - d) According to the faithfulness of God, the common grace ministry extends to everyone who hears the gospel.
 - e) In this instance, it is necessary to put together what we know from the rest of Scripture with this verse. Common grace is not exclusive, and that is the reason for its name.
 - f) The gospel always comes in power, but it does not always come with full conviction.
 - (1) This full conviction is portrayed by the Greek words *PLEROPHORIA POLLE*.
 - (2) More literally, this is ‘much conviction.’
 - (3) Colossians 2:2 identifies that full conviction comes by means of understanding.
 - (4) Full conviction is what post-salvation spiritual growth brings about. This is the confidence that we can have about the saving work of God.
 - (5) The saving work of God happens immediately when we believe, and it is irrevocable. The confidence can only come through post salvation growth in the word.
 - g) Verse four says ‘knowing... His choice of you.’
 - (1) Your knowledge of that choice comes about through the study of the word.
 - (2) That in turn builds confidence that you were chosen.
 - (3) The choice is everything that God does for you at the moment you believe.
9. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, “(13) But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. (14) It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- a) And now we are saving the very best for last. These next two passages are the ones that bring the weight of wisdom to the debate.
 - b) God chose us from the beginning for salvation. We can match this statement especially with that of Ephesians 1:3-5, ‘Chosen before the foundation of the world.’

- c) We were chosen from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.
 - d) This is a universal election; and it contrasts with the special election of Deuteronomy 7:6.
 - e) This passage is exciting because it shows that there is an election that is equivalent to the idea of unlimited atonement.
 - f) God chose us from the beginning for salvation. This salvation comes through:
 - (1) Sanctification by the Spirit, which is His baptizing ministry, whereby you are placed in union with Christ.
 - (2) Faith in the truth. Although these are simultaneous in the passage, it is chronologically correct to put faith first.
 - g) God called us for this reason: salvation through the power of the Spirit and faith in the truth.
 - h) He called us that we might gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (1) This is the salvation glory of resurrection.
 - (2) The preposition EIS plus the noun PERIPOIESIN is a combination that forms a purpose clause. Purpose shows intent, but not necessarily fulfillment. That is the nature of intent - it is contingent.
 - i) Now is the perfect time to include that grand statement of universal intent, 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."
 - (1) When you combine this stunning statement with our own passage, there is no question as to the existence of a universal election.
 - (2) God chooses us for salvation. But from 2 Peter 3:9, it is clear that He chooses all.
10. 2 Timothy 2:10, "For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory."
- a) Here again is a universal election for the human race. Paul endures all things for the sake of the chosen ones.
 - b) The crucial verb here is TUCHOSIN. It is an aorist subjunctive verb, which shows potential in the free will of man. It is literally 'they might obtain.'
 - c) For someone who is a believer, salvation is never a contingency. Once you believe you are saved from that moment forever.
 - d) There is both salvation and eternal glory mentioned here. Paul includes for Timothy the idea of post-salvation spiritual growth, and reward.
 - e) Paul endures all things for those who are chosen. Think about this one, now, and see if you can't recall another similar passage.
 - f) 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 comes to mind immediately: "19 For though being free from all [compulsion], I have enslaved myself to all [men], so that I might win the more. 20 And to the Jews I became like a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those under the law [I became] like one under the Law, not being under the Law itself, that I might win those who are under the Law; 21 to those without the Law, like the lawless, not being lawless from God but within the Law of Christ, so that I might win the lawless; 22 I became weak to the weak, so that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I might in any way save some. 23 But I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I might become a fellow partaker of it."

- g) And by the way, the 'chosen' are not the Jews here. The chosen are the people that God chose for salvation. Chosen from eternity past to become believers. This universal election was made by God from the goodness of His will.
11. John 15:16, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."
- a) It has been argued that this verse teaches that God chose us in eternity past before we chose Him in time. As a result, this negates the argument from Deuteronomy 7:6-8 that God chooses us because we choose Him first.
 - b) God loves us first, and He elects us under general election, but the special election does not come to us from God until we choose Him.
 - c) This verse is not interpreted correctly. Christ is talking about His choice and calling of the disciples in time, and nothing more.

F. The Great Problem: Foreknowledge and Culpability.

1. So you say, "Okay, I understand that God chose salvation for the entire human race, and that He applies that election in time only to those who believe in His Son Jesus Christ. So what's the big deal now about all this prehistory stuff?"
2. Just one problem needs to be resolved, so that we can relax. It is the relationship between divine foreknowledge and creation.
3. Namely this. Did God the Father know exactly how your life was going to turn out before He set the world in motion? If He did, and He still chose to set the world in motion, how culpable is He for what has happened? Do you still have the full function of your will in this case?
 - a) Ignorance does not mean that you have free will.
 - b) If God makes you ignorant of your fate, and at the same time foreordains all the events of your life, then He is cruel indeed. Your conscious mind is only along for the ride!
4. There is a moment - just one moment - that requires your thought for now.
 - a) It is the very moment before human history was set into motion.
 - b) At that moment, God had to decide on certain principles concerning the nature of human history.
 - c) God decided that before He would set the world in motion a few rules would be in order.
 - d) Almost all theologians agree that God made certain decrees concerning the spiritual welfare of the human race at this time.
 - e) This requires restraint on the part of God, for if He knew just how it was going to turn out, and set it in motion, then He is the one who is responsible for the outcome.
 - f) The computer analogy: God is the programmer and user. Human history is the program. The computer program analogy is especially appropriate because it represents the creation of something that thinks.

- (1) There is a kind of program that simply requires the user to tap the 'ENTER' button, and it runs to its conclusion. The programmer writes everything so that He knows exactly how it will turn out. This is more properly analogous to making a video and hitting the 'PLAY' button, but it may apply in the computer world as well.
 - (a) This represents a combination of foreordination and deism.
 - (b) The end result is that God plans human history, He knows exactly how it is going to turn out, and does not intervene at all in the proceedings.
- (2) There is a kind of program that requires user input at certain points which may cause program contingencies. That is, the outcome of the program is affected by user input. This is just like a calculator, which waits for you to enter the data and hit the '=' sign. Then it makes its calculations and surrenders its answer. The programmer designs the program so that everything comes out according to His plan, and He knows the outcome before He puts the numbers in.
 - (a) This is foreordination with divine intervention.
 - (b) God knows exactly when, where, and how He is going to intervene, but even before it all begins He knows how it is going to turn out.
- (3) There is a kind of program that includes the calculation of random numbers in response to user input, so that random events occur, and the user cannot know the immediate outcome. The programmer programs the possible outcomes, but not the random calculations that choose those outcomes.
 - (a) This is predestination with divine intervention and human free will.
 - (b) The random number is analogous to the human will. God knows the circumstances of our lives; He knows all the possible outcomes of our decisions.
 - (c) He also intervenes with His own input, designed to affect our decisions.
 - (d) This is all resolved as a series of 'if... then' propositions. If this person chooses 'a', then this will be the immediate result. If 'b', then a different result.
 - (e) But there is a secret of computer programming that applies to this: there is no such thing as a truly random number. If you know the starting number in the sequence, then you will certainly know every number after, and thus come to a complete foreknowledge of all the outcomes.
 - (f) It only takes the sure knowledge of the starting number in the sequence, which is accomplished in programming through a process called 'seeding.'
 - (g) For instance, let's take a sequence of numbers one through ten, and scramble them: 5 4 6 2 1 3 10 9 7 8. Then let's set the seed through taking the last digit of the time right now, by the minute. If it is 3:40 where you are, then you would seed the sequence at the number ten, then the next number would be nine, and so on until you get back to ten.
 - (h) Many computer randomizers begin with 64,000 numbers in a scrambled sequence.
 - (i) But if you know the sequence, then what happens next is not truly random. It is foreseeable and predictable.
 - (j) The question remains: does God choose to know what you are going to say and do and think, and especially decide.
 - (k) So now is it right for God to seed the numbers and know how it is all going to come out? In other words, is it right for God as the master psychologist and creator of your soul to look into all the factors of your life and thus know how it is going to come out - all of your decisions?

- (l) If He does - that is, if God programs human history, and factors in the apparent random nature of human volition, and yet He knows the seed and the sequence - doesn't that make human history just a program?
- (m) To the participants it seems real. In this program, the lines of code have consciousness and in all reality experience what God wants them to.
- (n) But let us return to the central question: IS THIS RIGHT?
- (o) Lapsarianism attempts to analyze this very question.

G. Lapsarianism.

1. R.B. Thieme Jr. has introduced his doctrine of lapsarianism in this way:
 - a) "Of all the decrees in eternity past, five are related to the purpose of God in election, so that lapsarianism deals with the logical order of these five decrees.
 - b) Lapsarianism, from the word "lapse," refers to the fact that man is a fallen being.
 - c) Under lapsarianism the five decrees of eternity past are related to the purpose of God in election. Therefore, the five concepts of lapsarianism are often called the five elective decrees.
 - d) Lapsarianism, then, deals with the order of the five elective decrees. It deals with the logical rather than with the chronological order of the decrees. By logical is meant that although the entire decree is one thought in the mind of God, the principle of cause and effect is involved."
2. Lewis Sperry Chafer has this to say about the subject: "In discussing the order of elective decrees theologians seek to distinguish the causal from the effective aspects of the decrees. Actually, because God's decree is eternal, establishing the order of elective decrees is only for human understanding of the problem of their relation to each other."
 - a) Chafer is trying to tell us that understanding the eternal mind of God is indeed a difficult if not impossible thing.
 - b) Romans 11:33-35, "(33) Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable His ways! (34) For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? (35) Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?"
 - (1) So God's intellectual ability is infinite, and His application flawless. His mentality combines both analytical ability and character in an eternal manner.
 - (2) God does not need our advice or counsel; God does not benefit from what we give to Him in such a way that He is in our debt.
 - (3) He certainly appreciates our integrity as creatures - when we make good decisions they please Him.
 - (4) But this verse in no way makes God inscrutable or unknowable. On the contrary, God causes revelation and grace to occur in human history so that man might know Him to the limit of his ability.
 - (5) This verse often becomes a cop-out for those who do not understand the interaction of divine sovereignty and human free will. It's a sort of: 'God works in strange ways.'
 - (6) Intellectual superiority does not make God unknowable!
3. But listen also to Chafer on the matter of the divine decree:

- a) From vol. 1, p.154, “In theology divine decrees refer to the total plan of God which includes everything past, present, and future that God has determined will come to pass... Though the decree of God is eternal, for human comprehension it can be imagined that God had before Him all possible plans for the universe, each differing from the other in only one particular. It is possible there was more than one plan which was equally good, but in view of the perfection of God it was necessary that he choose the best of all possible plans. In the omniscience of God such a plan was decided from eternity past and includes all events, not only those that God Himself does or that are accomplished through natural law but also those that are fulfilled by moral agencies such as angels and men.”
- (1) So Chafer identifies that God has a plan. The plan of God is what comes to pass; not just what He plans and desires, but what He brings about.
 - (2) Chafer also determines that God brings about all that is accomplished through moral agencies such as angels and men.
 - (3) What? God’s decree decrees the activities of Satan? We will treat this later in more detail, but it certainly rankles.
- b) And over on p.155 this is made abundantly clear, “The doctrine of divine decree assigns to God the position of being the first cause of all that exists. The Westminster Short Catechism states a decree is “ ‘His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.’ ”
- (1) Chafer agrees with the nature of this statement.
 - (2) Everything that comes to pass is foreordained by God. Everything, including evil, is ordained by God.
 - (3) But God is not the author of evil, and shuns it completely. For no reason at all will He be associated with evil of any kind.
 - (4) This is the very underpinning of Christ’s death on our behalf. Our total depravity demanded it.
- c) On pp.155-156, “The decree of God is eternal though its execution is in time. All of the parts of the decree of God were in God’s mind from eternity past even though they are fulfilled in history.”
- (1) This must indeed be true. God is eternal; but a question: is the decree logical?
 - (2) That is, did God, in one moment’s time, determine an order for the decrees, so that we might have a trust in them?
 - (3) Logically, God had to have established certain principles regarding human history before He set it into motion.
 - (4) God is eternal and infinite; therefore, it takes no time for Him to think and act. But for our sakes, there is a chronology and logic concerning the principles of human history.
 - (5) Just as God took seven days to create the earth so that the angels could comprehend what He was doing, so also there is a hesitation, a slowing down of the divine thought process so that all these years later we might understand and appreciate divine thinking.
- d) On p.156, “In addition to being eternal, the decree of God is wise since it is a product of the infinite wisdom of God. Even His permission of evil will ultimately be a demonstration of His glory and will bring praise to Him.”
- (1) Now here lies some truth. The permission of evil will ultimately be a demonstration of His glory and will bring praise to Him.
 - (2) This is certainly true. God allows evil, and evil in itself is a demonstration of the goodness of God by way of contrast.

- (3) But God does not need evil to show His goodness, and He did not plan evil for that purpose.
 - (4) God allowed evil, and evil demonstrates the glory of God. But this is not by the intent of God.
 - (5) Actually, God had something great in the prehistoric trinity relationship, and conceived of creatures to share that.
 - (6) God created out of an overflow of personal love. But in order to appreciate God, the creatures had to have mentality and volition as a part of that volition.
 - (7) And volition had to allow the possibility of choosing against God.
- e) “The divine decree is free... His determination of the decree was not influenced by any other because when the decree existed in eternity past, there was none in existence except God Himself. As a perfect God, He could not do otherwise than determine His decree in keeping with His Person. The freedom of God is conditioned only by His infinite attributes and He will not decree or do anything that is contrary to His nature.”
- (1) This is perhaps the best statement of all from Chafer. It makes clear that no one can, and no one ever has influenced the integrity of God in the issuing of decrees.
 - (2) This would be especially true if no one was there. Being the only one present, the Godhead would have to rely only on His own principles in the decree.
- f) “The decree of God is unconditional. There is no eventuality which can suspend any of the relationships or conditions under which the decree is to be fulfilled. Though men have a sense of choice and though they experience what seem to be free acts, in the omniscience of God it was all a part of His eternal decree and it was determined that it should be as it is.”
- (1) Here at last is the real sticking point. Chafer tells us that we only seem to have free will, and that our experience of volition is an illusion brought about by our ignorance.
 - (2) If God made us ignorant, and gave us the illusion of free will without the reality, that is a knock against His integrity.
 - (3) It did not happen this way.
 - (4) Chafer is grounding this assertion on his misunderstanding of Scripture, and he accepts the foreordination view without breaking down the verses in a proper manner.
 - (5) There are so many verses and passages that are just not read in the original Hebrew and Greek, and left the way they are in spite of their damaging nature.
 - (6) The question is, why wouldn't an interpreter of Scripture look at the foreordination viewpoint and realize that it leaves the character of God in a poor state, and therefore desire to re-examine the passages, and see if there weren't any mistakes in translation and hermeneutical procedure?
 - (7) Accepting the verses on pure trust is a little too much to expect if the character of God is going to be compromised.
- g) Finally, on p.160, a conclusion on the problems of sin and free will, “In contemplating the decree of God one must realize that the decree was enacted by the will of God in its totality. It is not necessary therefore that each act performed under the decree in itself be good but that the total decree with all its relationships and ramifications will work out to the glory of God and accomplish His holy, eternal will. Men in their limited understanding can only partially comprehend the reasons for this, but in obedience to what the Word of God reveals, they should accept the doctrine of God's complete sovereignty as reflected in His decree.”

- (1) Chafer chooses to completely compromise the character of God rather than reexamine the word of God.
- (2) Come on, now, would you teach your children to live and plan their lives in this manner?
- (3) Would you base your society on the concept that the end justifies the means? How truly awful to even suggest such a thing, and yet this is the assertion of Chafer, in plain letters for all to see.
- (4) Assume for a moment that God has foreordained evil, and that He has done so because in His character the end justifies the means. Should we now tacitly accept the final statement of Chafer?
- (5) Should we accept this doctrine even though it contravenes the most basic moral goodness that we teach our children?
- (6) How many evil captains of history are now justified if indeed God justifies the foreordination of evil from this utilitarian view? Are not they all standing righteous before the creator of the universe.
- (7) For what evil act is not justified from this very selfish motive and rationale? Unless God is flawless, He cannot expect His creatures to be the same.
- (8) And yet Scripture tells us that He does. And not only does He expect us to be Holy before Him, but according to Chafer, He ordains that we are otherwise.
- (9) And to continue, they claim they do not understand this thing - that it is a great mystery of God, and that God is unsearchable and unknowable on the subject.
- (10) Which thought is pure hogwash. When you look at a scriptural doctrine, and determine that in its totality it portrays God as evil and the author of evil, you don't throw up your hands and proclaim it a mystery. That is tantamount to surrender.
- (11) You go back to Scripture and start from the original languages, and see if there isn't another honest and legitimate way that you can go with the statements on the matter.
- (12) And indeed this is what we have done on the matter.

H. Isaiah 46:10 has a defining comment on the sovereignty of God. “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.’”

1. This has the unique combination of divine foreknowledge and intent.
2. God declared the end from the beginning; the end of human history and His victory in the angelic conflict has been declared from the beginning of times.
3. Furthermore, things not yet done have been declared from ancient times. This is certainly a reference to prophecy.
4. God employs His ability to know the future in order to declare certain future events of human history.
5. So we can say for sure that this verse teaches the divine employment of foreknowledge.
6. By declaring these things through prophecy, God proclaims that His purpose will be established. That is, what He wants done will be done.

7. But the last line is also essential. There, God reveals that He will accomplish all His good pleasure.
 - a) What pleases God? It pleases Him only to do what is right.
 - b) In the employment of His foreknowledge, God only does what is right.
 - c) What is the purpose of God in human history? To bring glory and vindication to his name through the angelic appeal trial.
 - d) This must be done in the exact right way, and that includes the respect of human free will.
8. The result: God will not accomplish anything that overruns our volition. He lets it run its course.
9. We know that God has the ability of foreknowledge, but does He always employ it?

I. The existence of prophecy tells us that God clearly employs His foreknowledge.

He can and does know the future with certainty.

J. The evidence for the restraint of foreknowledge.

1. It begins in Genesis 2:19: "So Yahweh God formed every beast of the field out of the ground, and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called the living creature, that was its name."
 - a) The qal infinitive construct of the verb RA'AH forms a purpose clause; God's purpose in bringing the birds and beasts to Adam was to see what Adam would name them.
 - b) This was a responsibility for Adam, and God was quite curious to see how this would turn out. This was Adam's first trial.
 - c) But wait a minute... God is omniscient, isn't He? Doesn't He know how this is going to turn out?
 - d) God is omniscient when He wants to be, and when it satisfies His integrity. Under the principle of kenosis, God may voluntarily restrict the use of His divine capabilities.
 - e) We can conclude from this little phrase that God can exercise His omniscience in the form of foreknowledge, but sometimes He chooses not to.
 - f) In contrast to what comes next, this is not an anthropomorphism. The purpose of an anthropomorphism or anthropopathism is to explain some action of God in human terms, attributing human attributes and limits and emotions to Him.
 - g) The essence of this figure of speech has to do with accommodation. It accommodates God to the human frame of reference. God does not have a head or hands or eyes; He is spirit. But He does things that remind us of our own actions that we take with our bodily members, and so the writers of the Bible employ the terms.
 - h) Now the question in this passage is how portraying God as limited in foreknowledge helps to explain His action here.
 - i) It simply puts forth a desire of God: He wants to know what the man would call the animals. That is God's purpose in bringing those animals to Adam.
 - j) And if God wants to know, then He doesn't know, and this lack of knowledge can only be through choice.

2. Genesis 11:5 “The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.”
 - a) This is a good example of an anthropomorphism. The writer gives God a human attribute in order to explain divine intervention into the Babel affair.
 - b) Before that time, God had been attentive to human affairs, even looking down with complete omnipresence from His heavenly throne.
 - c) But God coming to earth is an anthropomorphic metaphor designed to show the advent of an intervention. I use this all the time.
3. Genesis 18:21 is just the same as the preceding, “I [God] will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know.”
4. Genesis 22:12 is another good passage that demonstrates God’s voluntary blinding of His omniscience in order to give true free will to His creatures: “He (God) said, ‘Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’”
 - a) This stands as a very dramatic example. Before this time, God did not know of Abraham’s respect for Him.
 - b) How could this be an anthropomorphism? What does it illustrate about God.
 - c) This is a test of Abraham, and the Bible honestly sets forth God’s motive in the test. God’s motive is to gain a knowledge of Abraham’s integrity.
 - d) Here is another example of God’s restriction of His own foreknowledge.
5. Exodus 3:4 has God waiting on Moses before acting, “When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’”
 - a) If God waits for us to act, it is an indication that He honors chronology.
 - b) Although this is not a direct reference to the restriction of foreknowledge, it does confirm the fact of divine intervention of human affairs.
 - c) Foreordination and chronological intervention manufacture a redundancy, for if God foreordains all things, then there is no need at all for chronological intervention.
 - d) Intervention implies that there is no foreordination.
 - (1) Because when you foreordain everything, there is no need to intervene in time.
 - (2) And if you do both, you are just posing to intervene. Just as free will is false in the foreordination model, so also is divine intervention.
 - (3) This again assaults the integrity of God.
6. Deuteronomy 8:2 is another fine example: “You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.”
7. Deuteronomy 13:3 is next, “...you shall not listen to the words of that [false] prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”
 - a) God wants to find out if we love Him. He would not have to do this if indeed He had foreordained it.

- b) Again, this is not a condescension, designed to make us understand an action of God. What action are we to understand here? It is inexplicable, unless there is a kenosis.
 - c) That God tests us, and that He does so to find out what we will do, this is indication of the kenosis of foreknowledge on the part of God.
8. Judges 3:4 continues the avalanche, "They [the Gentile nations] were for testing Israel, to find out if they would obey the commandments of the Lord, which He had commanded their fathers through Moses."
- a) More of the same. God tested the Israelites through the Gentile nations. He wanted to know if they would obey His commandments under adversity.
 - b) How could this be under the foreordination viewpoint?
9. 2 Chronicles 32:31, "Even in the matter of the envoys of the rulers of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of the wonder that had happened in the land, God left him alone only to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart."
10. Psalm 14:2 is yet one more: "The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God." Psalm 53:2 repeats this exact phrase.
11. Isaiah 65:16, "Because he who is blessed in the earth will be blessed by the God of truth; and he who swears in the earth will swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hidden from My sight."
- a) This is a clear and real example of the kenosis of the omniscience of God.
 - b) In forgiveness God forgets our sins, and they are hidden from His sight.
 - c) It is necessary for the sake of integrity that God do this.
 - d) And this is a real anthropomorphism. Nothing is hidden from the sight of God. Hebrews 4:13, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."
 - e) But it is an anthropomorphism that illustrates forgiveness. And the forgiveness of God means that He restricts His ability to recall that sin. It is truly forgotten, and He knows it no more.
 - f) Psalm 103:12 puts this in another way: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."
 - g) Now again, the integrity of God demanded this restriction of omniscience. God has the ability to remember our forgiven sins, but He chooses to restrict that ability for the reason of integrity.
 - h) This is a real restriction; it is integrity.
12. But there are many biblical instances where God feigns ignorance to prompt thinking in creatures.
- a) Genesis 3:9 - A rhetorical question... "Adam, where are you?" The purpose is to get Adam to think about where he is.
 - b) Genesis 4:9 - A rhetorical question... "Where is Abel your brother?" The purpose is to get Cain to think about the location of his brother.
 - c) 1 Kings 19:9 - A rhetorical question... "What are you doing here, Elijah?" The purpose is to get Elijah to think about what he is doing there.
 - d) But the reason for these legitimate illustrations is to contrast them with the incidents where there is a real kenosis of foreknowledge.

- e) Compare these now again to God's expressed desire to know what Adam would name the creatures. There is clearly a reversal of perspective; instead of the creature perspective, there is the divine, and this is the important observation that we must make.
- f) The focus of the rhetorical questions above is on the man. The focus of the narratives of Adam and Abraham are on God. In each case it is clear that He wants to know for His benefit.

K. Why God restrains His foreknowledge.

1. Because any decree with absolute foreknowledge of the outcome is foreordination.
2. And foreordination destroys integrity. It makes God the author of evil and a lot more.

L. The Calvinistic Lapsarianism.

1. The decree to elect some to be saved and to reprobate all others;
2. The decree to create men both elect and nonelect;
3. The decree to permit the Fall;
4. The decree to provide salvation for the elect;
5. The decree to apply salvation to the elect.

M. Infralapsarianism.

1. The decree to create all men;
2. The decree to permit the fall;
3. The decree to provide salvation for man;
4. The decree to elect those who do believe and leave condemned all who do not believe;
5. The decree to apply salvation to those who believe.

V. The Final Resolution. A View to the Past: before the Decree...

A. Creation from the motivation of love.

1. Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness..."
2. This verse stands as the only true revelation of divine motive for the creation of man.
3. And the verse does not speak directly to motive, only to the pattern of creation.
4. The pattern of creation is the character image of God. As such, it is apparent that God wanted man to represent Him in some vital way.
5. There is a subtle difference between the creation of angels and men.
 - a) Angels were created without the stigma of the angelic conflict. They were created simply to share the fellowship and blessings of a relationship with God.

- b) But mankind not only has the same as angels, it has the initial motivation of resolving the angelic conflict.
 - c) This makes God's love of man no less; but the initial motivation had to do with the angels. The fallen angels required a just forum for their complaints about the character of God, and human history was the result.
6. Nonetheless, God loves man, and has a plan for the life of every one. And He desires for every human being the fellowship and blessings of relationship with Him.

B. Necessity of free will. Free will is absolutely necessary for an honest love between creatures. It is absolutely necessary that man be volitional in order to get an honest resolution of the conflict of angels.

1. Evidence of the free will of man.

- a) God intervenes. Since God intervenes, it reveals He believes it will make a difference to man.
 - (1) Sometimes He intervenes and it does not good; He does not attain the objective of His intervention because of human rejection.
 - (2) At other times, God intervenes and it brings about the intended effect.
 - (3) The breakdown of this is that God intervenes knowing that something is truly at stake, depending on the volition of man.
- b) God commands.
 - (1) Although a command issues from sovereign and rightful authority, it is still contingent on the volition of creatures for its execution.
 - (2) That the Ten Commandments should so often be violated by men is sufficient enough evidence for the existence of volition among men.
- c) The many contingencies of Scripture related to the choices of man.
 - (1) The salvation contingency is found in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." It says whoever, meaning it is open to all.
 - (2) A fine example of post-salvation contingency comes up in Romans 6:4, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." It says 'might,' indicating the contingency.

2. Permission of the fall.

- a) God determined in eternity past that man would have free will, and that sin and evil would therefore be an option available to human beings.
- b) Evil does not come from God; it exists as the opposite of all that God is, and so has always existed in contrasting possibility.
- c) Since God is perfect, He will never choose evil. Therefore, evil never came into being before there were creatures.
- d) God decided that creatures would have free will, and so evil was a possibility from the beginning.
- e) He would allow the fall, because it was necessary for creatures to have free will in order to enjoy fellowship with Him.

- f) So in God's mind there was a thought like this: "If they choose against Me, I must allow it."

3. Law of volitional responsibility.

- a) Along with the freedom to choose, God emplaced in this world a law as certain as the law of gravity.
- b) Our decisions have consequences. God has given us responsibility for our decisions, along with His character image in our souls.
- c) Responsibility has the presumption of grace: God could only make us responsible if He also provides for us to make those good decisions.

C. Responsibility for creatures.

1. Remedy for fall in unlimited atonement.

- a) 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."
- b) 2 Corinthians 5:14-16, "(14) For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; (15) and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."
- c) Romans 5:6, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."
- d) 1 Timothy 2:5-6, "(5) For there is one God, and mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (6) who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time."
- e) 1 Timothy 4:10, "For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers."
- f) Titus 2:11, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men."
- g) Hebrews 2:9, "But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone."
- h) 1 John 2:2, "...and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."

2. Universal election.

- a) 2 Timothy 2:10, "For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory."
- b) Ephesians 1:3-5, "(3) The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is blessed, the one who blessed us in every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ, (4) just as He selected us in Him before the foundation of the world, for us to be holy and blameless before Him in love (5) after He predestined us for an inheritance through Jesus Christ into Him, according to the good intention of His will..."

3. Other categories of providential grace.

- a) Of course, we are only focusing on salvation grace here. There are many other elements of grace related to the post-salvation life of glory.

- b) And there is also logistical grace.
- c) God determined to provide both these categories as a part of His responsibility toward His creatures.

D. Determination toward intervention. God determined that He would intervene at the proper time into human lives. The condition for intervention would be need. That is, whenever human beings need intervention, God is immediately and effectively on the scene of their lives.

1. The Universal Kingdom. Alva J. McClain, in the fourth chapter of his masterful *The Greatness of the Kingdom* points out some important distinctions of the universal kingdom of God.
 - a) This Universal Kingdom exists without interruption throughout all time.
 - b) The Universal Kingdom includes all that exists in space and time.
 - c) The Divine control in the Universal Kingdom is generally providential.
 - (1) By the term “providential” we mean control by means of second causes.
 - (2) (McClain goes on to explain this as the rule of God over nature).
 - (3) Because in His Universal Kingdom God controls the processes of material nature, He is able by such means to control the circumstances of human existence and thereby direct the stream of history.
 - (4) McClain illustrates by the book of Esther, and the crucial night of the narrative: “...at stake, in a very real sense, was the entire divine program for the ages. If Israel perished, there would be no Messiah, no redemption, no Church, no future Kingdom of God among men. With such issues in jeopardy, we might not have been too much surprised to see the arm of Deity breaking forth into the affairs of men with some great supernatural intervention; perhaps something like the deliverance of Israel from the hand of the Egyptian Pharaoh. But nothing of the kind happens. There is not even any mention of God. The writer of the Book of Esther merely records what might be regarded as the master understatement of all time: “On that night could not the king sleep” (6:1). Why he could not sleep, we are not told.”
 - (5) Fire and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling His word” (Psalm 148:8).
 - d) The divine control in the Universal Kingdom may be exercised at times by supernatural means.
 - (1) The God of the universe is said to be both in the universe and above it. Therefore at any time He may break into the so-called “closed system” of nature with great exhibitions of His unveiled power.
 - (2) The resort to miracles in the rule of the Universal Kingdom does not mean necessarily that God might not be able to accomplish His purposes by other and less spectacular means. The supernatural method is rather for the purpose of demonstrating publicly that there is a true God in heaven who always will have the last word in human affairs.
 - e) The Universal Kingdom always exists efficaciously regardless of the attitude of its subjects.
 - f) The rule of the Universal Kingdom is administered through the eternal Son.
 - g) This Universal Kingdom is not exactly identical with that Kingdom for which our Lord taught His disciples to pray.

- (1) He said, "Thy kingdom come."
 - (2) But here, Christ says "All things have been given to Me."
 - h) As Thieme summarizes: "It is also true that our Lord today, as always, rules in the Universal Kingdom of God, which is administered through providence. Jesus Christ is the absolute ruler over all, but allows human volition to choose His rule until such time as the forces of evil are bound."
2. Direct intervention, which is the miracle.
 - a) There is much evidence of direct intervention into the lives of men.
 - b) The Old Testament has many instances of the theophany - the 'appearance of God.'
 - (1) There was the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day. God made an everyday appearance into the Garden of Eden to teach truth to Adam and Eve.
 - (2) We no longer have theophanies in our dispensation, but God can intervene directly without making a personal appearance.
 - (3) Through miracles and healings He makes direct intervention.
3. Indirect intervention. This is far more common.
 - a) Circumstantial guidance.
 - (1) This comes under two manifestations: discipline and blessing.
 - (2) Divine discipline comes in the form of circumstances - the negative things that happen to us because we have neglected our relationship with God.
 - (3) Blessings follow the pattern of discipline: they are tailor-made so that we can know that they are only from God.
 - b) People under divine guidance.
 - (1) God also brings people into our lives.
 - (2) He is able to guide people through unconscious and conscious means, so that they reach those who need the truth.
4. Responsive intervention.
 - a) Special election, which is the choice of God from personal love toward those with faith.
 - b) Grace activation. This is the activation of grace on account of the prayers of believers. Special election is simply the activation of grace at salvation.

E. Allowance of intervention from evil sources.

1. God allows intervention from those with negative volition. He allows their viewpoint to exist, and their activities to go as far as divine discipline and divine establishment will allow.
2. The existence of evil is the outworking of free will.

F. Foreknowledge of all possibilities.

1. There are two categories of foreknowledge:
 - a) The foreknowledge of possibility, which was exercised before the decree, and at any point of intervention.
 - b) The foreknowledge of certainty, which is sometime exercised in time, like with prophecy.
2. At this time, God exercised His foreknowledge of all possibilities, so as to account for all grace.
3. God's function of grace allows for all possible outcomes, and accounts for them all.

G. The setting forth of the decree...

1. God decreed the beginning of human history without foreordaining the outcome.
2. But He is always ready with grace, knowing what may come.
3. At this moment, God restrained His ability to foreknow all things, so that the outcome would not be foreordained.
4. He had so much confidence in His ability to respond with wisdom and righteous deeds that He could let go of the foreknowledge.
5. God's ability to analyze each situation on the fly is infinite; there is no need for Him to meticulously plan our lives from eternity past. He has the ability to know what is right in each moment of time - what is right for each of us and all of us.

H. Foreknowledge of the working out of the decree.

1. Once human history is begun, God has the option to employ His foreknowledge when His integrity demands it.
2. But He doesn't maintain a constant foreknowledge of certainty, because that would violate His integrity.
3. Foreknowledge of certainty must be suspended whenever an intervention takes place.

VI. Its Effects.**A. Proper motivation is retained.****B. Divine control over human history is retained through intervention.****C. Utilization of foreknowledge is limited to those situations that demand it.****D. A careful view of divine guidance.****E. A final exhortation to responsibility in the procurement of grace.**