

NOTES ON ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION

PART ONE: An Introductory Discussion of Foreknowledge, Predestination and Election

1. Foreknowledge – God’s knowledge is perfect (Job 37:16) and His understanding is infinite (Ps. 147:5). It includes prior knowledge of all events – actual (Isa. 44:7-8; 48:3, 5) and possible (Mt. 11:21). It also includes in many cases the idea of a pre-salvation relationship (Jer. 1:5) although that relationship does not become a salvation relationship until one places their faith in Christ (Luke 7:50; Eph. 2:8-9). Many teach that “foreknowledge” should also be translated foreordain which would make it mean the same thing as predestine (Rom. 8:29-30). However, the primary meaning is obviously to have prior knowledge as in 2 Pet. 3:17 and Acts 26:5.

2. Predestination – The word “predestination” means to mark out beforehand. This would include events divinely caused (e.g. The return of Christ in John 14:1-3) and events divinely permitted (e.g. The arrest and crucifixion of Christ in Acts 4:27-28). God never is responsible for the enactment of evil. However, He may choose in His sovereignty to permit evil. Nowhere in scripture does it state that God predestines people to trust Christ or to reject Christ. God predestines for individuals the benefits of the choice to trust Christ but does not predestine the choice to trust Christ except to divinely permit it. By the same token, God predestines the consequences for individuals of rejecting Christ but does not predestine the choice to reject Christ except to divinely permit it.

3. Election – Election is God’s choice of individuals to receive the benefits of trusting Christ such as salvation. Nowhere does scripture state that God chose our choice to trust or to reject Christ. God’s choice was made prior to creation and is based on His foreknowledge and grace.

PART TWO: Scripture Passages Concerning Election, Predestination and Foreknowledge

Ephesians 1:4 - For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. (NIV)

One of our spiritual blessings in the heavenly or supernatural realm (Eph. 1:3) is that God chose those of us who are now in Christ before the creation of the world. Notice, what the verse does not say. It does not say that God chose us to be in Christ, but that He chose those of us who are presently in Christ. It does not say that God chose our decision to trust Christ. He chose us to have a holy and blameless standing in His sight. We are not holy and blameless in our state or walk, but we are holy and blameless in our standing (1 Cor. 6:11). God chose us and chose us to have this benefit of a holy and blameless standing. In chapters 4-6 of Ephesians we are encouraged to live out in practice this holy and blameless standing in our daily lives. However, our standing does not change even though our state changes. God’s choice never meant that we did not have to choose to trust Christ as Savior. That was our responsibility. Certainly, God had already made the choice of what He was going to put in the salvation gift package before we made that decision to trust Christ for salvation. However, since God knows all things (1 John 3:20), it is obvious, that He could choose us and that benefit of a holy and righteous standing in advance of our decision. His choice in advance of our trusting Christ did not color that choice. To be sure God uses the gospel (2 Thes. 2:13-14) and the conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-9) to bring about that choice, but not everyone who is convicted and hears is

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saved. To know that God chose us who are in Christ to have a holy and blameless standing before creation assures us that God has a complete and perfect plan for our lives.

Ephesians 1:4-5 - Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will. (NASB)

In the last paragraph, we looked at verse 4. Here, we will look at verse 5 and the last two words of verse 4. We are told that God in His love predestined those of us who are now in Christ to be adopted as sons. The word “predestine” simply means to mark out or chart out what is going to happen. There are two aspects of what God predestines. The first are events and choices that He causes and brings about and the second are those events and choices that He permits to come to pass. God is never the author of evil (James 1:13). The first usage is in view here. God predestined those of us now in Christ to the benefit of being adopted as sons. Notice, this verse does not say that God predestined us to trust Christ. God predestined us to receive in the gift of the salvation package the benefit of being adopted as sons. To be adopted as God’s son is not the same as being born again to become His child although that is another benefit in this gift of salvation package. The practice of adoption is not like our western custom of being born into one family and raised in the adoptive family. What this meant was that when a child reached a certain age, there was a private ceremony in the family which gave them the full rights of an adult son. This was called adoption. Sometime later usually several months, there was a public ceremony recognizing that this son had the full rights of an adult son. Galatians 3:26 cp. 4:5 states that when we trust Christ as Savior, we are adult sons in the family of God. This corresponds to the private ceremony. However, Romans 8:23 speaks of our adoption as future when we get our new bodies at Christ’s return (Phil. 3:21). This corresponds to the public ceremony where everyone realizes that you are an adult son of God. This is the time when we will be revealed with Christ (Col. 3:4). Romans 8:14 would remind us that since we are sons of God, we are to be led by the Holy Spirit. The question we must ask ourselves, since the Holy Spirit is leading are we following or are we straggling behind?

Ephesians 1:11 - Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will. (NASB)

We must remind ourselves that the meaning of predestine was to mark out or chart out what is going to happen. There are two aspects of what God predestines. The first are events and choices that He causes and brings about and the second are those events and choices that He permits to come to pass. It is very important that we get that concept in our thinking. Here we see that God predestined us as believers to have an inheritance. Notice again that it does not say that God predestined our choice to trust Christ as Savior. He simply predestined us to have this inheritance in our gift of salvation package. This inheritance is described in 1 Peter 1:3-4 as being reserved in heaven for us, as imperishable (not subject to decay but eternal), as undefiled (not ruined by sin like our present world) and that will not fade away (it will not lose value with the passing of time). This predestination of this wonderful inheritance being included in our gift of salvation package was in harmony with God’s purpose and with the fact that He works all things in keeping with the counsel of His will. 1 Peter 1:3 states that we are to praise God for giving us this living hope (confidence for the future) by Christ’s resurrection.

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Romans 8:28-30 - 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.²⁹ 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;³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (NASB)

This passage introduces the concept of God foreknowing us. This implies a relationship prior to our salvation much like God foreknowing His people Israel in Romans 11:2 and knowing Jeremiah before he was formed in the womb (Jer. 1:5). Those who over-emphasize the sovereignty of God point this out. However, the fact that God foreknows us in such a way does not exclude the fact that He also foreknows our choices and actions such as foreknowing what we are going to say (Psalm 139:4). So when God refers to those He foreknew, He obviously meant not only the prior relational factor but the foreknowledge of the individual's thoughts words and actions. This aspect of foreknowledge is not mentioned by those who over-emphasize the sovereignty of God because this would tend to derail their theological system. So foreknowledge would also include whether or not we would place our faith in Christ and the time that this decision would be made which would run contrary to those who over-emphasize God's sovereignty.

We repeat that God's foreknowledge of us is not just confined to knowing us prior to the time we were born but also includes His foreknowledge of our future choices including whether or not we would trust Christ as Savior. It states that God in His foreknowledge predestined those of us who are now believers to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Notice, it does not say that God predestined us to trust Christ for salvation. One of the benefits in the salvation package that we receive on trusting Christ is that there will come a time when we are conformed to Christ's image. This is when Christ returns according to 1 John 3:2. While we are living in this body the Holy Spirit transforms us over a period of time to be more like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18) although we never arrive in this life (1 John 1:8, 10). Since God has predestined this wonderful benefit for every believer, we can now understand this benefit best as we cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in making us more like Christ and enabling us to manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

We have established in the previous paragraphs that God foreknows believers not only in a pre-salvation relationship but predestines them to be conformed to the image of Christ. We noted that this does not say that God predestined them to trust Christ but simply to receive the eventual benefit of being conformed to Christ's image or likeness when He returns (1 John 3:2). Here we see that God called those whom He foreknew who were also predestined to eventually be conformed to the image of Christ. Called can be understood in two ways. For example: "The man called his wife to explain that he would be late returning home for supper." In this case, it is understood that the wife answered the call. Now looking at a variation of this example, "The man called his wife to explain that he would be late returning home for supper, but his wife who had been angry at him refused to answer the call. In the first case the call was effective and in the second case the call was given but not effective. The word "called" is

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equivalent to our word “invited”. Look at Jesus’ parable in Mt. 22:1-14. We see that all sorts of people were invited but only a few accepted the invitation. Jesus summed it up in verse 14 by saying that many are called but few are chosen. This is the general call that goes out to everyone who hears the gospel. However, there are those who receive the call by placing their faith in Christ (see also 2 Thes. 2:13-14). The word “called” in Rom. 8:28-30 obviously falls in the category of those who answer the call by placing their faith in Christ because we see that this particular group of called people were justified which of course required faith in Christ on their part (Rom. 5:1). We know that once we are justified by faith that we are going to be glorified as Jesus teaches in John 6:39-40 where He points out that He is going to resurrect those who have placed their trust in Him because He is not going to lose any of them. Each of us can be confident that if we answered the call of God by faith in Christ that we were foreknown in every respect from eternity past, predestined to eventually be like Christ and will one day be glorified with Him (Col. 3:4 cp. 1 John 5:11-13).

1 Peter 1:1-2 - To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. (NKJV)

We observed previously that God chose those of us who are now in Christ prior to the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). 1 Peter 1:2 makes it clear that this was based on God’s foreknowledge of us. Those who overemphasize the sovereignty of God state that God’s foreknowledge of us is simply a pre-salvation knowledge of us such as of the people in Israel in Rom. 11:2 and of Jeremiah in Jer. 1:5. However, when God’s word says that God foreknows us and chooses on the basis of that foreknowledge, it includes the foreknowledge of our choices. There are 3 views of God foreknowing us:

1 – Those who overemphasize divine sovereignty: Foreknowledge of an elect person is simply a pre-salvation relationship.

2 – Those who underemphasize divine sovereignty: Foreknowledge is just prior knowledge of an elect person’s choices.

3 – Those who are biblically balanced: Foreknowledge of an elect person is not only a pre-salvation relationship but also includes prior knowledge of an elect person’s choices.

To be sure God did not choose or elect us because he foreknew our works or deeds according to Rom. 9:11. Rom 9:11 does not rule out that God chose us because He foreknew our faith. Rom. 11:5-6 states that God’s election is an election of grace. Rom. 4:16 states that salvation is by faith that it might be based on grace.

Up to this point, we have discussed the fact that God chose us who are now in Christ prior to the creation of the world to have a holy blameless standing according to Eph. 1:4. We saw that God did not choose our choice to trust Christ. It is not a rigged election. We saw that this choice is based on God’s complete foreknowledge of us which is not only a relationship but prior knowledge as well of what we will do in relation to believing the gospel. God achieves this through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit on His part and obedience on our part. This obedience is not obedience to the various commands of Christ but to trust Christ as Savior. In 1 Peter 4:17, Peter speaks of those who do not obey the gospel, i.e. those who do not believe. In

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Acts 6:7, it speaks of the priests becoming obedient to the faith. In Rom. 10:16 we see the fact that obeying the gospel is to believe God's report through His spokesman. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is done in at least one phase for everyone and in 4 phases for the believer. We are familiar with the fact that when we trust Christ as Savior, we are sanctified in our standing or position before God at the moment of faith in Christ (Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 6:11). From the time that we trust Christ as Savior, there is an ongoing process of sanctification often called practical sanctification mentioned in John 17:17; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thes. 4:3; 1 Peter 1:14-15 in which we work together with God in becoming more and more like Christ. Finally, there is perfect sanctification mentioned in 1 Thes. 5:23-24 which God does for us at the moment Christ returns and we are completely like Him (1 John 3:2). In this verse it is what I would term pre-sanctification in which the Holy Spirit sets apart both those who eventually believe and those who do not believe to convict them of their need of Christ (John 16:8-11). Without this work, no one could come to Christ by faith. We know this pre-sanctification does not insure that those who experience it will trust Christ as one can see readily in 1 Cor. 7:14-16. So through this pre-salvation sanctification which God does for the world (John 16:8) and through the obedience to the gospel (=trusting Christ which is our responsibility), the blood of Christ is applied to us for the forgiveness of our sins (Rom. 5:1, 9).

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 - But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,¹⁴ to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

The word "beginning" includes the creation and also the time prior to the creation (John 1:1-3). Since Ephesians states that God's choice of those in Christ occurred before the creation of the world, then it is referring to the beginning as mentioned in John 1:1-2. Notice very carefully that it does not state that God chose our choice to trust Christ. It does say that God chose the benefit of the faith that we would exercise, and that benefit is salvation. God chose the means by which this salvation was available to people. The first part of that means is God's responsibility and that is sanctification by the Spirit. We mentioned that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of the sin of unbelief, righteousness and judgment (John 16:7-11). This world includes the vast majority of people who reject Christ and those few who eventually will trust Christ (Mt. 7:13-14). As we saw, this aspect of the sanctifying work of the Spirit comes to all people. The second part of the means that God chose by which this salvation would be available to people was belief in the truth of the gospel. This is our responsibility. We also see that God used the gospel to call us to Him for salvation. Most people do not accept this call or invitation. However, everyone who trusts Christ for salvation does accept this call in order to trust Him. As we see with this passage and have seen with other passages, it is critical that we look at exactly what it is saying and that we do not read anything into it. It is also critical that we look at what it is not saying. Since some of those who overemphasize God's sovereignty often try to state that this sanctification by the Spirit mentioned here and in 1 Peter 1:1-2 is the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration which means that He gives new life before we believe. We will look at the scriptures incorrectly used for that misunderstanding.

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John 1:12-13 – But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name,¹³ who were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God. (HCSB)

1 John 5:1 - Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of Him. (HCSB)

1 John 5:1 is often used as a proof text to state that the Holy Spirit imparts new life to (regenerates) the individual prior to faith in Christ. On the surface that contention seems very strong since it states that the one who believes has been born of God in the past with present results. However, when we look at John 1:12-13, we see those who received Christ by faith (at a point of time according to the Greek) had the right to be children of God and were born (at a point of time according to the Greek) of God. There, it is obvious faith on the part of the believer is needed for the new birth to take place. So the question is does 1 John 5:1 conflict with that. The answer is an emphatic “no.” John talks in His letter about the tests for fellowship in the first chapter and the tests for genuine salvation in chapters 2-5. 1 John 3:9 speaks of the fact that sin is no longer dominant in the saved person’s life, 1 John 2:29 explains that doing right is dominant in the saved person’s life. 1 John 3:14 explains that love for fellow-believers is dominant in the saved person’s life. 1 John 5:4-5 states that the saved person overcomes the world. John uses the present tense in the Greek to show that these qualities are the dominant pattern even though believers do not do these things in every situation. 1 John 5:1 is simply stating that the one who has been born of God continues to believe that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ). In other words these passages are harmonized by seeing that when we trust Christ as Savior we are at that point born of God and therefore children of God according to John 1:12 and that everyone who continues to trust Christ after that new birth shows that their salvation is real. The order could be charted like this: Initial saving faith in Christ >>> the New birth >>> evidenced by ongoing faith in Christ.

John 1:12-13 is misused to teach the error that human will is not involved in receiving salvation. However, we clearly see from Rev. 22:17 and John 5:40 that human will is involved in trusting or not trusting Christ. Notice that we receive Christ at a point of time and we are born of God at a point of time. The Greek verb tense of the word “receive” speaks of that type of action. We have noted that the benefits of the salvation gift package are not the same thing as our faith that appropriates that salvation. Two of those benefits are being born of God (point of time in the Greek – this is how we receive the new birth that Jesus discussed with Nicodemus) and being (again at a point of time in the Greek) children of God. Notice the new birth is not a result of blood (literally bloods) meaning that it is not received by our human birth or lineage. It is not of the will of the flesh which speaks of self effort (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5). We cannot will that we receive the new birth. We can will to trust Christ as Savior which brings about the new birth; we cannot will that we be born again apart from trusting Christ as Savior. In other words, we must have Christ to have the life and all its attendant benefits according to 1 John 5:11-12. If we do not have Christ we do not have any of the attendant benefits of that salvation life. That is why we must receive Christ by faith.

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John 6:37, 39 - Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out This is the will of Him who sent Me: that I should lose none of those He has given Me but should raise them up on the last day. (HCSB)

Jesus points out that believers are a gift from God to Him before they come to Him for salvation. Coming to Christ is the same as trusting Him as savior. God is able to do this because of His perfect foreknowledge of what choices people are going to make in relation to Christ. The fact that God gives us to Christ speaks not of Him rigging our choice but giving us at some point in the past as a gift to His son the Lord Jesus who would give Himself for us. Notice in 6:37 that Jesus will never cast out this one who comes to Him showing that once we are saved, we are always saved. This phrase “everyone the Father gives me” is used several times in the scripture, primarily by John. First of all, we know the decision to come to Christ is an open invitation as shown in Mt. 11:28 and John 5:40. People can accept or refuse that invitation. Notice the benefits that are mentioned here that God has planned. Christ will lose none of those who come to Him and He will raise them up from the dead in the last day which speaks of the period of time when Christ returns and all the attendant events. Because God gave us to Christ, no one will pluck us out of God’s hand (John 10:29). Christ gives eternal life to everyone that God gives Him according to John 17:2. Because everyone who is given to Christ ends up trusting Him, they will receive that benefit of eternal life. Christ as high priest does not intercede for the world (= the unsaved) but for those whom God gives Him (John 17:9). One of the benefits that Christ has secured from the Father is that everyone who has been given to Him will behold Christ’s glory that God has given Him (John 17:24). In John 17:6, Jesus says essentially the same thing as in John 6:37. John 17:6 states that believers were given to Christ by the Father out from among the world’s people. Jesus points out that they kept God’s word which in John’s gospel is the same as having trusted Him as savior (see John 8:51). In summary the chain is something like this: At some point in the past God chose to give those who will trust Christ later to Christ as a gift >>>> these are the people who will choose to trust Christ for salvation (God aids but does not control or manipulate that choice on the part of the individual believer) >>>> the believer will receive all the benefits mentioned in this paragraph and in the rest of scripture which is God’s choice and action. We will continue looking at other verses in John 6 misused by those who overemphasize God’s sovereignty.

John 6:44-45 – No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, ‘AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. (NASB)

John 12:31-33 - Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² As for Me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to Myself.” ³³ He said this to signify what kind of death He was about to die. (HCSB)

Those who overemphasize God’s sovereignty often use John 6:44 and teach that all people who are drawn to Christ come to Him. Look carefully again, this is not what the verse says. The verse says that no one can come to Christ unless the Father draws them. This is not saying that everyone who is drawn to Christ comes to Him. We must also observe that this verse is present tense and therefore pertained to Christ’s earthly ministry prior to the cross. In other words, there are people who were drawn by the Father during Christ’s earthly ministry who did not come to Him. It would appear that during Christ’s earthly ministry, the Father was the one who

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did the drawing (Mt. 11:25; 16:17; John 6:65). In John 6:45, we see that all the people who were drawn were taught by God. However, only those who learned came to Christ. God's responsibility was to teach the people in order to draw them. However, only those who learned as well as were taught came to Christ. Learning was the hearer's responsibility and was necessary to come to Christ. John 12:32 shows that this arrangement changed after Christ died on the cross because this now means that all people are attracted or drawn to Him. Just as people resisted the Father attracting people to Christ, so people presently resist the fact that Jesus attracts or draws all people to Himself. People who overemphasize God's sovereignty often state that the words "all" people mean all kinds of people, i.e. both Jew and Gentile as in John 12:20. However, this seems highly unlikely because the previous verse in John 12:31 explains that Christ's death is a judgment on the world. The word "world" refers to everyone as in John 3:16. Because of the word "world" the best understanding is that all people means everyone. There is universal conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment by the Holy Spirit according to John 16:8-11. However, this will not result in a majority of the people of this world trusting Christ according to Mt. 7:13-14. In summary, during Christ's earthly ministry prior to the cross, no one could trust Christ apart from the Father's drawing work (John 5:44). After Christ's crucifixion, everyone could come to Him because He draws everyone to Himself (John 12:32) and this is supported by the universal convicting work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11). The problem rests not with a lack of ability or a lack of conviction on the Holy Spirit's part but an unwillingness on the part of the hearer of the gospel to come to, i.e. trust Christ (John 5:40).

John 15:16, 19 - You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. (NASB)

John 15:16 would appear to teach that Christ chose us for salvation and that we did not choose Him. However, the context of John 15:1-16 is not salvation but fruitfulness. The choice of his hearers for the office of Apostle is in view not His choice of them for salvation. We see that the same Greek word is used in Luke 6:12-13; John 6:70-71 and Acts 1:2. The same Greek word for appoint is used in Mark 3:13-14. This has its parallel for us in the fact that our spiritual gift is not something that we choose but that the Father (1 Cor. 12:18 – same Greek word as "appointed in John 15:16) and the Holy Spirit choose (1 Cor. 12:11). In John 15:19, a whole different context is in view. In John 15:18-25, our relationship to the unsaved world is in view. We have been chosen out of that world so that we are in the world but no longer of the world according to John 17:14-16. Like Ephesians 1:4, John 15:19 does not say that God chose our choice to trust Christ. He chose us for one of the benefits of the salvation package which is to be no longer of the world even though we are in it. Remember, what goes into the salvation

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package is God's choice and God's responsibility. The reception of that salvation package is our responsibility to trust Christ for salvation. In summary, we have no choice in the matter of our spiritual gift. We do not choose Christ in order to determine our role and place in His plan. That is strictly His choice. Our responsibility begins when we by faith enter that plan. After having trusted Christ for salvation, we are called upon to be fruitful because of the role He has laid out for us in that plan.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-5 - We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; ³ constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, ⁴ knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; ⁵ for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. (NASB)

Here we see that other believers know that we are elect or chosen by God as evidenced by our transformed lives in receiving the gospel, the manner in which we received it, our work showing the evidence of our faith, our labor motivated by love and our confidence concerning our future with Jesus Christ, i.e. our hope. These works and changes in our lives are not the basis of election. They are the evidence of election. We must not lose sight of the fact that our election by God is based on foreknowledge according to 1 Peter 1:1-2. This does not relieve any individual of the responsibility to trust Christ for salvation. The evidence of God's election and the evidence of our trusting Christ as savior are identical – a transformed life (2 Cor. 5:17).

2 Peter 1:5-11 - For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, ⁶ knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, ⁷ godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they will keep you from being useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ The person who lacks these things is blind and shortsighted and has forgotten the cleansing from his past sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, make every effort to confirm your calling and election, because if you do these things you will never stumble. ¹¹ For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly supplied to you. (HCSB)

God uses Peter to explain that as Christians, we are to develop several qualities in our Christian life. If we develop these and grow in these areas, then we are useful and fruitful for Christ. If we lack these qualities, we tend to not look at things from God's perspective of eternity but just in view of the present time. In addition, if these qualities are lacking, it will be because we have forgotten how much God has cleansed us from our sins when we trusted Christ for salvation. Because of this, we do need to grow in these qualities to confirm in our own minds that God has chosen us and called us. Obviously, it remains clear in God's mind (2 Tim. 2:19). This is not speaking of losing salvation which no one who genuinely trusts Christ will ever lose (John 6:37-40; 10:28-29). It is speaking of losing our own sense of assurance of that reality in our lives. In v. 11, we conclude with noting that it is not a question of us entering the eternal kingdom but a rich or rewarded entrance as mentioned in 1 Cor. 3:10-15. The distinction between rewards and salvation is given in the table below. In concluding, when we trusted Christ for salvation,

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we became a part of God's plan. For this reason, it is important to grow in our Christian character so that have a stronger sense of our participation in that plan.

Distinctions between rewards and salvation:

Ltr.	Rewards	Salvation
a.	Rewards are gained by works (Matthew 16:27; Revelation 22:12).	Salvation is a free gift and is received by faith and not by works (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).
b.	Rewards are a future attainment (Matthew 16:27; Luke 14:14).	Salvation is a present possession (John 3:36; 5:24; Ephesians 2:8-9).
c.	Some rewards can be lost (Colossians 2:18; 2 John 1:8; Revelation 3:11)	Salvation cannot be lost (John 5:24; 10:28,29; Ephesians 1:13,14; 4:30).

1 Peter 2:7-8 - Yes, you who trust him recognize the honor God has given him. But for those who reject him, "The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone." ⁸ And, "He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they do not obey God's word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them. (NLT) Notice that these Jewish people stumbled into judgment because they did not obey God's word, i.e. they fail to trust Christ as savior. Peter used the terms "obey" and "disobey" for trusting or not trusting Christ as can be seen by looking at such translations as the NASB or NKJV (1 Peter 1:2, 22, 3:1; 4:17). These particular Jews of which Peter was speaking were appointed to stumble into judgment because of their failure to trust Christ. It does not say that God appointed them to fail to believe. That was their responsibility and choice. We will discuss how judicial blindness entered into their rejection of Christ and how and when God imposes it.

John 12:37-40 - Even though He had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in Him. ³⁸ But this was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet, who said: Lord, who has believed our message? And who has the arm of the Lord been revealed to? ³⁹ This is why they were unable to believe, because Isaiah also said: ⁴⁰ He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so that they would not see with their eyes or understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I would heal them. (HCSB)

There are several types of blindness spoken of in scripture:

1. Physical blindness (John 9:1-3)
2. Natural or spiritual blindness (1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:17-19)
3. Satanic blindness - Satan blinding people to the truth of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:3-4)
4. Carnal blindness – blindness of saved believers who are not walking in the Spirit but by the flesh (2 Pet. 1:8-9 cp. 1 Cor. 3:1-3).
5. Judicial blindness will be discussed in this paragraph.

In the passage, we note that there were people in Israel who saw miraculous sign after miraculous sign performed by Jesus. Yet they continued to not place their faith and trust in Him. The Greek verb tense speaks of continuing unbelief rather than a onetime rejection of

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Christ. This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy in Isa. 53:1 of widespread Jewish unbelief despite seeing Him display God's power pictured by God's arm. Because of their persistent unbelief despite overwhelming evidence in these miraculous signs, God finally rendered them unable to believe. This is what is called judicial blindness. This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy in Isa. 6:8 and unlocks the meaning of Rom. 11:8-10. One of the themes of scripture is that God does not judicially blind most people. He only does this to those who have tremendous evidence of the truth of the gospel and persist in willful and deliberate unbelief. Anyone who worries about having gotten to the point where they cannot believe is not at that point. If they were at that point, they would have no concern about their unbelief. Secondly, we are never to try to guess or in any way determine if God has judicially blinded someone. We are to attempt to share the gospel with them just as we would with anyone else.

Acts 13:48 - When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. (NASB)

God has a perfect advance knowledge of who is going to trust Christ for salvation and who is not going to trust Christ. Nowhere in scripture does it say that God forces or manipulates people to trust or reject Christ. Now God does influence everyone to trust Christ (John 16:8-11; Rom. 10:17) although most people choose not to do so (Mt. 7:13-14). Based on His perfect knowledge of all things God is able to appoint people (whom He knows are going to trust Christ for salvation) to have the benefit of eternal life which is a critical part of the salvation gift package which we receive the moment we put our faith in Christ. What this verse is not saying is that God appointed them to believe, but it does say that they are appointed for the benefit of eternal life. Everyone whom God had appointed for eternal life made the decision on this particular occasion of hearing the gospel to trust Christ for salvation. Most of the time, people who are eventually going to trust Christ have to hear the gospel multiple times before they trust Christ. It would be very rare that everyone in a group who is eventually going to trust Christ would do so on the same occasion, but that is exactly what happened in this situation.

2 Timothy 1:9 - Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, (NASB)

God's grace was given to us from eternity past and is the basis for God's election (Rom. 11:5-6). For receiving salvation, grace and works are mutually exclusive according to Rom. 11:6. Salvation is received by faith so that it may be based on grace (Rom. 4:16; Eph. 2:8-9). Since God's grace is a basis of His election, then the fact that it could only be received by faith would also be a part of that basis. Keep in mind that election is based on foreknowledge according to 1 Peter 1:1-2. One of the practical outcomes of the truths of this verse is the fact that we are called to live a holy life. This speaks of a call on God's part for us who have trusted Christ as savior to live a holy life which simply means a life that is set apart for God's purpose for there is no greater purpose than that of God.

Roman 9:14-18 - What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." ¹⁶ So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who

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runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷ *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."* ¹⁸ *So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. (NASB)*

This passage starts with the contention that there is no injustice with God because He knows and plans ahead of people's choices without coercing those choices and without manipulating those choices. God says that He will have mercy on whom He chooses to have mercy and compassion on whom He chooses to have compassion. Fortunately, God has given us the choice of whether we receive His mercy or reject His mercy. Acts 10:43 tells us that whoever trusts Christ as Savior has forgiveness of sins. God chooses to have mercy on everyone who makes that choice. Verse 16 tells us that the provision of mercy or forgiveness (Christ's death and resurrection) is not dependent on human effort ("runs") or our own choice ("wills") about how God should provide for salvation mercy or about how we should receive salvation mercy. We know from other scriptures that God wills to give eternal life to those who trust Christ (John 6:39-40). 150 times the Bible says that salvation is received by faith alone in Christ alone. To be sure our will is involved in trusting Christ according to Rev. 22:17. It just is not involved in deciding how it is to be received. To express it another way, human will cannot gain us salvation. However, human will can choose to trust Christ and in that way receive salvation as a gift. God raised up Pharaoh to the throne of Egypt to show His power and to have His reputation/name proclaimed throughout the earth. This is not saying that Pharaoh was born for that purpose but that He was raised by God to the position that He was in for God's purposes. We know that all authority is appointed by God (Rom 13:1-2). That does not mean that God approves of their exercise of authority because God has reasons for raising up people who choose to be evil to positions of authority. Verse 18 shows that God as demonstrated by Pharaoh put him in that position to show that He has mercy on those who come to Him by faith, but hardens those who repeatedly refuse to repent and believe as shown by the multiple times that Pharaoh who already had a hardened heart before God hardened it. God predicted that He would harden Pharaoh's heart in Ex. 4:21; 7:3 but had not yet done so since it was not mentioned until sometime later in Ex. 9:12 that God hardened Pharaoh's heart after he had seen several signs and wonders and still refused to repent and believe. As we share Christ, it is important to warn people that any time they reject Christ, they put their eternal souls at risk because even if they do not die suddenly, God may judicially harden their hearts as we saw in John 12:37-40.

Romans 9:21-23 - Or has the potter no right over the clay, to make from the same lump one piece of pottery for honor and another for dishonor? ²² *And what if God, desiring to display His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience objects of wrath ready for destruction?* ²³ *And what if He did this to make known the riches of His glory on objects of mercy that He prepared beforehand for glory— (HCSB)*

2 Timothy 2:19-21 - But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." ²⁰ *Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.* ²¹ *Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is*

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dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. (ESV)

Romans 9:21-23 has been misused by those who overemphasize God's sovereignty and disregard the fact that God has given people the capability of using their power of choice to receive or to reject Christ. They speak of God as the potter who has freedom to prepare people for glory (heaven) or dishonor (hell). They fail to take into account the fact that 2 Tim. 2:19-21 makes it very clear that the choice to be a vessel of honor or to be a vessel of dishonor rests with the individual human being. Those who overemphasize God, the potter's freedom and His unchanging purposes fail to look at the whole passage concerning the potter in Jeremiah 18:1-12. There we see that God is responsive. If a nation repents in faith, God is favorably disposed toward that nation despite God's previously declared purpose of judgment. If God is favorably disposed toward a nation and the nation does not repent in faith but plunges into evil and error, then God will bring judgment upon that nation. Going back to Romans 9:21-23, we see that some people are prepared for glory (heaven) and some for destruction (hell). This has to do with God preparing these people's destinies. This verse does not say that God prepared their choice or decision to reject or receive Christ. God can make these preparations because of His perfect knowledge of all matters—past, present and future. God wants everyone to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4) and is not willing that anyone perish but that they come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9) because of His love for everyone (John 3:16). Unfortunately, most people will choose the broad road of trying to find their own way rather than the narrow road of coming to Him through Christ (Mt. 7:13-14 cp. John 14:6). By faithfully sharing the gospel, we will not stop God's judgment from falling on most people, but we can reduce the casualties by helping those who do choose to believe in Christ.

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