

# **BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED**

*What God's Word teaches about*

## **PREDESTINATION**

**Gordon Lyons**

**KJV Edition**

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### *Special Acknowledgement*

I must acknowledge a genuine debt of gratitude to the work of Dr. Charles Hodge. The writings of this theologian from a previous generation have helped considerably in preparing this work. On a number of occasions—as will be seen when reading these studies—I have cited or alluded to Dr. Hodge's remarks in his three-volume *Systematic Theology*. These references have been acknowledged in the footnotes to the study text.

# Predestination

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## Part 1

### Synopsis: Predestination of the Elect

Predestination of the elect (otherwise known as election) is the unalterable purpose of God—decreed from before the creation of the world—in choosing out of fallen mankind certain individuals to inherit salvation through faith in Christ. In this way, God would deliver these individuals from the bondage of sin, and from his just and holy wrath and curse on sinful mankind. Election is not founded on God's foreknowledge, but on his own sovereign will and pleasure. All those whom God has elected from eternity, are—in process of time—effectually called or drawn to Christ, from whom they receive all the benefits of salvation. This salvation, together with the ability to repent and believe of one's own free will, is freely bestowed upon them as a gift of God's grace. None, except the elect, can inherit the kingdom of God. However, since God will gather his elect from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation, the gospel is to be preached to all mankind without distinction of persons.

#### Note 1

##### *Mercy and Justice*

God elects some to salvation in Christ, while he leaves others to the just punishment of their sin. Those whom God elects are not more deserving than those whom he leaves. Election to salvation is entirely of God's free grace and mercy. *He owes it to none*, but he gives it to some. For many are called, but few are chosen.

#### Scripture References

Matthew 22:11-14

- <sup>(11)</sup> And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: <sup>(12)</sup> And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.
- <sup>(13)</sup> Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- <sup>(14)</sup> For many are called, but few *are* chosen. (See vv.1-10; cf. Luke 14:16-24)

Romans 9:14-16

- <sup>(14)</sup> What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid.
- <sup>(15)</sup> For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. {*Exodus 33:19*}
- <sup>(16)</sup> So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. (See vv.6-24)

Ephesians 1:4-6

- <sup>(4)</sup> According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: <sup>(5)</sup> Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>(6)</sup> To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (See vv.7-14)

## Note 2

### ***Regenerated Believers are God's Elect***

All those whom the Holy Spirit brings to Christ in true repentance and genuine faith, and whom God's Spirit has regenerated or has brought to the new birth, belong to God's elect people. This applies also to all those believers who lived before the redemptive work of Christ had been accomplished. By his grace, God justified these Old Testament believers through faith. They, too, therefore belong to God's elect people. Such was the patriarch Abraham and his wife Sarah; and such were all others in that economy to whom God granted a like faith.

### **Scripture References**

Hebrews 11:1

- <sup>(1)</sup> Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (See vv.2-5)

Hebrews 11:8

- <sup>(8)</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. (See vv.7-12)

Hebrews 11:13

- <sup>(13)</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (See vv.14-15)

Hebrews 11:16

- <sup>(16)</sup> But now they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Hebrews 11:39-40

- <sup>(39)</sup> And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: <sup>(40)</sup> God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (See vv.17-38)

1 John 3:1

- <sup>(1)</sup> Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (See vv.2-3)

1 John 5:1

- <sup>(1)</sup> Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. (See vv.2-4)

### **Note 3**

#### ***God's Compassion and Justice***

There is no injustice on God's part in that he elects some to salvation, but does not elect others. All mankind has sinned; and, without exception, all alike deserve to perish. If he had permitted everyone to suffer the due penalty of their sin, God would have been acting with absolute justice, fairness, and righteousness. However, in his sovereign grace and mercy—and out of his infinite love—he chose to redeem a countless multitude of undeserving sinners.

#### **Scripture References**

Isaiah 45:9-10

- <sup>(9)</sup> Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! *Let* the potsherd *strive* with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? <sup>(10)</sup> Woe unto him that saith unto *his* father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? (See vv.5-8)

Isaiah 45:11-12

- <sup>(11)</sup> Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. <sup>(12)</sup> I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, *even* my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. (See vv.13-25)

Nahum 1:2-3

- <sup>(2)</sup> God *is* jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and *is* furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies. <sup>(3)</sup> The LORD *is* slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet. (See vv.4-6)

Nahum 1:7-8

- <sup>(7)</sup> The LORD *is* good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. <sup>(8)</sup> But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end

of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies. (See vv.9-15)

Romans 9:18

<sup>(18)</sup> Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth. (See vv.9-17)

Romans 9:19-21

<sup>(19)</sup> Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? <sup>(20)</sup> Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus? {*Isaiah 29:16; 45:9*} <sup>(21)</sup> Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

Romans 9:22-24

<sup>(22)</sup> *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: <sup>(23)</sup> And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, <sup>(24)</sup> Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? (See vv.25-29)

2 Peter 3:9-10

<sup>(9)</sup> The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

<sup>(10)</sup> But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (See vv.1-13)

## Note 4

### ***Christ Never Rejects Any Who Come***

Those whom God elected to salvation, were chosen by the Father from before the creation of the world, and given to the Son. All those whom the Father has given to the Son will certainly come to the Son; and whoever comes to Christ, he will never drive away. This is the invariable teaching of the Bible. God is a God of justice, holiness, and righteousness. However, he is also a God of love, mercy, and compassion. In his infinite and unmerited grace, God has deemed to have mercy on all those who call upon the name of his Son for salvation. No one whom the Holy Spirit thus brings to a deep sense of their need, and to repentance and faith in Christ, will ever be refused or turned away.

### **Scripture References**

John 6:37

<sup>(37)</sup> All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. (See vv.35-45)

John 17:2

<sup>(2)</sup> As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. (See v.3)

John 17:6

<sup>(6)</sup> I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. (See vv.7,9,11)

John 17:12

<sup>(12)</sup> While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

John 17:24

<sup>(24)</sup> Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1:4

<sup>(4)</sup> According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (See vv.5,11)

## **Note 5**

### ***Elect and Fallen Angels***

Predestination applies to angels as well as to men. Those angels, whom God has elected, maintain their holy position in the presence of God. Others—having fallen into sin—have been expelled from God's presence. We refer to those angels whom God has expelled as the fallen angels. The fallen angels include Satan and the demons. There is no salvation for any of the fallen angels. All alike are destined to perish eternally in the hell which God has prepared for the devil and his angels.

### **Scripture References**

1 Timothy 5:21

<sup>(21)</sup> I charge *thee* before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

2 Peter 2:4

<sup>(4)</sup> For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Revelation 20:10

<sup>(10)</sup> And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever

### **Related Bible Truths**

The doctrine of Predestination is inseparably linked to the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God. Both doctrines form part of the doctrine of Divine Decrees; i.e. God decrees or foreordains from eternity everything that will happen in time. This does not, however, make God the author or approver of sin.

In setting his love upon a countless number of selected individuals world-wide, and providing for them a full atonement in Christ Jesus, God is exercising his sovereign choice, according to his own will and pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *Bible Truths Explained: Sovereignty of God*, by the same author.

## Part 2

### Augustinian Scheme of Redemption

The Augustinian teaching regarding the scheme of redemption, or plan of salvation, may be summarised as follows:

1. That the glory of God, or the manifestations of his perfections, is the highest and ultimate end of all things.
2. To achieve this end, God purposed the creation of the universe, and the whole plan of providence and redemption.
3. God then created man; placed him in a state of probation, and made Adam the head and representative of the entire human race.
4. The fall of Adam brought all his posterity into a state of condemnation, sin and misery, from which they are utterly unable to deliver themselves.
5. From the mass of fallen mankind, God elected a countless number to eternal life, and left the rest of mankind to the just recompense of their sin.
6. That the ground of this election is not the foresight of anything in the one class to distinguish them favourably from the members of the other class, but the good pleasure of God.
7. That, for the salvation of those thus chosen to eternal life, God gave his own Son to become man. God's Son obeyed and suffered for his people: thereby making a full satisfaction for sin; bringing in everlasting righteousness, and rendering the ultimate salvation of the elect absolutely certain.
8. That, while the Holy Spirit—in his common operations—is present with every man so long as he lives, restraining evil and exciting good—yet, the certainly efficacious and saving power of the Spirit is exercised only on behalf of the elect.
9. That all those whom God has thus chosen to eternal life, and for whom Christ specifically gave himself in the covenant of redemption, shall certainly be brought to the knowledge of the truth, to the exercise of faith, and to perseverance in holy living unto the end.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> From C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1871, 1977 reprint], p.333.



## Part 3

### What The Bible Teaches About Salvation

#### For God So Loved The World

The Bible teaches that the love of God is without limit, boundless and free; and that it extends to men and women of every nation in all parts of the world. God's boundless love for fallen mankind was fully demonstrated when he yielded up his one and only Son to the cross. By his voluntary and substitutionary death, the Lord Jesus secured an atonement for sin, and purchased the redemption of all his people. To this end, the Bible says:

John 3:16

<sup>(16)</sup> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (See vv.14-18)

Such is the extent of God's love. 'For God so loved the world that he gave...' God gave the One who was closest to his heart—his own Son—and he gave him for everyone who believed. God has promised irrevocably that Christ will accept all who come to him, and that he will grant to all who believe on him a full and a perfect salvation.

#### God Forgives the Vilest Sinner

All whom God calls are sinners to whom he shows mercy. Included in these are some of the worst or vilest of sinners. Therefore, no one is beyond God's willingness or ability to save and forgive. This applies no matter how deeply involved in sin a person may have become, or what kind of sins that person may have committed. If he or she comes to Christ, the Lord Jesus will never reject them because of what they are or were. He will receive them *just as they are*, and will forgive, cleanse and sanctify them. Through their heartfelt and genuine repentance toward God, and through their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will become the children of God. To God, they will be honoured and precious in his sight. He will never despise them for their former manner of life.

#### No-one Ever Turned Away

The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, will never turn away anyone who comes to him in faith. (John 6:37) This is what the Scriptures teach, and this is the assurance which God's Word gives to everyone who believes. The Scriptures say:

John 3:16b

<sup>(16b)</sup> ...that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:36a

<sup>(36a)</sup> He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life...

All those whom the Holy Spirit brings to faith in Christ are accepted wholeheartedly by Christ and by the Father. The Holy Spirit has regenerated them, and God has adopted them into his family as his chil-

dren and heirs. They are now joint-heirs with Christ Jesus—God’s eternal Son. Thus, God’s Word says:

Romans 8:14-17

<sup>(14)</sup> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

<sup>(15)</sup> For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

<sup>(16)</sup> The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: <sup>(17)</sup> And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. (See vv.18-23)

### **All Whom God Gives, The Son Receives**

However, while it is true that God never rejects anyone who comes to his Son, it is also true that—because he is spiritually dead and morally debilitated—no-one desires to come to Christ. To experience the necessary desire (or spiritual thirst), he must be drawn to the Son by the Holy Spirit. God’s Word makes it abundantly plain that only those whom the Father has given to his Son, and whom the Holy Spirit draws to the Son, can and do come to Christ. To this end, the Scripture says:

John 17:2

<sup>(2)</sup> As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. (See v.6)

John 17:9

<sup>(9)</sup> I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. (See vv.11-12,24)

In case it should be objected that the Lord is here speaking only of his disciples, Jesus adds:

John 17:20

<sup>(20)</sup> Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

Again, it is taught in God’s Word:

John 6:37a

<sup>(37)</sup> All that the Father giveth me shall come to me...

That is, all those whom God has given to the Son will come to the Son. However, no one can come who has not been given to the Son from before the creation of the world; i.e. predestined from eternity. (Eph. 1:4-5,11)

The Scripture continues:

John 6:37b

<sup>(37b)</sup> ...and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

This confirms that God will never reject anyone whom he has given to his Son, and who comes to his Son in repentance and faith.

### **Not All are Given to The Son**

Not everyone can come to the Son of God for salvation, for the Father has not given everyone to his Son. Therefore, the Holy Spirit does not draw everyone to Christ. To this end, the Scripture says:

John 6:44

<sup>(44)</sup> No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. (See v.45)

John 6:65

<sup>(65)</sup> And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. (See v.66)

Again, concerning the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, it is recorded:

Matthew 11:25-26

<sup>(25)</sup> At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. <sup>(26)</sup> Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. (Cf. Luke 10:21)

Matthew 11:27

<sup>(27)</sup> All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*. (Cf. Luke 10:22)

Luke 10:23-24

<sup>(23)</sup> And he turned him unto *his* disciples, and said privately, Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things that ye see: <sup>(24)</sup> For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them*. (Cf. Matt. 13:16,17)

***'I Will Give You Rest'***

Concerning all those to whom the Father had revealed his Son, and who now were seeking spiritual refuge in him, the Lord Jesus says:

Matthew 11:28-30

<sup>(28)</sup> Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>(29)</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. <sup>(30)</sup> For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light. (See esp. vv.25-27; cf. Isa. 55:1-3)

This is the Lord's invitation to all who sense their need of him, and who desire deliverance from their heavy burdens. Jesus most solemnly assures everyone who comes to him that—in him—they will find rest. They will find peace with God through the forgiveness of their sins. From this peace that passes all understanding will flow true and enduring rest for their souls.

No-one who thus comes to the Lord Jesus in response to this invitation will ever be turned away.

## Part 4

### ‘Whoever Will May Come’

A common objection against the doctrine of election is that—in some passages—God’s Word appears to teach that ‘whoever will may come’. For instance, the Scriptures say:

John 12:32

<sup>(32)</sup> And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. (See vv.27-33; cf. Rom. 5:18; Heb. 2:9)

Romans 10:11

<sup>(11)</sup> For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. {*Isaiah 28:16*} (See Rom. 10:8-10; cf. 9:33)

Romans 10:13

<sup>(13)</sup> For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. {*Joel 2:32*} (See Rom. 10:12-17; cf. Acts 2:21)

Joel 2:32

<sup>(32)</sup> And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. (Cf. Isa. 11:11; Rom. 9:27; 11:5,7; John 10:16; Acts 13:46-48)

Revelation 22:17

<sup>(17)</sup> And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. (See vv.13-16; cf. Isa. 55:1; John 7:37-39; Rev. 21:6)

### Necessary Qualifications

The writer of these studies believes that the Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of election. To reach a correct interpretation of God’s Word, however, we must qualify the verses quoted above by examining the context in which they appear, and by comparing these verses with other similar and related passages of God’s Word.

For instance, in John 12:32 above—and frequently elsewhere in Scripture—the word ‘all’ does not necessarily indicate ‘all (people) without exception’ or ‘everyone’. We must determine the exact meaning of a particular verse or passage by considering its context, and by comparing it with other related passages of God’s Word (the analogy of Scripture). Following these rules, it becomes evident, that—in this verse—the word ‘all’ does not indicate ‘all without exception’, but ‘all *without distinction*’ whom God

calls from among all nations. This is the meaning that it is intended to have in many other passages of God's Word.

This is paralleled by such passages as those where 'all the land of Judea' is said to have been baptised by John, whereas it was clear that the Pharisees and many others were not baptised. Clearly, then, the meaning here is not 'all without exception' but rather 'all (kinds of people) *without distinction*'. (Matt. 3:5-6; Mark 1:5)

In other places too, the word 'whoever' (or 'whosoever') occurs frequently. In each of these places, however, we must remember that the 'whoever' refers only to those people whom God has given to his Son. In other words, the elect. Whoever of those whom God has given to his Son, will indeed come to the Son—and will never be turned away. No one else, however, *can* come; and, in his or her sinful, spiritually dead and unregenerate state, no one else has the spiritual desire to come. That this is true, can be seen from a careful reading of the following Scripture passages:

Romans 10:9-10

<sup>(9)</sup> That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. <sup>(10)</sup> For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:11-13

<sup>(11)</sup> For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. *{Isaiah 28:16}* <sup>(12)</sup> For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. <sup>(13)</sup> For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. *{Joel 2:32}*

The words, 'anyone' and 'everyone' in verses 11-13 above, refer only to those who confess with their mouth Jesus as Lord, and who believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead (vv.9-10). However, no one can confess Christ as Lord, *except* by the Spirit of God working within him. As the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 12:3

<sup>(3)</sup> Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

No one can believe in his heart that God raised his Son from the dead, except saving faith has been given him by God. If given him by God, however, then he is one of God's elect. If God's elect, then 'whoever will' will indeed come, and will indeed believe—freely and willingly.

To this end, the Scripture says:

John 6:44-45

<sup>(44)</sup> No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>(45)</sup> It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. *{Isaiah 54:13}* Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

## All Who are Given, Will Come

As has been shown, the Bible teaches the following primary truths regarding the plan of salvation:

1. No one can come to Christ unless a genuine spiritual hunger and thirst (spiritual desire) has been given to him or her by the Father. (John 6:44,65). This intense spiritual desire is created by the Holy Spirit in effectual calling and regeneration.
2. No one can come to Christ unless the Father has given that person to the Son. (John 17:2,6,9,11,12,24)
3. All that the Father gives to the Son will come to the Son; and whoever comes to him, Christ will never turn away. (John 6:37,45; 10:26-28)

## Only the Elect can be Saved

Thus, from the teaching of God's Word, we can see that only the elect receive salvation and eternal life. In other words, only those whom God has chosen or predestined to eternal life, and to whom he gives the gifts of repentance and faith, are able to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation, therefore, does not depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. (Rom. 9:16)

It is possible, for a time, that other men and women may exhibit some of the common graces or operations of the Spirit. Yet, they cannot exercise saving faith in God's Son, if God does not grant saving faith to them. However, all whom God has elected or ordained to salvation will certainly inherit that salvation.

Not one of the elect will be missing from the kingdom of God. Once saved by God's grace, none of God's redeemed children can ever lose their salvation. Election guarantees that their redemption cannot fail of completion in glory. To this end, God's Holy Spirit indwells each believer to act as the guarantor of his or her personal inheritance, and to seal the believer unto the day of final redemption. Thus, the Scripture says:

Ephesians 1:13-14

- <sup>(13)</sup> In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>(14)</sup> Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. (See vv.11-12; cf. 2 Cor. 1:20-22; 5:4-5)

1 Peter 1:3-5

- <sup>(3)</sup> Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>(4)</sup> To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>(5)</sup> Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (See vv.2-9)

Those whom God has called, however, have been called unto holiness of life. There is no such thing as a person being called and justified in the sight of God if his calling and justification is not followed immediately by ongoing sanctification and holiness of life.

Ephesians 1:4-5

<sup>(4)</sup> According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: <sup>(5)</sup> Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

## Part 5

### No-one Seeks After God

Left to their own inclinations, and to the exercise of their own free will, no one would turn to God in repentance and faith. Because of the Fall, everyone's heart has become thoroughly corrupted by the deceitfulness of sin. Their innate tendency toward sin and evil so pervades their soul, that they have no lasting desire for that which is holy and good. (Isa. 64:6-7; Jer. 17:9)

Jesus said that men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. The Lord also added that they would not come to the light for fear that the light would expose their evil deeds. Thus, God's Word says:

John 3:18-20

<sup>(18)</sup> He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. <sup>(19)</sup> And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. <sup>(20)</sup> For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. (See v.21)

Unless God creates in each of his elect people a new and right spirit that seeks after righteousness, then no one would seek the Lord or call upon his name. Salvation, therefore, is all of grace and none of self. Therefore, concerning the grace of God, the Scripture says:

Colossians 1:12-14

<sup>(12)</sup> Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: <sup>(13)</sup> Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: <sup>(14)</sup> In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

### Salvation is by Grace

Salvation is a gift of God's sovereign grace, bestowed at his pleasure on whom he will. From this, it follows that the foresight of repentance and faith cannot possibly be the ground of election. In other words, God does not choose an individual because he foreknows that he will repent and believe. In his fallen and unrenewed condition, man is unable and unwilling to repent and believe. Those who repent and believe do so only because God has elected them. He has given them to his Son, drawn them by his Spirit, and granted to them as a gift the ability and the desire to repent and believe. At this stage, however, the Holy Spirit enables the sinner to call upon the name of the Lord *freely and willingly*.

The elect, therefore, are drawn to Christ by the sovereign grace of God. Their salvation is entirely of grace from beginning to end. Man's works of merit play no part in God's plan of redemption. The only meritorious work that is of any—and of infinite—value in God's sight, is the work of Christ as Redeemer and Mediator.

## The Exercise of Faith

God's salvation is not dependent on the merits of a person's good works. Neither is it dependent on the exercise of faith. This is because no one can exercise saving faith of his own free will. A person may have the *desire* to believe, but he does not have the *ability*. God must grant him the gift of saving faith, together with repentance.

To this end, the Scripture says:

Ephesians 2:3-5

<sup>(3)</sup> Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. <sup>(4)</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, <sup>(5)</sup> Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by (grace ye are saved;) (See vv.1-2)

Those who are spiritually dead cannot exercise saving faith. They must first be made alive unto God by the working of the Holy Spirit (in effectual calling); and this is a work of God's sovereign grace. Again, those who are the objects of God's wrath (v.3) cannot commend themselves to God by repentance and faith. This is because their sin totally alienates them from God, and results in their being at constant enmity with God. No amount of repentance or faith on the part of one who is God's enemy, can make them acceptable to God or make atonement for that person's sin. Only by the Lord's work on the cross, can God's wrath be propitiated and a now-redeemed sinner be reconciled to God. All this, however, is a work of God's sovereign grace and mercy.

## Faith is God's Gift

The Scripture says:

Ephesians 2:8

<sup>(8)</sup> For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: (See vv.9-10)

Faith is as much a gift of God as is every other aspect of our salvation.

Again, the Scripture says:

2 Timothy 1:9

<sup>(9)</sup> Who hath 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 us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (See v.10; see also Titus 3:3-7)

Our salvation—including the gift of [saving] faith—was given to us in Christ Jesus, before God created the world. God commands people everywhere to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. However, those who repent and exercise saving faith, are those to whom God has given that kind of faith. In other words, the elect. Thus, God's Word says:

Matthew 11:27

<sup>(27)</sup> All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*. (See vv.20-26)

John 17:6-8

<sup>(6)</sup> I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. <sup>(7)</sup> Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. <sup>(8)</sup> For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. (See vv.2-3,9)

### **The Gospel is for All Mankind**

No one knows who are the elect of God, and who are not. This is known to God alone, and to his Son. From this, it follows that the gospel must be preached—without respect of persons—to all mankind. For, out of every tongue, tribe, people, and nation, God effectually calls forth his elect. Thus, God's Word says:

Matthew 24:31

<sup>(31)</sup> And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (See vv.29-30)

Matthew 24:40-41

<sup>(40)</sup> Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. <sup>(41)</sup> Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. (See vv.36-44)

Revelation 5:9

<sup>(9)</sup> And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; (See vv.5-10)

Concerning the importance of preaching the Gospel to all mankind, the Scripture says:

Romans 10:17

<sup>(17)</sup> So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (See vv.13-16)

Generally, the Holy Spirit calls forth God's elect through the preaching of the Word. It is therefore essential that God's Word be preached in all its fullness and power. For that Word is the power of God

unto salvation to everyone who believes. (Rom. 1:16) By the work of the Holy Spirit, God's Word becomes effectual unto the salvation of everyone who believes the message and calls upon the name of the Lord.

But how can they call upon him of whom they have never heard? And how can they be saved if they do not hear the gospel? As the Scripture says:

Romans 10:13-15

<sup>(13)</sup> For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. {*Joel 2:32*}

<sup>(14)</sup> How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? <sup>(15)</sup> And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! {*Isaiah 52:7; Nahum 1:15*}

## Part 6

### Election is Not by Merit

The foundation for election to salvation, is the sovereign will and pleasure of almighty God, which he exercises according to his own wise purposes. God decreed these eternal purposes in Christ Jesus, before he created the world. Therefore, God's Word says:

Ephesians 1:4-5

- <sup>(4)</sup> According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: <sup>(5)</sup> Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Ephesians 1:11

- <sup>(11)</sup> In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Ephesians 3:9-11

- <sup>(9)</sup> 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: <sup>(10)</sup> To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, <sup>(11)</sup> According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

God does not choose a person because of any good in them—for there is nothing good in them. The Lord does not choose them because they are more righteous than others—for they are not more righteous than others. God does not choose them because he foreknows that they will accept his Son as their Saviour. Because, of their own free will, sinful men and women are incapable of accepting God's Son as their Saviour. Firstly—and by the grace and mercy of God—the Holy Spirit must draw them to God's Son, and open the sinners' eyes to the truths of the gospel.

Concerning those whom God calls, the Scripture says:

Deuteronomy 7:6-8a

- <sup>(6)</sup> For thou *art* a holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth.
- <sup>(7)</sup> The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people: <sup>(8a)</sup> But because the LORD loved you... (See vv.8b-10)

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

<sup>(13)</sup> But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: <sup>(14)</sup> Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See vv.9-12)

1 Peter 2:9-10

<sup>(9)</sup> But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: <sup>(10)</sup> Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (See vv.6-8)

Election, therefore, is not based on anything meritorious or worthy in the elect. There is absolutely nothing in them to commend them to God in preference to others. God may choose anyone—even the vilest offender—and number that person among the elect, so that he or she may be brought to eternal salvation through repentance and faith in Christ. Thus, God's Word says:

Romans 9:14-16

<sup>(14)</sup> What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

<sup>(15)</sup> For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. {*Exodus 33:19*}

<sup>(16)</sup> So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. (Cf. Isa. 45:9-12; Jer. 18:1-10)

Predestination, therefore, is not founded on the merit of the person chosen, but on the sovereign grace of God and in his never-ending love and compassion toward fallen and sinful humanity. Thus, concerning those whom he has redeemed, God's Word says:

Titus 3:3-7

<sup>(3)</sup> For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another. <sup>(4)</sup> But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, <sup>(5)</sup> Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; <sup>(6)</sup> Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; <sup>(7)</sup> That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (See vv.1-2)

## **Election is by Grace**

As has been shown, election to salvation is entirely a gift of God. A sinner cannot merit it, either by good works or by the exercise of faith. We may illustrate further the gratuitous nature of election by considering the following points outlined by Dr. Charles Hodge:

- It was a matter of grace that salvation was provided for fallen mankind, and not for fallen angels.
- It was a matter of grace that the plan of salvation was revealed to some portions of our race, and not to others.
- The acceptance, or justification, of every individual heir of salvation, is entirely a matter of grace.
- The work of sanctification is a work of grace; i.e. a work carried on by the unmerited, supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.
- It is a matter of grace, that—of those who hear the Gospel—some accept the offered mercy, while others reject it.<sup>3</sup>

## **Election is to Holiness**

Those whom the Lord calls, he calls unto holiness of life. God has set his love upon us, and chosen us, that we should live—not for ourselves—but for the praise of his glory. (Eph. 1:12; 4:1) The Scripture says:

1 Peter 2:9-10

- <sup>(9)</sup> But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: <sup>(10)</sup> Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (See vv.1-8)

1 Peter 2:11-12

- <sup>(11)</sup> Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; <sup>(12)</sup> Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Again, God's Word says:

Ephesians 1:4-6

- <sup>(4)</sup> According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: <sup>(5)</sup> Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself,

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<sup>3</sup> From C. Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp.342,343.

according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>(6)</sup> To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

In the passage from Ephesians chapter 1 above—and again with reference to Dr. Hodge's remarks—the apostle Paul teaches the following points:

- That the end or design of the whole scheme of redemption, is the praise of the glory of the grace of God.
- To this end, and of his mere good pleasure, he predestined those who were the objects of his love to the high dignity of being the children of God.
- That, to prepare them for this exalted state, he chose them from before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame before him in love.
- That, in consequence of his choice—or in execution of this purpose—he confers upon them all spiritual blessings: repentance, faith, regeneration, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> From C. Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp.341,342.

## Part 7

### Individuals Unable to Respond to God's Call

#### Infants Dying Before Birth, or in Early Childhood

As a rule, the Holy Spirit calls or draws the elect to Christ through hearing and reading the Word of God. However, certain exceptions to this rule exist. Such exceptions apply to those of God's elect who die before being able to respond to the Word, or who are not capable of making a response. For example, should a child die before birth, or in infancy, that child will nevertheless benefit from the full redemption already provided for him or her by Christ Jesus. Granted, they have not been able to respond personally to the call of the gospel. Yet, because of their election from before the creation of the world, the Holy Spirit regenerates every such child, thus ensuring their certain and eternal salvation. This applies not only to children who die in infancy or early childhood, but also to those who die at any stage of development before birth.

Regarding children, the Scripture says:

Matthew 18:10-11

<sup>(10)</sup> Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

<sup>(11)</sup> For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Matthew 18:12-14

<sup>(12)</sup> How think ye? if a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? <sup>(13)</sup> And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. <sup>(14)</sup> Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Luke 18:15-16

<sup>(15)</sup> And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when *his* disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them. <sup>(16)</sup> But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. (See v.17; cf. Matt. 19:13-15)

Acts 2:39

<sup>(39)</sup> For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. (See vv.37-38)

1 Corinthians 7:13-14

- <sup>(13)</sup> And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. <sup>(14)</sup> For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. (Cf. v.14 with Mal. 2:15)

Psalms 103:17-18

- <sup>(17)</sup> But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; <sup>(18)</sup> To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

## Learning Disabilities

The same principle applies to any other elect person, of any age, who—because of some infirmity—is incapable of responding to the call of the gospel. This includes those who suffer from some forms of cerebral (brain) injury or disease. It also includes those people with certain forms of learning disabilities or other similar disabilities that make it virtually impossible for them to understand and believe the gospel. Although they cannot personally respond by faith, their election guarantees their full and final salvation.

## Objection

It may be objected that God saves *only* his elect people—of whatever age. This is true. However, none of us can presume to be wiser than God. In the case of infants or young children, and in the case of people suffering from specific mental or psychological conditions, why cannot God deem to elect all such children and disabled people without exception? Is it not true that the Lord knew from eternity *that these particular people* would never be in a position to respond to the gracious call of the gospel? If such a child dies in infancy or before birth, therefore, or if such an adult can never understand the gospel, is God not at liberty to elect these individuals *en masse*? This should present absolutely no problems for the general truth of election or for the integrity of God. Indeed, it would serve to enhance God's glory, honour, and power.

In the absence of clear Scriptural guidelines to the contrary, it may be wiser in such cases not to insist on the strictest principles of election. God is a God of justice, holiness, and truth. He is also a God of grace, mercy, and compassion. Let us exalt, praise, and magnify his holy name that he will never—and can never—do that which is wrong, unjust, or unfair. In virtue of his own unchangeable nature, God can only do that which is right, holy, and just.

Thus, let us be content to rest our hope, confidence and assurance in God. For, in this respect as in all other respects, our Father in heaven will never prove unfaithful to his Word or to his character.

## Part 8

### The Believer's Certain Assurance

For the people of God, the doctrine of predestination is one of the most reassuring doctrines of the Bible. It embodies in its teaching the absolute certainty of the final perseverance of all the saints. Even the weakest believer may be assured of their final redemption. For, since God did not choose them because of any merit in them—but because he loved them—then their salvation does not depend on them. Rather, it depends on the unfailing promises and the almighty power of God and on his never-ending love and mercy toward them in Christ Jesus.

All those whom the Father has given to his Son, and whom God's Spirit has called to faith in Christ, are being kept by God's sovereign and almighty power. Through faith, the Lord is keeping them secure for their glorious inheritance in the last day. God's people remain forever secure; for the Spirit of grace and of glory seals them permanently as belonging to God. In Christ Jesus, they are safe—now, and for all eternity. To this end, God's Word says:

Ephesians 1:13-14

<sup>(13)</sup> In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>(14)</sup> Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. (See vv.11-12; cf. 2 Cor. 1:20-22; 5:4-5)

1 Peter 1:1-2

<sup>(1)</sup> Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, <sup>(2)</sup> Elect according to the foreknowledge <sup>5</sup> of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

1 Peter 1:3-5

<sup>(3)</sup> Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>(4)</sup> To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>(5)</sup> Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (See vv.6-9)

The purposes of God in election are immutable or unchangeable. Moreover, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Therefore, God's purposes in Christ must forever remain the same. In

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<sup>5</sup> foreknowledge: Not merely 'to know beforehand who would accept Christ', but 'to set one's love upon from the eternal ages, with a view to effecting their salvation'. To know = to set apart or to choose. To foreknow = to set apart or to choose beforehand. (Cf. Rom. 11:2 with ch. 8:29 and with Jer. 1:5; see also Isa. 49:1-6) [G. Lyons]

Christ, God has purposed to bring to everlasting glory all who believe on the name of his one and only Son. On the day of final redemption, not one of the saints in light shall be accounted missing from the blessed presence of the Lord. Without exception, the Lord will gather every one home. As God's Word says:

Psalms 94:14

<sup>(14)</sup> For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. (Cf. 1 Sam. 12:22; Rom. 11:1-2)

John 14:1-3

<sup>(1)</sup> Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>(2)</sup> In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>(3)</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

Jude 1:24-25

<sup>(24)</sup> Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, <sup>(25)</sup> To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Therefore, since God has given us this assurance of salvation, let us press on—by God's grace—to demonstrate the reality of our calling and election. Let us show by our growth in grace, by our progress in sanctification, by our holy and godly manner of life, and by our love toward God and others, that we are indeed the regenerated and adopted sons and daughters of our Father in heaven.