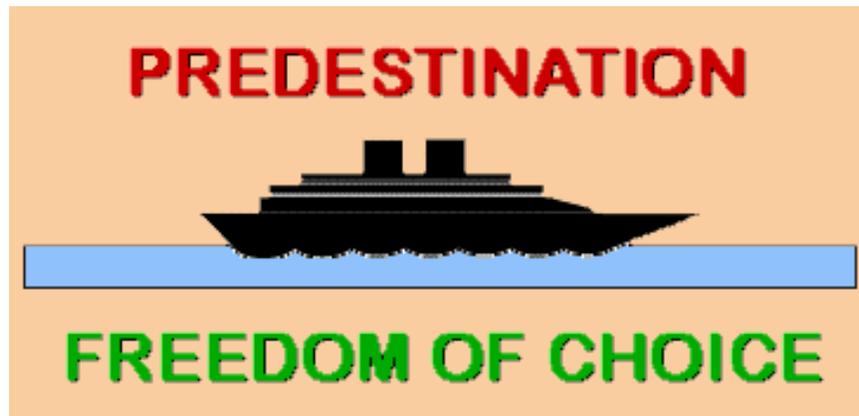


NAVIGATING PREDESTINATION AND FREEDOM OF CHOICE



DEFINING ACCEPTING APPLYING TWO CONTRADICTIONARY TRUTHS

When ship captains navigate through various waterways, they use charts to plot their course. These charts show where distinct red and green floating buoys are placed in the water to mark safe passageways.



The **red** and **green** buoys are always separated from each other and placed on opposite sides of the channel. In order to navigate safely, ship captains must always keep both buoys in sight and steer between them in order to remain in the safe, deep water.



The Bible is God's navigation chart for our lives. It presents 'spiritual buoys' to us that are separate and opposite from one another; the buoys of 'Predestination' and our 'Moral Freedom and Accountability'. God's spiritual buoys, when properly understood, allow us to know that we are in 'safe water', and to recognize the direction we must take in order to navigate successfully toward eternal life. We can understand God's spiritual buoys when we:

- 1) **Define** each truth biblically; seeing it in its 'true colors'.
- 2) **Accept** the contradiction in these truths (their separateness and oppositeness).
- 3) **Apply** these truths to our lives in the way that God instructs us to.

GOD'S FIRM FOUNDATION

The apostle Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, wrote that there are two truths written upon the foundation of God's government:

Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, 'The Lord knows them that are His', and 'Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity'. 2 Timothy 2:19

In the original Greek version of Paul's letter to Timothy, the word 'knows' was written in the past tense. Paul was pointing out that God has known, from before the beginning of creation, all those who will eventually enter into His future eternal kingdom. Paul was making reference to the 'sovereign' predestination and election by God the Father of all men and angels to their ultimate eternal destinies.

Two things must be understood about predestination. First, we must recognize that predestination belongs to God the Father.

GOD THE FATHER ALONE IS THE GREAT 'PREDESTINATOR'

Secondly, we need to understand that all of His elective purposes are certain to be fulfilled:

All whom the Father gives to Me shall come to Me. And he that comes to Me I will in no way cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will Who has sent Me; that of all whom He has given to Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. John 6:37-39

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life. And they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, Who gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. John 10:27-29

This is a doctrine that Paul presents forcefully in the 9th chapter of Romans. It is the Father's predestination of all of the inhabitants of His universe to their ultimate eternal destinies, for the sole purpose of providing Himself with the opportunity to fully reveal His own glorious attributes. The Father has predestined some to become 1) the objects of His kindness, and others to be 2) the objects of His wrath. This is a concept known as 'double predestination', and was described by King Solomon:

The Lord has made all things for Himself. Yes, even the wicked for the day of evil. Proverbs 16:4

God's right to predestine all things is also referred to by many Christians as the '**SOVEREIGNTY**' of God. Just as a king is sovereign over his kingdom, and can do whatever he pleases with it, so God is also sovereign over the universe.

But while Paul first described predestination as foundational to God's universe, he went on to add a second truth to that foundation. Paul wrote that we, as human beings, determine our eternal destinies by embracing our moral freedom of choice and accountability in this world, and by living our lives knowing that God will judge every one of us based upon one simple principle and one simple question:

- 1) God will judge us 'according to our deeds'.
- 2) Have we obeyed the Law of God?

This half of the foundation of God's universe stands just as certain as predestination. Our eternal destinies are determined by our own free moral choices. This is how it has always been, and always will be:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that hear shall live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this. For the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. John 5:25-29

But after your hardness and impenitent heart you treasure up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that does evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. But glory, honor, and peace to every man that works good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God. Romans 2:5-11

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad. 2 Corinthians 5:10

And I saw a great white throne, and Him Who sat on it, from Whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. And the books were opened, and another book was opened which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. Revelation 20:11-12

And, behold, I (Jesus) am coming quickly and My reward is with Me; to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Revelation 22:12-14

Not only does Paul set these two foundational truths before us, but he also tells us how to handle them. Paul uses the same metaphor with Timothy that he uses in Romans chapter 9, describing predestination as God's right as a 'Potter' to create and use vessels in any way that He pleases. But Paul then goes on to say that the kind of vessels we were predestined to be before the universe began, is fulfilled in the free moral choices that we make in this present world:

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these (iniquities or sins), he shall be a vessel unto honor; sanctified and ready for the Master's use, and prepared for every good work. 2 Timothy 2:20-21

Paul was saying that God's eternal predestination is fulfilled in the moral choices that we make in our everyday lives. Predestination and our freedom of

choice are both fully and simultaneously true. And so, we have as much power over our eternal destinies as God does.

This is the Bible's explanation of the interplay between the sovereignty of God and the moral freedom and responsibility of man. Both are fully true at the same time, and human beings are commanded to accept this and embrace their side of this equation. It is this same approach to these two 'foundational' truths of the Bible that Peter also set before Christians who had begun to understand and experience God's electing grace:

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure (certain, final, permanent). For if you do these things, you shall never fall. 2 Peter 1:10

IS GOD THE FATHER FULFILLING HIS PREDESTINED PLANS EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES? ABSOLUTELY! BUT WE CAN ONLY OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE WHEN WE CHOOSE TO **DEPART FROM INIQUITY.**

RED & GREEN TOGETHER

Paul's two great, foundational truths are found throughout the Bible; sometimes in the same verse. I present some of these verses and passages below. Following the navigational analogy that I used to begin this web page, I have colored God's words about predestination in red, and His words about our moral freedom in green. The message is always the same; what God the Father has predestined in eternity past, free moral agents will chose to do in this present world.

Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom **prepared for you from the foundation of the world**; **For I was hungry and you gave Me meat, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink....**" Matthew 25:34-36

All that **the Father gives Me shall come to Me....** John 6:37

I have manifested Your name unto the men **which You gave to Me** out of the world. **They were Yours**, and **You gave them to Me**; and **they have kept Your word.** John 17:6

Him (Jesus), being delivered **by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God**, you have taken, and **by wicked hands have crucified and slain.** Acts 2:23

And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as **were ordained to eternal life believed.** Acts 13:48-49

And we know that all things work together for good **to them that love God,** to them who are the **called according to His purpose.** Romans 8:28

According **as He has chosen us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world,** that we should **be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestined us** to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, **according to the good pleasure of His will.** Ephesians 1:4-5

Being confident of this very thing, that **He Who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.** Even as it is appropriate for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as **both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.** Philippians 1:6-7

But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has **from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.**
2 Thessalonians 2:13

God has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, **which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.** 2 Timothy 1:9

To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,** in **sanctification of the Spirit,** for **obedience** and **sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ....** 1 Peter 1:1-2

Who are **kept by the power of God through faith** unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:5

Therefore, to you who believe, He (Jesus) is precious. But to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble, **being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.**
1 Peter 2:7-8

For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old **ordained to this condemnation**, **ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Jude 4

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are **called**, and **chosen**, and **faithful**. Revelation 17:14

As we look at these various verses and passages in God's word, it is obvious that the Bible tells us that both the Father's predestination of all things, and our own complete moral freedom of choice and responsibility are fully true. How is this possible? How can we make sense of this? I attempt to answer these questions in the sections below, beginning by defining predestination and our moral freedom of choice as we find them in the Bible.

DEFINING PREDESTINATION

Beyond recognizing that predestination is a foundational truth of the Bible, we must define it accurately and appreciate its moral underpinnings. We must understand why it is right that God the Father should predestine the moral choices that each of us will make throughout the course of history. In Romans 9 Paul described God's unconditional election at work in the lives of Isaac, Jacob, Esau and the Pharaoh of Egypt:

And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls), it was said unto her "The elder shall serve the younger". As it is written "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated". What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For He said to Moses "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion". So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God Who shows mercy. For the scripture said unto Pharaoh "Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth". Therefore He has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens. Romans 9:10-18

Paul pointed to the fact that God's predestination of the lives of Jacob and Esau not only preceded their births, but also preceded anything that they had done, either good or bad; in other words the Father's predestination preceded their rebellion with Adam in Eden. Paul also points to the fact that God both commanded Pharaoh to let His people go, while also hardening Pharaoh's heart

so that he would not obey; in order to provide Himself with the opportunity to reveal His glory to the world. Paul then posed the question that we will all ask:

You will say then unto me 'Why does God find fault? For who has resisted His will?' Romans 9:19

The fact that Paul's question is the objection that most people raise against Biblical predestination, proves that double predestination is indeed Biblical. If this was not so, no one would have a problem with the doctrine or ask the question. Paul then provides God's response to the question:

Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it "Why have you made me thus?" Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory? Romans 9:20-23

It is important to recognize that Paul does not 'water down' predestination. He does not make excuses for it by pointing out that 'both predestination and our freedom of choice are true'; or that they are 'two sides of the same coin'. Paul does not mix these truths, or set them before us as a 'set of truths' to be embraced as a 'package deal'. He sets the Father's unconditional predestination of all things before us nakedly, boldly and unapologetically.

The hypothetical question that Paul posed was one that naturally arises within the mind of man; a question about true causes and righteous judgments. But God is not bound by our perspectives or subject to our notions of 'justice'. God's 'rights' flow out of a completely different frame of reference than ours; the greater reality of what He is, and what we are.

In contrast to the Creator of the universe, we amount to no more than lifeless 'clay'. Relatively speaking we are nothing; and therefore He can do with us whatever He pleases. This is how things should be. This contrast between God the Father, and the relatively 'worthless' inhabitants of His universe, is found throughout the Bible:

Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Behold, He takes up the isles (the Gentile nations) as a very little thing; and Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted by

Him less than nothing, and vanity (worthless). To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare unto Him? Isaiah 40:15-18

And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me. And I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored Him who lives for ever; Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. And none can restrain His hand, or say unto Him 'What are You doing?'. Daniel 4:34-35

The four and twenty elders fall down before Him Who sat on the throne, and worship Him that lives for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created. Revelation 4:10-11

The Bible indeed tells us that the souls of angels and men are very precious, and matter greatly. But the Bible also tells us about a God that is so unspeakably glorious, dreadful and terrible that it is only right that the souls of men and angels should exist for no other purpose than to provide Him with the opportunity to reveal all that He is and all that He is capable of. This is the Biblical definition of predestination. It is about the Potter, and the clay vessels that He creates and uses as He pleases. It is one of the two 'moral pillars' that Paul described for Timothy, is found everywhere in the Bible, and that supports the foundation of the universe.

GOD IS NOT ONLY THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE: HE IS THE REASON FOR THE UNIVERSE!

The patriarch Abraham began a morals-based plea with God on behalf of any righteous people who might be found in Sodom and Gomorrah:

That be far from You to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that the righteous should be as the wicked. That be far from You. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Genesis 18:25

But then Abraham stopped to acknowledge his true standing before God: "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord; I who am but dust and ashes." Genesis 18:27, 30-32

Abraham was then given permission to continue his moral plea on behalf of his nephew Lot. And because he properly appreciated both aspects of his relationship with God, he eventually became known as "the friend of God" (James 2:23).

DEFINING FREEDOM OF CHOICE

The Bible tells us that we live in an open-ended moral universe, and that its ultimate destiny will be determined by the free moral choices that God, men and angels make in their ongoing relationships with each other. Furthermore the Bible tells us that God Himself is bound by the requirements of righteousness, truth, fairness and justice in determining what the ultimate outcome of the world will be.

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS; THAT GOD JUDGES MEN AND ANGELS BASED ONLY UPON WHETHER OR NOT THEY HAVED OBEYED THE LAW.

In Acts 17:31, the apostle Paul told the people of Athens that a day is coming when God is going to judge the world "in righteousness". Moral righteousness will be the standard by which God Himself is measured, and by which He will measure all other beings.

Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws. Genesis 26:5

And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us. Deuteronomy 6:24-25

According to thy name, O God, so is Thy praise unto the ends of the earth. Thy right hand is full of righteousness. Psalm 48:10

But when John the Baptist saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them "O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits consistent with repentance. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is cut down, and cast into the fire. Matthew 3:7,8,10

Think not that I (Jesus) am come to destroy the Law or the prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, 'Until heaven and earth

pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, until all is fulfilled'. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:17-20

Therefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not every one that says unto Me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Matthew 7:20,21

Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or else make the tree bad, and its fruit bad. For the tree is known by its fruit. Matthew 12:33

Then Peter opened his mouth and said "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation he that fears Him, and works righteousness, is accepted with Him". Acts 10:34-35

Do we then make void the Law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the Law. Romans 3:31

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:1-4

For He (the Father) has made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21

Little children, let no man deceive you. He who does what is right is righteous, even as He (God) is righteous. 1 John 3:7

Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie. Revelation 22:14-15

THE SECOND PRINCIPLE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT IS TRUTHFULNESS; THAT GOD JUDGES MEN AND ANGELS BASED ONLY UPON WHAT IS REALLY TRUE OF THEM.

The Bible tells us that God is going to judge the world in complete truthfulness, and in accordance with what each one of us has freely and knowingly chosen to do. It is important here to clarify the underlying principle of God's justice. It is the principle of 'subjectivism'; that God judges people based strictly upon what is actually, subjectively true of them. God only judges men and angels based upon what they have freely thought, said or done. In other words, God will judge the world according to our 'works' or 'deeds'. He never judges upon any other basis.

He (God) is the Rock. His work is perfect, for all His ways are judgment. A God of truth and without iniquity; just and right is He. Deuteronomy 32:4

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad. Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord. For He comes, for He comes to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth. Psalm 96:11-13

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whosoever you are that judges. For wherein you judge another, you condemn thyself; for you that judge do the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And think you this, O man that judges them which do such things, and do the same, that you shalt escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But after your hardness and impenitent heart you treasure up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds. Romans 2:1-6

THE THIRD PRINCIPLE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT IS FAIRNESS. THE ONE WHO WILL JUDGE MANKIND WILL BE A MAN HIMSELF; A RIGHTEOUS MAN WHO SO LOVED BOTH GOD AND MANKIND THAT HE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE TREATED AS A CRIMINAL IN ORDER THAT WE MIGHT BE JUSTLY FORGIVEN AND RESTORED TO GOD.

I suppose it goes without saying that God's judgment, based upon both righteousness and truth, will be just and fair as well. But this point needs to be stressed. Not only will God's judgment be fulfilled in perfect righteousness,

truth and justice, but it will be pronounced by Someone who has 'walked in our shoes'.

The One who will sit upon the Great White Throne will be Someone who left His heavenly glory behind, coming to earth as the 'Son of Man'. As a human being He obediently endured all of the moral trials and temptations that any human being can experience, and then subjected Himself to a criminal execution in order to make forgiveness and possible for rebellious sinners.

It will be in the context of the Son of God's moral obedience and patient loving kindness that people will come before Jesus to be judged. It will be a dreadful thing to come before the One who died for us, only to be condemned because we refused to acknowledge our sins and embrace His grace and mercy.

**For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son.
John 5:22**

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. Romans 2:16

**Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Who, being in the form of God, thought it not a thing to be clung to, to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Philippians 2:5-11**

CONTRADICTING PREDESTINATION

One of the things that people have done, as they have read the Bible, is to turn these two great truths of God against the other. They have used them to nullify and destroy each other. Where the Bible talks about God's choices, people say it's really about man's choices. And where the Bible speaks about man's choices, they say it's really about God's choices.

For instance, while the Bible declares that God has chosen our eternal destinies without any thought about our own subjective moral character (Romans 9:11-16), many people teach that God first looked forward into history, saw that all of humanity would choose to sin and rebel against Him, and then simply

chose to predestine some sinners to receive mercy, while leaving other sinners to receive the punishment that they deserve.

This is called 'infralapsarian predestination'. 'Infra' means 'after', and 'lapse' means to fall or 'sin'. 'Infralapsarian' means that, within God's mind, predestination follows mankind's universal rebellion. By putting man's choices ahead of God's choices, infralapsarian teachers take away the 'offensiveness' of biblical predestination and election. The correct view, by the way, is 'supralapsarian'. 'Supra' means before the lapse (or fall) of man, and means that God the Father predestined all things without any thought whatsoever regarding anyone's personal character or future choices.

There are others who go beyond infralapsarian predestination. They say that God not only saw the future rebellion of mankind in Eden, but also foresaw which sinners would be willing to repent of their disobedience and embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ. God then simply predestined them to hear the gospel, so that they could do what He already knew they would choose to do.

To be fair, this is a sincere attempt on the part of some Christians to uphold the Biblical truth of mankind's moral freedom of choice and responsibility. But such a subversion of foreknowledge and predestination is unscriptural and unnecessary. God shows us, in His word, how we can be at peace with both Biblical predestination and our moral freedom of choice.

CONTRADICTING FREEDOM OF CHOICE

In explaining predestination, I have referred to what I would call the primary 'wellspring' of truth in the Bible concerning predestination; Paul's explanation of it in Romans chapter 9. In this section I point to the 'wellspring' of truth concerning mankind's moral accountability and freedom of choice. That 'wellspring', like the first one, is found in Paul's epistle to the church in Rome. In that letter Paul pointed to the universal immorality of all mankind, and then traced that immorality back to its roots.

Beginning in Romans 1:18, Paul described the nature of human sin; a refusal to acknowledge, love and honor God:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse. Because that, when they knew

God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Romans 1:18-23

Then, in chapters 2 and 3 Paul proceeded to describe the **universality** of human sinfulness, found **without exception** throughout the world:

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whosoever you are that judges. For wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself. For you that judge do the same things. Romans 2:1

As it is written "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understands. There is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that does good; no, not one. Romans 3:10-12 (Psalm 14:1-3)

Then in Romans 3:23 and 5:12, Paul traced mankind's universal sinfulness to **one act** that we all committed in the past; Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden:

...for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

...by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12

In both of the verses above, when Paul wrote that we have 'all sinned', he used the simple, active past tense form of the Greek verb 'sin', indicating an **action** that has been performed in the past. If Paul's original Greek words are to be taken literally, then we must understand him to say that each and every one of us was present within Adam in the Garden of Eden, and that each one of us **personally**, **consciously** and **individually** chose to commit the same act of disobedience that Adam himself was committing.

How was this simultaneous sin of Adam and the rest of humanity possible? A 'Trinitarian Union' existed between ourselves and Adam, patterned after the 'oneness' of the three Persons of the Trinity. I have explained this connection with Adam in my web pages titled **Death and the Judgment of God**, and **The Truth About Original Sin**. And I have explained the similar union that exists between the 'last Adam', Jesus Christ, and His people in my web page titled **God's Forgiveness**.

The simple and correct explanation is that the human race was created in the image of God. Just as three eternal Persons are united as one God, so also the many billions of the human race were united within one man; Adam. When the divinely inspired apostle wrote that we 'all sinned' in the Garden of Eden, he meant exactly what he said. Paul was saying that death is the revelation of the wrath of God from heaven against the very real sins of each and every single member of the human race (Romans 1:18).

So how have people used the sovereignty of God to nullify the Bible's declaration of our real and personal rebellion in Eden? Around 400 AD a man named Augustine began to deny that we all consciously sinned in Eden, and instead to teach that Adam's immorality is passed down to each of us biologically. This is an idea known as 'hereditary (inherited) depravity', and is foundational to Roman Catholic theology. Since such a biological connection between ourselves and Adam could only have been 'sovereignly' established by God, the blame for our moral bondage also falls upon God, rather than upon ourselves.

Not only does Augustine's teaching contradict the apostle Paul and the testimony of our own conscience, but it also contradicts the Old Testament:

In those days they shall say no more "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge". But every one shall die for his own iniquity. Every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. Jeremiah 31:29-30

The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying "What do you mean, that you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?'" "As I live" says the Lord God, "you shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine. As the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine. The soul that sins, it shall die". Ezekiel 18:1-4

These two passages repeat a message found throughout God's word; that God always has and always will reward each one of us truthfully, and 'according to our deeds'.

Roughly 1100 years after Augustine, with the coming of the Protestant Reformation around 1500 AD, Protestant leaders 'doubled down' upon Augustine's error. They not only embraced Augustine's claim that God 'sovereignly' ordained hereditary depravity, but also taught that God appointed Adam to be our legal 'representative' in Eden; so that He could then impute or

charge Adam's crime to each of us, even though we ourselves had not personally sinned.

The 'Reformers' taught that the power of Sin dominates us through hereditary depravity, while the penalty of sin dominates us through an even more remote 'connection' with Adam; Adam's 'Federal' or 'Representative' headship of the human race. The claim is that, when our 'representative' sinned, God then charged or 'imputed' his choice to the rest of humanity. The false 'imputation' of Adam's sin to the innocent, and a corresponding false imputation of Christ's righteousness to sinners, is foundational to 'Reformed', 'Calvinistic' theology. It bases our condemnation and justification upon the 'legal fictions' of a 'sovereign God', rather than upon what is actually and subjectively true of us.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. But after their own lusts they shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

Why did the Reformers do this? It was a reaction to Roman Catholic legalism. Rome's single emphasis was upon inherited depravity, and a person's deliverance from that depravity. Rome's false claims, that its priests and sacraments could provide that deliverance, led Roman Catholics to demonstrate their salvation and the validity of Roman Catholicism through the only means that was actually available to them; their knowledge of right and wrong. Although believing otherwise, Roman Catholics are actually limited to the 'works of the Law' as their means of achieving righteousness (see **Why God Requires Our Faith**).

In a reaction to Rome's slavish legalism, rather than go back to correct Augustine's error, the Reformers chose to counter Rome's false subjectivism by rejecting subjectivism altogether. And so they detached man's condemnation and justification from from any legal basis whatsoever.

Reformed Theology denies that God radically changes sinners by uniting them with Christ in a 'Trinitarian Union'; a union through which both the penalty and power of Sin are dealt with through the sinner's own death, burial and resurrection with Christ. This transformation through union with Christ is referred to in the Bible as 'regeneration', the 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit', and 'the new birth':

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Regeneration is not a legal fiction. It is a transformation that God bestows upon the repentant sinner after he has 'purified his heart' by acknowledging his guilt and need for the shed blood of the Savior (Acts 15:9, Romans 10:10). Obsessing over the sovereignty of God, Calvinists and Reformed theologians insist that regeneration is something that God must do to a sinner before he can choose to repent and believe the Gospel. This is one of the gravest heresies in the history of the world. It is an attack upon God's truth, justice and 'Order of Salvation' (Ordo Salutis). It is a denial of mankind's real sin and guilt, and God's real solution for that sin and guilt.

There are many 'unions' in the universe that are real and important. There are unions within atoms and between atoms that define matter. There are unions between gravity, light, stars and planets that define galaxies and solar systems. There are unions among people that define families, and define groups and nations that share common 'values'. But there is no union more real, or more important in the universe than the union that exists between the three Persons of the Trinity. And it is just such a union that also exists between between the 'last Adam', Jesus Christ, and His people:

That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You. That they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave to Me I have given to them; that they may be one, even as We are one. I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one. That the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. John 17:21-23

I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live through faith in the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20

Reformed theologians who embrace both of the 'crippled' versions of predestination and our moral accountability that I have described above, are caught in an embarrassing contradiction. If the universal sin of all mankind is only imputed or inherited, then infralapsarian predestination means that God looked ahead to a universal sin that He Himself created. But if the universal sin of mankind is real, then hereditary depravity and God's false imputation of Adam's sin are worthless doctrines; "wood, hay and stubble" (1 Corinthians 3:12).

AUGUSTINE USED GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY TO ATTACK THE FOUNDATIONS OF GOD'S JUSTICE. REFORMED THEOLOGIANs ARE FINISHING WHAT AUGUSTINE STARTED.

Those who bring God's sovereignty and man's moral freedom together, using one truth to contradict the other, are mixing the 'reds' and 'greens' of God's word, resulting in a **brown** color. When God's spiritual buoys are all **brown**, they become much harder to see; especially at night and in the turbulent, muddy waters associated with the storms of life. In addition, because all the buoys are the same color, people are left unable to determine the direction that they are traveling in; toward God or away from Him. As a result, people who choose to mix God's sovereignty and man's moral accountability are in danger of shipwreck.

It is this 'gutting' of the Bible, at its most fundamental level, that has left Christianity powerless in today's world; unable to accurately explain death, or to proclaim the moral relevance and power of what Jesus has done at the cross. Calvinists and Arminians like to argue about who is orthodox and who is not, but this is empty talk. They both, along with Rome, embrace the fundamental error of blaming God for our sin problem. They all attack the Gospel at its very foundation; the need of real sinners for a real salvation.

Old-Earth and Young-Earth creationists both claim that they handle the creation account in the book of Genesis faithfully, maintaining that Adam was a real historical person. But they both deny the most important thing that God tells us about Eden; that every single one of us was also present in that Garden. Without an understanding of this truth, regardless of the relative merits of a Young-earth or Old-earth view, it is impossible to accurately handle Genesis. If Eden is not real to us because we know that we ourselves were there, then it is not Biblically real to us at all.

GOD'S ANSWER: THE WISDOM OF MOSES

When we try to reconcile predestination and freedom of choice within our own minds, we are trying to do something that is intellectually impossible. The apostle Peter recognized that the apostle Paul was uniquely used by God to set forth great truths of the Christian faith; some of which are 'hard to understand'. Peter warned that twisting God's word can lead to our destruction:

And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrestle (twist or distort), as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. 2 Peter 3:15-16

And Peter described this twisting of God's word as 'the error of the wicked':

You therefore, beloved, seeing you know these things beforehand, beware lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. 2 Peter 3:17-18

How we choose to handle the truths of God's predestination, and our own moral freedom and responsibility, is more than an interesting intellectual exercise; it is a matter of life and death.

So what are we to do with these two great truths? We can look to Moses. Just prior to his death at the age of 120, after he had led the people of Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness for 40 years, and knowing that he himself was not going to join them in entering the 'promised land', Moses reviewed the Laws of God one last time for the Israelites. In Deuteronomy chapter 29, Moses made an important statement about our relationship with God:

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God. But those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this Law. Deuteronomy 29:29

In this verse Moses declared two important truths:

- 1) What God chooses to do, He does secretly and invisibly; unseen and inaccessible to us.**
- 2) Our visible world is morally defined, and in it we choose whether or not to obey God's Law.**

It is here, at this very point, that we are shown what to do with the contradictory truths of predestination and our moral freedom. Predestination is God's business, not ours. There is a 'barrier' between us and Him. Our duty is to focus exclusively upon the world which we can see, and the Law of God that defines and governs that world.

This is the same set of dual truths that Paul was describing for Timothy; that what God has predestined to happen will be realized in the free moral choices of angels and men within the universe.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. Ecclesiastes 12:13

IS GOD THE FATHER FULFILLING HIS PREDESTINED PLANS EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES? ABSOLUTELY! BUT WE CAN ONLY OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE WHEN WE DO ALL THE WORDS OF HIS LAW.

ACCEPTANCE: THE TABERNACLE MODEL

Moses' instruction is helpful, and tells us that we must focus upon our own moral choices in order to get to heaven. Moses simplifies our lives, telling us to ignore predestination and to give all of our effort to moral purity. But how was Moses able to find 'intellectual peace' with the contradiction between predestination and our moral freedom of choice?

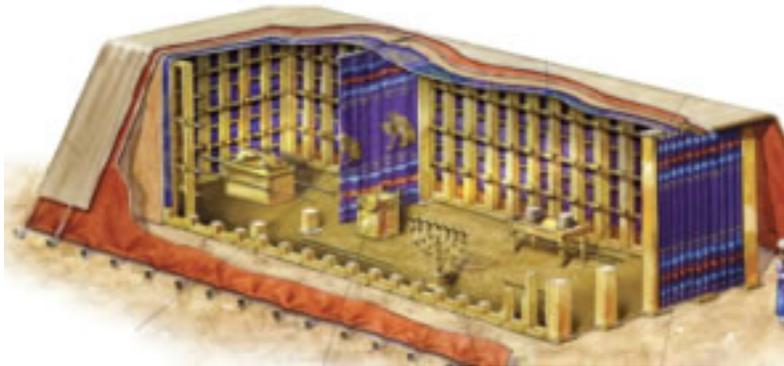
We find the answer in the Tabernacle of Worship that God gave to Moses and to the Hebrew people around 1500 BC. Beginning in Exodus chapter 25, after He had brought the Israelites out of Egypt, God instructed Moses concerning the building of this Tabernacle.

The first thing to observe is the white fence that surrounded the entire Tabernacle area. People could only enter through this fence at one opening: on the Eastern end of the enclosure. Then, before approaching the Tabernacle, the people and the priests had to deal with the issues of guilt and uncleanness (the penalty and power of sin) through offering animal sacrifices upon the altar, and being washed in the 'Laver of cleansing'.



THE TABERNACLE

Once the issue of sin had been dealt with, the Tabernacle could be approached. The interior of the Tabernacle was divided into two rooms; a first room called 'The Holy Place', and a second room called 'The Holiest Place', or the 'Holy of Holies'.



THE TWO CHAMBERS

There was only one entrance into the Tabernacle; through a door in its Eastern end into the Holy Place. And so the 'Holy of Holies' could only be entered by passing through the 'Holy Place' first. We are told by the author of Hebrews that this Tabernacle was an earthly copy of God's true 'Tabernacle' in heaven, where His real throne exists (Hebrews 8:1-5).

Within Moses' earthly Tabernacle all three Persons of the Trinity were symbolized. In the 'Holy Place' there was a Lampstand having seven lamps (Exodus 25:37).



THE HOLY SPIRIT

These lamps symbolized the Holy Spirit, Who is represented as seven 'Spirits' or 'Torches' before the throne of God in Revelation 1:4-5, 4:5. Something of the sevenfold nature and fullness of the Holy Spirit is described in Isaiah:

And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him (Christ), the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. Isaiah 11:2

In addition there was a 'Table of Show-bread'. This bread symbolized the Son of God.



THE SON OF GOD

Jesus is humanity's 'bread of life' in two ways. **Firstly**, as the 'Word of God', the Son of God not only created humanity, but also gave God's Law to us. In Eden He gave us one simple commandment to obey; one that would define all morality for us. It was the commandment not to eat the forbidden fruit and learn the difference between right and wrong (see **Why God Requires Our Faith**). This is the first sense in which the Son of God has been our 'necessary food':

But Jesus answered and said "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'".
Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4, Deuteronomy 8:3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. John 1:1-4

Secondly, Jesus is the redeeming 'bread of life' for sinners, because His body was broken for us and has become 'spiritual food' that leads to forgiveness and acceptance with God.

And Jesus said unto them "I am the bread of life. He that comes to Me shall never hunger. And he that believes on Me shall never thirst". John 6:35 (48,51)

A veil separated the Holy Place from the 'Holy of Holies'. And behind that veil God the Father was represented by the 'Ark of the Covenant'.



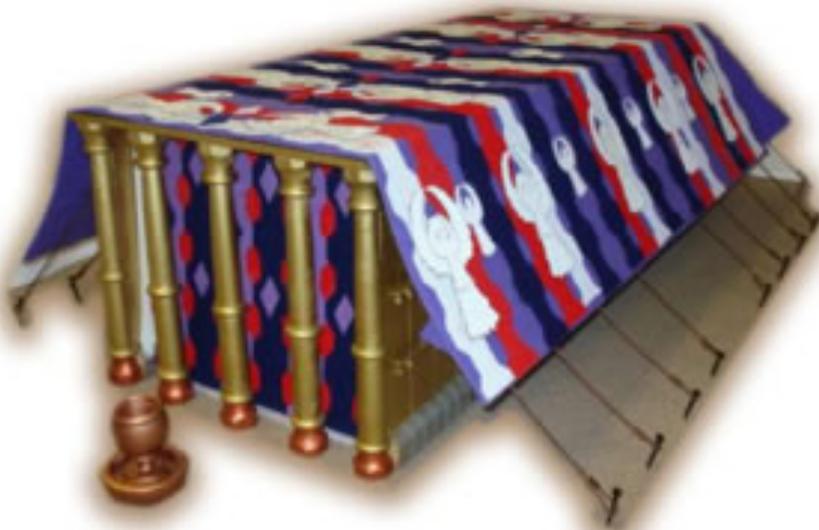
GOD THE FATHER

The Ark had special angels, called Cherubim, connected to it. We see the real Cherubim around God's throne in Revelation 4:6-8.

And the Tabernacle portrayed both the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies as completely surrounded by angels. They were woven into the tapestries that covered the ceilings and walls of both chambers, as well as the veil separating the chambers.



THE VEIL



GOD SURROUNDED BY ANGELS

There was also a fourth piece of furniture within the Tabernacle. It was the Altar of Incense that stood in the Holy Place in front of the veil.



THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

This altar symbolized the ability to pray to the Father behind the veil. Although entrance within the veil was forbidden, the 'pleasant fragrance of prayer' could not be kept out of the Holy and Holies and away from the Father. This Altar of Incense is also seen in the book of Revelation (Revelation 8:3-4).

So what did Moses learn from the Tabernacle?

1) First, there is a division among the Persons of the Trinity in terms of how They interact with humanity. Although it has been given to us to know that there is a Father in the Trinity, to observe Him and His activities is not given to us.

While the Old Testament priests entered into the Holy Place every day of the year, interacting with the Table of Showbread, the Lampstand and the Altar of Incense, they were forbidden to enter the Holy of Holies and to have access to the Father. The 'Holy of Holies' could only be entered once a year; and then only very carefully by the High Priest on 'the Day of Atonement'.

2) Secondly, prayerful communication with the Father could only be maintained through a right relationship with the Son of God and the Spirit of God. It was only through proper everyday attendance to the Lampstand, Showbread and Altar of Incense that the blessing of answered prayer by the invisible Father could be had.

And so it is important for us to understand that access to the Father and eternal life can only be obtained through a right relationship with the Son of God. Our English word 'showbread' is a translation of the original Hebrew words that might better be translated 'bread of the Presence', or 'bread of the Face'. Those Hebrew words convey the fact that the Son of God is the revelation of the invisible Father to the world. Jesus Christ is the Father's face, speaks the Father's words, and is the Father's presence in our visible, morally defined universe:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father; full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has revealed Him. John 1:18

He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has one that judges him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken by Myself, but the Father Who sent Me gave Me a commandment; what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting. Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak. John 12:48-50

Thomas said unto him "Lord, we know not where You are going; and how can we know the way?" Jesus said unto him "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes unto the Father, but by Me. If you had known Me, you would have known my Father also. And from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him. Philip said to Him "Lord, show us the Father and it will be sufficient for us." Jesus said unto him "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known

Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father. So how can you say 'Show us the Father?'" John 14:5-9

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts; to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6

Jesus is the image of the invisible God, born before creation. For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers. All things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all the fullness (of God) dwell. And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself. By Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. Colossians 1:15-20

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (Trinity) bodily. Colossians 2:9

We must also understand the role that the Holy Spirit plays in God's relationship with mankind:

1) Firstly, the Lampstand was always positioned in such a way that it not only provided light for the entire Holy Place, but especially shined its light toward the Table of Showbread. This is consistent with the Holy Spirit's role in the evangelization of humanity. The Holy Spirit speaks to people through the Bible, and directs our attention to God's 'Bread of Life'; Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit has worked to turn people to repentance and faith throughout human history, and continues to urge people to come to the Son of God today.

And the Lord said (before Noah's flood) "My Spirit shall not always strive with man". Genesis 6:3

But the Companion, Who is the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things; and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. John 14:26

And when the Holy Spirit has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on Me. Of

righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. John 16:8-11

Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. For He shall not speak about Himself. But whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak. And He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me. For He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you. John 16:13-15

2) Secondly, the Holy Spirit worked within the Lord Jesus to accomplish the salvation of man. We see a close cooperation between the Son and the Spirit throughout the life of Jesus. The word 'Christ' or 'Messiah' means 'anointed one'; and Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill His mission.

And John bore record, saying "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it rested upon Him. And I knew Him not. But He Who sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me 'Upon Whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit'. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God". John 1:32-34

For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God. For God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. John 3:34-35

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised. Luke 4:18, Isaiah 61:1

That word, I say, you know; which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached. How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him. Acts 10:37-38

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Hebrews 9:14

3) Thirdly, it was the Son of God Who commanded mankind in Eden not to learn the difference between right and wrong. God's plan was that, as we fulfilled the

primary righteousness of believing Him, the Holy Spirit would enter our bodies and share God's own righteous traits with us; 'fruits' of the Holy Spirit such as love, joy and peace.

Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:17-20

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said unto him "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" And he answering said "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself". And Jesus said unto him "You have answered right. This do, and you shall live". Luke 10:25-28

That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:4

No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us. 1 John 4:12

In the Tabernacle we do not find an explanation of how predestination and our moral freedom can both be true. We are simply given a picture, and shown that God inhabits both sides of the veil that separates predestination from freedom of choice. And we are shown that it is only through obedience regarding the 'Lampstand' and the 'Showbread' that access to the Holy of Holies, the Ark and the Father can be obtained.

There is a day coming when the Ark in God's true heavenly Temple will be seen. It will be the moment when the seventh Trumpet has sounded, and the Father's eternal purposes will have been achieved in our visible, moral world:

And the seventh angel sounded. And there were great voices in heaven, saying "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ. And He shall reign for ever and ever". And the temple of God was opened

in heaven. And there was seen in His temple the Ark of His testament. And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.
Revelation 11:15,19

And there shall be no more curse. But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it (the New Jerusalem). And His servants shall serve Him. And they shall see His face. And His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, nor light of the sun. For the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign for ever and ever. Revelation 22:3-5

IS GOD THE FATHER FULFILLING HIS PREDESTINED PLANS EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES? ABSOLUTELY! BUT WE CAN ONLY OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE WHEN WE OBEY HIS 'SHOWBREAD', THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

ACCEPTANCE: THE CORPORATE BUSINESS MODEL

There is another possible model for understanding predestination and our moral freedom. I would suggest that the relationship between the Father and the Son might be likened to the Chairman of the Board of a corporation, and its Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

As the divine 'Chairman of the Board', God the Father established a purpose or 'agenda' for the universe; the full revelation of the glory of God. But while He Himself would work behind the scenes to insure that every needed resource would be available, the execution of the Father's plan would have to be carried out by a 'Chief Executive Officer'; One who would agree to the goals of the plan, and commit Himself to their full execution.

And so, before the beginning of the universe, there was an understanding reached between the Father and the Son:

Unto me (Paul), who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given. That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Ephesians 3:8-11

Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling; not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began. 2 Timothy 1:9

The agreement between the Father and the Son was to work together, visibly and invisibly, to reveal the full glory of the Trinity. But in order to reveal that glory, two things would be necessary:

- 1) The entire Trinity would have to be working within the Son as He executed the Father's plan.
- 2) The Father's plan would have to be executed within a morally-defined, Law-based universe whose ultimate outcome would be uncertain; determined by the moral choices of both its Creator and its inhabitants.

It is in Christ that the sovereign plan of the Father, and a world defined by genuine moral freedom of choice, are both realities. It is in Him that the seeming contradiction between these things is resolved. This is because the Lord Jesus created a universe that would be defined by righteousness, truth, justice and the Law, and then submitted Himself to obey those values:

But unto the Son He says "Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever. A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity. Therefore God, even Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows. Psalm 45:6-7, Hebrews 1:8-9

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom; to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Isaiah 9:6-7

Before the foundation of the world, the Son of God agreed to undertake the Father's plan. But that plan could only be accomplished if the Founder of the universe Himself, the Son of God, was willing to have His own soul thoroughly examined and tested. Only then would He be able to become both God's great High Priest and the spotless sacrificial Lamb of God for sinners:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son. Made from a woman, made under the Law, to redeem those that were under the Law; that we might receive the adoption of sons. Galatians 4:4-5

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Who, being in the form of God, thought it not something to be clung to, to be equal with God. But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was

made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Philippians 2:5-11

For we have not a High Priest (Jesus) Who cannot be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.
Hebrews 4:15

Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him Who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because He feared; though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them who obey Him. Hebrews 5:7-9

In essence, before the beginning of the universe, the Father said to the Son 'I have a plan that will fully reveal Our glory. And I have a people in mind, whom I wish to bless. If You are willing to obey the Law, and to enable these people to also obey the Law, then they will become My children and Your bride forever':

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him (Christ). He has put Him to grief. When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed (offspring), He shall prolong His days. And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His (Christ's) hand. Isaiah 53:10

And this is the Father's will Who has sent Me; that of all whom He has given to Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. John 6:39

And he said unto me "Write: 'Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb'". And he said unto me "These are the true sayings of God". Revelation 19:9

Christ is the Father's CEO. He is the only One authorized by the Father to 'do business' for Him. He is 'the Way, the Truth and the Life' (John 14:6).

As the great Lawgiver and Law-keeper of the universe, Jesus only transacts the Father's business in the 'hard currency' of truth, righteousness and justice. He has no use for the 'counterfeit currency' of inherited sin, imputed sin or imputed

righteousness. We can only come to the Father through His CEO, and only by obeying the Law:

**Do we then make void the Law through faith? God forbid! We establish the Law.
Romans 3:31**

Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people; zealous for good works. Titus 2:14

Because it is written "Be holy; for I am holy". 1 Peter 1:16, Leviticus 11:44-45

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He (Christ) is righteous. 1 John 3:7

In the book of Revelation we see the great 'agenda' in the hand of the 'Chairman of the Board', and its fulfillment by His 'CEO':

And I saw in the right hand of Him (the Father) Who sat on the throne a scroll written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice "Who is worthy to open the scroll, and to loose its seals?" And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the scroll, neither to look at it. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the scroll, neither to look at it.

And one of the elders said unto me "Weep not! Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll, and to loose its seven seals". And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne.

And when He had taken the scroll, the four creatures and twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of incense, which are the prayers of saints. And they sang a new song, saying "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals. For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth". Revelation 5:1-10

In our world successful CEO's are often rewarded very handsomely; but none so handsomely as the 'CEO' of God:

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the ceraphim and the elders. And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing". Revelation 5:11-12

The relationship between the Father and the Son might also be likened to one between a King, and His prime minister. In past history, people were often forbidden to come into the presence of a king without an invitation. They could only conduct business through the king's prime minister. We see this in the story of Esther, where anyone coming uninvited into the presence of the King could be punished by death (Esther 4:11).

We see a similar relationship between Joseph and the Pharaoh of Egypt (Genesis 41:37-57). Joseph was 'resurrected from prison' to sit at Pharaoh's right hand 3700 years ago; and to handle Pharaoh's business and provide saving bread for the world. Joseph is a prophetic picture of the resurrection of Jesus from death to the right hand of His Father in heaven, becoming the 'Bread of Life'. God's word tells us that we must now bow to His 'Prime Minister':

Be wise now therefore, O you kings. Be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His anger is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him. Psalm 2:10-12

And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth". Matthew 28:18

For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. John 5:22-23

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from Whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God. And books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. Revelation 20:11-12

IS GOD THE FATHER FULFILLING HIS PREDESTINED PLANS EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES? ABSOLUTELY! BUT WE CAN ONLY OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE WHEN WE **OBEY HIS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.**

ACCEPTANCE: COMMON SENSE

Though predestination and our freedom of choice cannot be made to 'agree' in our minds, this does not mean that we do not know instinctively how we are to handle them. There is a 'moral logic' that is common to humanity, and that tells every one of us that the only sane and right thing for any of us to do is to focus upon the things that we can see. Let me present a hypothetical example.

Suppose a Christian father is sitting on the front porch of his home, and his little three year old child is playing in the front yard. And let's suppose that this child begins to wander toward the street, and that it is busy with car traffic. Given what he knows about God's predestination and man's moral accountability, this father might waste some time considering two hypothetical choices. He could trust his child's fate to the 'sovereignty of God', and say 'Whatever God wills to happen, will happen'. Or he could get up and rush over to his child, keeping him from the street while warning him of its dangers.

What do you think God would expect this father to do? Wouldn't such a father, if he wasted one minute in thinking about predestination while his child wandered toward the street, be guilty of murder in the sight of God? Most of the world's parents, Christian or not, have already considered such scenarios in their minds; and have known for a long time what they would do in such a situation. Even parents who do not care about their children will often do the right thing anyway, because they know that they will be held accountable by their fellow man for negligence toward their children.

The conclusion that we must reach is this: to allow what God may be doing, in unseen realms, to influence our thinking and decisions in everyday life makes no sense, and in fact may be morally wicked and damnable. Regardless of what God may or may not be doing in heaven above, we must focus upon our own responsibilities in this world. This is an aspect of God's Law that He has written upon every human heart.

**WE MUST NOT THINK FATALISTICALLY.
FATALISM IS ALWAYS FATAL.**

It is in such examples that we see how God expects us to live, and what He expects us to do in response to the doctrine of predestination. Predestination is true, and God wants us to know that. This is why He has put this information in His word. But predestination is the Father's business. It is not ours.

God operates in a realm that is too 'high' for us; that belongs to Him alone:

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways" says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts". Isaiah 55:8-9

We must accept this. The wise person does not let the intellectual 'contradiction' between predestination and freedom of choice interfere with the practical decisions of everyday life. Many in the history of the world, both Christians and non-Christians, have ended up 'shipwrecked' because they have assumed that, if God is sovereign, there is no point in embracing moral responsibility for their lives. This is a rejection of the common sense that God has written upon every human heart.

IS GOD THE FATHER FULFILLING HIS PREDESTINED PLANS EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES? ABSOLUTELY! BUT WE CAN ONLY OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE WHEN WE **USE OUR GOD-GIVEN COMMON SENSE.**

ACCEPTANCE: THE LESSONS OF QUANTUM PHYSICS

I have watched a video on YouTube titled The Computer Simulation Hypothesis, produced by Fair Wind Films, and written and narrated by Kent Forbes. I would describe it as a 'layman's guide' to understanding Quantum Physics, and its progress over the past 100+ years. I recommend it to my reader as a thought-provoking 'primer' on the subject.

The 'hypothesis' of the video is that our universe is like a computer 'simulation'; a world that is produced by a hidden 'CPU' or 'Mind' that sustains all of the matter and physics in our observable universe, moment by moment.

One of the primary discoveries of Quantum Physics is that a barrier, or 'veil' exists between our visible universe, and an invisible realm that is comprised of 'waves of potential or possibility'. This barrier has been discovered in the 'double slit' experiment'. It is also found in God's word:

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us. For in Him we live, and move, and have our being. As certain of your own poets have also said, 'For we are also His offspring'. Acts 17:27-28

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Hebrews 11:3

These discoveries have prompted many thoughts and comments from some of the world's most brilliant scientists. The following words from Max Planck are typical:

"All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent Mind. This Mind is the matrix of all matter."

In the 'Delayed Choice' and 'Quantum Eraser' experiments we find that not only is there a barrier between these observable and unobservable realms, but also that the scientist's choice to open or close his eyes in the 'Delayed Choice' experiment, and the paths of entangled photons or electrons in the 'Quantum Eraser' experiment, seem predestined by this 'Mind' or 'CPU' from within the invisible realm.

This idea, that events in the visible realm are predestined from within the invisible realm, is known as 'determinism'. It is a concept rejected by some scientists because of its spiritual implications, and by others because they simply do not wish to think 'fatalistically'. It is perfectly consistent, however, with the Bible.

For many years, since this discovery of a barrier between these observable and unobservable realms, there has been much discussion about the religious or 'metaphysical' implications of this; about what it all means. But some physicists have not wanted to bother with such questions. They have been more interested in the practical uses of this knowledge in our visible world. Their response to these endless philosophical conversations, has been to say 'Shut up and calculate!' In other words, 'Focus upon what we can see, test and verify mathematically. And put this information to practical use'.

This approach has resulted in tremendous technological progress since the days of Einstein. Today we enjoy great advances in science that are the result of ignoring the invisible, and focusing upon the visible. This is the same approach that God instructs people to take spiritually as well. He tells us to stop speculating about predestination, and what He may be doing in unseen realms. He says 'Shut up and obey the Law'. This has always been God's practical path to eternal life.

IS GOD THE FATHER FULFILLING HIS PREDESTINED PLANS EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES? ABSOLUTELY! BUT WE CAN ONLY OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE WHEN WE ARE PRACTICAL: FOCUSING UPON THE WORLD THAT WE CAN SEE.

APPLICATION: STAYING IN OUR 'LANE'

Through His word, God is saying to humanity '**Stay in your own lane!**'. What is 'our lane'? It is this present, visible universe within which we live. It is this planet which the Son of God created, where He placed us, and where He has interacted with us from the very beginning. It is the realm of God's Law and His goodness. Here we have a God-given conscience, moral freedom, and the responsibility to make moral choices every day. And it is here, from the very beginning, where God established the simple principle of blessing for righteousness, and death for wickedness.

The Bible reveals the existence of 'domains' within God's universe. Several times in the New Testament the apostle Paul refers to heavenly 'principalities and powers' (Romans 8:38, Ephesians 1:21, 3:10, 6:12, Colossians 1:16, 2:10,15). I believe that these 'principalities and powers' are angels whom God has appointed to exercise authority and power on His behalf throughout the universe.

The Bible seems to indicate that the universe may have been filled and administrated by these spiritual beings before the creation of our planet and its inhabitants. Thus God is sometimes referred to in the Bible as the 'Lord of Sabaoth' (the Lord of Hosts). But we find, in the rebellion and fall of Lucifer (Satan), an angel who desired to leave his own domain, and to intrude into God's domain:

How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, who did weaken the nations! For you have said in your heart "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the NORTH. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High". Yet you shall be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. Isaiah 14:12-15

It is interesting to note the words "the sides of the North" in the passage above. The front door of the Old Testament Tabernacle and Temple always faced to the East. And so, upon entering the Holy Place, the Table of Showbread was always on the right; on the North side of the Holy Place. The above words in Isaiah may indicate that Lucifer, in his quest to glorify himself, was seeking to challenge the Son of God.

Jude has described the judgment that fell upon other angels for not remaining in their own 'domain':

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, God has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Jude 6

Some have thought that Jude is referring to Genesis 6:1-4, and the possibility that some angels may have trespassed into the domain of humanity; leaving their assigned place in heaven above, and coming down to earth to marry and produce children with women. Whether this is true or not, it is clear that God judged them because they did not remain in their assigned place.

Lastly, in Genesis chapter 3 we see Adam and Eve commanded to not to obtain the knowledge of right and wrong; a knowledge that had been reserved for God. They were commanded to simply trust God where the question of morality was concerned, and to refuse the forbidden fruit (see **Why God Requires Our Faith). But Satan contradicted God, and enticed them to elevate themselves closer to God's level:**

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman "Has God really said 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" And the woman said unto the serpent "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said 'You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die'". And the serpent said unto the woman "You shall not surely die; for God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil".

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat. And gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. Genesis 3:1-6

And so we find, beginning in Eden, that God instructed us that there were things that we were forbidden to 'see'; knowledge outside of our 'domain'. The invisible realm, where God the Father operates to fulfill His eternal purposes, is also one of those 'domains' that we are forbidden to see or enter.

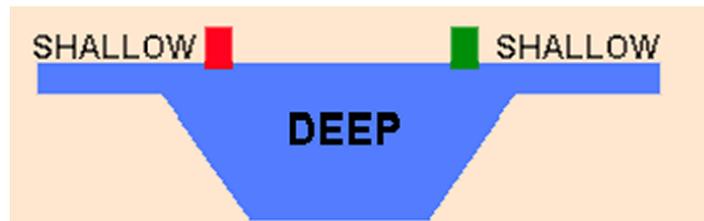
IS GOD THE FATHER FULFILLING HIS PREDESTINED PLANS EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES? ABSOLUTELY! BUT WE CAN ONLY OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE WHEN WE **STAY IN OUR OWN LANE.**

APPLICATION: THE NAVIGATIONAL MODEL

In this section I am referring back to the initial illustration that I used to open this web page; of using red and green buoys to safely navigate waterways. We must think like the captain of a ship. A captain does not second-guess those who placed the buoys and made the charts.

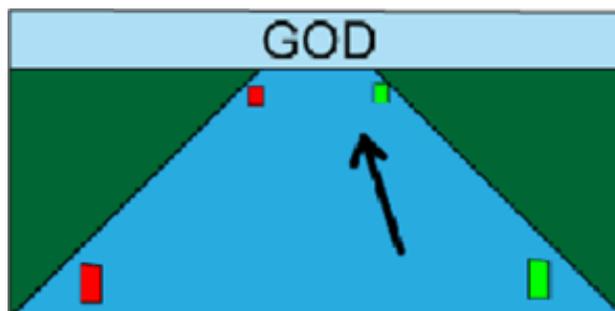


He does not struggle with the fact that the red and green buoys are always widely separated and opposite from one another. Instead, he rejoices in the fact that their oppositeness allows him to navigate safely. He accepts these different 'truths' just as they are, not struggling with the fact that information is coming at him from opposite directions. He appreciates the wisdom that allows 'contradictory' reference points to keep him in the safe deep water at all times.



But we must go beyond properly defining and accepting the two truths of **predestination** and our **moral freedom of choice**. The **red** and **green** buoys not only allow a ship captain to know where the deep water is, but also to know which direction he is traveling in. Shipping channels, like public roads, are two-lane highways. Captains are expected to stay on the right side of the channel in order to avoid oncoming traffic.

For the purposes of this illustration, the way to God is the one where the **green** buoys are on our right side and kept close at hand.



The green buoys of moral accountability are to be our primary point of reference. It is fine to understand, intellectually, that our 'channel' is defined by both **predestination** and **moral choice**. But from a practical everyday standpoint, the only way to move toward God is to focus upon the '**green**' truth of our moral freedom and accountability.



Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God and keep His commandments**; for this is the whole duty of man. **Ecclesiastes 12:13**

So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance **among all those who are sanctified**. **Acts 20:32**

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God**. **2 Corinthians 7:1**

Follow **peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord**. **Hebrews 12:14**

IS GOD THE FATHER FULFILLING HIS PREDESTINED PLANS EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES? ABSOLUTELY! BUT WE CAN ONLY OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE WHEN WE NAVIGATE WISELY.

APPLICATION: THE CHRISTIAN'S FIRST LOVE

Often when evangelicals try to share the gospel with non-Christians, one of the questions that the unbeliever will ask is 'Why is there so much evil, suffering and death in the world?' The Christian's answer should be that both Lucifer and the human race have chosen to disobey God and bring evil into His universe, with all of the just consequences of that choice. This is the correct and primary Biblical answer, and is a good starting point for any further discussion about the Bible.

The unbeliever's next question is often 'Isn't God all-knowing? Couldn't He foresee that sin was going to happen, and that suffering would follow? Couldn't He have prevented it?' The Christian's answer to that question should be that God not only foresaw that sin would happen, but that God the Father predestined it to happen, for the single purpose of having an opportunity to display His own glory.

This is also a correct answer. Rather than duck the question about God's foreknowledge, the Christian should be prepared to stand up and meet it head on, knowing and understanding that both of his answers are true and that, as Paul told Timothy, together they comprise the firm foundation of God's kingdom.

This is the only way to meet these challenging questions. Sometimes they are asked in genuine curiosity, and sometimes out of animosity. Regardless of the circumstances, there is no other Biblical way to respond. God's word is both our 'light', and 'the sword of the Spirit' (Ephesians 6:17). It is His appointed means for communicating with mankind:

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. And bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

But while basic questions and challenges about predestination and our freedom of choice often come from outside of the 'church', more complex and difficult challenges have come from within the church. One of the things that people do, is to point to past Christians who share their beliefs, and who have been great servants of God. It is undeniable that there have been many 'Calvinists' and 'Arminians' who have been used by God. John Wesley, George Whitefield and

Jonathan Edwards come to mind; leaders in the Great Awakening revival that occurred in England and the American colonies in the 1700's.

Many claim that it was Calvinism or Arminianism that made these men great. But was it their commitment to doctrinal distinctions that made them effective, or was it something else? I believe that it was something else; something that they all had in common. It was something that the Lord Jesus pointed to in His message to the church at Ephesus:

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write: These things says He that holds the seven stars in His right hand; Who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. "I know your works, and your labor, and your patience, and how you cannot bear them which are evil. And you have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars. And have born (through difficulties), and have patience, and for My name's sake have labored, and have not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works. Or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your lampstand out of its place, except you repent. Revelation 2:1-5

In this passage we see a local church that had many great characteristics; characteristics that every church should seek to emulate. And yet the Lord Jesus said that they had one great fault, and that if they did not correct that fault, He would remove their church (lampstand) from its place in Ephesus. What could this great fault be? Jesus said that they had 'left their first love'.

What is a Christian's first love? It is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and the gracious salvation accomplished through the blood of His cross. Christians on earth should be focused, first and foremost, upon the truth that absorbs the thoughts of Christians in heaven:

**And they sang a new song, saying "You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof. For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And have made us unto our God kings and priests. And we shall reign on the earth".
Revelation 5:9-10**

In short, for the faithful Christian 'To live is Christ' (Philippians 1:21), and all other things pale in relative significance. For the Calvinist or Arminian who has not left his first love, glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and pointing people to Him is his first priority, and Calvinism or Arminianism takes a distant second place in his affections. His attitude is that of the apostle Paul:

For I determined not to have anything known by you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:2

This has been true of all of the great Christians in history. It is for this reason that their 'lampstands' continue to burn brightly in their writings to this day, while others have seen their lampstands grow dim, or be removed altogether. We must not only proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. That is not enough. Beyond that, we must proclaim that His crucifixion and shed blood alone has the power to atone for sins and give new life.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23

And according to the Law almost all things are purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no remission (of sin). Hebrews 9:22

When today's Reformed (Calvinistic) Baptists are asked about great men who have shared their traditions, they often point to Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon is supposedly the perfect example of a 'Reformed Baptist', and Calvinistic Baptists use Spurgeon constantly to add lustre to their position. Spurgeon was indeed a Baptist who embraced Calvinism. One must remember, however, where Spurgeon began his life.

Spurgeon was steeped in Calvinism from his youth. Both his father and his grandfather were Calvinistic preachers. The fourth word in Spurgeon's vocabulary, after 'mama', 'daddy' and 'Jesus', was 'Calvin'. Spurgeon was saturated in the Bible and Puritan theology from the moment he began to read. He was a well-trained Calvinistic preacher before he became a Christian!

But in his early teens Spurgeon realized that he had not yet come to a saving knowledge of Christ. He was increasingly aware of his own sinfulness, and troubled by it. At the age of 15, after he had begun to visit every church in his part of England in a quest to be saved, God providentially brought him into a little Arminian Methodist church, where a common layman (who was substituting for the pastor) addressed Spurgeon directly from the pulpit and told him what he needed to do; look directly to Jesus Himself. On that day Spurgeon became a Christian. What had not happened after many years of the most intense Calvinistic indoctrination, God brought to pass instantaneously in a little primitive, Arminian Methodist church.

The powerful truth in that experience was not lost on Spurgeon. Spurgeon had heard that God must sovereignly regenerate a person before he can repent and

believe the Gospel. But in that Methodist church he was told to simply look directly to the Savior. When Spurgeon did that, his regeneration and filling with the Holy Spirit quickly followed. And to the praise of His grace, God immediately put Spurgeon on a path to a lively evangelism. The English-speaking world has been blessed by it ever since.

During the early years of his ministry, although he continued to call himself a Calvinist because he had experienced God's election, Jesus was always Spurgeon's first love. Everything else paled in relative significance for him. Spurgeon pointed people directly to Christ, and renounced any aspect of Calvinism that might trip him up, and interfere in any way with an open invitation to all people to 'look unto Jesus' and be saved. This is the key to understanding Spurgeon:

SPURGEON WAS A CALVINIST WHO BECAME A CHRISTIAN

On that Sunday morning when Spurgeon simply looked to the Savior, he discovered the 'order of salvation' that Jesus had described for Nicodemus. In John 3:14-15, Jesus likened being born again to the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness; when they had sinned against God and they were being bitten by poisonous serpents (Numbers 21:4-9). God instructed Moses to put a bronze serpent on a pole, and promised that anyone who simply looked at it would then live. In this experience of the Israelites, God's order of salvation is revealed.

CALVINISTS SAY THAT WE MUST LIVE BEFORE WE CAN LOOK. GOD SAYS 'LOOK, AND THEN YOU SHALL LIVE'.

Calvinism, in its obsession with the sovereignty of God, perverts God's 'order of salvation'; saying that it's about God's choices rather than man's. But just as the Israelites looked first, and then the poison and death flowing through their bodies was reversed through the regeneration of those bodies, so also sinners are regenerated and obtain new life after they look to the Savior.

We see the same thing in the work of John the Baptist. Repentance and looking (or coming) to the Baptizer preceded the waters of regeneration and reception of the Holy Spirit. Calvinism is willfully self-blinded regarding God's order of salvation, and subverts it. Spurgeon was delivered from that. That is what made Spurgeon what he was.

The story is told of Spurgeon standing in an empty building, testing its acoustics. He shouted out 'Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'. Unknown to Spurgeon, a worker somewhere in the building heard

Spurgeon's words, and repented and became a Christian. This was Spurgeon's message, 'Look, and you shall live!'. And that message bore great fruit. By God's grace Spurgeon moved from a lifeless Calvinism to a lively, experiential Christianity. Sadly, I fear that many of today's Reformed Baptists have moved in the opposite direction; from a living, experiential Christianity to a lifeless Calvinism.

Calvinists who quote Spurgeon, and claim him as one of their own, need to ask themselves if they are moving in the same direction that Spurgeon traveled. Are they moving from Calvinistic roots toward a lively evangelical Christianity, or have they moved away from lively evangelical roots toward a barren Calvinism. It does us no good to walk in Spurgeon's footsteps, if we are traveling in the opposite direction that Spurgeon traveled.

I have known pastors and Christian leaders who have taught many false doctrines, and yet God has honored and used them because they were in love with Jesus. They emphasized pursuing holiness and a clear conscience, and faithfully brought people to the foot of the cross. And I have known Christians who were initially deeply in love with Jesus and had effective evangelical ministries, but who turned aside from their 'first Love', and have had their lampstands greatly dimmed. Doctrine is important, but it is only one part of what defines true Christianity. True Christians possess both doctrine and sanctification:

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. Revelation 14:12

Although God used Spurgeon and his church mightily during the earlier years of his ministry, I fear that his love for the Lord may have 'cooled'. As I listen to his sermons from throughout the years of his ministry, I detect in his later years a certain 'dryness', and a return to doctrinaire Calvinism. I also consider it a grave failing on Spurgeon's part that he went beyond teaching the necessity of Christian perseverance, to teaching the certainty of it for all born-again Christians.

IS GOD THE FATHER FULFILLING HIS PREDESTINED PLANS EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES? ABSOLUTELY! BUT WE CAN ONLY OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE **BY CONTINUING WITH 'OUR FIRST LOVE'.**

THE DISOBEDIENCE OF CALVINISM

In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul warned about people who 'intrude into things that they have not seen':

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels. Intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. And not holding the Head (Christ), from Whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God. Colossians 2:18-19

I believe that Paul's words accurately describe a systematic theology called 'Calvinism'. Calvinism's fundamental trait is that it describes history and mankind's relationship with God primarily in terms of predestination, and the impact of God's sovereignty upon the world. Thus Calvinism centers upon things that it cannot see, while it neglects the morally-defined world that it can see. Calvinists give lip service to mankind's moral freedom and responsibility, but in practice they deny it.

I suspect that Calvinism's basic flaw is that they do not believe that God's sovereignty and mankind's moral freedom can both be true at the same time. And so, leaning upon their own understanding, they have chosen to obsess upon God's invisible activities. Calvinists mistakenly believe that it is more Godly to focus upon the Father's activities behind the veil, than upon the other two Persons of the Trinity on this side of the veil; in our visible world.

In doing this, Calvinists are disobedient to everything that God commands us concerning the handling of these truths. Calvinists leapfrog right over the Lampstand and the Showbread, and stick their heads around the veil. They talk endlessly about what's going on there, and claim to be the 'champions' of these glorious truths.

As I have already pointed out, both Moses and Paul instruct us to obey the Law. And yes, Jesus did talk about the sovereignty of His Father. But He never allowed the Father's sovereignty to overshadow the requirement that both He and we 'must fulfill every jot and tittle of the Law' (Matthew 5:17-20). Seven times, in His messages to the seven churches in Asia, the Lord Jesus promised eternal life to those who obediently 'overcome' in the faith (Revelation 2 & 3). Jesus never allowed the sovereignty of His Father to displace the necessity of obeying the Law.

Calvinists are guilty of all of the faults that Paul describes above. Besides obsessing over the Father's unseen business, their other faults are...

1) Voluntary (false) humility: Calvinists love to portray themselves as humbly bowing before 'a sovereign God', while accusing any who disagree with them of 'pride'. This is one of their main 'battering rams' in theological discussions.

2) Worshiping 'angels': These are not heavenly angels, but human 'angels'; like the 'seven angels of the churches' in Revelation chapters 1-3. These 'angels' are 'messengers' whom God has given to the Christian church at various times in its history; like Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Edwards, Whitefield, Spurgeon and others. In their veneration of these 'angels', Calvinists put God's messengers above God's message. Their self-identification as 'Calvinists' confirms this.

3) Vainly (uselessly) puffed up in their fleshly minds. Calvinists proudly claim to have glorious access behind the veil; to see what cannot be seen. And so, self-blinded to our visible moral world, they lead others to stumble as well:

Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Matthew 15:14

But now you say "We see". Therefore your sin remains. John 9:41

4) Not holding fast to the Head (Christ). The fundamental message of the Bible is that 'all have sinned' through a 'Trinitarian Union' with Adam, and that people can be saved through a 'Trinitarian Union' with the last Adam, Jesus Christ.

In this union with Christ, people die and are then raised from the dead in Him. When Christians then maintain their nourishing connection with the Head of the church, they continue to bear fruit. When they neglect this connection, they are in danger of a dreadful thing; dying again after having died with Christ:

I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in Me, and I in him, brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered. And men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. John 15:5-6

These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you; feeding themselves without fear. Clouds they are without water, carried about by winds. Trees whose fruit withers. Without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Jude 12

This is the most terrible position that any human being can be in. It is to have been born again, only to be separated from Christ through disobedience; to die a second time. Calvinists deny that this is possible, because 'everything is in

God's sovereign hands'. According to them the invisible activities of God should be our focus and comfort, rather than the 'working out our salvation' through moral choices in this visible world (Philippians 2:12).

This is the spiritual bankruptcy of Calvinism. And the problem is that Calvinists know better. Every Calvinist who has ever been truly born again, came to Christ after hearing about God's coming judgment, and the necessity of choosing to be honest; repenting of his genuine sins and calling upon Christ to save him.

This is the only way that God saves people. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-10); not of election, foreknowledge and predestination. Calvinists disobey the commandments that the Lord Jesus gave to the churches in Ephesus and Sardis:

Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the first works. Or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of its place; unless you repent. Revelation 2:5-6

Remember therefore how you have received and heard. Hold fast, and repent. If therefore you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief. And you shall not know what hour I will come upon you. Revelation 3:3

This is the heart of Calvinism's error. Calvinists forget the sinfulness of their past, and the moral context that they have come from. The apostle Peter described those who fail to progress in sanctification as those who forget their past:

For if these things (virtues) be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off; and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 2 Peter 1:8-9

And the apostle Paul reminded his hearers about the shame of their past lives, and thus the necessity of pursuing sanctification in Christ:

For when you were the servants of Sin, you were free from righteousness. What fruit had you then in those things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:20-23

This is the error of Calvinism; a departure from the visible, morally defined world in which we live. And Calvinists reject God's warning that He is going to judge every member of the human race (Christian and non-Christian alike) on the basis of our deeds. Whether or not we have been serious students of the Bible, or have experienced 'election', will not matter. Real righteousness will be the only thing left standing when God has finished judging the world.

Calvinism is known for its famous 'Five Points':

TOTAL DEPRAVITY: The 'sovereign God' of the Calvinists, who imposes inherited and imputed sin upon all humanity, is supposedly glorified by the fact that people are so spiritually disabled, that they cannot repent and believe the Gospel without His help; unless He regenerates them first. The perversity of these claims is apparent. But Calvinism subverts the Biblical doctrine of regeneration as well. Regeneration follows repentance and faith; it does not precede it. I explain regeneration, and Calvinism's mishandling of it, in my web page on [Christian Baptism](#).

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION: Calvinists correctly teach that God the Father unconditionally elected people to be saved. But while God's past election is unconditional, salvation in our present universe is not. Salvation in this world is conditional; when we choose to acknowledge the truth, confessing our sins and coming to the Savior, or choose to oppose Him and suffer deserved destruction in the Lake of Fire.

LIMITED ATONEMENT: This is a declaration that Jesus died only for God's elect. With this claim Calvinists are taking their obsession with the sovereignty of God, and superimposing it upon a discussion of the nature of the atonement.

The fact of the matter is that Jesus' suffering and death was necessary to save one sinner, and has the power to save all sinners. Christ's death is sufficient to save any who might come to Him, but only efficient (effective) for those who actually do choose to come.

Somehow Calvinists have managed to describe the most wonderful and unspeakably gracious thing that has ever happened in the history of the universe (the death of Christ on behalf of sinners) as 'limited'. Some Calvinists use the phrase 'particular redemption' rather than 'limited atonement', because it lets them avoid the offensiveness of the term 'limited'. But that doesn't change anything. They still manage to diminish the brilliant glory of what the Son of God accomplished upon the cross. Calvinists talk about 'sovereign grace', but redeemed sinners talk about 'amazing grace'.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE: This is a repetition of unconditional election, with the added claim that if the Father has elected someone to be saved, then that person is certain to come to repentance and faith. This is obvious. Tell us something that we don't know!

But again, Calvinism is destructive. This is because while the Father's eternal purposes are sure to come to pass, our experience in this visible world is that God's grace can most certainly be resisted. And people need to be warned about this. The phrase 'irresistible grace' is the last thing that God wants added to His Gospel, for lost people to be told:

You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. You always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Acts 7:51

But after your hardness and impenitent heart you treasure up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds. To those who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life. But unto those that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that does evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. But glory, honor, and peace to every man that works good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God. Romans 2:5-11

5) THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS: Here again, Calvinists proclaim the obvious. All those whom the Father has predestined for heaven will repent and believe, and then will persevere in the faith until they die. I would give Calvinists a little credit for declaring the necessity of perseverance, if it wasn't for the fact that they turn right around and claim that anyone who has been born again is certain to persevere. This is a stumbling block being placed before the feet of Christians.

The Bible likens the Christian experience to the Hebrews who were delivered out of Egypt (Exodus). They were 'saved' from the penalty and power of Egypt through the Passover and their passage through the Red Sea. But then, after crossing the Red Sea, God immediately told them that He was going to test their obedience in the wilderness before leading them into the 'promised land' (see my web page on The Necessity of Christian Perseverance).

It is true that the Father has predestined some people to become Christians, and then to persevere in the faith until they 'lay hold of eternal life'. But that fact is of

absolutely no use in our everyday lives. The Father's eternal purposes are realized through the free choices that we make:

Wherefore my beloved as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God Who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13

IS GOD THE FATHER FULFILLING HIS PREDESTINED PLANS EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES? ABSOLUTELY! BUT WE CANNOT ENTER ETERNAL LIFE UNTIL WE HAVE **FINISHED OUR WILDERNESS JOURNEY.**

STUMBLING OVER ELECTION

Some people, after becoming Christians, forget the original circumstances of their conversion. I was one of those people. The Spirit of God first spoke to my heart, and convicted me powerfully of sin and judgment, at the age of 17 (1967).

I was deeply concerned about my eternal destiny, but I did not sincerely repent. I made a false profession of faith. I remember that when I first read about predestination in Romans 9, the Holy Spirit brought the truth of Paul's words home to my heart. But I didn't think anything more about it.

When I became a Christian eight years later, at the age of 25 (1975), it was only after I had finally come to see and admit how evil I was. In a desperate situation I cried out to Jesus to save me, and He did. After being born again and experiencing Christ's unspeakable mercy and grace, I also discovered that God had loved me and had predestined me to be saved before the world began. A verse from Psalm 65 became my 'salvation verse', and a source of great joy to me:

Blessed is the man whom You choose, and cause to approach unto You; that he may dwell in Your courts. Psalm 65:4

I was deeply impressed not only by God's grace, but by His 'sovereign grace'. In time I came to consider myself a 'Calvinist'. But after this experience of God's mercy, I proceeded to ignore my moral responsibilities. I turned the grace of God into lawlessness; until God brought me up short five years after my initial conversion.

In the early Fall of 1980, just after leaving a Sunday evening church service, the Spirit of God suddenly and sensibly withdrew from me. I immediately became terrified by the possibility that I had apostatized from the faith through my self-

willed ways, and had cut myself off from the grace of God forever. Among the many Bible verses and passages that I read, one stands out in my memory. Jesus was speaking to His disciples:

Jesus answered them "Have not I chosen you twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" John 6:70

In that moment all of my false confidence stemming from my 'election' vanished. I had been resting upon God's sovereignty, thinking it was a guarantee that I would get to heaven. I did not understand it at the time, but the Holy Spirit was doing something for me that my fellow Christians could not do (because they did not know the true state of my soul):

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto you as a heathen man and a publican. Matthew 18:17

To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 Corinthians 5:5

During the first five years of my Christian experience I had been, as Peter described it, 'untaught' and 'unstable'. I had been unwilling to combine what I knew about God's sovereignty with what I also knew about my own responsibility. But God did not leave me in the darkness. After the Spirit withdrew from me, for the next five years I humbly lived my life with one truth before my eyes; that my daily choices would determine my eternal destiny.

I liken my experience to the experience of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (in Daniel chapter 4). When he became proud, Nebuchadnezzar's mind was taken from him and he lived like an animal; outdoors in the fields. God gave his mind back to him after 'seven times' had passed.

Although I was given gracious indications in late 1980 that my relationship with God might not be hopeless, nevertheless it would not be until five years later (in the Fall 1985, 10 years after my initial conversion) that I would be graciously restored to conscious fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through my experience of correction and instruction, I have come to appreciate the words of the apostle Peter:

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure (certain, final, permanent). For if you do these things, you shall never fall. 2 Peter 1:10

I suspect that many Calvinists throughout history have made the same mistake that I made. And this is why Calvinism has been so widely embraced and taught. This web page is an ongoing journal of my thoughts on this subject over the years, and I hope that it might be useful to someone.

What is the truth? Is the sovereignty of God the truth? I suppose that we could worship at that altar, if we could see it. But we cannot see the Father or His activities. We have only seen the bread of His 'Face' or 'Presence'. We have seen His Son. And so it is Jesus alone Who is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). We must not allow any other 'body of truth' to turn our eyes away from Him. And He has told us what we must do:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For assuredly I say to you, "Until heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law until all is fulfilled". Matthew 5:17-18

And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life. And he that does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 John 5:11-12

IS GOD THE FATHER FULFILLING HIS PREDESTINED PLANS EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES? ABSOLUTELY! BUT WE CAN ONLY ENTER ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH OBEYING HIS SON.