

God's Magnificent Salvation Plan

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An Indepth Biblical Study of
God's Salvation Plan for Mankind

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PREFACE

*"Good evening. Welcome to the Open Forum."
"...Brother Camping?..."
"Yes, go ahead, you're on the air."
"Well, I just had to call after that last caller.... I mean, really, the very idea that not all can be saved.... I mean, when the Bible is so clear, "...whosoever believeth in Him should not perish..." and sir, I want you to know that my Lord does not send people to Hell!" Click the conversation was abruptly ended.*

Over and over, this scenario is repeated on the nationwide evening radio program called Open Forum — people, sincere students of the scriptures, struggling with the enigma presented by the issue of divine election.

The caller had captured his position to his satisfaction with the verse he quoted from John 3:16. Others reach for the passage in II Peter proclaiming,

“...He is not willing that any should perish...”

But the simple truth is there are other passages which seem to declare that only the elect who have been chosen before the foundation of the earth will be saved. Take, for example, Ephesians 1:4, which states, “...He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world...” And how about Romans 11:5, where God speaks of “...a remnant according to the election of grace”? The caller’s frustration was focused on the implication that only an elect group of people is going to be saved and conversely that those not among this elect group would be sent to hell. Since he views God as a benevolent, loving Creator, to him such an election not only seems grossly unjust, but downright unworthy of decent men or God!

For five centuries this issue has been a battle cry. There was a time when Renaissance minds were causing an intellectual dawn to quell the Dark Ages with humanism’s insistence that all life questions be seen from the human perspective. This insistence crept into the theological arena. From that perspective such questions naturally arise...“If those not elected by God are not going to be saved, how can it be true that God’s offer of salvation is truly honorable? Whatever happened to the fairness we associate with God? How dare we tamper with the `free will of man’?”

However, this issue is best served by looking at the question from the proper perspective — the divine viewpoint. Once we capture a clear insight into God’s identity, in His nature and work, it will not be difficult to see that His program of salvation is entirely fair and equitable.

And for those Bible students willing to struggle objectively to see the whole issue from this perspective, they will make two exciting discoveries: (a) this enigma can be resolved; (b) this resolution will foster a new appreciation of the incomprehensible love of God in providing such a magnificent program of salvation.

But make no mistake, whether your humanistic outlook is due to the secular classroom of today’s education system or gleaned from a pulpit under the cloud of theological humanism some 500 years old, all such viewpoints must be abandoned.

True enlightenment and joy is attainable only by viewing this issue from the divine perspective; i.e., looking over God’s shoulder.

CHAPTER 1

GOD’S MAGNIFICENT SALVATION PLAN

As we begin our study concerning the nature of salvation, we must begin by understanding who man is. We see that the Bible teaches that man was created to worship and serve God, that men of their own volition have rebelled against God and will never wish to come to Him. Therefore, because it is God’s desire to have a people for Himself, God sovereignly chose the individuals whom He planned to save.

Going back to the very beginning in Eden, we see that man was created in the image of God. To be created in the image of God included the fact that he loved righteousness and truth just like God. Moreover, Adam could choose whether to obey God or not. He was free to obey God voluntarily because this desire was inherent in him as part of the image of God. Thus he stood before God as a responsible creature accountable for his actions. Therefore, he was also warned

that he must bear the consequences of disobedience — “...for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

The results of his disobedience are well known. Mankind was sentenced to death, physical death as well as spiritual death, which meant eternal separation from God in a place called Hell. There he would eternally endure the wrath of God for his disobedience.

The impact of that initial sin was so terrible that man’s very nature was corrupted and disobedience to God became normative for his life. Like an adulterer senselessly and stupidly returns repeatedly to the harlot, so man continues to disobey God. It was so far reaching that the whole human race, which issued from Adam and of whom Adam was head, remains in this awful corruption. Thus Romans 5:12 declares, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...”

In I John 3:8 we read, “He that committeth sin is of the devil.” In Colossians 1:13 God declares that when He saves us it is that “He hath delivered us from the power of darkness.”

In the parable of the wheat and the tares Jesus informs us that “the tares are the children of the wicked one.” This enslavement to sin is described by the language of Romans 6:16, where God warns, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey.”

We see therefore that man in his very nature continues in constant rebellion against God. Because he lives in this enmity toward God, the awful curse of God’s wrath continues to rest on him. He became a slave of dominion of sin and spiritual darkness which ruled over by Satan, who vanquished man in Eden.

IS MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS SIN?

But now a question of great importance must be faced. Did this corruption of man’s nature and this enslavement to Satan, which together produce an ever mounting condemnation for man, minimize or reduce in any way God’s demand upon him to be without sin? Had he in any sense become so helpless in his sin that God could no longer hold him accountable? This is a key question, for in its answer one will be able to resolve the apparent paradox of God’s gracious offer of salvation to all men and God’s elective decrees whereby only God’s elect will be saved.

The answer to the question of man’s continued accountability to God after the fall is found in analyzing the reason for his hopeless condition of slavery to sin and Satan. His frightful condition did not result from a whim or caprice of fate. It did not result from irrational anger by God as God lashed out at man for his disobedience.

Rather it was altogether the result of man’s own action. God had created him good, with every conceivable blessing; and because he was created in the image of God he was fully responsible for the consequences of his disobedience. Thus, the fact that his very nature became corrupted and that he became a slave of Satan did not diminish in any way his accountability to God for his sins. Even to the present day, because he is still man created in the image of God, however shattered that image may be, he continues to be

answerable to God for his actions.

Therefore one is not surprised to read that at the judgment man must render account to God for all his works. Matthew 12:36 states, "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Romans 2:5,6 declares, "...after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God: Who will render to every man according to his deeds..." Thus God is emphasizing that an answer must be tendered.

Romans 14:10-12 makes it clear that "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...for...every knee shall bow...and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." II Corinthians 5:10 cites that "...we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Moreover we read in Revelation 20 that at the judgment throne Christ will have on record all the deeds of those who stand there. And they must answer to God concerning these deeds. Revelation 20:12 declares:

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

That God looks upon man as being fully answerable for his sins is repeatedly taught in the Bible. Consider, for example, the words of Jesus in Luke 13:34:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not! (Cf. Matthew 23:29-34, 21:23-41)

Christ is speaking in these passages to people as responsible humans created in the image of God. He is not demeaning them by suggesting that in any way they are no longer accountable. His declaration is that they are fully answerable for their rejection of God's overtures of grace. Actually it is more than an offer. It is a command from God to the human race that they are to repent of their sins and turn to Christ for salvation (John 6:29, Acts 17:30, I John 3:18-24).

Thus the Bible gives ample evidence that mankind is fully answerable to God for his actions. Even though the entire human race is altogether in rebellion against God, each and every human stands accountable to God.

GOD DECLARES HIMSELF TO MAN

In this sad context, God comes with His gracious offer of salvation. First of all, He gives plentiful evidence to man that God exists. By placing man in a creation that is so filled with incomprehensible impossibilities and delightful wonders, man cannot escape the knowledge that only an infinite being could bring this to pass. The stars, the newborn baby, the fragrant rose, all testify to the power of God (Psalm 19:1, Romans 1:18-23).

Moreover, because he was created in the image of God, there is a witness

within man. Intuitively he knows that murder and adultery and stealing are sins because to some degree God's law is written on his heart (Romans 2:14,15). Intuitively he knows that there is a judgment coming when he must account for his sins (Romans 1:32).

Furthermore, God shows him that He is a merciful and loving God as He provides man with so many undeserved blessings such as health, the benevolent sunshine, and fruitful seasons. (Cf. Acts 14:17, Romans 2:4.)

But man's response to these evidences of the existence of God, to the knowledge that he is a sinner who must some day be judged for his sin, to the kindness of God as He surrounds man with His blessings, is one of even greater rebellion against God. But because man himself is the sinner, man himself must bear the full consequences of his actions.

Finally, God comes with His supreme offer of love. God has fully outlined this in that marvelous written declaration of God's will, the Bible. He covenants with man that if he will only throw himself on God's mercies, if he will only repent of his sins and entrust his will to Christ as Lord, if he will only trust in Christ as Savior for God's forgiveness for his sins, God will make him His child, God will give him eternal life, God will free him from slavery to Satan and make him a citizen of God's kingdom. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

To do this for man, to make this offer possible, requires an enormous sacrifice by God. It requires complete satisfaction of the price demanded by God's decree, "the wages of sin is death," for all who will accept this gracious offer of salvation. This price was paid by God Himself, as He came as the God-man, to bear the wrath of God on behalf of those who would trust in God's offer of salvation.

If ten men out of the whole human race would believe in Christ as their sin-bearer, Christ's suffering must be equivalent to the punishment deserved by these ten men. If a million people would trust in God's offer of reconciliation, Christ's suffering must be equal to an eternity in Hell for a million men. However many turn to God's offer of love, Christ would obediently endure God's wrath on their behalf. For only then can God's holy justice be completely satisfied (Romans 3:24-26, Romans 5:8-9, Romans 5:21).

NO MAN WILL ACCEPT GOD'S OFFER OF SALVATION

But man in his perverseness, in the corruption of sin which has enveloped his whole being, will not accept this wonderful offer. He will not be obedient to God's command to repent of his sins and believe in Christ. His natural enmity towards God, his unconscious allegiance to Satan, his pleasure in his sin, all work together to encourage him to ignore, to spurn, to ridicule this offer. It is indeed a well-meant offer by God. There are no strings attached. It is given to man, who originally was created in the image of God to think God's thoughts after Him, to love God, to worship God, and to fellowship eternally with Him. The fact that man in his willful disobedience has become totally corrupted and has become a slave of Satan does not diminish or in any sense invalidate the gracious and marvelous intention of God's salvation offer. Man is still accountable to God. The fact that not even one man would be obedient to this offer does not make it any less a gracious offer of love.

Even so, the offer of God's love, the Gospel, with its command to mankind

to believe on Christ, is sent forth into all the world. But no man of his own volition will respond to it. Rather, in his lusting after sin he will do all that he can to silence and reject it. The deadness of man is so succinctly outlined in Romans 3:10-20 and Ephesians 2:1-3. "There is none that seeketh after God," we read in Romans 3:11. Man is as spiritually dead as Lazarus was physically dead after his body had decayed in the tomb for 4 days. No wonder the Bible declares in John 6:44, "No one can come to Me except the Father draw him." No man is able to come because he is spiritually dead.

GOD WILL SAVE A PEOPLE FOR HIMSELF

But God is not thwarted in His desire to have a redeemed people. If man left to his own volition will not respond to His gracious, well-meant offer and command of salvation, God will reach down into the mire and misery of human sin and save a people, whether they want to be saved or not (John 6:37). He will take for Himself as many as He wants, and precisely those whom He wants, so that He will be the Redeemer. He will build His church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail. Read, for example, the beautiful description of God's salvation plan in Ezekiel 34:11-16.

Therefore, in sovereign righteousness and justice God chooses, even before He creates the world, those whom He will save (Ephesians 1:4). They are not to be saved because they are in any way, to any degree whatsoever, more holy or more worthy of salvation than those who remain unsaved. Rather it is totally God's sovereign grace that He saves one and leaves another under His wrath (Romans 9:11-13).

For those whom He does save He must provide payment of the penalty required by God's perfect justice. And so Jesus became sin. He took upon Himself the sins of all whom God planned in His elective decrees to save. Based on God's declaration of John 3:16 that "whosoever believeth on Him should not perish," we might declare that Christ was prepared to pay for the sins of anyone in the whole wide world throughout time who might turn in faith to God and accept this offer of forgiveness. This is perhaps one truth inherent in the Biblical statement that Christ died for the sins of the whole world. In all the world Christ was the only possible sin-bearer. He would pay the price for anyone who believed. This principle is surely suggested by the promise of I John 1:9, which proclaims, "...if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

As a matter of fact, He did die only for those who were elected of God. For only they will obey God's command to believe in Christ. And this includes both the believer of the Old Testament as well as all those who will believe right up until the end of time. This truth is surely evident in the declaration of the angel to Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins." The phrase "His people" cannot refer to the whole human race. If it did, double jeopardy would occur, inasmuch as the Bible clearly teaches that the unsaved must pay for all their sins (Revelation 20:12-15).

Christ died for those who believe, but not one of these believed of his own volition. Only because God inclined their wills and opened their eyes did they respond to the Gospel. This gracious intervention of God occurred only in the lives of God's elect. These God irresistibly drew unto Himself (John 6:37,44). These were given to Christ by the Father (John 6:37,39,John 17:9,20), who were born not of the will of man, but of God (John 1:13).

Therefore, while in principle the atonement is available for each and every individual in the whole world, in actuality it covers only the sins of the elect. For only they will believe in Him. The dead Lazarus responded to the command of Jesus to come forth from the tomb because with the command Christ qualified him to come forth by giving him ears to hear, life to respond, and the will to obey (John 11:43,44). So likewise God qualifies those who are spiritually dead so that they will respond to the Gospel call.

Sorrowfully, the Bible declares that the rest of mankind remains under the wrath of God. When Christ went to the cross to pay for sin, He was ready to pay for anyone of mankind who would trust Christ as his Savior. But no penalty was paid by Jesus for those who would not respond obediently to God's salvation command. Therefore, they must stand before God's judgment throne on their own behalf when God judges the nations at the end of time. God declares, "The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness" (Romans 1:18), and "There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil" (Romans 2:9). Furthermore, in Romans 2:5 God ominously decrees:

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up for thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

In Revelation 20:12,13 we read:

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Had their sins been paid for, they would never have to stand for judgment and answer to God for each and every sin they had ever committed. God's wrath could never come upon them. Such condemnation, after Christ had already paid for their sins, would be double jeopardy. It would be a violation of God's perfect justice.

ANYONE CAN BE SAVED

Who then can be saved? Anyone can who surrenders his life by faith to Christ as Savior and Lord. There is not one who ever honestly sought for Jesus who will be cast out. There will be no one at the judgment throne of God on the last day who will be able to argue with God that he had earnestly sought for salvation. While he may have sought salvation, it could not have been the salvation of the Bible. Rather it would have been a salvation of his own design. No one will stand before the judgment throne who had been following the Biblical prescription of a broken and a contrite heart, which is the beginning of true salvation.

Wonderfully, anyone can know he is one of God's elect by repenting of his sins and hanging his whole life on Jesus. God warns man to make his calling and election sure. By turning to Christ without reservation, in child-like trust, he is proving he is one of God's elect. After he has turned in obedience to Him and knows that he, too, has become born from above he will discover from

God's matchless Word that his salvation was all of grace (Ephesians 2:4-10). It was altogether the work of God. If God had left him to himself, he would never have turned to Him.

That the Father decided to save some and let the rest go to Hell for their sins is God's business (Romans 9:14-23, Ephesians 1:4,5). He is the sovereign Creator and Redeemer, who is glorified by the salvation of those who believe (Ephesians 1:6). He is also praised by the wrath of man (Psalm 76:10).

The real wonder is not that He failed to save every last person in the world. The real wonder is that He saved even one out of the human race. The fact that He saved a vast company of believers from every nation and tribe and people is gracious love and condescending grace that no man will ever understand. This wonderful salvation is possible only because...

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith Jehovah...(Isaiah 55:8)

A SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

We have discovered that God indeed comes with a gracious offer of salvation to mankind, a gracious offer whereby He declares that He will save anyone at all who will come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed it is more than an offer. It is a command to believe on Jesus as Savior. Our salvation of course can be accomplished only through our Savior because there must be someone to pay for our sins. Jesus as our substitute did provide Himself as that payment. Because of His sacrifice of Himself, God comes with the gracious offer of salvation to this world.

We learned that because man is desperately wicked, because he is dead in his sins, he does not want to accept this offer of salvation; he does not want to be obedient to the command to believe in Christ as his Savior. He refuses to surrender his will to God. In the hardness of his heart he wants to go his own way. "There is none that seeketh after God," the Bible sorrowfully declares.

We saw that even though man is dead in his sins he remains accountable to God. Regardless of his spiritual blindness, regardless of the fact that he is a slave of sin and Satan, he still has the responsibility to face God at the judgment throne and answer for all his sins.

Then we saw that God, in His mercy, in His sovereign will, declared, "But I will build My church." It is God's purpose to have a people for Himself even if no one of his own desire will believe in Christ as his Savior. We saw that even before the foundation of the earth God named those whom He would save; and these He drew to Himself, opening their spiritual eyes that they might respond to the Gospel offer, so they did indeed become saved.

Then we examined the question, "Well then, can anyone be saved?" And the answer was, "Yes, indeed, anyone can be saved who will respond to the Gospel." But we learned that the only people who will respond in submission to God's Word, the Bible, who will obediently follow God's program for salvation, will be those whom God has drawn to Himself. There will be nobody facing Hell at the judgment throne who will be able to argue, "I wanted to be saved on God's terms but I am not saved because obviously I was not one of God's elect." Anyone facing judgment and Hell is there because he did not want God's salvation program. He may have wanted salvation on his own terms, but he did not want God's salvation, and therefore he still has to

answer to all his sins.

GOD'S ELECTIVE PROGRAM

As we go on in our study of salvation, particularly as it relates to predestination and God's elective program, let's look at these questions again on a little more formal basis, following the outline that the church has followed, under the acronym TULIP:

T = Total depravity **U** = Unconditional
election **L** = Limited atonement **I** =
Irresistible grace **P** = Perseverance of the saints

Certainly the acrostic principles behind the acronym TULIP sound intriguing; but unless they are altogether Biblical, they shall not stand. In that view, we focus altogether on scriptural foundations.

CHAPTER 2

A. T = TOTAL DEPRAVITY

The matter of total depravity is a very ugly concept, and it is this doctrine that divides the church as no other teaching concerning salvation. Many, many people in the church can agree, "Yes, I believe that God draws us to Himself: I believe that once we are saved, we are always saved."

But they have difficulty crossing that line where they would acknowledge that man is so depraved, that he is so spiritually dead that he is incapable of taking that first step toward God. They really insist on the possibility of free choice or free will on the part of man to choose for Christ. They conclude that God has done all that He can do, and now it is up to man to take the next action.

Let's examine the Bible very carefully in regard to this matter because we want the Bible to speak to us. We are interested in knowing God's truth on this. Some of the verses we will look at will be a repetition of what we have already covered in this study, but they bear repeating because they are so very important.

In Ephesians 2:1-5 we read:

And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation (conduct, behavior) in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace ye are saved...

In these verses God is speaking about someone who has become saved. He is not talking about the desperately wicked of the world who remain in their wickedness and end up in Hell, but He is talking about someone who actually has become a child of God.

And what does He say about him? He was dead. He was spiritually a corpse, without any spiritual life of any kind. Notice the description, "walked according to the course of this world." In other words, he had been living exactly like the world that remains in unbelief.

Then God adds, "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." By these words God is declaring that this person was a slave of Satan, walking after the ways of Satan. Remember that Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father the devil."

Moreover, verse 3 declares he was living "in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." This is the terribly rebellious condition in which God finds us when He saves us. The description fits any unsaved in the world, even the most wicked. This is the way we are, the way God sees us before we are saved.

How can this person exercise free will? How can this person decide to come to God? He is spiritually dead, his will sold out to Satan. He is a corpse. While he might argue that he has the freedom to choose for God, in actuality he will never choose to come to God through Christ. In the freedom of his will he will always choose against God because in his depraved nature he is altogether in rebellion against God.

The terribly rebellious state of man's heart is further described by the language of Jeremiah 17:9, where God declares, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jesus pointed out the awful depravity of man's heart by the language of Mark 7:21,22:

<i? i="" <="" foolishness,="" pride,="" blasphemy,="" eye,="" evil="" an="" lasciviousness,="" deceit,="" wickedness,="" covetousness,="" thefts,="" murders,="" fornications,="" adulteries,="" thoughts,="" proceed="" man,="" of="" heart="" the="" out="" within,="" from="" far="">

No wonder Jesus said of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:27:

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

In these words our Savior was pointing out the unsaved condition of these church rulers. But the description of their hearts fits the heart of every unsaved person.

In Romans 3:10-18 God emphasizes and underscores the sorry state of mankind when measured by the standard of God's holiness. In verse 10 God declares, "As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one." Thus we are made to realize there is no one in the world who is righteous, not a single individual. God has in view here the whole human race, including those who will become believers. The Bible continues, beginning with verse 11:

There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre. With their tongues they have used deceit. The poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

This is an awful indictment of the human race. God is showing us what miserable sinners we really are compared with holiness of God. This language shuts the door on any possibility that anyone of his own free will would turn to God... "There is none that seeketh after God..." The language is that of a desperate sinner, one who is spiritually dead. His throat is an open sepulchre. That is, all the words of his mouth proceed from a grave of decaying flesh. What an ugly statement declaring our spiritual deadness. How can we say that any person would turn to God of his own free will? We have to absorb this terrible truth. It is God's truth, that we are spiritually dead before we are saved. We are so depraved in our nature that we would never seek Him of ourselves.

Our spiritual deadness is further emphasized in John 5:24, where God says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My Word and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death into life." We are dead in our sins. Only God can give us life.

THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED TO DEAD PEOPLE

This same truth comes to light in I Peter 4:6, where we read, "For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead." Of course we don't preach to the physical corpses; we don't go into a cemetery and preach to the bodies that are in the graves. We preach to someone who has life and breath, who has conscious existence. But God says here that the Gospel is preached to those who are dead. You see, we are spiritually dead before we are saved. Therefore, we of our own volition will never come to God.

Wonderfully, this verse tells what happens to those who do respond to the Gospel as they are experiencing God's salvation love. Verse 6 goes on, "...that they might be judged according to men in the flesh." That is, they still will experience physical death. But then the next phrase declares, "...but live according to God in the spirit." In their spirit or soul existence, where they have experienced the resurrection at the time they were saved, they will live to God.

In John 6:44 Christ declared, "No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." The word "can" in this passage is a word that signifies that no one has the power to come to Christ. No one has the strength to come to Him. Why? Because we are dead. Only because our Heavenly Father draws us, do we come to Him.

Remember, earlier in our study we mentioned Lazarus. Lazarus was in the tomb, and he had been dead for 4 days. He was a stinking corpse. Yet Jesus spoke to that dead man just as we speak to the spiritually dead, according to the language of I Peter 4:6. Jesus said to Lazarus, "Lazarus, come forth." Did Lazarus have the ability to come forth? Could he come forth because he heard the voice of Jesus? No, he couldn't even hear the voice of Jesus. He was dead. He could never come forth. One might go to a cemetery and call for a thousand years for people to come forth. But not even one person will even come forth because all in the cemetery are dead.

That is how dead we are spiritually. The corpse of Lazarus in the tomb is a picture of our spiritually dead condition before we are saved. God is using this particular historical event to teach us the spiritual truth of the nature of salvation.

That the death and resurrection of Lazarus is a picture of salvation is shown by the language describing this miraculous event. As Jesus is talking to Martha and Mary about the dead Lazarus, He said to them in verse 25 of John 11, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall live." This beautiful promise relates altogether to salvation. Jesus is going to raise Lazarus to prove that this promise is trustworthy. Even as Lazarus was raised physically, we who believe in Christ are to be raised spiritually. Lazarus had no power in himself. He was dead, so that he of his own will could not rise physically. Yet he did rise physically. So also we are spiritually dead before we are saved. We have no power whatsoever. Therefore we cannot rise spiritually. Nevertheless, as the Gospel comes to us, we will rise if it is God's will to raise us, even as Lazarus was raised from the dead.

This is the teaching of the Bible. We are dead, and our actions cannot contribute in any sense toward our salvation. There is no such thing as free will insofar as the Bible is concerned.

THE DOCTRINE OF FREE WILL IS ANTITHETICAL TO THE BIBLE'S TEACHING OF OUR SPIRITUAL DEADNESS

I am afraid that the idea of free will is clung to so tenaciously by some because it affords them a little bit of credit for their salvation. Oh, we know that it is by grace that we are saved. We are ready to admit that. But oh, how we want to receive a little credit at least. Can't we have a little bit of recognition that we have contributed something toward our salvation? This is our nature.

Suppose we have baked a beautiful cake, or done something else that displays our handiwork. We have slaved over this, and our work is very lovely. Indeed then, we are very disappointed if our friends fail to commend us on the work of our hands. This is the way we are designed; we want some kind of commendation. And so we also want some kind of commendation with regard to our salvation.

If it was my free will that caused me to turn to Christ, then somehow I am a little bit better than my unsaved neighbor. After all, somehow I responded to the Gospel while he didn't, and therefore I can receive a tiny bit of credit, even though I know that basically my salvation depends upon what Christ has done.

But the Bible says no. We are dead in our sins, and there is no way that we can be saved except that God will draw us. It is God's work altogether. Therefore, God declares, "A broken and a contrite heart I will not despise."

THE DANGER OF THE DOCTRINE OF FREE WILL

I might point out something very ominous in connection with this doctrine of free will. Really, it is a very serious matter that we are discussing. The Bible shows why.

In Numbers 15:32-34 we read about a person who picked up some sticks on the Sabbath Day:

And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath Day; and they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation, and they put him in ward because it was not declared what should be done to him.

This man apparently has committed a very, very incidental sin. He has picked up a few sticks. As near as we can tell, he has kept the Sabbath Day as was commanded, but he just picked up a few sticks. Certainly that isn't a very grievous crime, is it? But God indicates in verse 35...

And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp; and all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died as the Lord commanded Moses.

What a horrible penalty for such an incidental sin! Why is this? Why did God put this in the Bible? You see, this is a dramatic warning to us not to mix work with God's grace. Let me explain.

The Old Testament Sabbath Day was a picture of our salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. When the nation of Israel rested on the seventh day from all its labors, they were not to do any kind of work at all. So, too, when we are saved, we are to rest altogether in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has done all the work required to bring us to salvation. The Old Testament Sabbath Day therefore was a figure of the salvation that God would provide through our Savior. Until we are saved, we are working so that in some way we might obtain entrance into Heaven by our own actions. But once we are saved, we rest from our labors altogether and simply trust in Christ, who has done all the work. It is by resting in God's grace that we have been saved, just like the children of Israel who rested on the Sabbath Day.

Therefore, when this man picked up a few sticks, his action paralleled the action of someone who is saying, "Yes, I am saved by grace, but my work has contributed just a tiny bit. I can do a little bit of work toward my salvation." God ordained that the man who picked up sticks was to be stoned to death. To be stoned to death in the Old Testament was the equivalent of coming under the damnation of Hell. This is the grievous thing that happened to those who were particularly sinful. Their death was a picture of God's wrath that comes upon sin, that results in damnation in Hell. Thus by this account of the man picking up sticks God is really teaching that if we have a salvation program that is mostly grace, but also requires a little bit of our own work, then we still are under damnation.

This is an ominous thought. This is a terrible thing. But we don't have to worry about this if we'll just follow the scriptures, if we'll accept what we read in Ephesians 2 and Romans 3 and John 5:24 and these other passages, that we are dead and we don't have free will. It is God Himself who does the saving altogether. Only He is to receive all the glory for our salvation.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE PASSAGES THAT APPARENTLY TEACH FREE WILL?

I know there are passages that seem to indicate that we do have free will. For example, in Revelation 22:17 God declares, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But this verse isn't indicating that anybody will of himself turn to the Gospel, which is the water of life. This verse is simply indicating that God's gracious offer of salvation is available to the entire human race. If any person does turn to Him, God will save him. When we read this verse in the light of the rest of the Bible, we know that no one of his own volition will turn to Christ. There is none that seeketh after God. Thus, while

Revelation 22:17 stands as a promise of God, it will never prompt a response in anyone unless God Himself is drawing him.

Revelation 3:20 is frequently used by those who want to retain some aspect of free will. There God declares, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me."

This verse to seems to indicate, when we read it quickly, that the action by the one responding to Christ is doing so of his own free will. But when we read this verse very carefully, we'll notice it says, "He who heareth My voice..." Can a dead man hear the voice of God? Could Lazarus hear the voice of Jesus? And the answer is, "Of course he couldn't hear the Savior's voice. He was dead." But he did hear the voice of Christ, didn't he? He did hear Christ's voice, and he did come forth.

Likewise there are those who are spiritually dead who of themselves cannot hear with understanding the Gospel call. Those who respond do so only because God gives them spiritual ears to hear. Even as He gave the dead Lazarus physical ears to hear so that he could respond, and gave him the strength to respond, so God gives us spiritual ears if He is drawing us to Himself. Revelation 3:20 is not teaching free will in any way. It is simply indicating that if we have ears to hear, then we will respond. But we know that those ears to hear must come from God Himself.

It is very significant that repeatedly in Revelation God declares, as He does in Revelation 3:22, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Only those whom God is drawing, those whom God is saving, will have that kind of ear. We see therefore that this verse also gives Biblical corroboration to the historical teaching to total depravity.

We must conclude therefore that the principle of total depravity is altogether Biblical. It is a teaching that will stand the closest scrutiny of the scriptures. But it is absolutely antithetical to the idea of free will. Any Gospel program that promotes the idea that I have a free will to choose God is contrary to the Bible. When we are unsaved, our will is sold out to sin and to Satan.

We might insist our will is free, but in our unsaved condition our will is always contrary to the will of God. We shall never will of ourselves to come to God because "there is none that seeketh after God." This is what the Bible insists. If you want to call that free will, that we shall always of ourselves go against the will of God, so be it.

Call that free will if you like, but that is not the meaning ascribed to free will when people say, "I, because of my free will, decided to become saved." Their meaning is that by an act of their will, which is under no constraint of God, they can come to Christ; and indeed those who are saved did become saved because of an action of their will. Likewise those who remain lost of their own free will reject Christ, and God will never impose His will upon them to make them want to come to Christ. But that idea or doctrine is a Biblical impossibility. Moreover, it is a very, very dangerous doctrine, as we have seen.

But doesn't the Bible teach that we are to choose for Christ, that we are faced with the choice of believing or rejecting Christ? And doesn't this imply free will on the part of those who do make the right choice? When Joshua commanded ancient Israel to "choose you this day whom ye will serve"

(Joshua 24:15), was Joshua suggesting that man has a free will? When we read Joshua 24:15 carefully we discover that Joshua's command to choose was not to make a choice between God and Baal. Rather it was a choice between one false religion and another. This verse reads:

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

God does not give us a choice to believe in Christ or not. He commands the human race to believe in Christ. We read in I John 3:23:

And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ...

If any verses in the Bible do imply a choice is to be made, God always commands what that choice is to be. It is always that we should turn back to God. As we faithfully bring the Gospel, we should present this command of God that should be obeyed.

However, as we bring this command to believe on Christ, we must fully realize that the only ones who will obey this command are those whom God is drawing—those whom God has chosen to salvation. They alone will respond to the Gospel offer. We must fully realize that we have been commissioned by God to make this Gospel offer so that God's salvation program will come to fruition in the lives of those whose wills are being inclined by God to respond to the command to believe.

Therefore we must never add to that Gospel presentation the statements that are so frequently made to the effect that the final choice is man's rather than God's. Too many preachers add such concepts as, "God has done His part and now it's up to you;" or "God by His grace has paid for your sins but it's up to you to accept His pardon;" or "God has done all that He must do; the rest is up to you;" or God is a gentleman. While He has provided for your salvation, He will not force you to accept."

All these statements imply that our salvation is based on God's work plus our work, that God's work will never be complete without our work. These statements are part and parcel with the concept that man has a free will. They do not recognize at all that our salvation is "not of works" (Ephesians 2:9). They do not recognize that man is dead in his sins. They do not recognize the awful import of a works/grace gospel.

I am afraid that the common assertion of many today that man must "accept" the Lord Jesus as his Savior is based on the premise that man has a free will. The fact is, we receive Christ because God has given us Him as a gift. God inclines our will, God draws us, God gives us salvation. We receive this gift of salvation without any work or effort on our part.

Now then, which of these two hymns are you ready to sing?

'Twas not that I did choose Thee,
For Lord That could not be;
This heart would still refuse Thee,
Hadst Thou not chosen me.
'Twas not that you did choose me,

For Lord that could not be;
Your heart would still refuse me,
Hadst I not chosen Thee.

The first of the two verses is the Biblical one. When “we have decided to follow Jesus,” it is actually God’s action moving us. We can take no credit whatsoever. The phrase accrues to the precious Lord Jesus Christ. God gives repentance! To God be the glory!

Let us now see what the Bible has to say about unconditional election. What does this phrase mean?

CHAPTER 3

A. U = UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Thus far we have examined the first principle that is suggested by the acronym TULIP, a word that outlines five principles that relate to the nature of our salvation. That first principle is the matter of total depravity. We have discovered as we looked in the Bible that indeed, we are dead in our sins. We are incapable of ever deciding to come to Christ. We are slaves of Satan. We obey the lusts of the flesh. We are as spiritually dead as Lazarus was physically dead in the tomb before he was raised.

But now we are going to examine the second principle that is a part of this acronym TULIP; namely, the principle of unconditional election. The subject of election is not a happy idea to many who are concerned with salvation because it brings with it the fact that God is the one who did the electing, rather than the fact that we have chosen for God. Man by nature does not like this particular point of view. This is so because it underscores the spiritual deadness of man. It robs him of any self-pride. It reminds him that he is not the master of his fate, the captain of his soul. But this is the point of view that the Bible very clearly teaches.

In examining this question of election we see first of all that it is required. That is, it is a necessary part of God’s salvation program. Without it, no one would be saved. Let us see why this is so.

We have already discovered that man is altogether dead in his sins. He will not seek after God. Of his own volition he will never elect to come to God. Therefore, if Christ had gone no further than offering salvation to the world, there would be no body of believers. This gracious, loving offer of salvation could be proclaimed for a thousand years to mankind, but not one individual in the whole human race would respond of himself. As we have already seen so clearly, man is dead in his sins. He loves his sin too much. In his very nature he is altogether in rebellion against God. And so no one seeks after God. Therefore, if God had not acted in man’s heart no one would become saved.

But Christ has determined that He would build His church. The gates of hell would not prevail against Him. Therefore, in order to build His church, He elected certain ones who were to be saved. Thus the truth of election is absolutely essential to God’s whole program of salvation.

WHEN DID GOD ELECT THOSE WHO WERE TO BE SAVED?

We might wonder when God elected or decided whom He would save. When did this election take place? The Bible tells us in Ephesians 1:4 that He chose us in Christ from before the foundations of the world. In other words, God

already decided whom He would save as part of the salvation program before man had ever been created, before man had ever fallen into sin.

In Revelation 17:8 God speaks of those whose names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world. He is speaking here of the wicked, those who are slaves of the Beast or of the kingdom of Satan. The fact that they were not written in the Book of Life from before the foundations of the world implies very strongly that the believers in Christ, who are not slaves of Satan, were written in the Book of Life from before the foundations of the world. That accords altogether with Ephesians 1:4, where we are told that "we are chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world." Therefore the Bible shows us that this election did take place before time, before God had begun His creation.

Because God knows the end from the beginning, He knew that man, whom He would create perfect and without sin, would of his own volition rebel against God and be plunged into sin. Therefore our Heavenly Father made provision for this eventuality by giving to the Lord Jesus Christ those whom He planned to save. We read in John 6:37, "all that the Father giveth Me..." These were the elect who, before the foundations of the earth, had been chosen by God and had their names inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The next logical issue we should face concerns the nature of this election. We find this word election in some fifty places in the New Testament. It is found in the Greek language as three different greek words... ..ekloge, eklektos and eklego. These three words are translated either as elect or chosen in the New Testament.

We find, for example, that God says in Romans 11:5, "There is a remnant according to the election (ekloge) of grace. In II Peter 1:10 we read, "Make your calling and election (ekloge) sure."

Again He declares in Colossians 3:12, "Put on, therefore, as the elect (eklektos) of God..." or in Titus 1:1, "According to the faith of God's elect (eklektos)." We find this idea of election in Matthew 22:14, "Many are called, but few are chosen (eklektos);" and in I Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen (eklektos) generation..."

And again, we read in Ephesians 1:4, "According as He has chosen (eklego) us in Him..." He has elected, He has chosen those whom He planned to save.

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION

A corollary doctrine of the Bible describing God's elective program is predestination. Predestination, like the word election, is a very uncomfortable word for many. Many are hoping that the word predestinate is not in the Bible, that it is some kind of theological word rather than a Biblical word. They want nothing to do with it.

But the fact is that the Greek word *proorizo*, from which predestination comes, is found six times in the New Testament. We find it in Romans 8:29, where God declares that "those whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." We read it in Romans 8:30, where He says, "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and those whom He called, He justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

Further, we read of this predestination in Ephesians 1:5. There God declares, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus

Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Again, in Ephesians 1:11, "In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."

This word predestinate is found in two other places in the New Testament. In one, Acts 4:28, it is actually translated in our English language as "determined before." There God is speaking about the will of God that Christ would suffer for our sins, and so He is indicating that as part of His divine plan Herod and Pontius Pilate and others were gathered together against Him. In that context He declares in verse 28, "For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel (God's counsel) determined before (predestinated) to be done." So we see, God's counsel had predestinated beforehand what was to be done.

The last place we find this word proorizo (predestinate) is in I Corinthians 2:7, where it is translated "ordained:" "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained (predestinated) before the world unto our glory." Here He is speaking of the whole Gospel plan that was predestinated by God.

You see, in these verses we find that God has predetermined from before the foundations of the world, not only every aspect of the salvation program, but also who were to be saved. He did not predestinate those whom He saw would of themselves come to Him. That's an impossibility because all mankind are dead in their sins. There is none that seeketh after God. But as He looked down the corridors of time and saw the miserable human race as it would become after the fall of Adam, He chose some of these miserable, rebellious sinners and elected them to salvation. He predestinated them to be saved. This is what the Bible teaches concerning salvation.

We must realize, if God had simply looked for those who would come to Him of their own free will and saved them, then He could never speak of them as being chosen. This would be incorrect language for it would not have been God's choosing but man's choosing. It would have been man who had elected to come to God and God would simply be recognizing those who would be saved. He could only speak of them as being the recipients of the grace of God and could not speak of electing those who were being saved.

But no, God uses the word elect because He chose out of the rebellious human race those who were to be saved. We read in John 15:16, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." This, you see, is what the Bible teaches concerning our salvation. We are the elect of God if we have begun to believe in Christ as our Savior and Lord.

OUR ELECTION IS UNCONDITIONAL

We must remember, even as the acronym TULIP suggests, that the principle that is laid down in the Bible is unconditional election. That is, God elects us regardless of how terrible our sin really is. He does not elect us because we were good. He does not elect us because we were beautiful people. He elects us in spite of our sins. Remember, in Romans 3:10-18 we saw that God speaks about the whole human race, without any exception, in the most ugly language, to indicate the natural wickedness, the murderous, viperous nature of man. It is these kinds of people whom He elected to be saved.

The Bible does not teach that Christ came to save those who were good but that Christ came to save sinners. The Bible declares in James 2:5, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" We are rich in faith, of course, because that faith is given to us as a gift. We read in Ephesians 2:8, "By grace ye have been saved through faith, but that not of yourselves. It is a gift..." In I Corinthians 1:27 God declares, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

In these verses God is very clearly indicating that in His choice of those whom He would save He is speaking of that which is despised, that which is of no value in itself, that which is foolish. That is our state when God saves us. Our election is absolutely and altogether unconditional. We did not deserve to be elected of God in any way.

Remember that we looked several times at Lazarus as he was in the tomb. There were many people in cemeteries in that day, as there are at any time in history. Christ could have gone to any one of those tombs and called to the dead person within the tomb to come forth, and that person would have come forth.

But Christ in His sovereign will decided to raise up Lazarus. He came to the tomb of Lazarus, and He said, "Lazarus, come forth." Lazarus did not meet any conditions at all in order to respond to this command, or to be the one who was elected to be raised from the dead. He was simply one of the dead. His body was corrupting. There was nothing that qualified him to come forth, nothing whatsoever; yet he did come forth when Christ elected to raise him and then commanded him to come forth.

Thus in the raising of Lazarus God gives us a dramatic picture of unconditional election. We are elected of God to be saved by Him. We come as we are, in our rebellion, in our perverseness, in our spiritual rottenness and spiritual bankruptcy. God declares, "A broken and a contrite heart I will not despise." That's the doctrine of unconditional election.

BUT DOESN'T THE IDEA OF ELECTION FOSTER FATALISM?

Of course the question might be raised, "If God has elected from before the foundations of the earth those whom He would save, and if there is nothing that I can do about my election, then what is the use of trying to bow to command of the Bible to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? If I am elect, I will believe. If I am not elect, I won't believe. There is nothing I can do to make myself elect because this is altogether God's sovereign plan."

The fact is that when God commands us to believe, we are to obey that command. Occasionally, there is someone who does obey that command. Whether he is elect or not is none of his business at that point in time. When we hear the Gospel, we are to be faithful in obeying the Gospel by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will afterwards begin to wonder, "Why did I believe? Why did I turn to the Lord Jesus Christ when many others around me did not?" Then, when they examine the scriptures to find out why, they will discover it is because God had elected them. It is

because God had drawn the sinner to Himself so that he became a believer. God had opened the spiritual ears and heart of this individual. God had qualified this person so that he would respond to the Gospel, even as He qualified the dead Lazarus in the tomb so that he would be obedient to the call of Jesus, "Lazarus, come forth." This is the doctrine of election.

Moreover, as we send forth the Gospel, it's not our business to know who are God's elect. We know only that there are those amongst the unsaved who are God's elect. These are the lost sheep that the Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and to save. Christ knows who they are; and as we witness to the Gospel and send forth the Gospel, there will be those whom God will bring to Himself as they hear the Gospel presented by us. God will draw them through this Gospel. God will draw them as we pray for them. We don't know whether they are elect or not, but God knows. We will only discover the elect as we see those who indeed do become born again.

This is a wonderful doctrine, a marvelous promise. This insures success as we bring the Gospel. The success of our Gospel presentation does not depend upon our winning ways; it does not depend upon the splendid rhetoric that we can offer; it does not depend upon our salesmanship. Rather it depends upon God's faithfulness to His own Gospel. Through the Gospel He will seek and save those whom He has predestinated to be saved. He will call them, He will justify them, and He will glorify them (Romans 8:30). This is the absolute promise of God. This is the teaching of unconditional election. What a wonderful doctrine this is! A pity it is that there are those who are afraid of this teaching.

If the doctrine of election and predestination is so beautiful, why then are so many afraid of it? I believe many do not like this doctrine because they would like to believe that God does not predestinate against the will of man. That is to say, man would like to believe that God predestinates those persons whom He knows will turn to Him. Man wants at least a bit of the credit for his salvation.

Moreover, man desperately wants to be sovereign in his own right. This was the nature of Lucifer when he fell into sin. He wanted to be a king. He wanted to be like God, as we read in Isaiah 14. So man, too, wants to be king on the throne of his life. It is reprehensible to him by nature to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. However, the doctrine of unconditional election, which the Bible very clearly teaches, underscores that God is sovereign. He saves those whom He will save! Under no circumstances is it man who does the choosing. It is God who is doing the choosing.

GOD'S WILL CONCERNING SALVATION IS COMPLETELY SOVEREIGN

God insists in Romans 9, for example, as He uses Esau and Jacob as a figure of His doctrine of predestinating election:

For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand; not of works, but of Him that called us; it was said unto her: the elder shall serve the younger; as it is written: Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

Now there it is, you see; God is indicating that He was completely sovereign in this. Again in verse 15 of Romans 9 He declares, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

We have here emphasized all these “I wills” because this is what God is emphasizing. He is the One that Makes the decision, and He adds in verse 16 of Romans 9, “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” This verse pointedly and plainly excludes man’s will.

Further reinforcement for this marvelous doctrine is seen in verse 18: “Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.” There is the doctrine of sovereign grace as it works out in God’s elective program.

In Romans we were reminded of the hymn, “Thou art the potter; I am the clay; Mold me and make me, after THY will.” This plea is based on the teaching of Romans 9:20-23:

Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.

Here, you see, God emphasizes the fact that He is supreme; He has the power, the right to save those whom He wished to save. God is under no obligation to save a single person in the whole human race. We deserve to go to Hell. We deserve to spend eternity under His damnation. The fact that He has saved some according to His divine choosing, His elective program, is God’s business altogether.

Futhermore, in John 1:13 God insists that we are born, not of the will of man. John 1:12 introduces this truth: “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” If we stop right there, it would appear as if the choice is altogether man’s, those who received Him. But notice the qualifying statement in the next verse, “which were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” God is insisting that He does the electing. It is His will that decides who is to be saved. It is not our will that we would want to be saved because our will is altogether sold under sin.

The doctrine that salvation comes only to those who are elect of God is further taught in Acts 13:48. As the Gospel is going out producing converts in the early church, we read, “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” That says it all over again, does it not? Not everybody was believing, but only those who were ordained by God to believe.

GOD GIVES US REPENTANCE

It is true that God commands men everywhere to repent of their sins (Acts 17:30). It is easy to assume, therefore, that even though our salvation is all of grace, at least it is a product of my independent will that I have repented. I am the one who turned away from my sins. Logically I might conclude that because I have turned away from my sins, God will save me. Somehow I want to believe that repentance has to do with my will altogether, apart from any action on God’s part.

But even this thought of independence apart from God’s action will not be tolerated by the Bible. In Acts 5:31 we read:

Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

How plainly God declares that even our repentance is given to us of God. God requires that no conditions be met before we can be saved. God takes the most unworthy, rebellious, wicked sinner and gives him repentance so that God's salvation program can proceed in his life. Small wonder then that Ephesians 2:8-10 declares:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk them.

Can we see now that even the good work of repenting of our sins is also a gift of God?

GOD GIVES US FAITH

Amazingly the Bible further strengthens the total role of God in our salvation as it discusses our faith. When we read Romans 4:3, which declares, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," we might conclude that even though our works are not at all meritorious toward our salvation, in some way at least our faith must be counted toward our salvation. However, when we look at the Bible more carefully, we will discover that it was not Abraham's faith that was counted for righteousness, but it was God Himself who was counted for righteousness.

Let us develop this thought a bit. In Galatians 2:16 we read:

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.

Reading this verse very carefully, we see that God declares that it is by (Greek dia - through) the faith of Jesus Christ," and "we might be justified by (Greek ek - out of) the faith of Christ." In other words, the basis of our salvation is not our faith but Christ's faith. Because He was perfectly faithful in carrying out God's salvation plan, we are saved. No wonder Christ is called "Faithful and True" in Revelation 19:11.

Moreover we see that in Galatians 2:16 God is declaring that we are not justified by (Greek ek - out of) the works of the law. In John 6:28 the Jews asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered them in the next verse as He declared, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." In this declaration the Lord Jesus is very definitely teaching that our faith whereby we believe on Christ as our Savior is a work. Therefore we know that we can be justified only by Christ's faith and not ours. For, as Galatians 2:16 has indicated, we cannot be justified by works of the law.

The grand truth of Galatians 2:16 is further strengthened by the language of Galatians 2:20, where we read, "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by (Greek en - in) the faith of the Son of God." See also Romans 3:22 and Philippians 3:9.

Returning to Romans 4:3 and Abraham's salvation, we should now read

Romans 4:5, where God declares:

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for (Greek eis - into) righteousness.

The phrase "his faith" can only refer to God's faith, that is, God's faithfulness which brings the believer into righteousness.

This then explains to us the meaning of the phrase we find in Romans 1:17, where we read:

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from (Greek ek - out of) faith to (Greek eis - into) faith.

God is teaching us here that the salvation of Jews and Greeks is out of faith (Christ's faith) into faith (our faith), which is a reflection or result of Christ's faith.

Thus we can understand the language of Ephesians 2:8, where God declares:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

In every aspect of our salvation we merit nothing at all. To God must go all the honor and glory. It is by virtue of Christ's faithfulness that we are counted righteous. His faith is given to us as a gift, so that we have begun to trust in Christ as our Savior.

One last verse, and then we'll be through with this principle of unconditional election, and that is John 6:37. Jesus declared there: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and Him that cometh to Me I shall in no wise cast out." Christ is here insisting that it is those whom the Father has given Him that will come to Him. There is no implication here that the whole human race would come to Him, but God has chosen out of the human race those whom He would save.

Therefore, the logical question follows, "If God has decided by His sovereign will to save some, leaving the others to face the Judgment Throne on their own account and be sentenced to eternal damnation in Hell because of their sins, then did Christ go to the cross on behalf of every last human being? Or did He pay only for the sins of those who actually would believe on Him-those whom He had chosen to be His own-a limited number?"

Historically, the church has spoken of this third principle as limited atonement or particular atonement. That is, Christ's payment at the cross was effective for only those who were elect of God. There was no provision made for those who would not believe on Him.

You see, there are those who teach that Christ actually paid for the sins of each and every person in the whole world, and it is only our rejection of Christ that sends us into Hell. It follows along with the idea that it is by our own free choice that we turn to Christ. This supports the erroneous idea that God has done all that He could, and now it's up to us. These are some of the ideas we shall explore in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

A. **L** = LIMITED ATONEMENT

In this chapter we shall examine the question of limited or particular atonement very carefully to see if it is a valid principle set forth in the Bible. First, let's look at Matthew 1:21. There God in very beautiful language is declaring particular atonement. He declared to Joseph through the angel, "And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save HIS people from their sins." Notice the phrase, "HIS people." Now who are His people? We saw earlier in John 6:37 that HIS people are the ones who were given to Christ by the Father. Thus we know that Christ is the Savior only of those who were given to Him by the Father. And, of course, to save them it was necessary that He pay for their sins, even as He did by going to the cross. There is no suggestion here that He laid down His life for every last individual in the whole world.

In John 10 Christ speaks about the sheep that He came to seek and to save. In verse 15 He declares, "I lay down My life for the sheep." Who are these sheep? In verse 14 He had declared, "I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep and am known of Mine." Now you see, these sheep are the ones that belong to Him. They are His. These are the ones for whom He lays down His life. He doesn't lay down His life for all people according to this passage, but He lays down His life for His sheep, and they will know Him..."I am known of Mine." They will come to Him. Paralleling again what we read in John 6:37.

CHRIST PRAYS ONLY FOR THOSE WHO ARE TO BELIEVE ON HIM

Secondly, we read in John 17, as Christ is praying to His Father in verses 9 and 10, "I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given Me, for they are Thine, and all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them." While in verse 9 Christ is speaking particularly of the disciples whom He chose, in verses 20 and 21 of John 17 Christ has ultimately in view far more than His disciples. In these verses Christ adds, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

That's a significant prayer, isn't it? If Christ had laid down His life for every last individual in the whole world, we would certainly expect that He would be praying for them. You would think, if their sins had been paid for, Christ would also make arrangements with the Father that they would come to Him. But here God opens the veil concerning the relationship within the Godhead, and Christ very clearly indicates He does not pray for the world. He prays for those who belong to Him and those "which shall believe on Me through their word." These would be His sheep. He is interceding only for those who had been given to Him by the Father. We read in Hebrews 7:25-26, where Christ is presented to us as our eternal High Priest:

Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

Here the Bible specifically declares that Christ makes intercession for those that come to God by Christ; that is, Christ makes intercession for those whom He is saving. This is precisely what Christ is doing in His prayer recorded in

John 17.

Furthermore, in John 17:2 Christ prays, "Father...as Thou hast given Him (Jesus is referring to Himself here) power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." Again in this immediate context He is speaking of the disciples. But He is enunciating a fundamental principle of God's salvation program. In this statement our Lord Jesus is singling out those who were given to Him by the Father (John 6:37). As Jesus discusses these who were given to Him, He emphasizes that He has provided eternal life for them. Eternal life is a gift to the believer provided by the atonement. (Must we believe there are some who have experienced the atonement without receiving eternal life? This would be the unbiblical conclusion we must come to if we believe that Christ paid for the sins of every human.)

ONLY THOSE WHO ARE TO BE SAVED ARE JUSTIFIED

Further still, when we look at the nature of salvation under the Biblical word justification, we find also that the idea of particular or limited atonement must be held as a Biblical principle. In Romans 5:18 we read, "By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." In Romans 5:25 we read, "who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification."

Notice in these passages God is very clearly teaching that those whom He saved, He justified. We read, for example, in Romans 5:9, "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Thus God has established the principle that those for whom He died are justified by His blood, as the foregoing verses clearly teach. Thus if Christ had paid for the sins of every single human, we must conclude that all mankind stands justified before God. This is the inescapable conclusion we must come to if Christ had gone to the cross on behalf of every single human.

Continuing this line of argument we must recognize that to be justified means that one has been made just. His sins have been paid for, and therefore there can be no condemnation. Thus, to believe that Christ paid for the sins of every human being brings us to the conclusion that every human being has been made just by Christ's shed blood.

But this conclusion runs counter to the plain teaching of the Bible. In Acts 24:15 we read, "That there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." Also in II Peter 2:9 we read, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

These passages very clearly indicate that not only those who are justified will be resurrected, but there are also the unjust who will remain so right up until Judgment Day. According to Romans 5:18 and Romans 4:25 we discovered that when we are saved, we are justified by Christ's blood. His blood was shed so that we might become righteous before God. Therefore, if Christ shed His blood (which brings justification) for every human, how can there still be those who are unjust insofar as God's holiness is concerned? This problem disappears when we recognize that Christ paid only for the sins of those who become saved.

MANKIND WHOSE SINS HAVE NOT BEEN PAID FOR MUST BE JUDGED FOR THOSE SINS

If Christ has paid for the sins of every last individual in the world (or as some would say, "Yes, for all their sins except the sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ"), then we have to ask the fair question, "How can people be judged whose sins have been paid for?" Now we read very specifically in Revelation 20:13 that those who stand before the Judgment throne will be judged according to their works, every man according to his works. Man's works are to be judged to discover if they were done sinlessly; that is, perfectly in obedience to God's Word. And of course, since every work of man is at best tainted by sin, those who stand for judgment will be found guilty of multitudes of sins.

We read in Matthew 12:36, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment, for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Of course unsaved men have no good thing within them. There is none righteous, and therefore everything they will give an account of will bring condemnation upon them.

In Romans 2 we read, beginning in verse 5, "After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds."

There it is, you see. God is insisting that mankind at the Judgment Throne has to answer for every sin, and every sin will be dealt with by banishment into Hell. There is no implication in the Bible that the only sin they will answer for at Judgment Day is the sin of rejecting Christ. They have to answer for every sin. Now if Christ has already paid for those sins by going to the cross (if we hold the view that He paid for the sins of every last individual in the whole human race), then it would be double jeopardy if these same individuals whose sins had been paid for now have to go into Hell to pay for these same sins. That just does not follow at all, does it?

In Colossians 3:25 God lays this principle down, "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong that he hath done, and there is no respect of persons." Only because Christ has become the substitute for those who are to be saved is this requirement of God met. The Bible says very clearly in John 5:24 of the believers that we do not come into judgment.

In Ephesians 5:25 we read, "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." He gave Himself for the church, not for the whole world, not for every last individual. He gave himself for the church. Later in this study we will see that only the true believers in the church have had their sins covered by Christ's blood, even though the cross bears some relationship to the church as a corporate body.

We see, therefore, that the Bible does not endorse the doctrine that Christ went to the cross to pay for every sin of the whole human race, with the only sin that sends us to Hell being the sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. The sin of not believing in Jesus as Savior is included amongst all the other sins and simply adds to our punishment. Our every action is sinful, and any one of these sins is going to send us into Hell. And of course it is all these sins that will really bring God's wrath upon us. How important it thus is that we trust in Christ as our sin-bearer. Only through Him can we escape Hell.

BUT DOESN'T THE BIBLE TEACH THAT GOD WOULD HAVE ALL MEN SAVED?

But aren't there verses in the Bible that say something different? Don't we read in II Peter 3:9 that God declares, "I would not wish that any should perish, but that all should come to Christ"? Doesn't that imply that Christ has paid for everybody's sins? And what about I Timothy 2:4, where we read that Christ would have all men be saved? How can He desire this if He has not already paid for their sins? Again in I Timothy 2:6, doesn't the Lord declare that He gave His life a ransom for all? Or in I Timothy 4:10 doesn't God declare He is the Savior of all?

These verses certainly seem to indicate that indeed Christ paid for the sins of every last individual. But if that is so, then we are in trouble with the verses that we have already covered, which very clearly teach particular atonement. How can we reconcile these passages?

As we look at these verses we see a consistent use of the word "all"; "...all should come to Christ..." "...a ransom for all..." "...the Savior of all..." We must understand the Biblical use of this word, letting the Bible be its own dictionary. He wished that all should be saved. He gave His life a ransom for all. He is the Savior of all. Normally when we use that word all, we think of it as an all-inclusive kind of word. If there were ten people in the room, and we said, "they all have hats on," then we immediately get the picture that these ten people without exception had hats on. But in the Bible, when God uses the word all it is conditioned by the context.

For example, in Luke 2 God declares, "A decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. We could conclude that "all the world" would include the North American Indians and Africa, etc. But the context shows us that the "all the world" to be taxed was that part of the world that was subject to taxation, namely, the Roman Empire. In other words, the word all was conditioned by the context in which it was found.

Likewise we read in Acts 2, as the Holy Spirit is being poured out, "In the last days I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh." We know from the Bible itself that God did not pour out the Holy Spirit on every last individual in the whole world that they would become prophets, or that they would prophesy; but He poured out His own Spirit on those who would believe. The "all" there is conditioned by the rest of the Bible, which declares that only those who are elect will believe. So the word "all" is much less than all-inclusive.

We read, for example, in I Corinthians 15:22, "As in Adam all die..." From the rest of the Bible we know that "all" is an all inclusive all. It includes every last individual in the whole human race. "There is none righteous, no, not one."

But then the next phrase says, "...so in Christ shall all be made alive." If that "all" included every last individual, then that verse would be teaching universal atonement, and we know that is not so. Hell is going to be heavily populated by people who have not been made alive. They are spiritually dead. Therefore we must read that second phrase, "...so in Christ shall all (who are to be made alive) be made alive." That is, God is teaching that all the individuals He plans to save are saved by Christ's work. Other passages of the Bible show us that the ones He plans

Likewise, when God uses the language, "He gave His life a ransom for all," or "He is the Savior of all," or that "He wishes that all should come to a knowledge of the truth," we know that the "all" in these verses is conditioned

by God's elective program. Only those whom He has predestinated, those whom He has elected, are the ones whom He has ransomed, of whom He has become the Savior. These are the ones that God has in view when He uses this word "all." He gave His life a ransom for all His elect. He wishes that all His elect will come to Him.

BUT DOESN'T THE BIBLE TEACH THAT CHRIST PAID FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD?

But then there is a second kind of passage in the Bible that is frequently offered as proof that Christ indeed paid for the sins of every last individual in the whole world. We read in I John 4:14 that Christ is the Savior of the world. Likewise in John 4:42 we see the same phrase, that He is the Savior of the whole world.

In I John 2:2 the statement even appears stronger as we read, "And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." My, doesn't that really underscore the fact that He has paid for the sins of the whole world, every last individual in the whole world? In John 3:16 and 17 we apparently see the same kind of an idea, where we read, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." This too seems to indicate that He paid for the sins of every last individual.

In that regard, we must also consider the dramatic words of John the Baptist, as he greeted Jesus, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." By isolating these verses from the rest of the Bible, we could conclude that Christ did come and pay for the sins of the whole world. These verses, as they stand, certainly give that impression.

However, when we read these verses in the light of everything else in the Bible, we know that conclusion is not possible. If Christ had paid for the sins of the whole world, that is, of every last individual in the whole world, then as we have already seen, there could not be Judgment Day and Hell. Everyone's sins would have been paid for, and therefore there could be no such thing as an unjust person who must be sent to Hell. Since Christ would have died for every person, He therefore would have justified them by His blood.

Therefore we must look at these verses more carefully. Let us look at I John 2:2 more closely. As we do, we must remember that there is only one sin-bearer in this world, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is only one way that forgiveness of sins can be obtained, and that is through the shed blood of Christ. In I John 2:2 God declares, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

If we assume that He had indeed paid for the sins of the whole world, we run afoul of passages like Revelation 20:13, Matthew 12:36, Romans 2:5-6 and Colossians 3:25, which clearly indicate the unsaved must give an account of and pay for all their sins. None of these passages would make sense anymore if Christ had indeed paid for every single sin of the whole world; so we know that this cannot be the kind of payment God has in view in this passage?

IN ALL THE WORLD CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY TO SALVATION

Then how are we to understand this passage? We can understand these phrases if we note that in the first part of verse two God is simply declaring

that Christ is the one who has provided for the salvation of those who believe. He is the propitiation for our sins. There is no one else who could provide the way back to the Father, who has provided Himself as a substitute. Only Christ is the WAY.

In the second phrase, “and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world,” we see that God is simply expanding that fact by declaring that in the whole world there is no other method of salvation except through Christ. In the whole world there is no Savior except the Lord Jesus Christ. All the sins in the whole world which are to be forgiven are forgiven by the blood of Christ. This passage is not detailing the extent of God’s salvation program in the world. It is simply indicating that for those who are to be saved Christ is the only propitiation.

Other passages declare to us who will be saved out of the whole world. They will be the elect. But in I John 2:2 God is simply declaring how they would be saved, and that is through Christ as the propitiation for their sins. Because we know that the unsaved of the world who remain unjust must stand for judgment and answer for every one of their sins and pay for their sins, we know that this verse cannot be teaching that their sins have already been paid for. God is simply declaring that those who will be saved out of the world, wherever they are found, can be saved only through Christ as the propitiation for their sins.

When John the Baptist declared, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world,” he was simply declaring, this is the Lamb whereby salvation is possible. John the Baptist isn’t going into the whole detail of that salvation. He is not indicating that there are God’s elect, that there has to be belief on Him, and so on. He is simply making the declaration that Christ is the Savior who has come into the world. He is the only means whereby the sins of the world which are to be covered will be covered.

We see this truth very beautifully in John 3:16, where we read, “For God so loved the world...” He loved the world, His creation, and therefore He gave His only begotten Son, that out of this world whosoever believeth on Him should not perish. The declaration “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish” automatically excludes the rest, does it not? That is the condition that God lays down. There must be belief on Him! And unless there is belief on Him they still will perish.

Why do they perish? They perish because of their sins. God had declared, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). And so when God speaks of Christ as the Savior of the world, if we conclude that every last person’s sins have been paid for, that will not be in agreement with all the other doctrines that point to the fact that there will be a vast company of people in Hell, paying for their sins.

DID CHRIST PAY FOR ALL OUR SINS EXCEPT THAT OF REJECTING CHRIST?

Earlier in this study I indicated that there are those who believe that Christ paid for all our sins except the sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. This doctrine is suggested by John 3:18, which declares, “He that believeth on Him is not condemned, But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” This verse seems to indicate that the reason people are condemned is that

they don't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But even this passage will not withstand that kind of conclusion, because verse 19, which immediately follows, declares, "and this is the condemnation...the light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Their sin, you see, is the love of darkness; and the love of darkness involves them in every kind of sin that is involved in the kingdom of darkness.

Verse 19 agrees altogether with those other statements of the Bible that indicate that men go to Hell not because they are sinners. Because they stand guilty before God, their failure to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ simply indicates that they have no covering for their sins. In Psalm 85:2 the Bible declares that "thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people, Thou hast covered all their sin." Christ's blood provides the covering whereby our guilt has been removed.

Moreover, when we conclude that Christ paid for the sins of the whole world, with the exception of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, then we have developed a gospel of grace that is again bordering on grace plus works. We're really saying that when Christ went to the cross, there by His grace He covered all our sins except one...the sin of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ.

That implies, then, that if the sin of rejecting Christ has not been covered by the blood of Christ, then the fact that I do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a good work of mine that is meritorious in saving me. We thus are declaring that God's grace covered all the rest of my sins. But because I have done the good work of believing on Christ, therefore I merit this salvation and all the grace that God applies to my life. We thus have placed ourselves in that terrible condition of developing a gospel of grace plus works, and that will send us to Hell for sure!

We must keep in mind, whenever we study any verses in the Bible that relate to salvation, that it is all of grace! Even the faith with which we believe is a gift of God. Actually it is not our faith that saved us, but the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only because He was faithful in going to the cross for our sins can we be saved. And the faith that we experience in our lives is really a reflection of the faith that Christ first demonstrated in paying for our sins. Both the faith which we see in our lives when we are saved, as well as the works that we do in our lives, are gifts of God. They are not meritorious in any way whatsoever!

BUT DOESN'T THE BIBLE SPEAK OF THOSE WHO ARE SANCTIFIED AND YET REMAIN IN UNBELIEF?

But there is one last group of verses that we ought to look at. They appear to indicate or at least can be misconstrued to teach that someone who is definitely unsaved still appears to be in a condition in which his sins have been paid for. The first of these is found in I Corinthians 7:15, where God declares, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband." Similarly, in Hebrews 10:29 God is discussing a man who knew the way of salvation and never did become a child of God. Then he deliberately turned away from the Gospel. And yet, in speaking of him God says, "Of how much more punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy

thing.”

These two passages are speaking definitely of unsaved people who are sanctified. It is this word “sanctified” which suggests that somehow a work of grace has been done on behalf of the unsaved who remain unsaved.

Let us examine this question more closely. The word sanctification means to be set apart for the service of God. Certainly born again believers are set apart for the service of God. But what about those who are in the congregation, and thus are corporately of the Body of Christ, yet who are not true children of God? What about those unsaved members of a family in which there are saved individuals, which would identify that family corporately with the Kingdom of God? Did Christ pay for their sins?

A third verse that is similar to this is II Peter 2:1. There God is talking about false prophets who are among the people. That is, they are members of the congregation. And they are bringing in damnable heresies, “even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” The phrase “that bought them ” certainly would seem to indicate that Christ had gone to the cross to pay for their sins.

We must look at these verses in the light of the discussion that we had earlier in this study, in which we saw that those who face Judgment Day must give an account of every sin. Because they must give an account of every sin, we know that they are not eternally Christ’s people. They are not His sheep.

Certainly if we isolate these verses from the rest of the Bible, we might conclude that Christ had paid for their sins, as He did for the believers. Thus they would not go to Hell. And yet the very context of Hebrews 10:29 indicates that Hell and damnation must still be endured by this person...in spite of the fact that these verses speak of him as having been sanctified. Likewise, the language of II Peter 2 is very clear that the false prophets mentioned in this context are subject to eternal damnation.

Thus we see that while God speaks of certain individuals as being sanctified or having been “bought” of the Lord, they are still subject to eternal damnation. How can this be? How does the Bible reconcile these apparent contradictions? Let us continue to investigate this problem.

We must remember, as we look at these verses, that God is concerned about the church, in its corporate sense, as in its eternal sense. Those who have become born again believers are eternally members of the body of Christ. They belong to Him, and their sins have been paid for by Christ’s blood. They are eternal members of the church Christ came to build. The organization in which these born from above believers are found is the congregation which is part of one denomination or another. And these congregations are the corporate expression of the Kingdom of God. The congregation is an organized, visible body of those who profess Christ.

Even though all those within the congregation profess Christ, they are not all necessarily believers. This is shown to us by the very verses we are studying. The false prophets of II Peter 2 were members of a congregation of believers. But they themselves were not saved.

An outstanding example of a congregation that had many unbelievers within it is that of national Israel. While there was a remnant chosen by grace within that congregation, the major part remained in unbelief. Thus they were still under damnation, even though as a whole body they were the corporate

representation of the Kingdom of God here on this earth throughout the 2,000 years which preceded the coming of Christ.

Likewise in the New Testament God began to represent Himself organizationally or corporately in this world by the churches and the denominations that began to spring up after Pentecost. Each of these officially is identified with Christ, and yet each of these is composed of both believers and unbelievers.

We see this clearly as we read the first three chapters of Revelation, where God talks about the seven churches of Asia Minor. Each is represented in Heaven by a candlestick because they are Christ's church. Yet we see that God warns that in one church there is a Jezebel. And in another one they are following the Nicolaitans, who are heretics of some kind. This mixture of believers and unbelievers can be expected in every congregation even though, corporately speaking, those same congregations identify with Christ.

Since each congregation was established, was set apart to serve Christ, every member of that church is looked upon as sanctified; that is, he is set apart for the service of God. Even a false prophet who is a member of the church is spoken of as having been bought by Christ. By this language God is indicating He went to the cross not only to save and pay for the sins of the born again believers, those who are His elect, but also in order to establish His corporate body, His churches, His congregations. In that sense, those who are members of the congregation have been bought.

But individually their sins have been paid for only if they personally have become believers. We saw this very clearly when we examined the Bible's teaching concerning the nature of Judgment Day. But corporately they are part of that body which has been bought as an organization by God (using the language of II Peter 2:1). Therefore, God can say that He has bought these false prophets.

In the same manner, the unsaved husband who is married to the saved wife is spoken of as being sanctified (I Corinthians 7:14). Because of one parent having become an eternal member of the Kingdom of God, the whole family has become corporately a part of the Kingdom of God even though the other family members may still be unsaved.

Thus, these verses that speak of unsaved persons being sanctified or having been bought are not teaching in any way that Christ has paid for their sins by His shed blood. They have been bought or have been sanctified only in the sense that they are members of the corporate body (that is, the organized church). And that organized church was established and exists because Christ shed His blood for the believers within those congregations.

I am convinced that when we examine everything that the Bible offers, we must conclude that limited atonement or particular atonement is the only answer that will correspond with all of scripture. You see, God has a very well-detailed and defined plan of salvation. He named those who were to be saved before the foundation of the earth and put their names in the Book of Life. He came to seek and to save those who were His sheep. It is all one complete design. It is true that the Gospel goes out to the whole world; and as we saw in the early part of this study, if anyone at all responds to Gospel, he WILL be saved. But we saw very clearly that nobody will respond except the Father draw him. And God will draw those whom He has elected in order that God's

salvation program will maintain total integrity.

Having completed our consideration of the first three letters of our five letter acronym TULIP, let's go on to the fourth letter which is "I" and stands for "Irresistible Grace."

CHAPTER 5

I. I = IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

What does the Bible tell us about Irresistible Grace? Is it a fact that man can NOT resist the will of God; or on the other hand, is it a fact that man CAN resist the will of God? If God really wants somebody to be saved, is there anyone powerful enough to resist His will?

Now of course we know that we can never pit man against God, since God is infinite and omnipotent, all powerful; e.g., He speaks and the universe comes into existence...while man is a finite creature. There is no man who could frustrate the will of God. Everything that we know about God tells us that He is absolutely in control of every situation. BUT; Is it possible, as some would teach, that God is the type of "gentleman" that wouldn't force anyone to be saved against his will?

If we hold the position that we can resist the will of absolutely nobody would be saved. Why is this so? Remember, we learned earlier in our study that "there is none that seeketh after God." We have already looked at the principle of TOTAL DEPRAVITY and discovered that man is dead in his sins and would never come to God. Even if the Gospel were preached for a thousand years or longer, nobody would come to salvation by his own choice. And so the idea that God is a gentleman and would not impose His will upon man's will is contrary to the Bible.

It is a fact, however, that thousands, and even millions, of people throughout history ARE saved. God speaks of the saved as being as numerous as the stars in heaven, and as the sand on the seashore in number. This indicates that God has indeed imposed His will upon mankind in some way! And that is what we want to look at now, under the topic Irresistible Grace.

THOSE GOD PLANS TO SAVE MUST BE DRAWN TO HIM

In John 6:37-39 we read the significant truth that the Father has given to the Lord Jesus Christ certain ones who are to be saved. Verse 37 reads, "all that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." In this verse the Bible teaches us first that there are certain ones whom the Father has given to the Lord Jesus. The second truth is that they "shall come to Him." That is, it is God's plan that nothing can frustrate His will. Those whom God plans to save are given by the Father to Christ and they shall come to Him. There is no suggestion that these who were given to Christ can avoid being saved.

The fact is, John 6:39 states very implicitly, "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." In this verse Christ is declaring with absolute certainty that there will not be any defects in Christ's salvation program. Every individual God planned to save will be saved. God is giving us a solemn promise and declaration that His salvation program, in which He has decided whom He would in His sovereign will save from before the foundations of the world, would be accomplished. Nothing would or could frustrate the will of God! And so He irresistibly would have to draw us to

Himself.

Philippians 1:6 states, "Being confident....He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Again God promises, God commits Himself to complete what He has begun. Can you see that the work that Christ began to do started even before Christ became SIN for us! Our names were identified with Him at the cross. Therefore, even before we were born, He had already begun His work of grace! As we are presented with the Gospel, and as God opens our spiritual ears and hearts to respond to the Gospel, God is continuing His plan of salvation for us. Philippians 1:6 declares that which He has begun will be completed. He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. God's plan will not be frustrated. It is an irresistible plan that is under the irresistible will of God.

Remember, in Matthew 16:16 Christ declared, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." What is the condition of the unsaved person before he is saved? He is a slave of Satan. He is under the dominion of darkness. He is a bond slave of his own sin. But Christ said, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail..." `Hell cannot hold these that I plan to save. No one can stop Me from what I intend to do.' And that is the reason that men and women are being saved. God is irresistibly drawing them.

Remember that Jesus said in John 6:44, "No man can come to Me, except the Father draw him." Again, we see that it is required that God draw us to Himself. This is so because spiritually we are dead. As dead people we have nothing to offer for or against our salvation. Christ has set up His plan, and the Father draws us (yes, irresistibly) so that plan cannot be frustrated.

It is true that many, when they are first brought face to face with the Gospel, are offended by the Gospel. But every once in a while one of these will finally give in and admit he is a sinner: "Yes, I know that I am a sinner, and I know that I need salvation." — What has happened? Who can resist God's will? When God wants to save a person, God begins to do His work of salvation within that person so that his heart is inclined to be obedient to the Gospel command...to believe on Him.

You see, we have as much to say about our new birth in Christ as we did about our first birth from our mother's womb. (Think about that for a moment.) Remember when you were born the first time? What did you have to do with it? Could you select your parents? Could you decide when you were going to be born? Could you decide if you wanted to be born? The answers to these questions are obviously and absolutely NO! You had nothing at all to do with it! You simply came into this world completely apart from your will.

Now, do you recall what Jesus said in John 3:6, as He talked to Nicodemus? He said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." He is talking here about the NEW BIRTH and indicating that it is just as real a birth as the first birth. We had nothing to do with our first birth. God is the one who inclines our hearts. If left of ourselves we would never seek after Him, as we have so frequently seen in this study. We would go our own way, right up until the moment we die.

We don't want to turn to God. Our whole life is in rebellion against Him. But God decided to save us, in His own timetable. It may be when we are at middle-age, or it may be as an elderly person, close to our death bed. But if

it's God's plan to save us, you can rest assured, He will draw us at the appropriate time. He will give us a will to believe, and a desire to turn away from our sins. Nobody can frustrate the will of God. Christ declared, "I will build My church..."

Remember what we read in Romans 9, where God said in verse 16, "Then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that shall have mercy." Our will, ultimately, has nothing to do with it. What we think is an action of our will as we do respond to the Gospel is simply the fact that God has already imposed His will upon us and is irresistibly drawing us to Himself.

May I quote again from John 1:13, where God is speaking of those who have become sons of God? There He declares, "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Could God be any plainer? If God waited for us and for our will to respond to the Gospel, we would never be saved! We would try everything possible to frustrate the Gospel because we, of ourselves, don't want to be saved. But when God says He is going to save us, you can rest assured He will save us! He will draw us irresistibly to Himself.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS SHOWS HOW OUR WILL IS INVOLVED IN OUR SALVATION

Let's look again for just a moment at Lazarus in the tomb. He is dead. And Christ decides to resurrect him. And so Christ stands outside of that tomb and says, "Lazarus, come forth!" Now let's entertain an unreasonable notion for a moment. Picture Jesus hoping that Lazarus would really will to come forth, the idea being that if Lazarus didn't so will, he wouldn't come forth.

NO! That isn't what happened at all! Jesus stood outside of that tomb and said, "Lazarus, come forth!" And Lazarus did come forth! He came forth because Christ also gave him a will and inclined it with a desire to respond to that command. It was Christ's intention to raise Lazarus, and neither Lazarus nor anyone else was going to be able to frustrate Christ's plan to raise him.

And there we see dramatically a picture of our salvation. When Christ comes with the Gospel, as He comes to seek and to save that which was lost, you can depend upon it that everyone that He comes to save will be saved! There is no way that we can frustrate the will of God! Isn't that a marvelous doctrine?

Think about this...Suppose you had an unsaved loved one who was particularly rebellious against God, very wicked, and very hardened in sin...oh, so sinful! And you were hoping and hoping for this person's salvation, because you loved him dearly! You tried to witness to him, but he loved his sin so much that he didn't want to hear any of the Gospel.

And yet you know that God will not be frustrated by the wicked will of man. If God should decide to save this loved one, He would impose His will on the will of the loved one so that in due time this person would come to the Lord Jesus Christ. He would have a desire to come!

Isn't that a wonderful, wonderful blessing to know? Otherwise, you look at your friends and loved ones who are hardened in their sins, and you say, "Why pray for them? They'll never respond! They're far too wicked! Their consciences have been seared! How can it be that they would ever come to the Gospel?"

But praise God! God has given this avenue of prayer! And God has promised that the “effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

God expects us to pray for the unsaved. And we are to pray without ceasing. And God works through our prayers! We don’t know if this loved one is elect or not; that is God’s business. But we know that if he is God’s elect, God will work through our prayers and God will impose His will upon the wicked, hardened, rebellious will of our loved one, so that his spiritual eyes will be opened, and there will begin to be a response to the Gospel. Oh, it is so marvelous! It is so heartening to know that God is in complete charge of the salvation program, and ultimately there is nothing that man can do that might frustrate Him in any way whatsoever!

And so this beautiful, beautiful principle that is laid down in the fourth part of the acronym, TULIP, Irresistible Grace, is so comforting to us! It gives us such great assurance when we know that Satan can never, never hold anyone in such terrible bondage that he would never be able to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nobody can resist the will of God when He wants to save someone. God gives the faith, the repentance. Satan is absolutely helpless when he is up against the powerful intentions of a gracious Sovereign Almighty God! What blessed assurance we have! Praise God!

Once again a warning must be voiced. If we believe that man can resist God’s will to save those whom He plans to save, effectively we have arrived at a gospel of grace plus works. For we are declaring that God has done what He must do and now it is up to us to take action, to do a work, that will complete this salvation plan for us. That work is to believe or accept what God has offered to us. This is our work, for presumably God will not impose His will upon us. We can receive credit for this action of ours. Thus God has done His part and we have done ours. Together we have accomplished our salvation. Christ indeed has done the major work because He has paid for all our sins. But only because we of our own free will have accepted Christ does God’s salvation program become effective for us. The very fact that we can frustrate God’s plan to save us indicates the importance of the work we have done in accepting Christ.

But this whole line of reasoning will lead us to Hell. Our work has no bearing on our salvation. We are saved by grace alone. As we have seen repeatedly in this study, any salvation plan that includes even the smallest work on our part is not the salvation plan of the Bible. The only reason we turn to Christ is that the Father is drawing us. God is giving us the spiritual ears to hear and the regenerated heart to believe. It is of eternal importance that we understand that it is God who has irresistibly drawn us to Himself.

Well, this brings us to the last letter of the acronym TULIP, which is P and which stands for Perseverance of the Saints. Sometimes we refer to this concept as Once Saved; Always saved. Is this doctrine Biblical? In our next section we are going to focus our attention on this whole matter of what we could also call Eternal Security.

CHAPTER 6

A. P = PERSERVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

Can one lose his salvation? This is a nagging question in the lives of many. Let us see if we can discover the Biblical teaching concerning the subject of

eternal security, which is sometimes called the perseverance of the saints. In answering the question of the security of our salvation, we should begin by an understanding of the nature of the salvation God has provided for us. The Biblical picture of unsaved man is that he is a sinner. He is a slave of Satan both in body and soul. He is altogether rebellious against God. In his whole being he is perverted and spiritually destitute (Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:11-20, Ephesians 2:1-3). As a result of his sin, he is under sentence of death. The Bible declares "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). The nature of that death is not only physical death, but also being eternally under God's wrath. There is no way to come into God's holy Heaven unless the penalty of sin, eternal damnation, first has been paid.

FROM WHAT HAS GOD SAVED US?

This brings us to the nature of the salvation God has provided for those who are saved. Christ has come as the Mediator, as the Redeemer, as our substitute to pay for our sins. In order for Him to do this it was necessary that He be a man like we are because it was man who sinned, and therefore it is man whom must pay the penalty for his sins. It was necessary for Him to be God because the wrath of God is so overwhelming and so terrible that, had He been any less than God, He would have been utterly consumed as He sought to pay for our sins.

As our Mediator, He became sin for us (II Corinthians 5:19). That is, He took upon Himself all the sins, the whole sinful nature, of those who have placed their trust in Him. As our substitute, burdened with our sins, He stood before the judgment throne of God and was found guilty.

Because He had become guilty for our sins, God poured out upon Him the wrath that we should have suffered by spending an eternity in Hell. Only because He was the God-man could He suffer so intensely that in the three days and three nights of the atonement He was able to completely pay for all our sins. What a wonderful Savior He is!

We, therefore, who have experienced this salvation, now stand before God as if we had just spent an eternity in Hell paying for all the sins we had ever committed.

The criminal who has just come out of jail after paying in full the sentence demanded by the law for his crime now stands without any further guilt before the law for his crime.

Likewise the law never again can make any demands upon us for our sins. Never again is there any way that we could stand guilty before God, for every sin that we had ever committed or would ever commit has been atoned for by our Savior. He ransomed us from Hell by paying the price of Hell in our place. Therefore the Bible declares that there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). We are in Him because He was our substitute. When our Lord Jesus went to the cross it was as if we were hanging there experiencing the wrath of God for our sins.

Since Christ has paid for all our sins, there is no way that we could commit a sin that would cause us to lose our salvation. Any sin we would do was already anticipated by Christ when He paid for our sins. As John 5:24 teaches, we do not come into judgment. Therefore we are eternally secure in Christ. Once we are truly saved, we can never lose that salvation because each and every sin we would ever commit has been covered by Christ's blood.

WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

Moreover, the Bible teaches that as a result of our salvation some changes have occurred in us that have everlasting consequences and which further emphasize that we could never lose this salvation. John 5:24 teaches that we "have eternal life." If Christ had gone to the cross just to give us life, conceivably we could commit a sin and lose that life; but because He has given us eternal life, by the very nature of something that is eternal, it must be forever and ever. Thus there can be no sin that we could commit that could cause us to lose eternal life. This very statement, eternal life, implies that we can never lose this life that God has given us. We can never lose our salvation.

The phrase eternal life is not a philosophical term of some kind, thus having no real substance. Rather it is speaking of something that has become very substantive and real in our lives. It is related to the fact that in a very important part of our personalities we who are saved have become new creatures. We have been resurrected from being spiritually dead into eternal life. Let us see how this is.

The Bible teaches that in our essential beings we are body and soul. The Bible sometimes uses the word "spirit" in speaking of the soul or spirit essence of man. When man has conscious existence, as we all do on this side of the grave, we cannot see the soul of man. We are a completely integrated personality.

However, it is upon the death of an individual that a separation of soul and body does occur. At one moment there is a whole personality consisting of both body and soul. At the next moment there is only the body, which has no life in it whatsoever. Something has left that body. It is the soul, as real a part of that individual as his body, that has separated from the body and has left the body.

An example of the separation of soul and body is seen in the death of the thief on the cross. Jesus told the thief next to Him, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." A bit later Jesus declared, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." Shortly thereafter the body of Jesus was placed in a tomb. The body of the thief was also buried. But both Jesus and the thief were present with the Father in Heaven. They went there in their soul existence.

The apostle Paul speaks of this separation as he, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, emphasizes "willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:8). Again, in Philippians 1:23,24 he confidently asserts "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." Furthermore we read in Revelation 20:4 of the "souls of them that were beheaded...; they lived and reigned with Christ..."

The reason the believer can and does go immediately into Heaven upon death is that at the moment of salvation he receives the resurrection of his soul. Before salvation both in body and soul he is spiritually dead. We saw this so clearly in the chapter on Total Depravity. This is why I Peter 4:6 declares, "for this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead." Obviously the Gospel is not preached in a cemetery where bodies lie. Rather it is preached throughout the world to those who are spiritually dead. But when he becomes saved, he experiences a resurrection. This glorious fact is taught

so incisively in the Bible. In Colossians 3:1 God declares, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." Our Savior experienced the resurrection when He arose from the grave. Since we are risen with Christ, we too must have experienced the resurrection.

In Ephesians 2:4-6 God insists, "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace are ye saved; and hath raised us up together..." How beautifully God is teaching that we have been raised with Christ. Since He arose, that is, He experienced the resurrection, and since we arose with Him, therefore we too have experienced the resurrection.

But in which part of our persons have we experienced the resurrection? It was not in our bodies. That can be seen so readily. Our bodies go into the tomb at death to await the resurrection of the last day. The whole Chapter 15 of I Corinthians discusses the wonderful event of the resurrection of our bodies.

Rather, it was in our soul or spirit essence that we experienced the resurrection. This is why at death the believer can go immediately into God's presence. While he cannot go into Heaven or be with God in his body until his body is resurrected a perfect spiritual body (cf. I Corinthians 15:42-44), in his soul or spirit he can go immediately into Heaven at death. His soul was already resurrected from the moment of salvation.

This resurrection is called the first resurrection in Revelation 20:5, as God is explaining why the souls of the martyrs can live and reign with Christ. These martyrs have already experienced the resurrection of their souls, the first resurrection, and therefore can go into God's holy presence immediately upon death. In this connection, in Revelation 20:6 God emphasizes five characteristics of those who have experienced the first resurrection. They are (a) "blessed", (b) they are "holy", (c) on such the second death has no power (cf. Revelation 20:14, where God teaches that the second death is Hell), (d) they are priests of God: and (e) they reign with Him.

All five of these characteristics apply to those who have been saved. We are the blessed. Think for example of the Beatitudes of Matthew Chapter Five, where our Lord speaks of the various ways believers are blessed. We are holy (I Peter 2:9, "Ye are a holy nation"). We are those who will not come into the second death, He.. (Romans 8:1 reads, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.") We are priests of God. (I Peter 2:9 reads, "Ye are a royal priesthood; cf. Revelation 5:10.) We reign with Him. (Ephesians 1:20-22 shows us that Christ is seated at the right hand of God reigning over everything in this age as well as that to come. And Ephesians 2:6 declares that we are seated with Him.)

Therefore, we too are reigning as we serve as His ambassadors on this earth (cf. Revelation 5:10). Thus we can know that the first resurrection applies to the one who has experienced salvation.

This explains, also, why the believer has within himself a great love for God and an earnest desire to do God's will. We read in I John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." You see, it is in our soul that we have experienced the new birth, that we have been born from above, that we have experienced the resurrection, that we have become a new creation. Therefore,

in our soul existence we will never wish to sin again.

Only because our bodies have not experienced the resurrection are we still troubled by sin. In our bodies, which are as real a part of us as our souls, we still lust after sin, and therefore we are commanded to crucify the flesh and its desires. In our soul, wherein we have already experienced the resurrection, and which is as real a part of us as our body, we never wish to sin again. God speaks about this struggle in the life of the child of God through the apostle Paul, as we read in Romans 7:21-24:

I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man (in his soul, where he has become born from above); but I see another law in my members (in his body, where he has not yet experienced the resurrection) warning against the law of my mind ("mind" in this context is a synonym for soul) and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

When we realize that the child of God had experienced the resurrection, not only can we understand the conflict that continues in the life of the one who has been saved, but we can also understand why the Bible declares in I Peter 4:6 that those who were preached to when they were spiritually dead might "live according to God in the spirit." In our "spirit" or "soul" we experienced the resurrection, and therefore we can live to God.

Now we can understand, too, why God declares in I Thessalonians 3:13 that when Christ comes He will come with all His saints. In I Thessalonians 4:14 this truth is further underscored as God promises at the coming of Christ that "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Those who have been saved eventually die; that is, they fall asleep (to use the Biblical language). But while their bodies are placed in the graves to await the resurrection of the last day, in their souls they continue to everlasting life. Death is simply the time when they change residence. At death they leave their bodies and continue to live and reign with Christ in Heaven.

All these marvelous truths and promises are certain and sure because at salvation we receive eternal life. How wonderful is the grace of God that He has provided such a magnificent salvation. Surely we should be able to see that one who is truly saved is eternally secure.

Before I leave the subject of eternal life I should comment on the future of the unsaved who remain dead in their sins. When they die there is likewise a separation of soul and body. But they in their soul existence cannot go into the presence of God. They cannot go there because they have not experienced the resurrection of their souls. The Bible tells us they go to a place of silence (Psalm 115:17). They will not have conscious existence again until they are raised at the end of time to stand for judgment. God speaks of this in Revelation 20:5, "the rest of the dead" (the unsaved) "lived not" (did not have conscious existence) "until the thousand years were finished."

In other words, when unsaved persons die, the next thing they will be aware of is the resurrection of the last day when they are raised to stand for judgment. How awful that judgment will be! How eternally important it is that we become saved while it is still the day of grace. "How shall we escape if we

neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3)

Returning to the matter of the eternal security believers enjoy, we find many other passages which teach this grand truth. In John 10:27-31 God declares that we shall never perish, and no one shall snatch us out of God's hand. In Ephesians 1:12 we have the promise that God has given the Holy Spirit to the believer as the guarantee of his inheritance. In Philippians 1:6 the Bible faithfully promises that God will complete His work within us. In the closing verse of Romans 8, God promises that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God. Specifically, we read these beautiful promises:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Verses 35 and 38-39)

Here we have the very confidence of salvation. As we consider these verses, how can we think even for a moment that we can lose our salvation?

BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE VERSES WHICH SEEM TO TEACH THAT WE CAN LOSE OUR SALVATION?

But aren't there verses that seem to indicate beyond the shadow of a doubt that, after all, we can lose our salvation? What about such passages as Hebrews 6:4-8 or Hebrews 10:26-27 or II Peter 2:20 or John 15:2,6? If we read these passages superficially, isolating them from the rest of Bible, we can indeed come to a conclusion that a believer can lose his salvation. However, when we read them and study them as we should, that is, viewing them in the light of everything else the Bible teaches, we know that under no circumstance could they be teaching that we can lose our salvation. If they are teaching this, then we would have a major contradiction concerning all the other passages of the scripture that indicate the nature of our salvation and the promises of God concerning the eternal character of our salvation.

THE BODY OF CHRIST - INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE

But these passages that seem to teach the possibility of the loss of our salvation must be faced. They, too, are part of the Bible. We can understand them if we will keep in mind, as we saw earlier in our study, that the Bible presents the body of Christ or the church in two ways. Sometimes, when the Bible is talking about Christ's body or the church, it is speaking of individual believers who personally have become born again. These individuals are, of course, eternally secure in Christ, as we have seen from the foregoing passages.

The Bible also, however, presents the body of Christ as a corporate body, that is, as an organized membership of those who have declared their desire to serve God. This corporate body is seen in the congregations and denominations and groups of believers which have been formed throughout the New Testament period and who declare that they will serve the Lord Jesus Christ. But within this corporate body of church members there are many who

are not born again. Corporately they have become citizens of God's Kingdom by virtue of their church membership.

But personally they have not become new creatures in Christ. Personally, their sins have not as yet been paid for. They have never personally accepted the fact of their spiritual bankruptcy and the fact that it is only by grace that they can be saved. They are those who believe that because they have joined the church, because they are seriously attempting to live a holy life, therefore they are worthy before God. They have a knowledge of many things that the Bible teaches. They know the Bible declares that mankind is sinful and is under the wrath of God. They know that Christ is the only way, But personally, individually, this has never become an intrinsic, intimate part of their lives. They are yet in their sins.

ISRAEL - AN EXAMPLE OF GOD'S CORPORATE BODY

Israel of old is an excellent example of this. Every Israelite was convinced he was saved, that he was acceptable to God. He believed this in view of the fact that Israel was the chosen race, in view of the fact that He kept the ceremonial laws. But the Bible teaches that most of Israel at any time in its history was unsaved.

Hebrews 3:15-19 declares this most graphically, as God states that they could not enter into His rest because they believed not.

This passage remembers ancient Israel in the wilderness on the way to the land of Canaan. They were intimately associated with God as He guided them in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They drank the water that miraculously came from the rock. They tasted of the manna that came from heaven. They were enlightened concerning the will of God. They were under the personal leadership of that great type of Christ, Moses. But most of them were not saved. The Bible sadly records "that they could not enter in" (Hebrews 3:19). It explains further that "the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2).

Corporately they were members of Christ's body. Corporately they had become identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. Corporately they were the bride of Christ. Corporately they were well acquainted with the promises of God. Corporately they experienced many blessings of God in their lives. But personally they were not saved. They individually had not trusted God with saving faith. Therefore they were still subject to Hell.

So is the case in the church today. There are those who are members of the congregation in good and regular standing. They may teach Sunday School. They may be pastors. They may pray fervently. They may read the Bible. They may do all the things that true believers do. But if they have not become new creatures in Christ, they still are not saved. These are the people whom God has in view in such passages as Hebrews 4:4-8, Hebrews 10:26-27, II Peter 2:20, and John 15:2,6. Like Nicodemus, who was a faithful member of the Jewish congregation of his day, they must still be born from above before they can enter Heaven.

Obviously, those in the congregation who have not experienced the new birth and yet believe they are saved rightly should believe they can fall from grace. The salvation they are following is one in which they are expecting to be declared worthy before God because of their church membership or because of their actions as seemingly committed Christians. When they stop

living this way, they no longer are identified with the body of Christ. The fact is they were never saved.

THE TEACHING THAT WE CAN LOSE OUR SALVATION IS A DANGEROUS DOCTRINE

The doctrine that we can fall from grace or lose our salvation is indeed very dangerous in the sense that effectively it makes our works a ground for salvation. If we believe that somehow by God's grace we are saved, but now, being weak in ourselves in departing from the law of God we would stand guilty before God, effectively we are declaring that a condition of our salvation is our good works. In other words, we think we are saved by God's continued grace in some sense, but in actuality we are attempting to gain salvation by living some kind of holy life.

We therefore have effectively designed our own salvation plan whereby we can merit God's continued favor and salvation by our acts in doing good works. Our salvation, therefore, is no longer a gracious bestowal of God's grace, God's unmerited favor upon hopelessly bankrupt sinners, but is something we have earned because of our holy lives. We have then fallen into the snare of the Jews of whom God speaks in Galatians 5, who were insisting that a requirement of salvation was circumcision. There God declares that those who believe this are then not under grace but under the curse of the law. Ephesians 2:8-10 clearly indicates that by grace we have been saved, not of works.

That our works could never save us is clearly indicated when we realize that the Bible teaches our best works are as filthy rags in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6). In James 2:10 God declares that if we have broken one of the smallest points of the law, we are guilty of the whole law of God. In other words, if we think for a moment that we can be saved by doing good works, we have elected to follow a salvation plan whereby we would have to be absolutely perfect before Him. If we deviate in the slightest from the perfection of God's law, we immediately come into the condemnation of sin and will be cast into Hell. Praise God that our salvation is of grace! The works that we do are a result of God's grace in our lives.

Some are afraid that if we teach that we cannot lose our salvation, someone who is a believer will become a very profane, wicked person in the security of believing that every sin has been paid for. He therefore will wish to enjoy the pleasure of sin.

Anyone who has become a true child of God will realize the impossible nature of this statement. He is a new creature in Christ, living with an eternal resurrected soul. Sin has become abhorrent to him. He doesn't require the threat of God's condemnation to be motivated to live a holy life.

In the eyes of an unsaved person, who lusts after sin both in his body and soul, sin is very attractive. But in the life of the true believer, who has received his resurrected soul, there is a severe conflict within his own personality when he sins. In his new soul he feels violated if he gives in to the lusts of his sinful body. He finds that his highest pleasure is in obedience to God because this is the kind of life in which his soul has pleasure.

Moreover, God indwells him. He has become the property of God, in view of the fact that he was ransomed by Christ. God therefore will begin to deal with him if he continues in sin. It is thus impossible for a born from above believer

to backslide, to again live as the unsaved person that he was before he had become a new creature in Christ.

PEACE WITH GOD

We therefore see very conclusively that there is no question at all about the eternal security of our salvation. What a tremendous comfort to us who have experienced God's saving grace in our lives! We never have to live with that feeling that possibly we might commit a sin of which we are not aware, or for which we have not specifically asked forgiveness, and thus end up in Hell in spite of the fact that at one time we were saved. We live with the peace of God in our hearts that we eternally are sons of God. We live with that tremendous joy that all our sins have been paid for. We will never have to answer to God for our sins. We will never stand before the judgment throne of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, as our substitute, as our Mediator, has already stood condemned before God on our behalf. As our sin-bearer He has already borne the wrath of God we so rightly deserved. What a magnificent salvation God has provided for us!

On that note we conclude our consideration of Eternal Security, which is also referred to as the doctrine, Once saved, always saved. We have considered it under the topic of the Perseverance of the Saints, which was the P part, or the last letter of our acronym, TULIP. This finishes our study of TULIP.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

We have come to the end of our study of the magnificent salvation program God has provided. We have seen that God indeed has a well-meant offer of salvation that goes to the whole world, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. We have seen, however, that because man is dead in his sin, completely rebellious against God, totally a slave to Satan, of his own will he will never respond to the Gospel. But Christ has, before the foundations of the earth, developed a very intricate and detailed plan of salvation wherein He has named those whom He would save. Therefore, as the Gospel goes out into all the world, Christ is seeking out those whom He has planned to save; and indeed He will save them!

This shows us that God is sovereign in these things, and nothing can frustrate God's eternal will. Again the question ought to be raised, "Where do I stand if I am unsaved and am not one of God's elect? Is there any possibility that I can be saved?" The answer we must come to is that the election program of God is God's business rather than ours. If we are unsaved, there is only one way to become right with God, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. By recognizing our sins and throwing ourselves on the mercies of God, trusting in Christ as our Savior, whether we think we are elect or not, whether we think we are predestinated or not, we will find the only hope there is, in the precious blood shed by Jesus at the cross.

If a person is elect unto salvation, God will incline his will, and so he will want to be saved. He won't ever want, in his born again soul, to sin again. and if a person is not predestined unto salvation, he will not be the least bit interested in God's salvation program. He might try to design one of his own, but he won't care about God's plan.

I am reminded of the time that the reformer Martin Luther, when he was

still a young lad, read St. Augustine's writings concerning election and predestination, which in turn were based upon the Biblical writings of Paul. Luther struggled in anguish with the horrible thought that perhaps he was not one of the elect who were predestined unto salvation...as much as he wanted to be faithful and saved...just think of it! What if he wasn't one of the elect?

He brought this concern in anxiety and tears to his beloved pastor, who told him, "Stop worrying, Martin, about these lofty theological matters! Instead, look to the precious shed blood of Jesus at the cross, which was shed for your sins! That is where forgiveness lies! Look to the blood of Jesus shed at Calvary for the forgiveness of your sins and for your salvation!" Yes, it is true, that is where salvation is to be found. So keep your eyes upon your precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Find your salvation and forgiveness in His shed blood at the cross of Calvary!

The advice given to Luther is also good advice for us when we struggle with such questions. You see, at the point where we are feeling anxiety, God is in fact calling. At that point, don't worry about predestination and election! Just trust Jesus! He came to seek and to save that which was lost. When you recognize that you ought to go to Hell for your sins, and yet you don't want to, but would rather spend eternity in joy praising our wonderful God in the fellowship of the saints, then simply throw yourself on the mercy of God and cry out to Him for His loving salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ. You can depend on the fact that YOU WILL BE SAVED!

God clearly teaches that if you seek with all your heart, you will be saved. "Seek and ye shall find." "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (right, privilege) to become the sons of God; to them that believe on His name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

After you are saved, you will want to study the Bible; and when you read it, you will realize that when you wanted to be saved it was really because God was drawing you. He elected you. He did His work of grace within your heart. (You had become "born again...of the will of God.")

The doctrine of election does not frustrate the Gospel call in any way at all. It is rather the insurance program that guarantees that the Gospel program of God will be successful. In a deeper sense of speaking, actually, it is the shed blood of Jesus that guarantees that the Gospel program of God will be successful.

To be saved, you must yield, as God turns you from your own salvation program to make you a part of His salvation program. If you do yield your will in repentance to God through Christ, as God empowers you to do so, then the blood of Jesus shed at Calvary in accord with God's program of election and predestination will absolutely guarantee that you will be saved.

I trust that this study will have helped us all to gain a greater appreciation of what a great and wonderful loving God we have! He is sovereign in every area of our lives. Praise God for His magnificent salvation program!

[END]