

# Difficult Christian Doctrines Made Simple

*A Concise Look at the Doctrines of  
Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Election*

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## Introduction

Throughout the history of the Christian church, people have studied the Word of God in an attempt to accurately interpret it. As a result, various doctrines and denominations have been established. Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Election are three specific topics that many Christians have differing views on.

In order to truly understand and interpret Scripture, we must do more than simply study it. The approach to understand Scripture is not found primarily in study but in a place of communion with Christ. This is why the things of the Kingdom of God are (deliberately) hidden by Him from the wise and prudent and only revealed to babes (Matthew 11:25-26). The survival of a babe is entirely dependent on sources other than its own. It is not and cannot be self-sustaining. Even so, we were instructed by our Lord to ask the Father in Heaven, "Give us this day, our daily bread" (Luke 11:3). There is a bread (of revelation) only He can supply in the secret place where no human eyes exist to praise or critique us.

My approach to understanding Scripture is basic:

- Never assume what you are trying to prove or attempt to fit Scripture into an idea or premise formed from an outside source.
- If the plain sense of Scripture makes sense, hold to that sense, lest you end up with nonsense.
- Always expect Christ to meet with you when reading and meditating on Scripture.

Considering what Jesus warned about those who speak from themselves (John 7:16-18), I have chosen to take great care in writing this. Representing myself and my deductive reasoning is nothing more than glory

stealing. I would be nothing more than an attention seeker. In all things concerning the Kingdom of God, we must be as babes—feeding from His love, care, knowledge, and wisdom. We must look to the only Source that can supply us understanding—our Father in Heaven. This entails our refraining from wrong dependency on our or other people’s understanding, especially those who we put on a pedestal.

My conclusions are not based on theological sources outside of Scripture. Instead, I have taken the stance that Scripture does arrive at its own conclusions and graciously shuts the door in our faces when aspects of God’s greatness is beyond our comprehension. Some things about God can never be grasped by us any more than we can count to the longest number. That number does not exist. God cannot be measured within the calculating abilities of the human mind. Along with the Apostle Paul, we all must conclude:

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable [are] His judgments and His ways past finding out! (34) For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor” (Romans 11:33-34)?

We, in our own power, are incapable of understanding God. However, God – revealed in the human form of His Son, Christ Jesus – can be grasped by us as God wills. “But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” (10) *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.* For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

There is one goal that God’s redemptive plan for fallen mankind is designed to secure above all else. The integrity of God’s sovereign rule depends on it. Scripture reveals the basis of that grand design secures primarily one thing: “...that no flesh should glory in His [God’s] Presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29). Not only that, the means of redemption also secures the same: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, (9) not of works, *lest anyone should boast*” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

This premise brings us to one conclusion: *God is first true to Himself before anyone else.*

Our lives lived solely for the glory of God is the objective of His redemptive plan. Thus, it is the reason He began with two trees in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9). The fruit of one tree was forbidden and the fruit of the other was as necessary as breathing. These two trees gave Adam and Eve a

choice to make. Would they be true to God first before themselves? The worship of God as Creator had to be a choice. They were not programmed to do it. Finding and abiding in that place of homage and deference to God is the epitome of who they are. They were created for that. Everything else with which they could identify had to be made subservient by them to their God-given original purpose. Having been created after God's image (Genesis 1:26-27), they had a free will to choose. The wrong choice would necessitate their knowing and worshipping God in an entirely different context—as their Redeemer from sin.

Enter the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8; Jesus). God's foreordained plan of redemption would be introduced because Adam and Eve chose wrongly. The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes became the means by which the seed of the serpent (the one who personifies deceit) was sown. That seed is the self-fixated pride of life (1 John 2:15-17). Adam and Eve, including all their descendants, would no longer be true to God first. Their one act of disobedience doomed humanity to a futile quest of regaining the hope of the lost paradise. Yet, their doom was counteracted and declared null by God's predetermined council for all those who believe.

## The Seed Reserved

Before defining the Biblical usage of foreknowledge, predestination, and election, the concept of God reserving a "seed" from humanity needs to be explored. Has and does God reserve for Himself a people out of fallen humanity? Being the Creator, it is His prerogative. God reserved Noah and his family while all others on earth perished in the Great Flood (Genesis 6). In the days of Elijah the prophet, the Lord told him that He had reserved for Himself seven thousand Israelites who had not bowed their knees to the false god Baal (1 Kings 19:18). The Lord spoke through the Prophet Isaiah that only a remnant of Israel would receive the Messiah when He came to put away our sins (Isaiah 1:9; 10:22-23). God left them a seed—a remnant people that would "turn the world upside down" (Acts 17).

God has reserved for Himself a seed or remnant from humanity because of what He foreknew. Not who but what. In foreseeing the great extent of sin's impact throughout all generations, God set a plan in motion to preserve for Himself a remnant people through whom He would work in the Earth. Sin's impact would be so daunting on humanity that Jesus would later define it in a very sobering tone: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. (14) Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Again, in Luke 13:23-24: “Then one said to Him, “Lord, are there few who are saved?” And He said to them, (24) “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and *will not be able.*”” Jesus came to seek and save those who are lost (Luke 19:10). Furthermore, He also often emphasized our need to seek Him in the Gospels. God requires it, but it must be done correctly as a “babe.” Otherwise, the ability to enter the “narrow gate” will elude us.

From God’s perspective, how appalling is the self-fixated pride of life? It is such that even among the many people who seek Him, only a few find Him. Those are Jesus’ words and not mine. This indicates that the self-fixated pride of life can be so delusional that even our seeking of God is about us and not about the true worship of Him. Even our humility is false if we are attempting to impress God with it—to get from Him what is already available through His Son. Christ, as the Great Shepherd of the sheep, is the door into the household of God (John 10). There is no other. Those who will not come to Him as the ONLY door deny who He is and concurrently deny the Father. Its pride gone to seed....and God resists (opposes) the proud (1 John 5). The proud cannot obtain grace, and by default, they cannot abide in it either.

Ultimately, that seed left in Israel is the reason I can write this. I am able to believe in Christ because that remnant obeyed the call and commission of God. By the Holy Spirit’s direction, the early Jewish apostles took the message of the cross mostly westward—all the way to Britain. My heritage is largely from there. Because the Christian Jews took the Gospel West to the Gentiles, Christianity is known mostly as a western religion to this day.

Let’s take a moment and give thanks to our Father in Heaven. Thank Him for showing mercy to many generations! Why? Because God could have chosen otherwise, and He would still be no less sovereign, just, good, loving, and merciful—no less God.

Part way into his discourse in Romans 9, the Apostle Paul writes: “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! (15) For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion”” (Romans 9:14-15).

Scripture testifies that condemnation because of sin-guilt is upon *all* people who do not believe. God’s wrath, a judicial sentence unto punishment, abides upon them (Romans 3; John 3:18, 36). If He as God, Creator, and Judge of all chooses not to have mercy upon the guilty, does that make Him unrighteous? No, that makes Him a wise and just God. He alone has all wisdom and knowledge. God owes nothing to our sentiments in the matter.

Nonetheless, He went the second mile for us and sent His only begotten Son, thereby, revealing the riches of His kindness to *all* who call upon His name. Although all of mankind are considered by God to be His enemies, He still sent Jesus (Romans 5:10; 8:7). God has made it clear throughout Scripture that we are hostile toward Him because of our rebellious sin nature. While we were dead to and hostile towards God in our trespasses and sins, He chose to save us.

While I do not fully comprehend God, I do trust Him. What about you? His faithfulness is tireless. Can anyone rightly accuse God of being unfaithful or unjust? He owes none of us mercy or intervention, nonetheless, He does fulfill His promises and covenant commitments.

In Romans 3, Paul states: “Then what advantage remains to the Jew? <How is he favored?> Or what is the value *or* benefit of circumcision? (2) Much in every way. To begin with, to the Jews were entrusted the oracles (the brief communications, the intentions, the utterances) of God. (3) What if some did not believe *and* were without faith? Does their lack of faith *and* their faithlessness nullify *and* make ineffective *and* void the faithfulness of God *and* His fidelity <to His Word>? (4) By no means! Let God be found true though every human being is false *and* a liar, as it is written, That You may be justified *and* shown to be upright in what You say, and prevail when You are judged <by sinful men>” (Romans 3:1-4; AMP).

Israel was chosen by God not because they were a great nation but because they were the least (Deuteronomy 7:7). Even as the least (the lowly) only a remnant of them believed. Why? Because they went from being the least to those who boasted in their birthright or human lineage. Both John the Baptist and Jesus rebuked Israel, calling them to repentance. Certain people in Israel came before John and Jesus claiming Abraham as their father believing this was what made them righteous before God—His chosen people. Both John and Jesus rightly named them a brood of vipers. Even so, God already knew this and had already foretold through the Old Testament prophets of His plan to send salvation to all the nations of the world. God in His wisdom used Israel’s disobedience to reveal His love to the world. Praise His name forevermore!

Amid abounding sin against and hostility toward Him, from one generation to the next, God’s plan of redemption would unfold. This could only be done by reserving a seed of people for Himself who would worship Him only. Through Divine encounters, promises, oaths, and blood covenants, God’s redemptive plan would be executed, while simultaneously honoring and incorporating the free-will of man. The success of God’s predetermined council would ultimately rest on one Man—the last Adam, Christ Jesus (1

Corinthians 15:22, 45). He alone was found worthy to oversee, execute, and enforce God's redemptive purposes and judgments in the earth.

Let's take another moment and give thanks for God's love and mercy shown unto us in Christ Jesus.

Now, let us explore the Biblical definitions of Divine characteristics over which the body of Christ is divided.

## Biblical Definitions

### Foreknowledge

The Greek word for foreknowledge is *prognosis*. Broken down, *pro* means "before" and *gnosis* means "knowledge." The word is often used "as is" in medical science among English speaking people but takes on, for the most part, a different meaning than its Biblical counterpart. It simply means "to know something or someone beforehand."

Scripture depicts two types of foreknowledge:

- Universal foreknowledge (God's knowledge of all things past, present, and future)
- Redemptive foreknowledge (only refers to people that God regards beforehand)

The word *foreknowledge* and its variations are used in New Testament Scripture four times. One instance alludes to God's universal foreknowledge of the places, people, objects, events, and the wickedness of people's hearts that He used to bring about Christ's crucifixion (Acts 2:23). This indicates that God foresaw the need to send His Son, Christ Jesus, long before He was needed as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. In Revelation 13:8, Jesus is depicted as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. This signifies that the Son of God decided before the world existed to be that Lamb. This decision was made in agreement with the other two persons who make up God's triunity. As John revealed: "For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one" (1 John 5:7).

The other three occurrences of the word *foreknowledge* involve God *favorably* foreknowing unto redemption a certain category of people and not necessarily an individual (Romans 8:29, 11:2, & 1 Peter 1:2). In Romans, the "whom" God is referring to as used in "whom He foreknew" (8:29 & 11:2) is amended by "these" (8:30) and "people" (11:2). "These" and "people" are plural and suggest a group or category. The Apostle Peter stated (1 Peter 1:2) that God's people are the "elect according to the foreknowledge of God." The designation "elect" is never used in Scripture

to refer just to one person, but to a group or category. It would be inappropriate to claim, "I am *the* elect of God," but instead we should say, "*We* are the elect of God" or "I am *one* of the elect."

From these Scripture passages, we can soundly conclude the following:

- As Creator, God foreknows and governs (not necessarily controls) all things including people, choices and motives, events and what causes them. Even evil is obviously used for His purposes. This could be defined as universal foreknowledge.
- "Whom He [God] foreknew..." indicates that God does favorably foreknow people of His choosing. This is to be differentiated from His foreknowing the existence of all people who have been, and are, and are yet to be born. This type of foreknowledge could be defined as redemptive foreknowledge.
- God in His universal foreknowledge foresaw the need for a plan of redemption for mankind which initially entails Him favorably foreknowing a certain category of people. This category of people will be unveiled later. God clearly defines who they are in Scripture.
- Whom God foreknew (in a favorable way), He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. These predestined ones to whom Paul was referring are obviously the "elect according to the foreknowledge of God" to whom Peter was referring. The elect are the predestined ones.

## Predestination

The Greek word for predestination is *proorizo*. Broken down, *pro* means "before" and *orizo* is the root derived from our English word *horizon*. It means "to define, determine, or lay out the boundaries of." Simply put, predestination is the act of determining or planning something beforehand and putting it into action. For instance, this word was used in Greek/Roman culture to describe a farmer laying out the boundaries of a field *before* planting it. This also resembles drawing up a blueprint *before* building a house. A farmer predestines his crops by laying out and preparing the field and a builder predestines a house by drawing up a blueprint.

The word *predestined* is used 4 times in the KJV (Romans 8:29-30 & Ephesians 1:5, 11; referring to God's people). The same Greek word is translated one time in Scripture as "determined before" (Acts 4:28; referring to God planning ahead for Jesus' death) and "ordained" one time (1 Corinthians 2:7; referring to God planning ahead to make His wisdom available to us). Altogether, it was used six times in the original Greek writing of the New Testament.

*Predestination* is never used in Scripture in the context of condemning anyone to eternal damnation.

In Romans 8, God's people are predestined to "be conformed to the image of Christ," and in Ephesians 1, we are predestined to "adoption as sons." Explanation: Christ is *the* Son of God, and we are to be conformed to His image as adopted sons. We are adopted by receiving His Spirit into our hearts (Romans 8:15 & Galatians 4:6).

- ‡ When a farmer lays out a field, prepares the soil, and plants the crop, unto what is the crop predestined? To grow and produce fruit for his good pleasure.
- ‡ When a builder draws up a blueprint, obtains the supplies, and builds the house, unto what is the house predestined? To provide shelter, safety, and happiness for his good pleasure.

God's good pleasure for us is summed up in our being conformed to Christ's image by means of the Spirit of adoption.

Predestination is, therefore, the architect's "blueprint" or "farmer's field" of redemption that God created ahead of time for those He favorably foreknows.

- ‡ The blueprint: we are being built together on a foundation of apostles and prophets (Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone) to form a habitation for God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).
- ‡ The prepared field: we are God's planting in the field prepared beforehand to grow and produce fruit as the elect. "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (John 15:16).

Simply, predestination is a word used by God defining the plan, purpose, and means by which He transforms those He favorably foreknows into the image of His Son. This is otherwise known as the complete plan of salvation. God's plan of redemption absolutely insures one thing above anything else. Everything in it is designed so that no flesh would glory in His presence. It is designed so that no person can boast before Him in their wisdom, cleverness, works, social status, and lineage. Those who boast in positions of authority, spirituality, accomplishments in the context of God-ordained ministry, knowledge of Scripture, of being the "elect," moral character, greatness, prestige, and seniority based on worldly and religious standards will have no place before Him. God's redemptive design enforces this strictly and without partiality.



*Remember, God is true to Himself before anyone else.*

He requires no less from those who believe and warns us of the consequences of not doing so throughout Scripture. We must also be true to Him first.

## Election

The word *election* sounds political doesn't it? In a sense, the idea of God voting for people does apply. Yes, God openly placed His vote for the whole world, no one excluded, by sending Jesus to die for all our sins but not all meet His criteria (John 3:16-17). When He planted two trees in the Garden of Eden it was a vote for Adam and all of his descendants. By placing two trees instead of just one, He showed the importance of and His regard for our free will. We must choose to come through the Door (Christ) that secures true worship only for God, and we must stay in that straight and narrow way. Otherwise, we will end up on the broad way of destruction (Matthew 7:13-14). All those attempting to come in some other way are judged by God as thieves and robbers. These thieves and robbers seek to steal the honor, glory, and attention that solely belongs to God (John 10). In this we see the seed of the serpent exposed.

The Greek Lexicon connected with my Online Bible Software defines the word *election* this way: "the act of picking out, choosing" and "of the act of God's free will by which before the foundation of the world he decreed his blessings to certain persons." So has God, from the beginning narrowed down His election to certain persons? Scripture is in agreement with this proposition.

We already know from Scripture that the "elect" are chosen by God's favorable foreknowledge and are also defined as the predestined ones. Now, look at this verse of Scripture to discover the chief characteristics of those God has narrowed down as the elect:

"Though the LORD [is] on high, yet He regards the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar" (Psalm 138:6).

Based on this, who does God regard over anyone else? This verse places all people into individual categories of either the lowly or the proud. Obviously, the elect are most likely the lowly, however, there are exceptions to this rule. The Old Testament tells us several stories of how God used one pagan king as a vessel of wrath and another as a vessel of honor. Saul of Tarsus' conversion would be a New Testament example.

This also means that the conditions for election are not based on God knowing ahead of time (universal foreknowledge) that we would choose Him

as is commonly believed. Otherwise, why were there two trees in the Garden of Eden? Why are Christians warned about the repercussions of not continuing in faith and grace throughout the New Testament? This indicates that we must continue to abide in Christ, feeding from Him as the New Tree of Life.

Jesus made it clear: “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:8).

The Apostle Paul was more specific about the identity of the lowly and why God regards them as the predestined ones.

“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; (28) and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, (29) *that no flesh should glory in His presence*” (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

*Again, God is first true to Himself before anyone else.*

God designed His redemptive plan for mankind unto one end: *that no flesh glory in His presence*. This is the safeguard for His Kingdom. Without it, more “Lucifers” would arise to challenge Him and, yes, even from the ranks of mankind. While the summons of God, His calling, has gone out into all the world, throughout all generations, His choosing (election) is selective. This is done in such a way that the door is slammed shut in the face of any elitism. No one can boast even in being one of the elect before God no more than a baby who is entirely dependent on the care of its mother can boast in being a baby. All things in God’s redemptive blueprint are designed only unto the praise of His glory revealed in Christ, even before the world was (Ephesians 1). It excludes any who would wrongly boast in His Presence. Such a wonderful design secures God’s place as the only God and Creator, and our place as the needy and sinful created ones.

The passage quoted from 1 Corinthians was preceded by this verse (26): “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called.*” Why? They bear too much of the image of the fallen angel Lucifer—the proud, self-exalting, and self-sufficient one for whom there is no redemption. These are the proud referred to in Psalm 138:6. Notice that this verse of Scripture, the words “are called” are italicized in the above verse. This indicates it was added by the translators for clarity and was not a part of the original text. It would have been better rendered as “are chosen.”

The lowly elect (the chosen) are *mostly* made up of:

- ‡ The foolish who will put to shame the wise
- ‡ The weak who will put to shame the mighty
- ‡ The base and despised who will put to shame the noble (those who boast in their ancestry)

Even the message of the cross of Christ is considered foolish by the wise of this world and is a stumblingblock to those who seek to gain God's favor through self-willed works (Read 1 Corinthians 1). This Gospel message that calls us into God's process of predestination cannot even be grasped by those who are so proudly self-fixated that they cannot recognize God in His simplest form. As Proverbs 17:24 states: "Wisdom *is* in the sight of him who has understanding, but the eyes of a fool *are* on the ends of the earth."

Only the lowly can be conformed to the image of Christ. Jesus portrayed Himself as meek and lowly of heart in the context of our taking His yoke upon us. His yoke was designed to replace a heavy, burdensome, and demanding one. Under the heavy yoke, the bearer can never produce enough. Conversely, Christ's yoke first imparts and maintains rest to the soul (Matthew 25:30). In that rest, we learn of Christ and are molded into His image as the predestined "babes." In that same context (v. 25), Christ rejoiced that the things of the Kingdom of God are hidden from the wise and the prudent but are revealed to the babes. The term "babes" also fits in with the foolish, weak, and base in defining who the lowly are. The things of the Kingdom of God are deliberately hidden by God from the proud and reserved for the babes. Why? (You should be able to answer this question by now.) So that no flesh can glory in His Presence.

## The Book of Life

The Book of Life is mentioned six times in the book of Revelation. The first occurrence in Revelation 3:5 is given in the context of a warning to believers in Christ. Jesus warned that church He would *not* blot out their name from the Book of Life if they overcame. The language in that verse indicates that Christ had His Divine eraser out and was ready to do it. The next occurrence in 13:8 is phrased this way: "whose names have been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The next occurrence in 17:8 is phrased this way: "whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world." The next occurrences portray this Book of Life as the means by which God with finality determines who is thrown into the lake of fire forever (20:12, 15; 21:27). The final occurrence (22:19) gives God's people, those whose names are already written in the Book of Life, a clear and terrifying warning:

“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; (19) and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book” (22:18-19).

It is possible to have your name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life and then have it removed based on the plain sense meaning of Scripture. One cannot have their part of that Book taken away if he or she does not already have a part. Understanding this clear warning, that this conclusion is based on Scripture alone and not on other theological writings, why would I believe and teach otherwise? Jesus made it clear that those who speak from themselves, representing conclusions and expertise from the minds of people, having their believing and thinking already compromised, are seeking their own glory (See John 7:11-18). If not their own glory, then the glory of their “greater” human and religious affiliations in which they boast (but not before God). So, those who are already written in the Book of Life would be comprised mostly of “lowly” people (1 Corinthians 1). The only sound conclusion would be that their names remain written in that Book as long as they continue as the “lowly” ones like their Savior and Lord was while on earth.

In this, we see the same pattern that existed in the Garden of Eden. In a sense, there are still two trees in the Garden. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God gives His people two choices: life or death – blessing or curse. The New Testament message is this: we must repent by completely embracing Christ, otherwise we will be eternally separated (condemned) from Him. To the believer in Christ, the choice is simple: abide in Christ or perish forever. The choice is between sinful self-fixation or God fixation in accordance with His directions.

Jesus said, “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:6).

## Who Chose Who?

Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:16 “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you...” This indicates that our choosing Him had nothing to do with God’s election. There is no Scripture or any implication in Scripture that God’s choosing us was based on Him foreknowing we would choose Him. Neither does this indicate that we could not or are not capable of choosing Him. Again, God’s first choosing us secures His supreme sovereign rule over all of creation. It secures the true worship of Him by

those who believe. The message of the Gospel is designed only for the lowly. It sifts out even those who seek Him for their own glory. The lowly are the most likely candidates to worship God only—refusing to put themselves before Him. Their praise can only come from God because they know all else is vain, empty, and ruinous. With God, He comes first or we are left to our own proud, self-fixated, and miserable state. Remember what we covered earlier from 1 Corinthians 1?

Therefore, God's choosing us cannot be based on His foreknowing (universal foreknowledge) we would choose Him. If our redemption depends on that, then those who do choose Him could never depart from the faith. While He does foreknow whether we will choose Him or not, that is not the basis for predestination. If that were so, then we would not have been clearly warned throughout the New Testament to continue in the faith. In fact, Scripture states that some will depart from the faith in the last days, giving heed to doctrines of demons and seducing spirits (1 Timothy 4:1). 2 Thessalonians 2:3 foretells a falling away (literally: apostacy) in the last days as one of two events that must take place before the coming of the Lord and our gathering unto Him (aka "the Day of Christ"). Most of Israel departed from God (while thinking they were still serving Him) except for a remnant as foreseen by God. As previously established, the potentiality of being blotted from the Book of Life was addressed to believers. It was conditional on their repentance. Only believers can depart from the faith.

Paul minced no words here: "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He [Christ] has reconciled (22) in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—(23) *if indeed* you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, *and are not moved away* from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister" (Colossians 1:21-23). Notice his use of "if indeed" and "are not moved away." A Christian can be moved away from the hope of the Gospel! That Gospel and our faith in it is our salvation. Our hope and faith in that Gospel is our only source of righteousness and eternal life before God.

God foresees and has revealed through prophecy in Scripture that some of His people would depart from the faith. Obviously, the success of God's redemptive plan for fallen mankind is not based on His foreknowledge of such things, but upon the fact that His Son, Christ Jesus, could not and will not fail. The writer of Hebrews assures us of this: "But He [Christ], because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore, He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (26) For such a High

Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; (27) who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. (28) For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever (Hebrews 7:25-28).

While the success of God's redemptive plan does *not* mostly hinge on the free-will of man, it is incorporated wonderfully as only such a wise God could do. *God's sovereignty is displayed in its greatest splendor as seen in His work through Christ as Great High Priest.* Christ first enforces the way of the cross (self-denial) as the Door into the sheepfold of God (John 10). No one can come to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). He does this saying to all who come before Him: "Those who do not honor Me as the way, truth, and life, do not honor the Father either. The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to Me" (John 5:22-23). Our failure to acknowledge Christ with the terms God has defined Him, the purpose for which He was sent into the world, and our great need of Him will amount to nothing but opposition from God toward us. God resists (opposes) the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5). If we continually resist the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, there will come a point at which He will no longer strive with us.

As established already in this writing, even the chosen (the elect) can be resisted by God and ultimately "cut off" like Israel as Paul warned in Romans 11. This could happen if we fail to continue in the humility associated with true faith in God. Failure to abide in Christ, as emphasized by John in his Gospel and his epistles, will cause us to be cut off and perish. We will be charged by God with prideful hostility toward Him. Any such unwillingness or resistance to God in His efforts to humble us under the weight of the message of the Cross is the essence of sin. Unwillingness and resistance serve as the soil from which hostility toward God and His people thrives in the earth. It is the source of deception and division in the body of Christ. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and its propagation of the self-fixated pride of life is revealed in its greatest but doomed splendor in this.

God's redemptive plan as revealed in Christ began before the foundation of the world. We continue in it by walking humbly before God and mankind, always being true to God first.

As Peter clearly stated, we "...are kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Peter 1:5). If we are kept solely by the power of God (aka His love in

action toward us), then we could never depart from the faith, forfeiting the gift of righteousness we have in Christ. No, it is not just by His power but also through our faith. True faith before God is a choice just like it was in the beginning—there were two trees in the Garden. We can choose to humble ourselves and receive life from Christ as the lowly or fall for the great lie as personified in the self-fixated pride of life.

*Daily*, we must deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Christ (Luke 9:23). Our covenant commitment to Him is expected to be renewed on our end every day because God's compassion and mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:21-26). Scripture does not teach any such thing as passive trust in God. Faith must be active, first in the secret place of intimacy with Christ and then in public, otherwise, it is dead (Matthew 6:7; James 2).

There are still "two trees" in the Garden. We must choose to either abide in Christ or in the self-fixated pride of life.

## God Sovereignty in its Great Splendor

So, does the Scripturally established fact that God's New Covenant people can depart from the faith, forfeiting their salvation, in any way diminish God's sovereignty? The answer: Did God's planting of two trees in the Garden of Eden diminish His sovereignty? Did Adam and Eve's partaking of the wrong tree diminish His sovereignty? Is God self-defeating? Absolutely not!

Does God's flawless redemptive blueprint for mankind, designed to secure our absolute loyalty to Him, His protocols, and ways diminish His sovereignty, even if we depart from the faith? Absolutely not!

Does setting Jesus as the only Door into the household of God diminish His sovereignty? Why not provide many doors? Does the fact that the way unto eternal life is narrow and difficult and the way to (eternal) destruction is broad and easy to find diminish His sovereignty? Why isn't the way to eternal life broad? The answer: Why is God first true to Himself before anyone else? Why is His glory protected and secured before we are? Because He is God and we are not. We are a fallen race—hostile toward God because of sin. We are self-fixated and will honor ourselves and those things that give us temporal identity and security above God and His Son.

Did creating mankind with a freewill diminish God's sovereignty? No, that was a part of our being created after His image. Adam and Eve were created in an innocent state, but righteousness had to be chosen as a free-will act of love and loyalty to their God. Thus, the reason for the two trees in the Garden.

God is not a like superhero who swoops in at the last minute and saves everyone from doom. However, He has given us His best, His only begotten Son and is willing to give us freely all things through Him (Romans 8:32). What is required, above all else, is absolute loyalty to who Christ is and the written record God has given us of Him.

God has revealed His sovereignty in its greatest splendor by doing all these things and much more.

Does the fact that a Christian can depart from the faith under the influence of deception lessen the saving power and love of Christ? Absolutely not! If we are going to be discipled (fathered) by Christ, we must take up our cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23-26). By so doing, we will not “lose our souls.” We must continually (daily) choose not to be as those who receive the grace of God in vain...whose end is to be burned (See 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, 10; 2 Corinthians 6:1; Hebrews 5:12-6:8). We have been given a stewardship of God’s grace. What are we doing with it?

Having a refrigerator in the kitchen is not the same as eating food. It provides the access to the food. We have access to God’s super-grace but are we accessing it? Or are we allowing ourselves to be cheated? We partake of Christ by accessing Him. It is not automatic. Scripture testifies to and directs us in our need to partake of Christ. It is similar to eating bread and drinking water (John 4 & 9). To receive the benefits thereof we must deliberately partake of both or we will eventually perish. Even so, must we abide in Christ.

“On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, *let him come to Me and drink*. (38) He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” (39) But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:37-39).

The New Covenant in Christ is not established on a one-time experience or choice to repent resulting in salvation. Scripture is quite clear: Only those who walk in the *steps of the faith* of Abraham are justified before God (Romans 4:12). Salvation begins when we first believed and continues as we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end (Hebrews 3:14). Abraham was declared justified by God because of a lifestyle of faith in Him and not just one act. Scripture clearly states that Abraham was justified by his consistent works of faith (Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-19; James 2:20-23). While being aware of his human limitations, sinfulness, and frailty, Abraham chose to continue in faith because of God’s consistent



pursuit of him. God became Abraham's Shield and exceeding great reward (Genesis 15:1).

In conclusion, God is working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. This is why we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:2-13). God, in the greatest splendor of His sovereignty, has chosen to work His saving wonders within those who believe. This is His way of salvation—of preserving us. It also requires our heeding the warnings against not submitting to His inward work. Jesus has already proven He cannot fail as Redeemer and Great High Priest. The question each of us must ask ourselves is, as 2 Peter 1:8-11 warns: Are we giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure? By so doing, we are showing forth the excellent of Christ's continual ministry that supersedes all others.

Much more could be said concerning how our beliefs in this matter affects our understanding of spiritual warfare, spiritual submission, delegated authority, and suffering. However, these are subjects for another time.