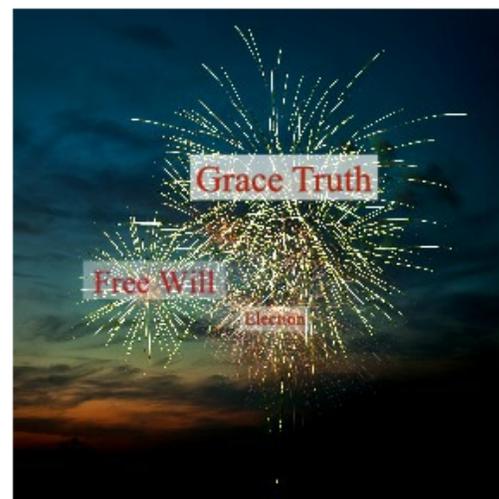


ELECTION, FREE-WILL, & GRACE TRUTH

PART 2

GOD'S PERFECT PLAN OF SALVATION MADE CLEAR BY A SIMPLE ANALOGY

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



Review of Study 1

The two common beliefs on how each person becomes a believer are (1) being chosen by God and (2) making a free-will decision to believe. Many verses are used to support each view, but upon analysis, clearly small phrases are taken out of context to make incorrect conclusions. When we look at the entire verses, not just small phrases, we see that God did choose something before the world began, but He was not choosing certain people. God chose the way of salvation, that is, the plan for salvation for our Age. He chose the way by which every person could be saved. The plan is simple, each person must be "in Christ" to be saved.

INTRODUCTION

Establishing the Purpose and Plan

God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33), any confusion we have comes from our own mind or from misunderstanding His Word. God, perfect in all ways, is very organized and thorough in all things, including planning for our salvation. From an anthropomorphic view (a human way of looking at the Almighty in order to better understand Him), He seems to work in this manner. First, He *thinks* through all things before doing anything. Part of the thought process is to develop a *purpose* (the desired goal) for any action taken. With a purpose in mind, He next develops a *plan* of action. Then, finally, with a plan in place, He puts the plan into *action* and thereby accomplishes what He originally purposed to do. We have no concept of the time involved

in thinking, establishing a purpose, and planning; in the mind of God these may all occur instantaneously. Putting it all in place and making it all work as desired is what we call history (both the natural history of the universe and human history).

Notice that the purpose and plan precede the action, as would be the case with any wise designer or builder. Jesus commented on the need for proper preparation, **"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish?'"** (Luke 14:28-30). This

teaching supports the need for careful preparation, as God exhibited prior to creation.

God's purpose (desire) for mankind included such things as saving us and blessing us. Thus, God planned for our salvation, for eternal life, for how He would reveal Himself throughout history, and so forth. His overall plan included all people in all ages; it covered all of human history. Accordingly, His plan included various means of salvation in differed ages. For example, salvation during the period of the Mosaic Law was different from the Age of Grace. Faith in God was always the most important aspect of His plan, at any time in history. His specific plan for us in the Age of Grace is consistent with His character and nature, dispelling any notion of inequality or arbitrariness in His actions. The fact that He established a purpose and plan before the world began is supported by Scripture, **"Who hath saved us, and called us ... according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began"** (2 Tim. 1:9, italics added).

Examples of Election in the Bible

We must not think when God elects (chooses) that He is selecting certain people for salvation. Here are three examples.

1. Israel was God's chosen nation. God chose the Israelites, they were the elect of God, but were they all saved? Certainly not! The chosen nation was not chosen for salvation; in fact, most Israelites rejected God. They were chosen to be a special nation to demonstrate to the world the glories of a nation that followed the one, true God, which they did not do well. You will note: Israel

was chosen, elected, foreknown, and called, but the Israelites were mostly unsaved. Clearly, election and being chosen do not apply to salvation, but to God's plan and purpose for the chosen nation. The chosen nation did not meet God's purpose, so Israel was finally set aside (her condition today). When Israel was set aside, God revealed the mystery to Paul (Romans 16:25, Eph. 3:1-10, Col. 1:25-27). That mystery introduced a plan for humankind that God had kept secret, but that was always in His mind. It involved a new age, called the Age of Grace.

2. Jesus called or chose the original 12 Apostles; they were not called to salvation (Judas was unsaved). They were called to a ministry, which was a predetermined purpose of God.

3. In Romans 11:28 and 2 Timothy 2:10, the elect are mentioned, but the context shows they were not saved, **"Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"** (2 Tim. 2:10). Thus, clearly, the terms *elect and chosen* do not refer to God's selecting people to salvation. A person or group may be elected (chosen) by God, but that election is not to salvation but to something different.¹

Discussion: Is it beginning to make more sense that God's election/choosing is not for salvation?

¹ Some biblical characters may have been chosen by God, even before birth; generally, they were chosen for a specific purpose (Gal. 1:15). These are exceptions, not an argument for God's choosing everyone for salvation.

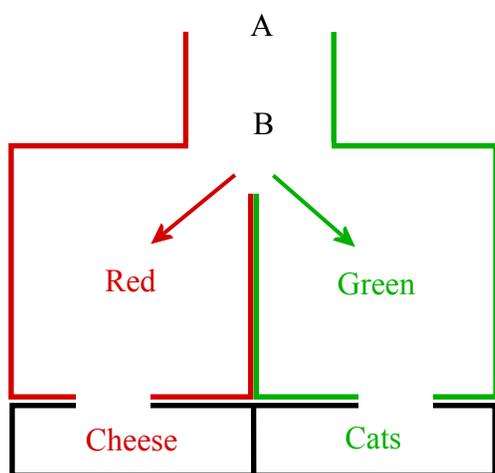
PRACTICAL ANALOGY

We will now consider a very simple practical analogy to help make this whole matter of election and free-will clearer. Consider a researcher, named X, working in a testing lab. A top-secret government agency has hired X to identify mice that prefer the color red to the color green. This preference for the color red has to apply

under all circumstances. Those who do not prefer the color red are of no value and do not need to be kept. No other colors matter, just red and green. The mice preferring red will be used for top-secret purposes. With everything else equal, X needs to determine which mice,

if given the choice, prefer the color red to the color green. But how?

After a little thought, with the purpose given to him fully in mind, X planned to make a very simple maze (shown below). One path of the maze would be colored red and one path colored green. With everything else equal, the purpose of the maze was to determine which mice would chose the red route and which would chose the green route. Mice would be released one-by-one at point A and proceed to point B, where they had to make a choice. Either they could go the red route (when they got to the end they would enter a room full of cheese) or they could go the green route (which ended in a room full of hungry cats). The mice had no idea what was at the end of each route; their choice of routes was based only upon the color they preferred.



We observe that X first had to think through this whole matter according to the purpose given. Then X planned on how to make the maze and how to conduct the testing program. Our researcher had to think it through to make sure the purpose of the testing was fair, unbiased, and

truly tested the correct thing. X planned that each mouse would have to go through the maze many times to make sure it always, under different situations, selected the red route. The testing program required switching the route colors, testing in hot and cold, testing day and night, and so forth. Once all these things were considered, X made the maze. Finally, X was ready to begin testing.

You immediately see there was a lot of preparation before any testing, before anything tangible was in place. The thought, purpose, plan, and even the outcomes were all predetermined before any mouse entered the maze. As each mouse entered the maze, it made its own free-will choice of what route to follow. The outcome of each choice was predetermined before the mouse entered the maze—either cheese or cats. However, the predetermined (predestined) outcomes did not in any way preclude the mice from making their own choices, indeed, making independent, free-will choices was part of the predetermined plan.

Your Thoughts: Discuss how a mouse can make a free choice, but the outcome of that choice can already be predetermined.

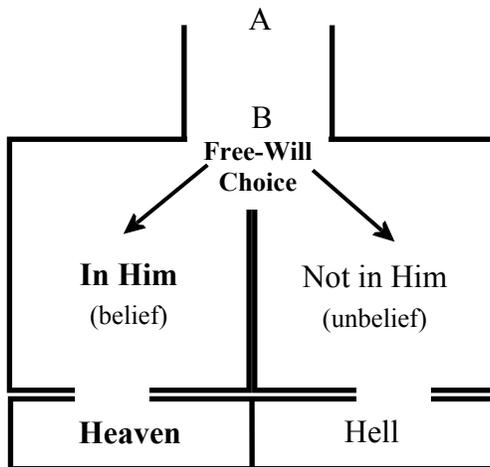
The mice that chose to go the red route received reward and could be called, “chosen in red” or elected in red, because X chose the red route for reward. X did not choose which mice would take the red route; each mouse made that choice. The mice that chose the red route could be called “predestined in red” because that choice of color predestined their destiny. The mice made their own free-will choice; X only determined what would happen based upon that choice.

BIBLE TRUTH

Applying the Maze to Us

Now we will apply the simple analogy above to God's Word. Remember, a simple analogy has limitations, so do not stretch this analogy to the point of absurdity in an effort to negate what it teaches. An example of going too far would be to infer humans (like the mice) have no knowledge of the hereafter. Please keep this analogy within the intended bounds.

In God's maze (plan for our lives), shown below, all humans enter at point A (birth). At some time in our lives, we have to make a choice whether to believe or not believe in Jesus Christ. Those who believe take a route called "In Him." Those who do not believe take the route called, "Not in Him." Those who believe will go to heaven; those who do not will go to hell. The "Not in Him" route could be shown as many routes, but simplicity is desired here. Notice, we have a free choice, but the outcomes of that choice have been predetermined (predestined).



Before we enter point A, the outcomes (Heaven and Hell) have been predestined (predetermined). Even though the outcomes have been predestined, we still make a choice. **God did not predestine what our choices would be.** The sovereignty of God is never in question. The Sovereign could have made every choice if He wanted, but *He chose to let us have a choice.*

Predetermined outcomes do not preclude us from making our own choices, indeed, making independent, free-will, choices are part of God's plan.

Starting at point A and up to point B, God calls us (an invitation to all), by illuminating our hearts to His truth. He also draws all humans toward Him; however, the choice to believe is ours to make. The *outcome* of each person's choice is predetermined, that is, heaven and hell are predetermined outcomes. Even if the wrong choice is made, those on the wrong route (Not in Him) are warned and given opportunities, throughout their whole lives, to turn around. Those who are on the right path (In Him) are guided to the finish so they do not turn around. Note: a person goes through the maze once in his or her life, not many times like a mouse.

Researcher X chose mice in the red route, but could have selected mice in other ways. We may think that God could have chosen another method for our salvation; however, He knew in our Age no other way would work. Other ways did work in the past, but those ways only worked for a limited time, awaiting Christ's death. At some point in history, Christ had to come to earth and die. That death was the basis for the forgiveness of sins for every believer from Adam to the last person saved. If Christ had not died, no one in all of history would have been saved.

God's purpose for humans had always been to provide a means of salvation and to bless us. His plan had always been to send Christ, so that His blood (death) could be used to save all believers, no matter when they lived. Shortly after Christ's death, God revealed His new plan (called the mystery because He kept it secret from the beginning of time). God's new plan was specifically for our Age of Grace. To receive salvation every person has

to be “in Christ.” To miss the “in Christ” aspect is to miss the point of Ephesians 1:4: “...**just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.**” For our Age, God chose that salvation would be based upon being in Christ.

God chose the plan of salvation before creation began. He thought it all out, had a passionate purpose (desire), made sure it was fair and unbiased, and made certain it would work. He knew it would only work if we were “in Christ.” It would only work if humans had no part in the actual solution for sin; the solution had to be provided by God. However, we are allowed to choose that solution. Thus, we see the Bible is not teaching that God selected certain individuals for salvation; instead, it teaches that God predestined (predetermined) the way we all must be saved.

Your Thoughts: It is comforting to know God is fair with us, that is, He does not select certain people to be saved, and thereby reject others. Anyone can be His child. Discuss.

The discussion above indicates the Calvinists are right in that God selected something, and the Armenians are

right in that He allows free choice. Grace truth pulls it all together and yields a better understanding of the Bible, which is, God has a *predestined plan of salvation*.

Right and Wrong Views

Recall Ephesians 1:4, “...**just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.**” It is often claimed the phrase “He chose us” means God chose me. That is an incomplete phrase and very misleading, as we discussed in the previous lesson. Quoting just part of a sentence, or in this case just a part of a phrase, can be as destructive to the meaning of the Bible as adding words or omitting words, which is warned against in Scripture.

A better understanding is found by studying the entire verse, which teaches God chose the plan of salvation and that plan requires us to be in Him. Before the foundation of the world, God predetermined the plan (or, if you prefer, the way or means) for our salvation. He chose that we would be saved and go to heaven when we are “in Him.” This is exactly what it says: “He chose us in him.” He chose the method of our salvation and that method was “in Christ.”

<p>Wrong God “has chosen us” – implies He chose certain people to be saved Right God “has chosen us in Him” – indicates He chose the way of salvation</p>

TAKE TO HEART

Summary

The perfectly organized God planned for our salvation before creation. Because the word "chosen" is used in connection with salvation, we must not assume God chose certain people to be saved. Recall that Israel was God's chosen nation, yet most Israelites were unsaved. An analogy of mice in a maze indicates a mouse can make a free-will choice of which route to take. However, the outcome of that choice can still be predestined. Similarly, each of us has a choice as to whether we will believe in Christ or not, but the outcome of that choice has been already determined (predestined). The predetermined outcomes do not in any way preclude anyone from making a personal choice; indeed, making an independent, free-will choice is part of God's plan. God knew the only way in the Age of Grace to be saved was to be "in Christ" through faith.

Gospel

"Who has saved us, and called us ... according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ

Jesus before the World began" (2 Tim. 1:9). God had a purpose in mind before the world began, that is, to save you through faith in Jesus Christ. All through your life He calls you (invites you to believe), but the final choice is yours. You can believe in Christ or reject Him. The outcomes of that choice are predetermined, and you know what those outcomes are!

Encouragement

Praise the Lord for those willing to look at God's Word with a new understanding. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you are "in Him." God chose the plan of salvation. According to that plan, each believer is chosen based upon personal faith in Him. Then you are blessed with all spiritual blessing. It may not seem like you are blessed because those blessing are spiritual and you cannot feel them or show them to others. However, those blessings are assured to you by God as part of His eternal purpose for you.