

# God's Sovereignty and Your Salvation, Part 5

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 10. Although we're not going to spend much time there, that is going to be our launching place as we're looking at the sovereignty of God in salvation, part five of however many parts to be discovered in the future.

Last week I purposely left you hanging. I gave you a theological cliffhanger so that you would think about some things. How is it that a person who is spiritually dead, who will not come to Christ, who can't understand the things of God, who is totally lost, corrupted in every part of his being, how does a person like that, with all of those things inside of him and all of the things outside—Satan, demons, evil men, the world—all standing between him and the gospel, how does that person ever come to Christ? How can *anyone* ever come to Christ? That was the question that we left [off with] last week.

We pictured unbelievers as spiritual corpses. They're buried doubly deep, they're in a concrete vault, they're welded into a bronze casket [and] covered over with dirt [that is] packed down. Satan, demons, evil men, and the world are on the lid so that the grave site is seriously guarded to make sure [that] no one is going to dig up that vault and jackhammer a hole in it and bring out that bronze coffin, and get a plasma cutter and get the lid off,

and shine some light on that corpse. So, how does someone get saved? The present state of every unbeliever is really beyond hope when you look at it in the Scriptures, when you do a very careful search, as we have done in the last four messages in this series. How can anyone ever get saved? What hope is there?

Do you remember what Jesus said to the disciples in Luke 18:25? He says that, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." It's not talking about the Needle Gate, and camels are big, and needles are small. How do you get a camel and stick it through the eye of a needle? It's impossible. That's the whole point: It's impossible. The disciples understood that and that is why they said, in verse 26, "Then who can be saved?" In their minds, at least God is blessing [the rich people], they have means, they have influence and power, [so] if a rich person can't be saved, then who *can* be saved? What hope is there for anybody? Do you remember what Jesus said? He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God" [18:27]. That is the answer. God is able to do impossible things like shove a camel through the eye of a needle—one hair at a time, I guess. I don't know. The point is [that God is] the God of the impossible. Therefore, even though it may be impossible for men to come to salvation, we have a God who can do it.

We are going to begin to investigate this morning the answer to the question that I left you hanging with last week: How does anyone ever get saved since there are these barriers both inside and outside of them [that] keep them from ever even wanting to come to Christ? Let me just ask you, to get you thinking along this line: If you're a believer, when was your salvation secured? Think about that question. A lot of times, when people start talking about salvation, they just think of one or [two] little verses, and they have a pretty simplistic view of things. It's like, "Oh, yeah. I believed when I was twelve and I was saved." [But] when was your salvation *secure*? [First], you could look at texts like 1 Peter 1:5, where Peter, speaking of believers, says there are those who "are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Here,

Peter speaks of salvation as something future. Why does he do that? Well, because even if you're a believer, do you still sin? Yeah. Do you still live in a sin-cursed world? Yeah. Is there sin all around you? Yes. So in that way, we have the hope—a future hope—of not only being delivered from the eternal consequences of sin, and the power of sin, but [also from] the presence of sin. So in that way, salvation is secured in the future.

Second, though, the Bible speaks of salvation as a process. [Do] you remember what 1 Corinthians 1:18 says? When Paul was talking about how he preached the gospel to the Corinthians, he said: “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” [emphasis added]. Paul includes himself as “those who are being,” that is, [those who are] in the process of salvation. You're thinking, “I thought it was [secured in the] future.” It is. “[But] it says here it's a process.” It is. You're catching on. In 2 Corinthians 2:15, Paul describes those who preach the gospel as a “a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are *being saved*” [emphasis added], so salvation is not only something we hope for in the future, it is also a process that we're going through.

Not only that—third—salvation was also secured when you placed your faith in Christ. If you don't place your faith in Christ, you aren't going to be saved. In 1 Corinthians 15:1–2, when Paul start[s] the big chapter on the resurrection, he says this: “Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you *are saved*” [emphasis added]. So, it's true also that you can say, “Well, my salvation was secure when I placed my faith in Christ.” That's true.

But, fourth, no one could be saved if Jesus hadn't died on the cross, right? Jesus had to die on the cross. If Jesus didn't die on the cross, no one [would] get to heaven. So you could very well say, “OK, then my salvation was secured when Jesus died on the cross.” Paul says this in Romans 5:9–10. He actually mentions the fourth and fifth things that secure our salvation:

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God *through the death of His Son*, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

[Which is a] reference to what? The resurrection. If Jesus hadn't [risen] from the dead, you wouldn't be saved. Paul [says] that we are "of all men most to be pitied" if Christ isn't raised from the dead [see 1 Corinthians 15:19]. So, you say, "OK, so salvation is future. Yeah. Salvation is a process. Yeah. Salvation is when I believed in Jesus. Yes. Salvation is when Jesus rose from the dead. Yeah. And [salvation is] when He died on the cross. Yeah."

[There's] one more. Salvation [was] secured when God, in eternity past, predestined you to salvation. That's when your salvation was *also* secured. What happens is [that] a lot of times when [people] come to the Bible [to explore salvation], they latch on to one or two of these. If you only teach some [of these concepts], then you teach error because the Bible teaches all of these things. ([In fact, there are] actually a few more [that] I'm not going to get into [at this time].) [Keep in mind that] predestination is the first step, the first stage, the first act of God, which determines definitively that someone gets saved.

With those thoughts in mind, let's look at Luke 10:21–24. Someday we're actually going to exposit [this] text, but we're just using it now to bring up the subject that God is sovereign in salvation, since the text clearly teaches that. We're talking about different implications of God's sovereignty in salvation, and that's why we're doing this whole series. Follow along as I read Luke 10:21–24:

At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and

have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” Turning to the disciples, He said privately, ”Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them.”

Here Jesus rejoices that the Father hides the truth from some people so they can't be saved and reveals it to others so they can be saved. [He] makes it perfectly clear that the only way a person can ever come to know Him or the Father is if Jesus wills it to happen. That is God's sovereignty.

We have been looking at different doctrines that are related to this, and even though they aren't explicitly mentioned in the text, they are implied. Salvation is implied because that's what the text is talking about: who gets saved, who has the truth revealed to them, who knows the Father. You [might ask], “Well, is that salvation?” Yes. As a matter of fact, knowing Jesus, or knowing the Father—not knowing *about* them, but having a relationship with [them]—is a synonym for salvation. Do you remember what Jesus said in John 17:3 in the high-priestly prayer? He said what? “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Knowing God and knowing Christ is a synonym for salvation. So, the text [in Luke 10] is about salvation. Why do we need [to be] saved? We spent four sermons on that one. [The next question is]: How do we get saved? This [sermon] is the first part of the how.

For this morning, I want to define some key terms related to the doctrine of predestination, look at some key Scriptures [that] teach predestination, and, finally, address some of the paradoxes or questions people have about predestination. I want you to know, you're going to have to pay attention here. I know it's getting to be summer, and it just never seems to be cold

enough in here. Even in the winter it's not cold enough for me. You're just going to have to fan each other with your bulletins because we're just going to jump into some pure theology, and this is going to be a mind bender to some of you. Some of you are just going to leave here today thinking, "I don't even know how to process this." That's OK. As long as you understand what the text says, God's Spirit will give you understanding as you ponder, meditate [on], and study these things and as we continue on in the weeks to come.

First let me give you the definition of five key terms. All of these are related to this whole idea of predestination. If you read books, or commentaries, or even study passages in Scripture, you're going to see these [terms], and you're going to need to understand what they are, how they are similar, and how they differ so you can get a grip on things.

The first [term] is "predestination." What does that mean? According to the *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, "Divine predestination means that God has a purpose that is determined long before it is brought to pass. It implies that God is infinitely capable of planning and then bringing about what He has planned, and Scripture speaks of him as doing." Predestination isn't always applied to salvation. Any plan God makes beforehand and brings to pass, He predestines it. Prophecy, for instance, is a good proof of this, isn't it? When God says something is going to happen in prophecy, does it happen? Yeah. Why? [It is] because He makes it happen. It's predestined to happen. Many Scriptures could be cited just about God's general predestination, but let me just read one, because this is one of the clearest and [most] definitive texts: Isaiah 46:8–10. Listen to this. Isaiah writes:

Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose

will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.”

Here, God is described as the God who, before anything even happens, has determined what He will cause to take place, and He causes *all* that He has planned to take place just as He desires it. That is sovereignty and predestination in a general sense.

Narrowing down, God also has predestination working in relationship to the salvation of men. Again, the *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* explains it simply when it says this:

God from all eternity has chosen a body of people for himself, that they should be brought into eternal fellowship with him, while at the same time he has ordained that the rest of humanity should be allowed to go their own way, which is the way of sin, to ultimate eternal punishment.

So, think of predestination as God's *plan*—that's the key term there—to save certain people: His predetermined plan.

[The] second key term is “election.” We all know what an election is: somebody's running for office, he puts a bunch of signs in peoples' yards and bumper stickers [on cars]. We don't know what he believes—he never tells us. He just tries, through propaganda, to attack [his opponent]. [He] has a smiling face, and he never says what he believes. I just wish [one person would] put on the signs: “I am for this and against that.” I would vote for that person even if I disagreed with some things just because the guy said what he believed. So, the guy puts the sign out there, has ads on the radio, and you get those funny phone calls from computers, “Hi! This is from so-and-so. We want you to elect me for whatever.” And, finally, all of the people vote, and whoever gets the most votes is chosen, elected. He gets to fill the position.

Well, in the same way, God elects certain people to salvation. He's the only one voting, and He's the only one [who] has the power to vote. He

votes, and that person gets elected. Let's say you came over to my house and my wife made some of her killer chocolate chip pecan cookies. They're chewy, and, man, they are good. She hands you a big plate, and says, "Take one." They're almost all the same size, and they all are really good, believe me, and you get to take any cookie you want. It's your choice. You *elect* a certain cookie to eat.

That's it. That's all election is. God says, "OK, here are some people [from whom I can choose]." Now, there's a difference because unlike the cookies, which are good, all humans are rotten. It'd be kind of like me extending a plate of rotten eggs and dead rats to you, and saying, "Take one!"

You'd say, "Well, I would really care not to touch one. I'm scared to touch the eggs—they might explode—and the rats are rotten and reeking."

"Oh, please, take one." So you grab [a rat] by the tail and hope it doesn't tear off.

That's how it is with God. We are sinners, we are His enemies, we have offended Him, we have rebelled against Him, "while we were enemies"—we just read that in Romans [5:10]—while we were hostile to God [see Romans 8:7], God goes, "Ew!" and picks one [person], and, "Ew!" and picks another. It's not because they're nice, and it's not because they smell good, it's not because of any good in them. He just elects them. He chooses them. According to Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, "Election is an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure." It's not based on any good in us because if it had anything to do with us, it wouldn't be of grace. Grace is not of works [see Ephesians 2:8–9], right? Keep that in mind.

[The] third term [is] "foreknowledge." Now, you might think the word means to "fore"—beforehand—"know"—have knowledge of. That is the basic meaning of the English compound word, but the word "knowledge" used in the New Testament describes a relationship: "to know in a relationship or to know experientially." It does not mean God looks into the

future, sees who is going to seek Christ, and when He sees that they're going to seek Christ and get saved, then he "foreknows" them, because if God waited around for somebody to seek Jesus, who would come? Nobody. We learned that [over] the last four [sermons]. No one seeks God.

Foreknowledge has two aspects: to bring about the relationship [that] is known beforehand, and to have an intimate relationship beforehand. Let me give you a couple of examples. [In] Acts 2:23, Peter, speaking to the Jews, says: "This Man," speaking of Jesus, "delivered over by the *predetermined plan* and *foreknowledge* of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death" [emphasis added]. What was that about? Way back in Genesis 3:15, God predicted that the woman's seed would crush the serpent's head and [that] the serpent would bruise Him. That was predicted way in there. All [of] the Scriptures [that] talk about the suffering of the Messiah—Isaiah 53, and the psalms, and all of that—[are] all God's predetermined plan. Remember, Jesus said, "No one takes My life from Me. I have the authority to lay it down, I have authority to take it up again. This command I received from My Father" [see John 10:18]. God determined to send His Son, planned to send His Son, Jesus willingly offered Himself up as a sacrifice, and it was all predetermined by the foreknowledge of God.

In Romans 8:29, Paul, speaking about believers, says: "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." Here, "foreknow" means "to have an intimate relationship with." If you have the King James Version of the Bible, and you look in Genesis 4:1, it says: "And Adam *knew* Eve his wife; and she conceived" [emphasis added]. Well, he didn't just know *about* her. It was a little bit more intimate than that. He had this intimate relationship with her, and that's what "foreknowledge" means—["to have an intimate knowledge of someone or something"]. It doesn't mean [that] God looks in[to] the future and sees what men are going to do, which will become even more obvious in a minute.

Then there is the word "chose," [the fourth key term]. In the Scriptures, those who have been predestined unto salvation are spoken of as the "elect"

or the “chosen” of God. The terms are used interchangeably—it’s pretty much the same thing. [The] fifth [term] is “to call,” or “the called.” This [term] either talks about the process of God actually saving those whom He has predestined, and foreknown, and elected, and chosen. Once they get saved, then they are called “the called.”

Those are the terms. You have predestination, the plan of God; election, the specific choice of God; foreknowledge, to have an intimate relationship beforehand so as to bring that intimate relationship to pass; choosing, which is pretty much identical to election; and then “the called,” those who are called to salvation. There you go. You have those terms, and you’ve got it down. If I called you over for a barbecue, I’d have to call you on the phone. I’d say, “Hey, do you want to come over for a barbecue,” you [would] get the call, [and] you [would] come. That’s it. You [would] come over. That’s it: God *calls* you, and He calls you through the gospel. We’re going to get into this in more detail in a bit.

Those are terms that circulate in books and in texts about predestination. Now, let’s look at some of the texts. I wish you’d get to look at all of them, but there are tons. We’re going to look at more specific ones. Turn to Acts 13, [which] is a very clear one. I’m going to try and give you some of the clearer ones. I just want to say this right now: If you’re out there, and you’re thinking, “But wait a second! How could this be true?” just put those thoughts aside [and] relax. We’re going to get there. I want you to see what the Scriptures say. I don’t want you to be trying to figure out the inscrutable here, I want you to see what the Scriptures say, and then we’re going to answer some of those questions this week and some in the weeks to come.

Look at Acts 13:48. Here, Paul and Barnabas are preaching the gospel. Notice what the text says: “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*” [emphasis added]. Is that clear? Who believed? [It was] those who were appointed. [Those who were appointed] by whom? God. Those who were predestined believed. God gives you the privilege of sharing the gospel so that those who are appointed to believe can believe.

Think of the gospel as a harvesting sickle or scythe that [is] use[d] to cut grain down. God gives you this tool, and says, “Man, swing that thing,” and you cut down grain. He says, “Go share the gospel,” [and] you lead people to Christ. That’s how it works. That’s the means, the tool—the gospel is the tool God uses to get those saved He has appointed to be saved.

Turn to Romans 8—I alluded to this already. This is another very clear text. [Look at] Romans 8:28[-30], which everybody knows [as the text that says that] everything is good for believers. In verses 26–27, Paul has just said [that] we don’t know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit intercedes with “groanings too deep for words,” and then [Paul] says the classic verse[s]:

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 whom He justified, He also glorified.

Notice [that] in verse 28, God is the one who causes. He causes. He makes it happen. He is the active participant. Those who get saved are the passive participants. [If] you punch somebody in the face, the puncher is active, the guy who gets hit is passive—he receives the action. We are running away from God, God lassos us, drags us, and says, “I’m saving you.” We’re going to see more of this in the future.

Notice here that God causes, He’s the one doing the work. He “causes all things to work together for good” to a certain group: those who are called. According to whose purpose? God’s, not ours. [It is] not God looking into the future, seeing what we’re going to do, and responding to us, but God determining what will happen and causing it to happen in the future. [These are] two hugely different things. How many times does the text say

we do something here? Zero. [It says that] He, He, He, He, He, He, He, He, and He does it all and we do. . . . Listen. Do you hear that? That's what we do: nothing.

Turn to Romans 11:5. Here, Paul is talking about God's sovereign choice of bringing the Gentiles into the covenant promises made to Abraham, grafting them into the root stock of Christ and the Abrahamic Covenant, and he says this, starting in verse 5: "In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's gracious choice*" [emphasis added], or a choice made by grace. Whenever God makes a choice, that's one thing, [but] whenever it's a *gracious* choice, then it's undeserved and unearned. [Paul goes on in verses 6–7,] "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were *chosen* obtained it, and the rest were hardened" [emphasis added]. Hmm. That sounds like the pharaoh of the Exodus, right, [when] God hardened pharaoh's heart [see Exodus 7:13, 7:22, 8:19, 9:12, etc.]? You're thinking, "Man, Jack, that is serious." It sounds like our text in Luke, doesn't it? Yeah.

Turn to Ephesians 1. This is the beginning of the letter to the Ephesians, where Paul begins to describe what the Father does, what the Son does, and what the Holy Spirit does. He's in the Father section here, and he says this to the Ephesian believers [in] verse 4: "Just as He," that is, God, "chose us in Him," that is, Christ, "before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will." Look down at verse 11: "Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will." That is about as perfectly clear as you can get it. It's not of our works, it's not because we're good, and it's not because we're sweet, and kind, and wonderful. It's not even because God sees that we're going to be that way. It's His own will, His own purpose, His own

plan, and has nothing to do with us. We neither earn it nor deserve it. He just does it because He desires to do it—[it is] His own sovereign will.

[There is] one more text. This is one of my favorite all-time texts, probably because it's in 2 Timothy. [In] 2 Timothy 1:9, Paul speaks of believers. This is Paul's last letter to Timothy, his beloved child in the faith—the last [letter] we know that he wrote—and in 2 Timothy 1:9, he says this: “Who,” God, “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” [emphasis added]. Is that good or what? Man, that makes me want to preach on just that verse. It's so great because it says here that God's the one who saves us, He's the one who calls us. It's not of us, it's not of our works, it's according to God's own purpose and God's own grace, which He just happened to grant us in Christ Jesus in eternity past. That is clear. The texts are clear: God predestines people to salvation, chooses certain people to be saved, and they all get saved.

I know you're tormented right now. Some of you are going, “But wait! Wait! I have questions!” We're going to answer seven of those questions right now. You [may wonder], “Well, how do you know what [my questions] are?” I've taught this before. Do you think this is my first time up here? OK. Here we go. These are seven common questions. If your question isn't [covered] here, I just want you to know, we're going to answer a few more [later]. We're going to answer some in kind of a shallow way [now] just because we're just going to totally blow them out later. [Also], there are a few things I want to save and give you in the big package deal that I just can't quite do now. It would almost take a whole sermon and we're running out of time.

You read all these texts that show that God saves, and hardens, and chooses, and it's His will, and His purpose, and not us, and grace, and all these things. Then all of a sudden, you think, “Doesn't the Bible say in Ezekiel 18[:23] and 33[:11] that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked? Doesn't the Scripture also say in 1 Timothy 2:1–4 that God desires all men “to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”?

Doesn't Scripture also say in Acts 17:30–31 that God is declaring that all everywhere should repent because Jesus is coming back to judge those who will not believe?" [The first] question [is this]: How can this be true and predestination be true? Why doesn't God predestine all men to salvation if He desires all men to be saved? That is a logical question, isn't it? That is the question. That is one that [makes] people [say], "Tell me that!" So, I'm going to.

For starters, I would encourage you to either order from the office or get online [and] listen to [the] four sermons on the sovereignty of God from the Psalm 145 "Attributes of God" series because in there I talk for four messages on what I'm going to give you now in just a couple [of] paragraphs.<sup>1</sup> I'm just going to do a very shallow treatment [now], but if you want the full-blown deal with all of the illustrations and everything, you can get [them] from the Psalm 145 Attributes of God series. Here [are] several things you need to know. [One]: You need to understand that, yes, it is true that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. And, yes, it is true that God desires all men to be saved. This is true, it's obvious, the text says it, and you can't explain it away. You can't say [that] 1 Timothy 2:1–4 is talking about "some" men when it says, "All, all, all." It means all, every, each, and that's just the way it is.

[Two]: Know that the gospel call is universal. What that means is [that] when the gospel is preached, it's preached to everyone. We aren't told to go out and preach the gospel to the elect. We don't know who the elect are. We are, in the words of the Great Commission, to go out and make disciples of whom? All nations [see Matthew 28:19]. We are to preach the gospel to all creation. We are to let everybody hear the truth. What is the gospel? That Christ died for you, He was buried, [and] He rose again on the third day,

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conquering death. Believe and you will be saved. That “All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him” [Isaiah 53:6]. That if you “confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” [Romans 10:9]. That whosoever “believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” [John 3:16]. [It goes] on and on and on. That’s the gospel. It’s universal. Everybody gets to hear it, and God commands all men everywhere to repent. We know that.

[Three]: This is the place where a lot of people go, “Oh! I didn’t know that!” Know that there are two different kinds of God’s will. This is critical. A lot of people never stop to even realize that this is true. There are two different kinds of God’s will. Let me just explain. Now, I’m going to throw out some big terms, [but] don’t let them make you fall asleep. One is, here we go, God’s “preceptive,” or “prescriptive,” or “desirous will.” That’s one kind of God’s will, whatever term you want to use [for] it. For instance, God says, “Pray without ceasing” [1 Thessalonians 5:17]. Do you do that? You don’t have to answer, I know the [answer]. It’s the same for me: “no.” The Bible says, “Do not be anxious” [see Philippians 4:6]. Are you ever anxious? I know the answer to that one, too. [It’s the] same for me: “yes.” OK, now, [you may think], “But I thought it was God’s will [that we are] not to be anxious and [to] pray without ceasing.” Well, it is. It’s what God prescribes in the Book for believers. He writes [it] down and tells us, “This is My will.” When you’re talking about God’s prescriptive, or preceptive, or desirous, will, He is telling you what He wants you to do—His will for you—but He gives you the freedom, get this, the *freedom* to go against His will because you can be anxious and you can sin that way. You can sin by not praying, and [not] doing [or doing] all the other things the Bible tells you to do or not do.

Keep that in mind, [and consider that] Jesus says, “I’m going to come again, and it’s going to be like lightning from east as from the west, and all eyes will see Me, and I’m going to set up My kingdom” [see Matthew 24:27–31]. Is that God’s will? Yeah. Is that going to happen? Yeah. Can

anything stop that from happening? No. So, what's the difference here? Well, [the other] kind of [God's] will that the Scriptures talk about is called His "declarative will" or His "absolute will." Prophecies are given to us [to let] us see some of God's absolute will. When God says something is going to happen, nothing can stop it. When we're talking about what God prescribes, or desires, in the pages of Scriptures, do we have to do something? Do we have to obey? Yes. When God says Jesus is going to come again, does that have anything to do with us? Well, we aren't supposed to obey that. It's just a fact, right? It's just going to happen.

When God says, "I have predestined so-and-so to salvation," is that part of His absolute will or His desirous will? [It is part of His] absolute [will] because when He predestines somebody, are they going to come to salvation? Absolutely. But, when God says, "I desire all men to be saved," is that His absolute will or His desirous will? It's what He desires because if it was His absolute will, how many people would get saved? Everybody [would], because nothing is impossible for God. So, the confusion comes when we don't understand [that] there are two different kinds of will mentioned in the Scriptures, and we take one definition and we apply it to both kinds and then it's not working. But as soon as you understand [that] there are two kinds, we can read a text, and say, "This text is telling us what God desires, [and] this text is telling us what God has decreed absolutely," and then the problem goes away. Bingo.

Finally, and this is still working on question one, since it had four parts, why does God predestine some people and not others? Why would God predestine certain unworthy sinners and not other unworthy sinners? Why is that? That is a good question. The answer, which I'd love to get into in detail now, but I can't, is found, very clearly, in Romans 9:6–24. You're just going to have to read it sometime.<sup>2</sup> Read Romans 9 and ask yourself that question and see what Paul says. Paul gives illustrations [and] examples galore. They're in there—all over the place. Basically Paul says this: The

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.+9:6-24;&version=49;>

reason God predestines those He predestines is because of His grace and mercy, because of His desire, and because of His sovereign will. There. [In response to that,] people [say], “Well, that’s not right!”

Then Paul says, “Who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, ‘Why did you make me like this,’ will it?” [Romans 9:20]. Not if you’re smart. God chooses whom He chooses because [that is what] He desires. Just like you choose what cookie you want to eat, God chooses what rotten sinner He wants to save.

[The] second question [a lot of] people have is: Since the Scriptures call all men to repent and believe in the gospel, then why does God predestine anybody? Why go through this big eternity past for the future [thing], making this big plan? Why doesn’t God just call all men and let those who will come come? We know the answer to this: because no one would. Have you ever wondered why Jesus said, “If you seek Me you will find Me, if you seek Me with your whole heart” [see Jeremiah 29:13], and yet the Scriptures also say, [in] Romans 3:11, “THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD”? Does that bother you? You’re thinking, “I know that the Bible doesn’t contradict itself, [so] they both have to be true somehow.” Let me tell you how they’re both true. When Paul is talking in Romans 3:11, and he says, “There is none who seeks for God,” what he’s talking about is [that] no one, on their own, apart from the grace of God, ever seeks Jesus. When Jesus [says], “If you seek Me you will find Me,” what He’s saying is that those who pursue Him, who are searching after Him, who are seeking salvation are those [in] whom God’s grace is working because God, then, is drawing them.

It would be so fun to go to John 6<sup>3</sup> but we can’t go there. It’s there if you want to search ahead. Those who seek God only seek God in response to Jesus first seeking them. It was not that we first loved Him, but He first loved us [see 1 John 4:19]. Jesus didn’t come to be sought by those seeking, He came to seek and save the lost [see Luke 19:10], and then those people,

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joh.+6;&version=49;>

in response to the grace of God, seek Jesus. We're going to get into this in great detail [later], so if you're thinking, "Oh, this is complex," we're going to unravel this one later. Remember [that] people, on their own, don't come to Christ. They don't come to the Light—John 3:19–20—they will not come to Christ—John 5:39 through funny. (Thirty-nine through funny?) Forty. (That's a good one. It's fun to sit around with pastors and talk about all the faux pas we make.) Anyway, Romans 3:11 [says] "THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD," and that's just the way it is. Nobody seeks God. God seeks men, and then men respond. So, do men seek Christ? Yes. [Do they do so] on their own? No. So, why do some seek Him? [It is] because of God's grace.

[The] third [question is]: If God has already chosen whom He will save, then why witness? Why would you ever witness if God has already determined whom He is going to save? Well, to even ask a question like that reveals an ignorance about why we witness in the first place. Do you witness to people so *you* can save them? No. You witness to people so *God* can save them. OK, so God's saving them, what's the big deal? Well, the big deal is this: God could have saved them without you—He doesn't need you—but God has actually made salvation so that you can participate in the process of leading people to Christ. That is cool! God says, "I could harvest [on] My own, but here's the sickle, go swing this baby. Share the gospel. The gospel is the means by which I bring in those who are the elect, and I'm going to let you participate in that. And so, if you love Me, then do this. If you love others, then do this, but don't do it because you think you're going to save somebody because you're not." The reason we witness is to obey the command of God, out of love for God, and because we realize that God uses the gospel to save people.

The [fourth] question (which is very similar [to the previous question], but I'll answer it) is: Then why pray for the lost if God has already determined whom He saves? Well, the same reasoning applies. Why do you pray? Do you pray so you can save people? No. You pray so [that] what? God can save people. OK, so we've got that one fixed: God saves them. So

then, why pray? [We pray] because God is gracious [and] allows us to participate in the process of people coming to Christ. He could have just saved them. He doesn't need us. He *lets* us participate, so [that] when you're in heaven, and [can] you say, "Hey! There's a guy that I witnessed to and He came to Christ. God used me. Our whole Bible study was praying for him for a year and a half." [Then] everybody else gets to praise God because God also used the whole Bible study, and you got to swing the sickle and harvest that one ear of grain. Praise God! You don't share the gospel or pray so *you* can save people, but so *God* can save people. So, the answer to those questions is: We pray so that God's will will be done, right? I mean, isn't that how you pray? You should, if you don't, [just as Christ did]: "Yet not My will, but Yours be done" [Luke 22:42]. We pray for the lost, and what we're really saying is, "God, save those You have chosen to save." That's what Jesus tells us to do.

[The fifth question is]: [Is it fair] for God to predestine some to salvation and not others? This is a dangerous question. You never want to ask God for fair[ness], because fairness leaves the realm of mercy and grace and gets into the area of justice. So, when you say, "I want everything to be fair," you're really saying [that] everybody needs to go to hell and suffer in the lake of fire, because that would be fair. Do you realize [that] God doesn't need to save anybody because salvation is unearned and undeserved? It's by grace. So, He could condemn everybody to hell, and He would be holy and just in doing it, wouldn't He? Yeah. So, when you say, "Well, that's not fair," then you're really saying, "God, cast me into hell, and everybody else, [too]. I want fair!" Grace and mercy supersede justice in that they offer to the unworthy, undeserving sinner that which he never deserves or earns. It's like a whole bunch of rebels running toward the cliff to kill themselves, and God lassos one, trips him up and drags him through the dust backwards, [saying], "I'm going to save you." It's not that he deserves it—they're all rebels. It's not that he earned it.

It's like this. [Imagine that] you go down to the bank, draw out \$100, go down to San Fernando [Boulevard], and start handing out \$1 bills to people.

You [got] 100 \$1 bills [out of the bank]. You hand them out, and say, “Oh, you want a Frappuccino? Here’s \$4. And for you, here’s \$1. I don’t know what you can buy for \$1 anymore, but I’m sure there’s still something. Here’s a buck.” You go over to some [other] people, [and say], “Here’s six bucks.” And, “Here’s ten bucks,” and “Here’s two bucks.” You can give them away. They’re yours, it’s your money, you can give [it] away.

What if some people were watching this, and said, “Hey, hey, hey! Where’s our money? This isn’t fair! You didn’t give me some of your money that I never earned or deserved. That’s not right!”

“Oh, really? [Do] you mean to tell me that I can’t give to people what I want? It is mine. It’s not like you deserve it. It’s not like you earned it. It’s not like I owe you anything. I don’t even know who you are!”

Do you remember the parable of the laborers in the vineyard that teaches this very thing [see Matthew 20]? [A man] goes out on the highways and byways, gets a bunch of workers, they come, [and he] says, “OK, guys, this is what we’ll do. I will hire you by my grace”—Jesus is the master—“and I’ll give you a denarius if you work all day.” They say, “Great!” because that was kind of the going wage for the day. [Then the man] realizes [the job is] not getting done, [so] He goes out and gets more workers. [He brings in workers] at different times of the day—some people only come in for [about] an hour. [Then], at the end of the day, he pays everybody a denarius.

The guys who had been working all day, say, “Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey! What are you doing? We worked all day long! Those people only worked [for] an hour!” [Do] you remember what happened? Jesus says, in Matthew 20:15, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?” or gracious. You see, the guys who were hired at the very beginning were hired by grace. They were offered a denarius by grace, and all the rest were hired not knowing what they would make, but the fact that they even got to be hired was gracious. At the end, the fact that everybody was paid the same was a gracious act. The Master, the Lord, has the right to give to people what He desires when it’s

not deserved—all of the other people that He didn't make the contract with. So it is with salvation. God gives to people because He chooses, because He is generous, because He is gracious. It has nothing to do with the guy earning a whole day's wage—he didn't. All those guys didn't. The only people who did were the guys who worked the whole day. But Jesus' point is, "Listen, God can do whatever He wants when He's dealing out grace." God can save 100 people, 2 people, no people, and He would be just in saving however many He wanted because it is all of grace. None of it's deserved or earned.

[The sixth question is]: Don't all people have the equal chance of being saved? You knew this was coming. The answer to that is "yes" and "no." Does that sound political, or what? If you're asking [if] everyone [is] without excuse before God, the answer is "yes." Romans 1:18–2:16 makes it clear that God reveals Himself to all men in three ways: He puts His law in their hearts, an instinct of right and wrong; He gives them a conscience, which tells them when they're violating the law He has put in their hearts; and He makes the world, and the heavens, and all they contain so that men can see that there is an intelligent, creating, powerful Being who exists who put all [of it] into place. He says, "All men have that revelation in them. Therefore, all of them are without excuse."

[Then you may ask], "Well, how many people come to Christ because of that?" None. It only condemns men because Paul also says that all men take that revelation of God and they suppress it in unrighteousness so that no one gets saved [see 1:18]. None. So, in that way, yes, everybody has an equal chance. Now, if you're asking [if] God predestine[s] all men to salvation, the answer is "no." If you want to know why, read Romans 9.

[The seventh question is]: What about my unsaved family members and friends? What if they aren't predestined to salvation? First of all, realize [that] you don't know who is predestined. People come to Christ at all different times of their lives. [With] some people, like the thief on the cross [see Luke 23:40–43], it's [on] the very last day [of their lives that] they come to Christ. You don't know if somebody is predestined or not, and

God doesn't want you to know. It's not because it's part of His absolute decree, He doesn't even tell you to do anything about it. He just tells you that people are predestined to encourage those who are saved. That's all.

This is what you need to understand: The doctrine of predestination, as taught in Scripture, is an encouragement to believers and believers only. There is never a text [that] applies predestination in salvation to unbelievers. It doesn't exist. But we say, "OK, believers are predestined, so what about the unbelievers?" and then we want to pull our hair out. Why? [It is] because it just doesn't make sense. Someone described it this way. There's the gate of heaven, and those who are outside of heaven—the unbelievers—look at the entranceway into heaven, and there's a sign that says, "Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved!" That is God's message to all unbelievers: Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Somebody reads that sign, and says, "OK, I'm a sinner, I'm going to repent," they believe, they enter into heaven, and they turn around, and on the back side of that sign, it says, "Predestined before the foundation of the world unto adoption as sons." No one in heaven sees anything other than [the sign saying,] "God chose you," and no one outside [of heaven] sees anything, or should see anything, but, "Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." There is a universal gospel call to all who don't know Christ. There is universal encouragement to all who [do] know Christ: "Predestined before the foundation of the world."

That's how it works. [If] you try and take the back of that sign and apply it to the front of that sign, you're going to pull your hair out because you're going to think, "Man, how does this work?" It doesn't. It's not supposed to work. The Scriptures never do it. But we like to do it, don't we? "What if..." Don't go there.

So, how does anyone get saved? It started in eternity past when God chose, elected, foreknew, people to salvation. And then, in their lives, He called them to salvation. I wish we could go into more, but, man, we're out of time. Here's a little bit of application. If you're a believer, you need to praise God that you were predestined before the foundation of the world

and foreknown, that God determined to have a relationship with you and brought that to pass by calling you to repentance and faith in Christ. [Remember that] it was all of Him and none of you.

If you don't know Christ, and you're out there saying, "But what if I'm not predestined?" Believe, and then you'll know. The message to you is: Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. That is God's message to you. Whoever wills to receive Him, "to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" [John 1:12]. Will you will to do that? If you will, you will be saved, and [you will then] look at the back side of the sign, and it will be an encouragement to you. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for being able to go through some pretty serious doctrine this morning. I pray for everybody's brain, that it would be able to soak this up. Father, that believers would be encouraged, knowing that You are in control, You have a plan, and You are going to save those You have chosen. For those who don't know You, if they're sitting out there and they're just wondering, "I don't know if I'm one," make that question be set aside in their minds, and may the real question[s] be: "Am I a sinner? Is Christ a Savior? Does He call me to repent and believe? Therefore I must," and give them the grace, Father, to do that, that they might be saved this morning, sitting in their pew, that You would change them, and they, then, would see the back side of that sign and be encouraged from now on and forevermore. We pray all this in Christ's name, Amen.

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