

## **The Doctrine of Election, Part 2**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-274

We're going to return now to the, I trust, refreshment of the Word of God. We're talking about the doctrine of election, chosen by God, who chose whom. And this is not without controversy, as you well know. The doctrine of sovereign election, the truth of predestination is much discussed and most discussions can degenerate into something very heated.

In fact, to say that there are people who hate the idea of predestination is not an overstatement. There are people who hate the thought of divine election, sovereign choice. In fact, there are some people who say that the doctrine is demonic, that the doctrine itself is satanic. It is such an affront to their sense of fairness and sense of what they think is right, that there are people who call themselves Christians who would see this as truth that comes from the enemy of God and not God himself.

For many people, rationally it seems unfair that God chooses who will be saved. For other people, it is emotionally hard to accept and endure that God would decide who he would save. To other people - and maybe to the same people as the first two - it seems like some kind of assault on free will, human choice, which many people are convinced is some kind of human right.

And I understand those feelings. It is a hard doctrine to accept. All of us who have come to understand what the Bible teaches about the doctrine of election have had to deal with the rational arguments that say this doesn't seem fair, this doesn't seem just, this doesn't seem equitable, this can't be the way it is. We've all had to deal with the emotional issues of, it's tragic, it's sad that God passes by some sinners. We've all had to deal with the fact that while we have volition, and we have choice, ultimately it is not independent of God.

So, I understand how you feel. I understand how you think. I understand all of those things, because no one comes to a biblical understanding of the doctrine of sovereign election without working through those issues. But then again, what satisfies my reason, and what satisfies my emotion, and what satisfies my sense of freedom is not the determiner of truth.

And so we have to come back to that point. I'm not God. And while things may not make sense to my reason, my reason is fallen. And while things may not make sense to my emotion, my emotion is fallen. And while things might not seem to square up with my sense of freedom, my freedom is fallen, too. And one thing I will not do, and none of us really would openly want to do, we will not create God in our image. We will not design God to fit our reason, our emotion and our freedom. We cannot

design God to be what we think he should be. We cannot design God to act how we think he should act.

Still, there are some who appear to be bold enough to make the attempt. They seem to be undisturbed by the fact that in rejecting the doctrine of divine election, predestination, they have created a God who is not the God of the Bible. The God of their creation may be more reasonable to them, he may be more comfortable to them. He may fit their instincts better. But the fact of the matter is, that God that they have made is not the true God.

A misrepresentation of God, any corruption of God, any diminishing of God, is to then create a God in your own mind that is not the true and living God, and such misrepresentations inevitably corrupt our worship, they corrupt our service to him, and they can be blasphemous as well as ignorant.

An illustration of that from another area that deals with the nature of God would be creation. If you believe in evolution, if you reject the idea that God created the universe in six days, if you will not accept that as fact but you believe that there's an evolutionary process going on, you have just stolen some of God's glory, right? Because he is to be glorified as the Creator.

And the fact that time is broken inexplicably really apart from creation into seven-day periods is a constant reminder that God created everything in six days. There's no other reason to break things down into seven-day periods. But human life itself is a constant reminder in the cycles of time that God is the Creator and God is to be honored as the Creator. And to hold a view that there is somehow other forces - or there are somehow other forces - operating in creation beyond what scripture attributes to God is to then to diminish his glory. Any corruption of the nature of God then takes you to a level below the reality of God, and therefore corrupts worship because it corrupts your understanding of who he is.

We do have reason. Reason, according to Romans 1 allows us to conclude there is a God. We do have emotion. Emotion gives us the faculty to relate to each other, something animals and plants don't have. And emotion also gives us the privilege of relating to God. And we do have will. We do act in some ways with a measure of freedom. But our reason fell when Adam fell, and our emotion fell when Adam fell, and our freedom fell when Adam fell. And so all our faculties, while they are residual, there are still some residual elements of those faculties given to Adam before the fall, all of our faculties are, to one degree or another, corrupted. Our reason is corrupted by the flesh. Our emotion is corrupted by the flesh. And our will, our freedom is certainly corrupted by the flesh.

Therefore, in order for reason, and emotion, and will to function as God wants them to function, they cannot be left to themselves because they're fallen. They must be brought under the authority of – what? - scripture. What is truly reasonable is not what seems reasonable to us. What is truly satisfying may not be what is satisfying to us. What is truly an expression of our will may not be what

our fallen will most longs for.

The only way we'll ever get an uncorrupted view of God is to go to an uncorrupted source. And what is that? It's the Word of God. And so in every issue that relates to God, we go to scripture. And I do understand that the idea that God chooses people for salvation is a hard thing to accept. I do understand that it's hard reasonably because we're so concerned with what is fair by our understanding. And I do understand that it's a difficult thing emotionally, and certainly with regard to the freedom of the human will.

But denying the doctrine of election or denying the doctrine of predestination doesn't change anything, because if I say that you're able to go to heaven based on your choice, not God's, that you're the determiner of your destiny, your eternal destiny, that this is up to you to do, God leaves it completely to you, the next question would be, "Does God know what you'll do?"

And the answer to that question has to be yes, he does know what you are going to do because he knows everything. And because he already has a book from eternity in which the names of all the people who will believe are already written down, so God already knows, so the question is if he knew you weren't going to believe, then why did he go and create you anyway? I mean, you really never escape the dilemma.

And somebody might come along and say, like the openness theologian people, and say, "Well, he doesn't know." Well, if he doesn't know then for mercy's sake why doesn't he just throw this thing to the wind like a bunch of dandelions and let it fall wherever it would? He certainly must have known how it would turn out, terribly. He certainly knew he had thrown Satan out of heaven. He certainly knew that a third of the angels went with him. He certainly knew that they were doing what they were doing in the Garden of Eden. He certainly knew all that. Why would he do this? Why would he create the race if there was even the possibility of hell? You never really do escape the issue.

In the end, one thing is clear. God never, ever planned to save everyone. You say, "How do you know that?" Because not everyone is saved, therefore God couldn't have planned to save everyone, or everyone would be saved, right? Because God can do whatever he purposes to do. Is that not true? So the question is then, why does God pass over some and choose others? And the other is, for his own glory. Romans 9, again, tells us that God is glorified in his wrath as he is in his mercy.

Now, this is a huge issue, but denying the doctrine of predestination or the doctrine of election doesn't solve the problem. One thing is clear. God did not determine to save everyone. That is clear. Jesus said that when he said, "Many are on the broad road that leads to destruction." And so the question then is, if God in his perfectly just, and holy, sovereign purpose determined to save some, by what means did he determine to do that?

Did he determine to do it simply willy-nilly on the part of the people making the choice, or did he himself make the choice? First, he determined, we know, not to save all, or there wouldn't be an eternal hell, and there wouldn't be "few" that find the way to life everlasting. So, the only question remaining is who chose whom? Do people choose God or does God choose people? And the answer is found where? In the Bible. In the Bible.

Last time, I gave you a long list of scripture texts because it's so very important to help you understand this doctrine. It's not isolated. Let me give you a few more, okay? Deuteronomy 10:14-15. Deuteronomy 10:14-15. I want to show you that wherever you go in the Bible, you run into this same truth. This is what it says.

Speaking of Israel, God said, "Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it." Now there is a statement as to the supreme authority of God. He controls the whole universe. "Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and he chose their descendants after them, even you over all people."

Now, what Moses is writing there in Deuteronomy chapter 10 is the Lord owns everything. Everything in heaven and the highest heaven, everything in earth, all that there is belongs to God. And out of it all God chose you, the seed of Abraham, and your descendants, and set his affection to love you above all people. He made a choice. And he passed by all the other nations. This is not something extraordinary for God to do in the New Testament era. This is how he's always operated. He even chose Abraham.

In the New Testament in Matthew 11:27, Jesus says, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father - " and then this important line, " - and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son - " listen " - and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal him." The only way you'll ever know God the Father is if the Son wills to reveal him to you. All the prerogatives belong to the Trinity. All the prerogatives belong to God. No one knows the Father except the Son and whoever the Son wills to know him.

In Matthew chapter 22:14 we read, "Many are called but few are - " what? " - are chosen." I don't know how much more clear that could be. Many are called. There is a wide, broad gospel call, few are chosen. In Mark chapter 13 - and it's important that we cover these because they're critical in spreading this teaching across the whole of scripture. Mark 13:20. Jesus is speaking about the future time of the tribulation, and he says, "Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved, but for the sake of the elect - " but for the sake of the chosen " - whom he chose."

There it is. Who chose whom? He chose us. He shortened the days. In the time of the tribulation, there will be horrific things going on, judgments all over the world. And the time is condensed. It's

short. It's very short or the elect couldn't even survive. For the sake of not everybody, not the whole world, "but for the sake of the chosen whom he chose."

In the 11th chapter of Romans - and I'm not giving you all the scriptures that I've written down. But these are important ones. In Romans 11:4. "What is the divine response to him?" Talking about Elijah and the prophets of Baal. "I have kept for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

What does God say? You know, Elijah in his life goes out and he confronts the prophets of Baal and then he begins to feel like he's the only one left and there's nobody faithful to the Lord. Verse 3. "I alone am left and they're seeking my life." You remember, the people started chasing him, Jezebel. And he's running out of town, and running out into the desert, and asking God to take his life because somebody is going to kill him. And he thinks he's the only one left. And the divine response in verse 4 is, "I have kept for myself 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal." I chose them. I kept them.

Verse 5 explains that, "In the same way then there has also come to be at the present time, a remnant according to God's gracious choice." There were 7,000 people who were true to God, who were believing in the time of Elijah that God had chosen and kept, and there is in the present time when Paul writes this, and in every time, and today, a remnant according to God's gracious choice. It's a choice. Verse 7. "What then? That which Israel is seeking for and has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened." Those who were chosen obtained it. Those who weren't chosen were hardened. God actually gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not, ears to hear not, down to this very day. Strong language about sovereign choice.

2 Timothy 2:10. 2 Timothy 2:10. Paul says, understanding this doctrine, believing it with all his heart, Paul said, "I endure." He wrote that Roman epistle. He says in 2 Timothy 2:10. "For this reason, I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus."

Why do you go through what you go through, Paul? My, life was so hard for him. Talks about suffering hardship like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He competes in verse 5 like an athlete, strenuously. He works in verse 6 like a hard-working farmer. I mean, it's all sacrificial. In verse 9 he talks about suffering hardship, "even to imprisonment as a criminal." Why do you do that? Why do you do it? "For this reason I endure all things, for the sake of those who are chosen." It's unmistakable. God has his chosen and their choosing has to be confirmed by the hearing of the gospel.

In James 1:18. James 1:18. Well, let's look at verse 17, this is a good verse, you know it well. James 1:17. "Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from - " where? Now what's the best gift that could come down from heaven? Salvation. Every good thing, the best thing would be salvation, the "perfect gift - " the gift of spiritual perfection " - is from above, - " everything, " - coming down from

the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." Everything that's good - and salvation would be at the top of the list - is from God. And so in verse 18 it says, "In the exercise of his will he brought us forth by the Word of Truth that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among his creatures." He did it. It came down from heaven. As an exercise of his will, he brought us forth and he did it by the Word of Truth, that is through the gospel.

James 2:5. James 2:5. "Listen, my beloved brethren. Did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom which he promised to those who love him?" Why are most of the people who are believers poor? Because what? God chose the poor. That's what it says. "God chose the poor." "Did not God choose the poor of this world?"

And then in Revelation 13:8, 17:8, it says their names were written down in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world, by a decision that God himself made. Look at 2 Timothy 2:19. And this is just introduction. 2 Timothy 2:19. Here is the firm foundation of your salvation. But backing up, there are in verse 18 people who have gone astray from the truth, upset the faith of some. "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands." God has made a foundation that will not move.

And what is on that foundation? Here's what's on it. It's like a great foundation for the church, and what is on that foundation? These words, "The Lord knows those who are his." The Lord knows those who are his. He knows who belongs to him.

Back in John chapter 3 - which is very familiar ground for any student of the gospel and the Bible - we read this. Jesus in John 3:3, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he can't see the Kingdom of God." Nicodemus said, "Then how can a man be born when he's old? He can't enter a second time in his mother's womb and be born, can he?" He's following the metaphor. He understands Jesus is talking spiritually. He knows that. He's just saying, "How can it happen?" And here's the answer - amazing answer. Jesus doesn't say, "Well, you've got to pray this prayer and do this and that." He said, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he can't enter the Kingdom of God." So it's not going to happen apart from the Holy Spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again."

Whatever - whenever this happens, wherever it happens, to whomever it happens, it happens by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a birth from above. In verse 8 he says, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, you don't know where it comes from, you don't know where it's going, so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Isn't that amazing? The wind goes where the wind wants to go.

You don't tell the wind where to go. We've been watching all those little lines, haven't we, down there in the Gulf, all those hurricanes, nobody's telling that thing where to go. It goes wherever it wants to go. And so it is with the Spirit, he goes wherever he wants to go. He blows wherever he wants to

blow. He sovereignly does whatever he wants to do in whatever life he wants to do it in. And in the end, he gets all the glory. I mean, he gets all the glory.

Let me have you turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, and I can illustrate this for you. I think if you're dealing with someone who doesn't like the doctrine of election, if you're dealing with someone who doesn't like the doctrine of predestination, if you're dealing with someone who is, what is known as Pelagian or Arminian from Arminius who denied this doctrine, if you're dealing with those people, here's a passage that really stops them cold in their tracks.

1 Corinthians 1:26. "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise, according to the flesh; not many mighty, not many noble." Just take a look at the congregation. All right, you're sitting there in the church at Corinth, look around. Look around. See the ones who have been called effectually into salvation. How many of the world's wise are there? How many of the world's mighty are there? How many of the nobles are there? How much royal blood is there in your church?

Verse 27. "But God has chosen the foolish of the world to shame the wise, God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised. God has chosen the things are not that he might nullify the things that are in order that no man should - " what? " - boast before God."

I'm telling you what, folks, Arminians are up a creek without a paddle in this passage. This says God wanted to be glorified. God wanted to receive all the glory. No person who is saved could ever boast about his own salvation and it served God's glory best for him to choose the foolish, and the weak, and the base, and the despised, and the nothings, and the nobodies.

Now listen, if the weak and the foolish chose God, this passage doesn't make any sense. If the weak and the foolish chose God, then who gets the credit? The weak and the foolish. So how does this end human boasting? It turns the whole passage into nonsense. And verse 30 he says, "But by his doing - " his being God " - you are in Christ Jesus." You're in Christ Jesus because God did it, so that verse 31 says, "If you're going to boast, boast - " where? " - boast in the Lord."

I mean, it's all over the Bible. This passage isn't about man's choice, this isn't anything to do with man's choice. This is about God's choice. And if it's about man's choice, then how does it end human boasting? It turns the whole passage into utter nonsense.

Well, while I'm on the subject, go back to Romans 9. Romans 9. Now, this is just obvious stuff. In verses 8 through 13, it talks about Jacob and Esau. And down in verse 13 it says, "Jacob I loved, Esau I hated." Jacob I loved, Esau I hated. Back in verse 11 it says, "Though the twins were not yet born - " Jacob and Esau " - hadn't done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to his choice might stand." God chose Jacob not because of anything they had done, not because of

any merit, not because of any good work, purely because of His own purpose.

It doesn't say anything about Jacob choosing God. And verse 14 seals it. Look at verse 14. "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be." Do you understand the importance of that issue? If Jacob was choosing and if people were choosing, and if anybody could choose, and if it was up to us, why then would you have to defend the justice of God? Right? Why would you ever have to say, "Well there's no injustice with God." I mean, if it's us choosing him, then why is Paul worried that we might think that God is unjust if it's just our choice?

If Paul is saying God just chooses those who choose him, well that's not unjust, nobody needs to defend God's justice. I mean, nobody would accuse God of being unjust if he just chooses whoever chooses him. But Paul knows that people will accuse God of injustice because it goes against the grain of our fallen reason when we hear that God makes the choice according to his own purpose.

And then down in verse 20, he says, "Who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" Why would anybody talk back to God? They wouldn't be talking back to God if God just chose whoever chose him. It's that there are people who are so offended by the fact that God chooses that they answer back to God. And he says "You're like a thing molded saying to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this?' " Which makes the point? If God hadn't been the one who made you what you are, then you wouldn't be answering back to him about that.

The whole argument here would be utter nonsense if it weren't crystal clear that this is a divine choice. And it does raise the question of God's justice, and it does raise the question of the rights of the pot in the hands of the potter. If it is a human choice, there's no need to object. If it's a human choice and God just chooses whoever chooses him, there's no need to defend divine justice. There's no need to defend God's sovereign authority to do whatever he wants with whoever. You see, if you deny sovereign choice, if you deny the doctrine of election, you turn all these texts either into nonsense or outright deception.

Now in Romans 11, there is a doxology that puts it where it should be. Verse 33, great doxology. And this is where you just have to rest, folks. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." Do you understand that you can't plumb the depths of God's knowledge and wisdom? Do you understand that? Don't overestimate yourself. What might not seem reasonable to you, might not seem emotionally satisfactory to you, might not seem fair to human will and freedom, you just understand that you can't even begin to challenge with your mind the depths of wisdom and knowledge that belongs to God. And do you not know how unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways? Don't ever put yourself in a position to be questioning God.

Verse 34, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?" I mean, that is outrageous. You're going to tell God what he can or cannot do? And what to you seems reasonable,



emotionally satisfying, and fair to the human will? Have you forgotten verse 36 that “from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever, amen.”?

Now even some of you who are even a little bit - you're a little bit squeamish about this doctrine still - I understand that, I really do. I mean, it takes time to work this through and when we get done, you'll see it differently. But, you know, even you that are having a little tough time with this, do you ever congratulate yourself on your salvation? Have you ever done that? Have you ever just looked up to heaven and said, “God, you must be really proud of me, the choices I made, the way I decided to turn from sin and believe the gospel?” I mean, had that thought ever entered your mind? Have you ever thought, “You know, look at all these stupid people around me who reject the gospel. I'm smart enough to see it for what it is. I buy the whole thing”?

Have you ever thought, “Look at all the riff-raff. I tell you, I found some holy longings and I pursued the gospel?” You don't think like that. And what do you say to someone you love that's outside of Christ? Do you say, “Come on, man, get smart. Come on, reach down deep, man, use your faculties”? You don't talk like that. What do you do when you want to see somebody saved? What do you do? You pray. Why? Oh you're hoping God will choose them if they choose him? And when anybody is saved, who do you thank?

See, you're all closet Calvinists. You understand you were drowning and he saved you. You were dead and he gave you life. You were blind and he gave you sight. You were deaf and he gave you hearing. You understand that. That's why Titus 3:5 says, “He saved us.” It was by his power, by his will, according to his purpose. We came because he drew us. It isn't apart from our will, he moved our will.

And, you know, when you heard these testimonies tonight, you heard about guilt, didn't you? You heard them talk about guilt, conviction, sensing their sin, wanting to be clean, wanting to be forgiven, wanting salvation, sure. You heard about humbling your heart. You heard about a willingness to give up your life, a desire to love Christ with all your heart.

He chose you. He saved you. But not apart from the Holy Spirit activating all those true spiritual responses: Penitence, humility, love, hunger for righteousness. No, you chose him because he chose you. Well to put it in the words of John, we love him because he first loved us. It is inescapable in the Word of God, absolutely inescapable. It doesn't violate your personal freedom, it activates your freedom. And when we want somebody to come to the Lord, we pray, we pray, we pray, we pray that the Holy Spirit would turn their hearts to Christ, that the hurricane of the Holy Spirit would come through their soul. We pray that the Spirit would make them willing to repent and willing to believe.

Never when we pray that do we think we're violating their will. You wouldn't pray like this, “Lord, it's got to be their deal. It's got to be their deal. So don't you be messing around with them. It's got to be

their deal. They've got to do it from their own hearts." That's absolutely absurd. You know that no sinner is going to do that unless the Spirit moves.

So the fact that God chose us is all over the Bible. It isn't that he chose us because he knew we'd choose him. Because if he hadn't chosen us, we'd never have chosen him. I told you when we talked about the doctrine of perseverance, or preservation or eternal security, if I could lose my salvation, I'd lose it. Well I'll tell you this, if I could lose my salvation, I'd lose it ten times a day, every day. I can't save myself or keep myself saved. God chose me, he awakened my heart and my will, he activated them all that I might embrace him.

Now I want to go back to this one idea and I'm – I'll - two weeks from now I'll have more to say, the good part, because there's an answer for this that's rising on the horizon. I mentioned that I want to talk about openness theology. Some say God can't choose because he doesn't know. Okay? Really important doctrine floating around out there. God can't choose. God doesn't know. The reason God doesn't know is there's nothing to know because nothing's happened. You can't know what hasn't happened, they say. It's their opinion. They have therefore created other than the true and living God. But anyway, for the sake of argument, he can't know what hasn't happened since what hasn't happened hasn't happened, it doesn't exist so how could you know it?

That's their little argument. It's called Open Theism, God is open like everybody else. He needs to read the morning paper just like everybody else to find out what's going on. So they say. God - their way out of this emotional trauma that the doctrine of election produces in them is to say he can't choose anybody because he doesn't know what they're going to do until they do it. Really? So God doesn't know the future. That's how they get God off the hook.

How is it that Isaiah 46:10 says, "He knows the end from the beginning," what does that mean? Well, how is it that Isaiah 41:21-22, Isaiah 44:7-8 say his knowledge of the future is what distinguishes him from false gods? Or how is it that through the Bible he foretells events centuries before they ever happen? How is it, for example, in Isaiah 44:28 that he names Cyrus as the ruler who will build up Jerusalem, yet the name of Cyrus, and even his existence as a human being, depended on an unimaginably long and complex series of human decisions separating the prophecy from its fulfillment? How did God know that?

In 1 Kings 13:2, God predicts the birth of Josiah 300 years before the event. How did he know that? And 2 Kings 19:25, he states explicitly that he had ordained and planned the military victories of the Assyrians long before they ever took place. God foretells the Egyptians' voluntary oppression of Israel in Genesis 15:13. He foretells Pharaoh's hardening of his heart against Moses in Exodus 3:19. He foretells the rejection of Isaiah's message by the Israelites in Isaiah 6:9. He foretells the rebellion of the Israelites after Moses' death, Deuteronomy 31:16. He foretells Judas' voluntary betrayal of Christ, John 6:70-71. And so on, and so on, and so on.

Now, these Open Theists say, "Well, you know, God's really sharp. He's really good at analyzing trends. And he's good at sort of predicting with accuracy what might happen because he kind of gets the flow." It's absurd. This doesn't work. You're talking about prophetic events that are the end of millions of human choices. Ridiculous. But I'll tell you what makes the whole thing most ridiculous. If God doesn't know the future - are you ready for this? If God doesn't know the future, he doesn't know Jesus is going to die. That's a problem.

This is where the whole openness thing goes down the proverbial drain. Acts 2:23 says, "Jesus was handed over to his enemies according to the definite plan, determined plan and foreknowledge of God." Did God plan Jesus' arrest? Did God plan Jesus' crucifixion? Did God plan that in detail? They did to him, according to Acts 4:28 what God's hand and plan had predestined to take place, that's what it says in Acts 4:28.

Come on, you don't believe that God was just reacting to what was happening to Jesus as it happened. I think he was a lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, don't you? That's what the Bible says. Now if God does not - listen to me. If God does not exercise power, control over human beings and their actions, and if God does not control those actions or work those actions into the fulfillment of his plan, and if God doesn't even have a plan because he doesn't know what's going to happen, then how did he know Jesus would end up on a cross?

If he doesn't know the future, how did he know the Jews would cooperate? How did he know the Pharisees would cooperate? How did he know Pilate would cooperate? How did he know Judas would cooperate? How did he know Judas wouldn't bail out two years into the deal and split? How did he know Judas would hang around long enough to betray him? How did he know Judas would throw the money on the floor? How did he know that? How did he know any of that? How did he know that Jesus would be raised up like a serpent in the wilderness? How did he know any of that if he doesn't know the future?

He not only knows the future, he ordains the future. And if he ordains the future, he makes the future happen. If he didn't know the future, he didn't know the Roman soldiers would even crucify Jesus. How did he know Pilate wouldn't say, "Ah, I don't want to deal with this just man, let him go? Give him a Roman escort, take him out of town, let him shuffle off to Greece, get lost in a crowd."

If God doesn't know the future, then God doesn't know that His Son is going to die for your sins. That's ridiculous. He not only knows the future, he ordains the future. And the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, one writer puts it this way. "The crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the hinge pin of history, and the indispensable condition of our salvation was most certainly not left up to the vagaries of human decision. It was ordained from the foundation of the earth, and it is impossible that it might not have occurred. The Bible nowhere suggests or even permits the interpretation that Judas, Caiaphas, Pilate

and the soldiers were unwilling pawns forced by God into the commission of a horrible crime. They acted freely and in accordance with their own motives and purposes, yet they did exactly what God's hand and plan had predestined would happen." Great statement.

God ordains it all. He knows the future because he's written it. All the choices are his. Certainly the choice of salvation for lost, dead, blind sinners. And again I say what John said, "We love him because - " say it " - he first loved us." Okay, that's the introduction. Two weeks from now - we're not to the message yet, but we're getting closer. Pray with me. I've got to write down where I ended because two weeks from now I may not remember.

Father, what a joy it is to celebrate the glories of this immense doctrine. It's not just about you sovereignly determining our salvation, its about you being sovereign and determining everything. This is just one component but how rich it is to understand this. You do what you do for your glory. We don't question you. We would never ever have a thought that you might be unjust or unloving, but you are God and we cannot plumb your knowledge, we can't go as deep as your wisdom. Your ways are past finding out, they are unsearchable, and we're content to leave your decisions with you for your own glory.

But we do know that even with this wondrous doctrine of sovereign election, you also have said, "Whosoever will may come, and him that comes to me I will not turn away." We don't understand the secret decree. We don't understand history until it all unfolds. We don't have that ability. But we do know that the gospel has come to us, and that we have been told to believe. And for some of us, the Spirit of God is moving in our hearts, and we need to be obedient, and respond in faith, knowing that you will hear and you will save all who come to you.

We thank you for that promise. We don't need to worry about the things we can't understand. We just need to respond to the gospel. And if we don't, as mysterious as it is, your Word says it's our fault, it's our responsibility, it's our guilt, it's our rejection, it's our unbelief that will doom us. How that fits with your sovereign will and glory is for us perhaps in eternity to understand, but for now to cry out to you for mercy and salvation while we can.

We thank you, Lord, for the grace that has come to us in Christ and shall come to others until all the church is redeemed and we enter your presence forever. We look forward to that with joy in Christ's name. Amen.

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