

Calvinism in Conversation

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Foreword

I have been asked many times to explain what exactly is meant by concepts such as predestination/election, perseverance, freedom, and so forth. I have learned a lot about sharing my theological convictions in conversation. I've learned first that if someone comes and asks you for theological guidance that I should then lead them in a process of them discovering it for themselves. My job is never to convict someone on what God's word says—that is the very job of God's word!

I've learned that “doctrine” is not something to be relegated to an elite group of Christians. The author to the Hebrews spends time in a discourse in his 5th chapter on moving from milk to solid food, and he starts his 6th chapter with the following:¹

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permits.

Hebrews 6:1-3

I so desperately want to aid other believers in their quest to “press on to maturity.” After having these discussions, some go well and others don't, but in the end both grown from the experience. I want to help others model the balance of Christ to stay humble while understanding the deep things of God's revelation.

The conversation here is between Robbie (R) and Chris (C). This model conversation I help Robbie to understand the concepts surrounding predestination. This conversation goes well: Robbie is challenged, and I learn from our interaction. I want to emphasize in this that when both sides have pure motives in asking of one another and helping one another that much can be done edifyingly.

¹ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Version (NASV).

Introduction & History

- R:** “Chris, I hear that you are the person to talk to about predestination.”
- C:** “Oh really? Well, what questions do you have?”
- R:** “I just want to know what it means. I mean, my church and Christian friends never want to talk about the issue.”
- C:** “Yes, I know. It’s often a soft spot amongst Christians. It’s a shame to because Paul literally rejoices over the doctrine in his epistles.”
- R:** “So, what does it mean; and why is it such a hot debate?”
- C:** “That’s a good question Robbie. You’d better sit down as this will take a few minutes. First, let me say that this has been debated for as long as the church has been in existence so don’t think I can explain all the nuances of the debate in an hour or so.”
- R:** “That’s understandable.”
- C:** “Let me ask you first, what do you think predestination is?”
- R:** “Well, I’ve always thought it was God’s knowledge of who and who would not choose Him.”
- C:** “Why do you think it’s been such a hotly debated issue?”
- R:** “The biggest thing I’ve heard is that it takes away from our free will.”
- C:** “Ok, right from here we need to establish what we are trying to discover. If go into the study of God’s word wondering how we are going to preserve our freedom then we’ll come out with an aberrant theology.”
- R:** “So are you saying we have no freedom?”
- C:** “No, that’s not what I’m saying, but I am saying that we need to look at this issue from God’s perspective and not our own. That is what Paul does in the 9th chapter of Romans. Does that make sense?”
- R:** “Sure.”
- C:** “Well, you need a little bit of context before we can tackle the issue of predestination. There are other factors that will mold our view of what predestination is. Are you familiar with the terms Calvinism and Arminianism?”

- R:** “Yes, but those are just man-made doctrines and Paul says in 1 Corinthians not to be divided over men.”
- C:** “Well, first you took that passage² out of context, and secondly let me explain the history on how we got those terms. Both sides do not claim that they follow men, but remember that the sides were named after famous proponents; but even modern adherents claiming one side or the other wouldn’t agree with everything that John Calvin or Jacob Arminius said. It started with Augustine who was the first to debate a man name Pelagius in the fourth century over what effect the fall had on man. Augustine said that the fall of Adam left man spiritually dead, but Pelagius declared that we are actually a “blank slate” that is not affected by Adam’s fall. Pelagius also declared that we could, hypothetically, live a life without sin. Man was, in effect, responsible for his own salvation apart from the intervention of God.”
- R:** “Whoa, a life without sin? This seems a little odd.”
- C:** “Yes, it was a big deal, and the Pelagian Controversy as it was dubbed was one of the earliest heresies the church had to battle. Pelagianism was declared as heresy by a church council in the 5th century. Are we good so far?”
- R:** “Yeah, I’ve never heard of any of this before. I can tell this is going to be a lot of information.”
- C:** “Yes, it will, but hang in there. A few centuries later a movement dubbed Semi-Pelagianism arose in the 6th century. This movement took sin more seriously, but still held to the thought that salvation had to start with man’s initiative. It was also condemned as heresy in the year 529 at the Council of Orange. It wasn’t until the 17th century that the debate came to its greatest point yet. A man by the name of Jacob Arminius studied under a staunch reformed teacher named Theodore Beza. The prevailing theology of the Dutch church was that man was born in complete bondage to sin and that only God could take initiative in our salvation. The church also had a strong view on predestination in terms of future events. Jacob thought that these teachings denied man’s moral responsibility and made God the author of evil. He then wrote out against the teachings of the Dutch church, but Jacob would never see his teachings take off. In fact, a year after he died his followers took his thoughts

² 1 Corinthians 1:12-13.

and compiled them into the *Remonstrance* which were five objections to the Dutch church's view on salvation. It then became known as the five points of Arminianism.”

R: “So, the five points of Arminianism came before the five points of Calvinism?”

C: “Correct. The Dutch church held a Synod which is a meeting to discuss doctrine called the Synod of Dort to review the Remonstrance and to make a ruling. After several months of debate, the Synod published the Canons of Dort which was a magnificent document outlining answers to the objections by Arminius and his followers.³ From this document we get the five points of Calvinism which they named after John Calvin who was known for his writings on predestination. Arminianism, or Semi-Augustinianism, went largely underground until the advent of John Wesley in the First Great Awakening on the 18th century. John Wesley then debated George Whitefield who was Calvinistic in much the same way Augustine debated Pelagius and the followers of Arminius debated the Dutch church. Since the First Great Awakening the teachings of John Wesley, which revived Arminian doctrine, have taken over the church at large.”

R: “But what exactly do Calvinists and Arminians argue over? I mean, if there is this much debate what are they debating about?”

C: “Good transition question. Now we’ll contrast the systems of Calvinism and Arminianism. First, let me get a refill, because we still have a ways to go.”

[Chris gets refill.]

³ It may be read online at http://www.reformed.org/documents/canons_of_dordt.html

The Punishment of Adam's Disobedience

- C:** "Ok, I'm ready to go."
- R:** "Let's do this. My mind is already busting so what's a little more info?"
- C:** "Ha-ha. You're doing well. Ok, first let's go over what Calvinism teaches. The five points are labeled by the acronym TULIP."
- R:** "Like the flower?"
- C:** "That's correct. 'T' stands for total depravity. Ok, why don't you open up Romans 5 and read me verses 12 through 17."
- R:** "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned-- for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."
- C:** "Good. Now who are the two people contrasted in this passage?"
- R:** "Adam and Jesus."
- C:** "Correct. Adam is seen as bringing what?"
- R:** "Death."
- C:** "And what does Jesus bring?"
- R:** "Life."

- C:** “Right. This is called the Federal Representative Theory.⁴ Adam brought death as our representative. He stood for all of mankind. Christ serves as our second representative, and He brought life. Now, what kind of death is brought on by Adam?”
- R:** “Uhh...sin?”
- C:** “Well, yes; but what did God say would happen if Adam broke his covenantal relationship with God?”⁵
- R:** “Death.”
- C:** “Did they physically die after eating?”
- R:** “No, they were just banished from the Garden.”
- C:** “So then what was the death brought on by Adam’s transgression?”
- R:** “Spiritual death.”
- C:** “Correct again. See, you can do this! Paul states, especially in verse 16 that through Adam’s one transgression he brought death on all of mankind, but the gift of justification came through Christ. Let’s look at another Pauline passage: we both know Ephesians 2:8-9, but how does Paul start his exposition in verse 1. In other words, what is our spiritual state in need of grace?”
- R:** “Paul says we were ‘dead in our transgressions.’”
- C:** “Let me ask you, how much can a dead man do?”
- R:** “Well, nothing of course.”
- C:** “Yes, and this is what Paul is trying to say in what we can do in regards to our salvation—nothing. It must be wholly a work of God’s free grace, it must be a ‘gift’ as he later proclaims; and verse 10 tells us our paths were prepared beforehand. I have a pet peeve when people quote 8 and 9 but leave out 10.”
- R:** “You got issues dude.”
- C:** “Yes, probably. Ok, back to Romans. What does Paul say in Romans 3:11?”
- R:** “No one seeks for God.”
- C:** “That is a pretty profound statement don’t you think?”
- R:** “Yea.”

⁴ R.C. Sproul extrapolates on this, and he also goes over other views of the Fall in his article: “Adam’s Fall and Mine” online at http://www.the-highway.com/fall_Sproul.html.

⁵ Gen 2:17.

- C:** “Now John 3. What does Jesus say to Nicodemus in regards to salvation?”
- R:** “He tells Nicodemus that one must be born of both water and Spirit.”
- C:** “That’s right. Jesus is saying that we must be born of water or amniotic fluid which is our natural birth, and we must be ‘born again’ from the Spirit. This is an important concept that we will look more into when we get to ‘I.’ What does Psalm 51:5 say?”
- R:** “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.”
- C:** “And 58:3.”
- R:** “The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.”
- C:** “The thought is that we are born in sin. What is the sin we’re born in?”
- R:** “Adam’s?”
- C:** “Right. His transgression gave us the spiritual inkling to only do evil and not good. That is why ‘no one seeks,’ because we are unable to. Remember the dead man does nothing.”
- R:** “Where are you going with this?”
- C:** “I have to explain the state of man before I can explain the role of predestination. Let’s look at two more passages for ‘T.’ What do John 5:24 and 1 John 3:14 say?”
- R:** “John 5:24 says, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.’ Hold on, I’ll turn to 1 John 3. Ok, verse 14 says, ‘We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.’”
- C:** “So what is the theme that John wants to highlight in these passages in terms of our spiritual status before God?”
- R:** “That we have moved from spiritual death into spiritual life.”
- C:** “Great! That gives us the framework to examine ‘U’ or unconditional election.”

God's Freedom in Election

C: This is where we start to examine what predestination is. Let me ask you a question, as we've established man is spiritually dead before God before our salvation. So, let me ask you: if God looked down the corridors of time and looked at the people in His creation, how many would be seeking Him?"

R: "Well, none."

C: "Right. That is why God's election or choosing of us for salvation is *unconditional*. God's election of us stems only from His pure and free grace."

R: "Are you saying that God chooses some and not others? Does this mean that people are born doomed to hell?"

C: "Hold on there bud. We need to slow down here for a second. The answer to both of your questions is 'yes,' but let me explain more."⁶

R: "I don't like this."

C: "It is natural to not like this; it flies in the face of our western, individualistic mentality that you and I both have been around our entire lives. Let's try and look at this from God's angle and not our own. Cool?"

R: "Cool."

C: "Please read for me Romans 8:28-30."

R: "We're spending a lot of time in Romans."

C: "Yes I know. It is an important work, and Paul had a lot to say about the doctrine of salvation⁷ in Romans."

R: "Ok, the verses say: 'And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these

⁶ Chris never does get back to dealing with double predestination. The doctrine is that God predestines the elect to heaven, and He the same relationship is predestining the non-elect. But God does not work in the same way in the elect as He does the non-elect. God does not 'make us sin' so as to be sure that we go to hell. When Chris looks at Romans 9:22-24 he will show that God could've let us all go aside. Is predestination fair? Paul deals with this argument in Romans 9:18-21 and says that God can do whatever He wants with His clay.

⁷ The doctrine of salvation is called Soteriology.

whom He justified, He also glorified.’ See? God chooses those who choose Him it says right here.”

C: “Hold on there stallion. Let’s look at this a little closer. It says that God predestines them who He foreknows not according to a choice. We’ve established that, if God did base His predestination on our choice, who would be predestined for life?”

R: “Based on ‘T’ I guess it would be none.”

C: “Yea. Also, the Greek work behind ‘foreknow’⁸ is not knowledge of actions, but it is an intimate knowledge. That is knowledge similar to what God says to Jeremiah: ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you’ and the whole 139th Psalm.”

R: “Yea, that is a crazy Psalm.”

C: “Paul’s proclamation is that who God foreknows He predestines not on the basis on obedience but only out of His free grace. He also proclaims that that those who He predestines will be glorified; in other words, if God saves them they’ll receive their inheritance. That’ll be something we talk more about when we get to ‘P.’”

R: “Dude, lots of letters.”

C: “Ha-ha. You’re doing good bud, just hang in there. Let’s look at Acts 13:48. In that passage it says that all those who were appointed to eternal life believed, because they were chosen of God. In Romans 9, right after his discourse on God’s free grace in predestination, Paul then turns to what has become of Israel. He then defends God’s unconditional election and that God is not bound to electing people based on any condition such as an identity of descending from Jacob. He even says in verse 13, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’ He quotes from Exodus 33 when God talks to Moses in verse 15, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ Paul also states that God’s free grace in election doesn’t depend on what man does, ‘So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.’

R: “So, this would go against the thought that God chooses us on foreseen faith.”

C: “It would seem so.”

R: “Well then, what about our freedom?”

⁸ The Greek word is *proginoōskō*.

- C:** “First, that question is a good one, but the problem is that too many Christians place that question above God’s own freedom. God’s freedom is the whole thrust of Paul’s argument in Romans 9. If we start by viewing God’s role in election and then come to a conclusion on the issue of freedom, then we’ll get a better picture than starting the other way around. That’s why Paul uses the potter analogy in Romans 9. Please read Romans 9:22-24.”
- R:** “What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.”
- C:** “Paul is saying that God could have let us all go aside as vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, but He saved a few to make known the riches of His grace on those He does bring to Himself. And an important part in Paul’s argument is that the salvific blessing is not just for Jews but Gentiles as well.”
- R:** “That makes sense.”
- C:** “The whole Biblical narrative revolves around election. God elects Noah, Moses, Abraham, David, and others signifying His work in election. Also, Jesus chooses the 12 disciples, and He later says to them, ‘You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit.’⁹ There are examples of election all throughout the Bible.”
- R:** “Are we finally going to talk about predestination?”
- C:** “We have been. Election is one side of predestination. The unconditional election of the saints. It is where we are giving a destiny before the world began, and that is what Paul says in Ephesians 1.”¹⁰
- R:** “But what then is the other side of predestination?”
- C:** “We’ll talk about this when we get to the issue of freedom. I can tell you that predestination will involve both the ends and the means to our salvation, and this

⁹ John 15:16

¹⁰ See specifically verses 3-11.

complete understanding is coming.¹¹ The last verse I want to mention is in Revelation 20 describing the final judgment, ‘And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.’ This book was written before the foundation of the world,¹² and it shows the measure of God’s election.”

R: “Are we going to talk about ‘L’ now?”

C: “I’m going to hold off on that until the end. I want to explain two other concepts first. We are now at a situation where man is completely dead from original sin, and God has elected a people before the foundation of the world. The question then becomes: How does God actually go about saving people? If no men seek then how can people accept Christ?”

¹¹ The *Easton Bible Dictionary* defines predestination as follows:

“This word is properly used only with reference to God's plan or purpose of salvation. The Greek word rendered "predestinate" is found only in these six passages, Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29, 30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11; and in all of them it has the same meaning. They teach that the eternal, sovereign, immutable, and unconditional decree or "determinate purpose" of God governs all events.”

¹² Revelation 13:8, 17:8

God's Power in Saving His Own

- R:** “I was always told growing up that everyone has the ability, because God wants all to be saved.”
- C:** “You bring up a good issue: Does God truly desire *every single person* to be saved?”
- R:** “Of course. It says so specifically in 1 Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9. I learned those growing up.”
- C:** “Let’s look at those passages. In 1 Timothy 2 Paul starts of the chapter by saying that Timothy should pray on behalf of all men, that is kings and who are in authority. Paul is saying that God desires all types of men to be saved, because if we take ‘all’ to be ‘all’ then does Jesus really save all men as what is seemingly said in verse 6?”
- R:** “Well, doesn’t Jesus die for all?”
- C:** “We’ll get back to this issue at the end when we talk about ‘L.’ The context of 2 Peter 3 is that Peter is giving an apologetic for when people ask why hasn’t your Christ come back?¹³ He says that time is essentially meaningless to God from verse 8, and that God will wait for all of His people to come in; that is, all of His elect. Instead of nullifying election—this verse establishes it!”
- R:** “I’ve never heard of that before. It’s interesting, but I’m not sure how I feel about it yet.”
- C:** “Don’t worry. Honestly, I’d be skeptical if you walked away from this conversation a full-fledged Calvinist. It should be something that is to be thought deeply upon, and you should come to a conclusion after a careful study.”
- R:** “I’ll keep that in mind.”
- C:** “Ok, back to the question of how God actually saves people. If man is spiritually dead, than we must be brought to life. We discussed the first half of this earlier when we talked about total depravity. How are we brought to life? Well, as we mentioned Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3 that one must be born of water and Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the agent which gives our ‘new birth.’”
- R:** “Is that what is meant by ‘born again’?”

¹³ Verse 4.

- C:** “Yes, it is, but it has been convoluted by a wide usage in evangelicalism. Let’s look at a great passage from Titus 3. Why don’t you read verses 3-7.”
- R:** “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”
- C:** This is great imagery used by Paul here. He says describes our spiritual condition before the Spirit’s intervention, how the Spirit intervenes, and what our spiritual state is afterwards. He says the Spirit is the manifestation of God’s love for mankind. The Spirit didn’t cleanse us on the basis of anything we’d done, but according to His mercy. He then uses the word regeneration which a word that describes the ‘new birth.’ He then says that because of this change brought on by the Spirit we now have hope of eternal life.”
- R:** “Can you explain that word regeneration more?”
- C:** “Sure. As I said, it is a word summarizing the new birth. The prophet Ezekiel gives us a very graphic picture of what it means to be regenerated or woken out of our spiritual death. Ezekiel 36:26-27 says, “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.””
- R:** “Wow, that’s a neat picture.”
- C:** “Yes, it is. All of this means that regeneration, or the new birth, must come before we can have faith.”¹⁴
- R:** “That makes sense. How can we have faith if we can’t even realize what it is?”

¹⁴ Although Chris doesn’t elaborate on this point here, this is the most central topic of debate between Calvinists and Arminians. The question is: Which comes first: regeneration or faith? The Calvinist says that regeneration must precede faith, because the natural man cannot come to faith. The Arminian says the opposite and that man is responsible for faith, and then God does the regenerative work. If we were to focus on anything further, this would be the main point.

- C:** “Great! Paul also uses this line of argumentation in 1 Corinthians 1 when describing how men react to the Gospel. He says, ‘For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.’¹⁵ He then describes the Spirit’s work in waking us out of this state in chapter 2: ‘For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.’¹⁶ This regeneration is often called ‘prevenient grace’ in theological parlance.¹⁷”
- R:** “Why all the unnecessary words?”
- C:** “You mean like the Trinity?”
- R:** “Oh, yea.”
- C:** “They encapsulate ideas. Remember that the word describing the idea isn’t important, what is important is the expressed idea. This is the very concept of language. Anyway, back on track. This is all included in the letter ‘I’ of our acronym which stands for Irresistible Grace.”
- R:** “Wait, wait. The Bible says that people don’t accept God; I thought that’s what we established. No one will accept the grace.”
- C:** “You’re absolutely right, but the idea doesn’t demote from the fact that everyone doesn’t have the natural ability to understand the things of God; and that is why it must be irresistible. God overcomes our disobedience, gives us a heart of flesh, and then faith.”
- R:** “Are we completely passive in the event?”
- C:** “No. Jonathan Edwards, a great reformed theologian, stated that God works 100% and we work 100% in the action.¹⁸ God in effect gives us the ability to respond. It does involve an act of the will. John Calvin also said that, ‘The will is not destroyed but rather repaired by grace.’”

¹⁵ Verse 18.

¹⁶ Verse 10. I would suggest a close examination of 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 in regards to this matter.

¹⁷ It’s good to note here what contrasts the Arminian and Calvinistic view of prevenient grace. The Calvinist believes that prevenient grace is particular, that is it is given only to those God will waken out of spiritual death. Jacob Arminius and the Remonstrance taught that prevenient grace is universal in scope. That is, God wakes all men out of spiritual death enough that they have the natural ability to make the choice for or against the Gospel. Thomas Schreiner wrote against this in “Does Scripture Teach Prevenient Grace in the Wesleyan Sense?” in *Still Sovereign* (pgs. 229-46). It may be accessed online at <http://www.biblelighthouse.com/sovereignty/StillSovereign.htm>

¹⁸ This can be found in his great work *Freedom of the Will*.

- R:** “So, are we talking about this issue of freedom now?”
- C:** “We’re alluding to it, and this point of the ‘bondage’ of the will to sin is important in Calvinistic theology.”
- R:** “Dude, I need to go to the bathroom. I’ll be right back.”
- C:** “Ok, I’m sure my talking is painful enough.”

[Robbie goes to bathroom and comes back.]

- R:** “Ok, sorry about that.”
- C:** “No prob; I can’t believe you actually came back!”
- R:** “This is interesting, and I want to hear what else you have to say. I’m not sure how I feel about it, but I like listening to this. No one else has talked to me about this stuff.”
- C:** “I hope that you are being challenged. We sharpen one another.¹⁹”
- R:** “Go ahead talking about irresistible grace.”
- C:** “Jesus says an important phrase in John 6 that I’d like to look at. How about you read for me John 6:44.”
- R:** “‘No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.’ Wow, that’s kind of a crazy passage when viewed in this light.”
- C:** “I know. It’s full of authority, and sadly I don’t feel Jesus is portrayed this way in most of modern Christianity. The pronouncement is clear: no one can come to Christ unless the Father has drawn them through His Spirit.²⁰ The line is absolute. This entire chapter is a discourse on the authority of Christ. Interestingly, Jesus emphasizes the same lesson at the end of the chapter, and all except His true disciples went away.²¹ It is displayed that they couldn’t handle who Jesus really was.”
- R:** “Wow. I really like this passage.”
- C:** “I as well. It is one of my favorites. The last passage I will look at is a specific example in Acts. In Acts 16:14, Luke writes that God ‘opened the heart’ of Lydia to

¹⁹ Proverbs 27:17.

²⁰ While not stated specifically in that passage that the drawing comes on behalf of the Spirit, it is implied from the other passages we have examined.

²¹ Verses 65-66.

hear the things taught by Paul. Even though it says she was a worshipper of God; she obviously was not worshipping God in the way she was supposed to.²² Turn to Jeremiah 32 verse 40, and read that please.”

R: “I thought you said that you the Acts passage was our last.”

C: “Oh, sorry. The last for ‘I,’ but now we’re moving into ‘P.’ We still have to go over ‘P’ and ‘L.’ I’ll close it up with a summary of what the Remonstrance said, and then I’ll get back to your question about freedom. I’m not skirting that question; I just want to put it in context.”

²² I take this passage to mean that Lydia was a Jew, although not told specifically, and that she was practicing the external elements of religion but couldn’t understand the Gospel without intervention on God’s behalf.

The Imperishable Inheritance

- R:** “Ok. Let’s keep chugging along. Jeremiah 32:40 says, ‘I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.’ Why did you have me turn there?”
- C:** “We’re now discussing ‘P’ or Perseverance of the Saints. The doctrine states that once God has saved us He’s going to see His work come to completion in us.”
- R:** “Do you mean ‘once saved, always saved’?”
- C:** “It is indeed often labeled that way, but that phrasing has been abused. Many take that phrase to mean that someone can just profess faith in God, and they then can do whatever they want after the confession. This, however, is not what the doctrine states.”
- R:** “In my Bible study on Romans last quarter, we talked about Paul saying that we shouldn’t keep sinning so that grace should keep getting poured out, because we have given up our sinful lives.”²³
- C:** “Great observation and this is why the doctrine is sometimes misunderstood. Yes, if we are born again as Jesus told Nicodemus then will we not continue to lead an unrepentant life. Continuing in blatant sin without a contrite heart only proves that you haven’t been saved all along, but I’m getting ahead of myself again. Let’s get back to the Jeremiah passage.”
- R:** “Sorry.”
- C:** “Don’t be sorry; keep chiming in. I like the sound of my voice a little too much. The Jeremiah passage is important, because it highlights the new nature of the new covenant that was talked about the 31st chapter.²⁴ God will gather His people back, and He will not abandon them in the new covenant. This is a promise.”
- R:** “Quick question.”
- C:** “Sure.”

²³ Romans 6:1-2.

²⁴ Verses 31-34.

- R:** “I’m sure you get asked this a lot, but there are a lot of passages that seem to say that we can lose our salvation.”
- C:** “True, at face value many of these passages do seem to say this; but we need to establish something before we look into that. Sometimes ‘proof texting’ doesn’t do enough to convince us of what the Bible says on a subject; sometimes we need to look at how we view God before we examine His word. Let me ask you, is God faithful to His promises?”
- R:** “Uh...yea.”
- C:** “Well, what is the promise God gives all the nations today?”
- R:** “That Jesus is coming back.”
- C:** “Well, yes; but I was looking for the individual promise. The promise is that if we repent and believe the Gospel we will inherit eternal life. The question then is: Is God faithful to this promise?”
- R:** “I’d sure like to think so, I’d hate to think what would happen if it was up to me.”
- C:** “I agree. We’re lucky, because we live in an age where all members of the new covenant enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which preserves us.”²⁵
- R:** “Do you have Scriptural support for that?”
- C:** “But of course! I wouldn’t give you something I couldn’t back up by God’s word. Let’s look at Ephesians 1:13-14. Please read that for me.”
- R:** “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.”
- C:** “In the context of this chapter, Paul speaks of our predestination in Christ before the foundation of the world; but Paul doesn’t leave us there. He explains how God will fulfill His election of the saints: the Spirit is given to us as a ‘seal’ of our inheritance in heaven.”
- R:** “Wow, what a neat passage. That makes sense in the full context of the chapter.”
- C:** “That’s not the only passage that speaks of our inheritance. My favorite passage in the New Testament is 1 Peter 1:3-9.”

²⁵ This is post-Pentecost which we see in Acts 2.

- R:** “I know 1 Peter is pretty much amazing!”
- C:** “Why don’t you go ahead and read that passage.”
- R:** “‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.’ Wow! Peter says we have an imperishable inheritance.”
- C:** “I know. Amazing isn’t it? He uses words such as “imperishable,” “will not fade away,” “reserved,” and “protected” when talking about the duration of our salvation. And like Ephesians 1, Peter starts off by talking about election in verses 1 and 2. Peter says throughout trials we must remember that our inheritance in heaven is not going anywhere. So rejoice! We *will* enjoy the salvation of our souls from our faith.”
- R:** “But Chris there are two passages I just can’t simply rub off.”
- C:** “What are they? Let me guess, one is going to be from Hebrews 6.”
- R:** “Yea, how did you know?”
- C:** “Had a hunch.”
- R:** “Hebrews 6:4-6 and in Romans 11 where Paul says that we can be broken off of the olive tree.”
- C:** “Let’s first think about the reasoning behind Paul’s olive tree analogy. The analogy was used to explain that fact that Jews and Gentiles are now partakers to the same covenantal promise of salvation. He wants to remove any source of boasting in the Gentiles that the Jews had from their national election as simply descendants from Jacob. He is giving them a stern warning not to become conceited; he is not giving a

great discourse on possible apostasy in that passage. He is dealing with the Jew/Gentile relations in terms of covenantal membership and not eternal security. We need to be careful not to read into a passage what Paul was not talking about. The Hebrews passage is often quoted to prove that we can lose our salvation, but the solution is simple. The passage refers to the unforgivable sin; that being, we can ‘taste of salvation’ or paraphrased ‘hear the Gospel’ but turning it away will fail bring us salvation.”

R: “What about those that do seem to be believers but just fall away?”

C: “That proves they were never really saved to begin with, and that is what John says in his first epistle: ‘They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.’²⁶ If they were true believers—they would’ve stayed in faith. That is exactly what John proclaims.”

R: “Are there any more passages you want to go over for this point?”

C: “Yes. In John 6, as we look at earlier, Jesus also says in verse 37: ‘All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.’ Lastly, Paul says in Philippians 1:6: ‘For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.’”

R: “This is neat, and I like hearing these passages in this new light. I still would like to know what the other side thinks.”

C: “That’s only reasonable. I’ll summarize Arminian thought after I go through ‘L.’”

²⁶ Verse 19.

Who Did Christ Come to Die For?

R: “Is this the last letter?”

C: “Yep. This is ‘L’ which traditionally stands for Limited Atonement.”

R: “What do you mean by ‘limited’?”

C: “I will tell you. First, who did Christ die for?”

R: “Well for everybody of course; that’s what John 3:16 says.”

C: “Are you sure that’s what John 3:16 says?”

R: “Of course. I think.”

C: “John 3:16 doesn’t address the scope of the atonement, that is, who Christ did or did not die for. The passage is making a statement that everyone who believes on Him will have eternal life. It doesn’t say who will or will not or whether that is limited in any way.”

R: “Are you saying that Christ died only for certain people? Why would I then evangelize?”

C: “I’m surprised this objection didn’t come up earlier; usually this objection is brought up when talking about election.”

R: “I guess I didn’t think of it then. But could you answer the question? Why should we evangelize if Christ didn’t die so everyone could come?”

C: “Well, all men are extended the offer of the Gospel, but as we established the natural man cannot understand the spiritual things of God circa Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 1:18. Furthermore, do you or I know who are the elect or non-elect?”

R: “No of course not.”

C: “Then the only worry you have is to sow the seed broadly, and this Jesus’ point in the parable of the sower in Mark 4—God does the rest. Paul says this, ‘I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.’²⁷”

R: “I’m going to have to think more about this.”

²⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:6-7.

- C: “And that’s great! I hope it doesn’t stop here. Remember, this is all new; and I spent months studying this before I came to a conclusion, and I learn more everyday. Don’t think you have to have it all figured out before we part.”
- R: “Please continue explaining this to me.”
- C: “This is where I want to ask you a question: If Jesus did die for all that gives us two possibilities on what Jesus’ death accomplished. What do you think that they are?”
- R: “Well, one could be that all would be saved, but I don’t think the Bible teaches that. I don’t know what the other one could be.”
- C: “You’re right on both accounts. One ramification is that all are saved, and you’re right that the Bible does not teach this. There is a very real place of torment. The second one is that no one is saved.”
- R: “I’m not quite with you.”
- C: “Ok, if Jesus died for all, but not all are saved, then that means that none were actually saved. Do you see that?”
- R: “Umm...I guess.”
- C: “This is just to set up how we will understand the atonement. A famous theologian named Loraine Boettner talks about what it means to ‘limit’ the atonement.²⁸ He says that both Arminians, who say that Jesus did die for all, as well as the Calvinists limit the atonement.”
- R: “How is that so?”
- C: “He described it as Jesus building bridges across the chasm of sin to God. In the Arminian scheme, all sins except for the sin of unbelief are paid for by Jesus on the cross; in this scheme, Jesus builds the bridges half-way across where man is responsible to build the other half. They limit it qualitatively. The Calvinists, on the other hand, say that Jesus actually build the bridge all the way across for a quantitatively limited amount.”
- R: “That’s confusing.”
- C: “Does the logic make sense?”

²⁸ Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1932) p. 153.

- R:** “Yes. Both limit the atonement in some sense. Are you going to look at passages that talk about this? I don’t think I’ve ever read a passage in the Bible that says Jesus died for the elect only.”
- C:** “If you’re looking for that passage, you’re not going to find that exact wording. What we need to look for are texts that talk of Jesus bearing all the sin of His people—that is, on the cross Jesus accomplished salvation by purchasing all the sins of the elect. We need to look for passages that make the atonement definite and final. That’s why I prefer ‘Definite Atonement’ over ‘Limited Atonement.’ We’ll find that in passages that say that Jesus died for the ‘sheep’ in John 10:11, ‘church’ in Ephesians 5:25, and the ‘bride’ in Revelation 21:2. We can safely use these as synonyms for the ‘elect.’”
- R:** “Doesn’t the Bible say that Jesus died for the whole world?”
- C:** “Let me ask you, what were all the disciples in terms of religion?”
- R:** “They were Jews.”
- C:** “Yes. In the New Testament times, the early church was realizing that the Abrahamic Blessing had not come to Gentiles²⁹; to them, this was the whole world. It was unfathomable that people other than descendants from Jacob were being given this gift. This is what John the Baptist says in John 1:29 that, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world;’ and the apostle John says in his first epistle that, ‘He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.’³⁰ Does that make sense?”
- R:** “I guess that sounds right with that context.”
- C:** “It’s hard for us, as 21st century Americans, to understand the mindset of a 1st century, Palestinian Jew that was seeing the whole of redemptive history change right before them. No wonder Jesus was so persecuted!”
- R:** “I see that.”
- C:** “Also, John sees in Revelation 5:9 and 7:9 someone from every, tribe, tongue and nation worshipping the lamb who was slain for them. In other words, the intent of Christ’s death was to purchase these elect individuals from every tribe, tongue, and

²⁹ Cf. Acts 10:45; Rom 4:9-13, 9:6, 22-24; Eph 2:11-22; Gal 3:8-9, 29; Rev 5:9.

³⁰ 1 John 2:2.

nation. Also, 1 Timothy 4:10 teaches that Christ died for all men but especially of believers.”

R: “Well, that sounds like that contradicts your whole theology!”

C: “Not so fast champ. Paul is saying that the cross bought common grace for all but salvific grace for the elect.”

R: “What is common grace?”

C: “Oh, I’m sorry. Common grace is one of two kinds of God’s grace. Common grace is the ability to live, breath, multiply; but this grace does save—it is ‘common’ to all. Jesus teaches this when He says that God ‘causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.’³¹ Paul also talks in 1 Thessalonians about this; would you read chapter 5 verses 9 and 10?”

R: “For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.”

C: “So, do you agree this passage destines us for salvation through Christ?”

R: “That passage would seem to say that.”

C: “The passage says that those God destined for salvation—Jesus died for. In this, He died for the elect. The author to the Hebrews says that Jesus’ death will bring many sons to glory.³² And we looked at John 6:44, and even though the atonement isn’t explicitly taught in that passage; it does say that those God the Father gives to Christ will be risen up with Christ. The ‘giving to’ implies the sins of those the Father has chosen. Also, in the high priestly prayer of John 17: Jesus says ‘I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours.’³³”

R: “I’ll be honest Chris, the first four points I didn’t have a big problem with; but this one doesn’t fit quite right. Can I believe the other four and not this one?”

C: “There are ‘four-point’ Calvinists. Here is why I reject four-point Calvinism, and why I think it is theologically incoherent to hold such a position. First, the message of the atonement is the intent of God to save those He has given to the Son. The task

³¹ Mat 5:45.

³² Hebrews 2:10.

³³ Verse 3.

is perfect, accomplished, and applied. Again, I don't want anyone to believe that we should believe this just out of logical necessity, but what sense does it make to say that God elected a group of people and then say that Jesus died for every single person? The Canons of Dort from the Synod of Dort we talked about earlier put the doctrines of election and atonement together, because they are so interrelated. I believe that the Christian message comes from the atonement."

R: "You seem rather passionate about that."

C: "All of us as Christians should be. It forms the core of the Christian message. Without the substitutionary atonement—we are in a lot of trouble!"

The Balance of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom

- C:** “Are you ready for one more topic of discussion?”
- R:** “Yes, I have a little bit longer before I have to go to class.”
- C:** “Good. Just enough time to get a little more into your head! The last point, we’re going to talk about is the topic of human freedom that I promised. This is where we’re going to venture into a little bit of philosophical jargon, but we’ll go slow; and I’m confident you’ll get it.”
- R:** “Philosophy? I thought we were only talking about theology.”
- C:** “They’re not mutually exclusive entities. The line between what is ‘theology’ and ‘philosophy’ in Christian doctrine is, for all intensive purposes, non-existent.”
- R:** “Are we philioigans? That’s funny.”
- C:** “Dude, I’ve corrupted you too much! No more caffeine for you! Back to our topic. The balance between divine sovereignty and foreknowledge with human freedom is one of the fiercest debates in Christian theology for the past 2,000 years. Many answers have been posited, but I believe there is one position that aptly holds up both truths.”
- R:** “So you do believe we have free will then?”
- C:** “Well, before we can go into that we need to define what the phrase means. Tell me, what does ‘free will’ mean?”
- R:** “That we can make choices.”
- C:** “That’s a good definition. We need to look at what it means to make choices. There are three positions on the issue of divine sovereignty and human freedom, but first I’m going to define what ‘divine sovereignty’ means. It’s important for us to define all the terms we’re using so we can have a fruitful dialogue.³⁴ Let me explain the three positions. Are you ready?”
- R:** “As much as I’ll ever be.”

³⁴ See my audio presentation on clearing up the misconceptions often held by both Arminians and Calvinists in this debate. It can be found online at <http://www.imperishableinheritance.com/wp-content/audio/myths/>.

- C:** “The three positions are libertarian freedom, compatibilistic freedom or ‘soft determinism,’ and fatalism or ‘hard determinism.’ Let me explain the three positions in terms of analogy. Let’s say you get up for breakfast one day, and you decide you want breakfast today. As you enter the kitchen, you see Cheerios and Frosted Flakes above the refrigerator.”
- R:** “Oh come on, you gotta go with the Cheerios.”
- C:** “Stay with me bud.”
- R:** “Sorry, but I really like Cheerios.”
- C:** “I’m sure you do; now let’s return to our analogy. You decide that you want Cheerios, because you obviously like them. The Libertarian view on freedom says that you can only be free if you could’ve chosen the Frosted Flakes, maybe eggs, or nothing at all. In other words, you must have the same opportunity to choose to the contrary. This is called the Principle of Alternate Possibilities. The Libertarian says that there could have been no external forces guiding your decisions. In terms divine foreknowledge, this view says that God’s foreknowledge is composed of what He sees of future choices of men. God’s determining of future events is thereby deemed *incompatible* with man’s freedom therefore they remove God’s determination of future actions. Make sense?”
- R:** “Yea, but I know I wouldn’t have chosen Frosted Flakes.”
- C:** “Moving on. There is the fatalistic view which is called ‘hard determinism.’ This is a view that there were external factors that not influenced you but made the decision for you. This view would say that not only would you have chosen the Cheerios, but you made no real, meaningful decision in the process—you are an automaton. In this view God determines the future, but humans themselves make no real choices. This is a view that also sees God’s determining of future events and man’s freedom as *incompatible*, and instead of throwing out God’s determination as the Libertarian does they throw out the freedom. Got that one?”
- R:** “What I’ve heard of Calvinism is that they hold this view. I thought Calvinists taught that we didn’t have any freedom.”
- C:** “This is often a caricature of Calvinism. The classical position held by Calvinists is that God can determine future events—which is the other half of predestination—but

when man makes a choice he does so from his desires. This is often called *compatibilism* or ‘soft determinism.’ It is ‘soft,’ because God doesn’t just coerce us into making the choice for the Cheerios; in other words, God’s determination of choosing the Cheerios is compatible with my free choice in the matter. The soft determinist would say that God wants you to choose the Cheerios, but when you do you had a free desire to make that choice. God’s determination is thereby compatible with human’s freedom as opposed to the other two views. Let me stop here. Is there anything you don’t understand from these three views?”

R: “I guess I’m not seeing how God can determine an action but yet we still are free.”

C: “To be truly honest with you Robbie, neither can I; but I see the Scriptures teaching that God both exercises His sovereignty by determining future events, but that we are also free to make choices according to our desires.”

R: “Can you explain the making choices from desires thing?”

C: “Yes, let me draw a diagram to show you what’s going on.

[Chris draws diagram. See Appendix 1 for the diagram]

C: “This is a diagram over the fourfold state of the will. Let me explain how our choices are affected by Adam’s fall, our conversion, and what it will be like in Heaven. First, after creation Adam was placed in the Garden and was given the choice to either eat from the tree or not. He of course did eat of the tree, and we learned from Romans 5:12-17 that all died in Adam’s transgression, and so we move into the next stage. This is the ‘post-fall’ stage or the state that every man is born into. In this state we are totally depraved as we’ve talked about. We have the natural ability to sin, but we do not have the ability to not sin; our will is, in effect, in bondage to sin. Paul says in Romans 14 that everything that is not from faith is sin.³⁵ We are free to sin—and we do so happily—until the Holy Spirit comes into our lives. For the elect, the Holy Spirit comes in and leads into the next stage. This stage is the ‘justified’ state. As I mentioned earlier John Calvin said, ‘the will is not destroyed but rather repaired by

³⁵ Verse 23.

grace.’ As we can see, our will is ‘fixed.’ Do you see what state we return to in terms of our will?”

R: “Adam?”

C: “Correct. We then have the ability to sin, and John says we still continue to³⁶, but we also have the ability to not sin. We are set free from the bondage of sin.”

R: “This makes the depravity issue a little clearer and the necessary relationship between that and irresistible grace.”

C: “Awesome! I shall plug on to the final state. The final state is the glorified state. This is where we will be the most free, but we will not have the ability to sin. Isn’t that perplexing that when we will be the most free it will be almost as though we can’t do something? Think of God. God cannot sin³⁷ or repent³⁸ yet He is the freest being in the universe! It seems from our human perspective that God is limited in some sense.”

R: “Craziness. That is a neat thought. Does this mean that God acts flow out of who He is? The Bible says that God is holy³⁹, and this would mean that He can only make holy choices?”

C: “You’re right on. I truly believe that being made in the image of God makes we make choices as God does. Now that doesn’t mean that we have the same abilities as God we have already demonstrated that, but it does mean that we make decisions in a similar way. God makes decisions in compliance with His holiness, and we make decisions in accordance with our wickedness.”

R: “I’m sure you have Bible passages to share with me.”

C: “But of course; without it my rhetoric would be meaningless. Let’s look at passages that teach first that God is sovereign in the Calvinistic definition that He does guide the actions of men, but then we’ll look at passages that teach that man makes decisions from his nature. Think of it like this: the Bible teaches that the Father is God,⁴⁰ the Son is God,⁴¹ and the Holy Spirit is God.⁴² The Bible also teaches that

³⁶ 1 John 1:8.

³⁷ Titus 1:2.

³⁸ Numbers 23:19.

³⁹ Lev 11:44 (cf. 1 Pet 1:16); Isa 6:3 (cf. Rev 4:8).

⁴⁰ Joh 8:41; Gal 1:1.

⁴¹ Isa 7:14; Col 2:19

God is One.⁴³ This is where we get the doctrine of the Trinity from. There is no verse in the Bible that explicitly states the Triune nature of God,⁴⁴ but we get the doctrine from a systematic observation of the Scriptures; even though these two ideas seem to be in tension—the Scripture holds both up. This is how we can look at balancing the truths of deterministic sovereignty and human responsibility. Some passages that teach that God determines future events to His praise are Ephesians 1:11 which says that God ‘works all things after the counsel of His will’ and its tied to predestination in that passage.⁴⁵ How about you read Jeremiah 1:4-5.”

R: “Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

C: “God has, of His own good pleasure, consecrated or set apart Jeremiah before his birth. Ephesians 2:10, as we talked about earlier, says that God set forth our good works through Christ before the foundation of the world. Two important passages are used in Acts. Acts 3:23 is in Peter’s sermon to the people for their actions in delivering over Christ to be crucified, but Peter declares that not only was it God’s plan but that He determined that it would happen. Secondly Acts 4:27-28 teaches that God predestines all that occurs. That was but a small sampling of texts related to this, but are seeing the gist?”

R: “Yea.”

C: “Now for the second part which are texts that relate to man making free choices according to his nature which are his desires. James 1:14 says that we are enticed and

⁴² Mat 28:19; Act 5:3-4.

⁴³ Deut 6:4; Isa 44:6.

⁴⁴ I am making in this passage the claim that the Johannine Comma in the KJV/NKJV Greek New Testament at 1 John 5:7 (“the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”) which is found only in the Byzantine family of manuscripts, cited by none of the early church fathers in their refutation of Trinitarian heresies, and the Erasmus promise makes this clear to me that this is not Scripture. See my analysis of this passage: <http://www.imperishableinheritance.com/2004/the-johannine-comma/>.

⁴⁵ John Gill correctly exegetes this passage:

“...predestination is not only to sonship, but to an inheritance; it not only secures the grace of adoption, but prepares and provides an heavenly portion: and this act of predestination proceeds according to a purpose; according to a purpose of God, which can never be frustrated; and according to the purpose of "that God", as one of Stephens's copies reads, that is the author of all things but sin; of the works of creation and of providence, and of grace and salvation; and who works all these according to his will...”

John Gill, *Exposition of the Whole Bible*, Ephesians 1:11

carried away by our own desires, Jesus says in Luke 6:43-45 that good trees bear good fruit but bad trees bear bad fruit relating to our decisions as a result of our natures,⁴⁶ and Titus 3:3 says that we were once, that is before conversion, enslaved to various lusts. There are also passages that demonstrate that we act and work in us. Why don't you read Proverbs 16:9 and 21:1?"

R: "The first one says, 'The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.' And 21:1 says, 'The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.' Wow, those are neat passages."

C: "It's a neat picture of how God directs us through analogy. Paul tells us in Philippians 2 that 'it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.'⁴⁷ I think though that the best example of man making free choices and God working in us to bring up what He desires is the inspiration of the Scriptures. The Bible is one book with 40 writers writing 66 different letters, historical chronologies, wisdom, prophecy, etc. It is amazing how not one of them writes the same, and yet each book is upheld to the same level for teaching, equipping man, training in righteousness, and it is all "inspired by God" or literally "God-breathed."⁴⁸ To say that every writer could have chosen to the contrary and written a different word, moved a thought break, or composed a different greeting or closing to a letter—is to say that God got really lucky! The Spirit moved within men to bring about God's purpose of writing and preserving the Scriptures. Peter teaches this when he says, 'But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.'⁴⁹ Does all this make any sense?"

R: "It's starting to; it's just a lot of information."

C: "I know, and you did a good job hanging in there with me. Unless you have any more questions than I'm done boring you."

⁴⁶ Bruce Ware comments on this passage:

"Our wills function, according to Jesus, as agents of our hearts. Out of the abundance of our hearts, we choose to speak what we will...That is, there is a necessary connection between character and conduct, heart and hands, desires and decisions."

Bruce Ware, *God's Greater Glory* (p. 79)

⁴⁷ Verse 13.

⁴⁸ 2 Timothy 3:16.

⁴⁹ 2 Peter 1:20-21

R: “Can I still have the Cheerios tomorrow?”

Appendix A⁵⁰

<i>Pre-Fall Man (Adam)</i>	<i>Post-Fall Man (Unsaved)</i>	<i>Reborn Man (Justified)</i>	<i>Glorified Man (Heaven)</i>
<i>Able to Sin</i> <i>Able to Not Sin</i>	<i>Able to Sin</i> <i>Unable to Not Sin</i>	<i>Able to Sin</i> <i>Able to Not Sin</i>	<i>Able to Not Sin</i> <i>Unable to Sin</i>
<i>C r e a t i o n</i>	<i>F a l l / B i r t h</i>	<i>R e g e n e r a t i o n</i>	<i>R e s u r r e c t i o n</i>

⁵⁰ See the defense of this idea more fully developed in Thomas Boston's: *Human Nature In Its Fourfold State*.

Scripture References

Genesis	Luke	Galatians
2:17..... 8	6:43-45..... 32	1:1..... 31
Leviticus	John	3:8-9..... 25
11:44..... 31	1:29..... 25	3:29..... 25
Numbers	3:3..... 7, 14	Ephesians
23:19..... 31	3:16..... 23	1:3-11..... 12
Deuteronomy	5:24..... 9	1:11..... 32
6:4..... 31	6:37..... 22	1:13-14..... 20
Psalms	6:44..... 17, 26	2:1..... 8
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Resources

Books

Why I'm Not An Arminian by Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams

The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, Documented by David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas

Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine by Wayne Grudem

Online

The Threshold (Monergism.com) <<http://www.monergism.com/>>

Grace Online Library < <http://www.graceonlinelibrary.org/>>

Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics <<http://www.reformed.org/>>

Sola Gratia <<http://www.solagratia.org/>>

Desiring God: The Doctrines of Grace (Calvinism and TULIP Theology)
<http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/doctrines_grace/doc_grace_index.html>