***The Doctrine of Election
RO119-01***

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Romans 8:28-30. The Destiny of Good, segment number 8.

In Matthew 22:14, we read, "For many are called, but few are chosen." The word "called" here is used in the sense of invitation in this particular verse, invitation to salvation. Many, in fact, all of the human race, are invited to salvation. The word "chosen" in this verse refers to those who have been elected to accept the invitation to salvation. Many are invited, but few are elected to accept.

That is a very dramatic statement in the Word of God and one that gives many people a great deal of trouble because they do not respect who God is, that He is above all else the sovereign authority. He is the King of the universe. He accounts to no one but to the integrity of His own character. While the invitation to salvation, then, is extended to all mankind, only those we have found will respond whom God has chosen for salvation.

This past week, a man that I have known for many years, I received word, in his old age now has died. This was a man who all the while that he lived knew how to make himself prosperous. He knew his way around the financial world. He knew his way around the people of importance, and he considered himself a very sophisticated, informed man of the world. He had nothing but indifference for the concept of being born again, for the necessity of receiving Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Religion was just not his bag. While he condescendingly tolerated the practice in others, as far as I could tell, there was no part in that in his life.

Well, now it's sad that he has died, and he has demonstrated again that another human being has gone out into eternity who was invited to salvation but who thumbed his nose at it. Because he didn't consider it real, necessary, whatever. But now indeed, I can assure you, as he sits in the agonies of Hades waiting his transfer into the lake of fire at the end of the millennium, he is thinking back about his wife who is still alive who has shared and does share his indifference toward the Word of God, and he is sitting there thinking, "How could I get a message back to her that we were terribly mistaken, that the people who were telling us these things were the ones who were right and we were wrong? I can't change my situation ever again, but she can. And our children, all grown with families of their own, who have carried our disillusion with them into their adult life, they can change it."

**Everyone Gets a Chance**

That's what's at stake here: that all are invited, but somehow, not all, in spite of the fact that they need to say yes, will say yes. There is something in the program and the choice of God that makes that possible. And as you understand the doctrine of election does give us a basis, indeed, of appreciation and love for the God who's made that possible.

Most of mankind, as you know, will be negative toward God-consciousness. They will be negative toward the Gospel when they hear it. So then, comparatively few, the Bible is telling us here, are going to enter into heaven. As you know, the book of Romans has already taught us that everybody, when he passes the age of personal accountability and now must make a decision for or against God relative to his salvation, also comes to a point of God-consciousness. He becomes aware there is a God to whom he must be accountable. He is aware that there is a standard by which he will be judged. If he is negative when he comes to that consciousness of God, that will be the end of the line.

Somebody asked me that question, and I reiterate that everybody gets a chance. Nobody is in hell because he didn't have a chance to avoid it. God-consciousness comes to everyone. But if you turn your back with indifference toward your awareness that there is a God to whom you must account, then the Gospel will never come to you. But if God-consciousness is received in the positive way, you can be in the deepest jungles of South America, Africa, wherever, and I assure you that a missionary will show up with Gospel information that you need to enter through that straight and narrow gate into eternal life. The Gospel you must have, but the Gospel you will receive when you are positive toward your awareness of the fact that there is a God out there who has made you, who has a standard that you do not even match your own sense of what you should be. Certainly, you do not match His.

So, everybody has a chance. Nobody is in hell because they didn't have a chance to escape it. But most of mankind goes negative when they become aware God is there and they go negative toward the point of Gospel hearing.

**Election, Predestination, Foreknowledge, Purpose**

Now, the Bible, we have pointed out, uses several words to refer to this divine election to salvation. It uses, of course, the word "election" itself, which means to choose some people from the mass of mankind, to bypass the rest. We have the word "predestination," which means to mark out a certain group of people for salvation. We have the word "foreknowledge," which means the selection of some for an intimate relationship with God for salvation based on the sovereign plan of God. Foreknowledge indicates a close relationship. It does not mean fear in terms of salvation that God looks down through the corridor of time and sees who will believe and who will not believe and then decides who's going to be elected. Otherwise, God would be learning something Himself, and then He's not omniscient.

Then, there was the word "purpose," which means the sovereign plan of God in eternity past to save some from among mankind. So, our definition of "election" simply is, election is the sovereign act of God in choosing for salvation in Christ Jesus those whom He has predestinated according to His own purpose. Election means that God has chosen some for salvation but not all. Not merely that God plans to give salvation to those who believe the Gospel but that He actually selects those who are going to believe the Gospel. That's what's amazing to people. It's not just that He's agreed to give salvation if you believe. It's that He, in election, says, "I'll tell you, and I will decide which of you will believe."

Bible never says, however, that God elects some people to be lost. The Bible never says that God causes some people not to believe. So, therefore, this is a doctrine that you have to walk a very straight and narrow path. You have to know exactly what the scriptures say. You must not step out of line with what it specifically says. The Bible makes it very clear that what God is doing is leaving the sinner in his self-chosen rebellion against God. He's not causing you to become rebellious. He's not causing you to become a sinner. He is simply leaving some people in that condition. But some of them, he selects out.

Now, this happened in eternity past when the Godhead had a conference, perhaps we can call it an eternal life conference, and they decided everything that would relate to human history, including the election of some for salvation. We call that the eternal decrees of God. Election, thus, does not take place at the point of one's salvation. Election was decided at the eternal life conference of the Godhead.

This is pointed out to us in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, "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." God from the very beginning, in eternity past, that unbeginning beginning of eternity past, chose some of us for eternal life to be brought about by the setting apart of God the Holy Spirit unto that eternal life and through our believing of the truth of the Gospel. So, election does not take place in a point of time. It is, as we say, pre-temporal. It is before time.

Romans 8:28, furthermore, tell us something very important about the order of some of these words we've been looking at. Romans 8:28, the last part of the verse says, "Who are called according to His purpose." So that, the sinner's call to salvation is based on the purpose of God, not on some anticipated response of the sinner down the line that God can foresee. Purpose is number one. If you want to line these words up, you have to put "purpose" at the very top. That's where election begins. It begins with God in eternity past, the conference of the Godhead declaring what the purpose was of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. And that purpose was the beginning of our personal election. So, one's personal faith in Jesus Christ does not determine your election, but rather your election determines that you will have personal faith in Jesus Christ.

**The Relationship Between God's Sovereignty and Man's Free Will**

Now, of course, I know the question that all this raises in your mind, and what is the relationship then between two things that the Bible very clearly tells us? We've discussed that God is sovereign. He calls all the plays. But we are also told in the Bible that man has a volition that he may exercise. He can say, "Yes;" he can say, "No."

This was the first of the divine institutions that was set up by God for the human race back in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were told that they could say, "Yes," to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; they could say, "No," to it. Man has the capacity to exercise his will. So that, we do have the exercise of will, and how that is related to the fact that God calls all the plays, we have no explanation in the Bible. And it is pointless and fruitless for our finite minds to try to come up with answers to that.

I'll tell you the mistake that people usually fall into. Religious groups say, "Well, it's all the sovereignty of God. It's all of God. So, we don't need missionaries. We don't need to worry about telling people the Gospel. If God has chosen you for eternal life, you're in. You're going to be saved. That's it. Nothing's going to frustrate a decision of God. Well, that's taking, you see, one side of the picture.

Other religious groups go to the other side. They're called "Arminians" after a man named Arminius who promoted this idea in the middle ages. And that is: it's all free will. It's not anything that God has to say. It's almost like Deism. God set it in motion, then He stepped aside, and it's up to you. You have free will. You can do it. You cannot do it. It's up to you to decide, and that's it. It's all of man. Well, if it's that, then, you see, there is a totally different approach to evangelism. But the Bible says, "No, you don't just take one side or the other."

You've got two things here that demonstrate to us what the scriptures tell us is that God's thinking is as high above our capacity to reason as the heavens are about the earth. Divine election, of course, indeed, is immutable, and no human act of the will can frustrate it. But both divine sovereignty and the human will are involved. "Whosoever will may come" is equally stressed in the Bible with the concept of truth of divine election. The sinner, then, is held responsible for being in hell. The sinner is held responsible for the volitional decision he made that took him into the lake of fire.

Now, within the mass of the lost humanity that you and I are acquainted with, we can't tell who's elect and who is non-elect. I've been mulling over in my mind a series of letters on different colored paper, perhaps, that step up by increments, and to take a section of the city of Irving - just one section of a limited number of neighborhoods - and begin by an initial letter to those families explaining to them our interest in clarifying for them the concept, the understanding of how a person goes to heaven and how important it is for them to know that perhaps what they were born in is not the way to do it. What somebody else has told them is merely a human viewpoint opinion and that we are going to be keeping in touch with them. No pressure. No confrontation at the door. Just a moment of quiet reading of a letter.

And then, a week or so later, another letter and a booklet that explains how to go to heaven that's in the process of being written. And then stepping up with several letters that encourage people to accept this truth and encourage them to look into the ministry of Berean Memorial Church and its various aspects that it has available, and just to have a series of contacts.

Now, if we do that, to whom would we send that letter? To whom would we send that package, step-by-step? Can we look through the addresses in our criss-cross and say, "Here is an elect home. We'll deal with that. Here is a home that's not elect. We're not going to fool with them." There's no way to know, so we will send to every home in that section of town that we are seeking to approach through mail evangelism.

In that mass of humanity, there will be many elect people who have not yet been born again, as well as many non-elect people who will take our letters, tear them up, throw them away, and never give it a second thought. Those who are elect but unsaved, God the Holy Spirit may use this means to alert them to a concern that they will then follow-up that will result in their considering the Gospel and making the move of acceptance. But on the part of God's sovereignty, and our ministry as evangelists and their volition at the point of Gospel hearing, God's sovereignty and our free will comes together. And they enter the kingdom of God and God's royal family. The reason some are chosen for salvation lies entirely within God Himself apart from all human volition. The Bible makes it very clear that people are chosen for salvation on the part of God's own good pleasure.

Ephesians 1:5, for example, says, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Adopted us to have full standing as adult men and women in the family of God, thereby, of course, implying that we are born again. And we are, indeed, children. We are, indeed, in the family of God. We are that by His good pleasure, the good pleasure of His will, not because there is something in us that we deserve it.

Ephesians 1:11 says, "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." Predestinated because of the working of the counsel of His own will. He didn't ask you. He didn't ask me. He didn't ask anyone else. There is only the wisdom, the judgment, the integrity of God that makes this decision. But this, indeed, does lead to certain objections to the doctrine of election. And I thought it might be helpful before we pass on from this subject to take up some of those and see how legitimate they really are.

**Objections to the Doctrine of Election**

Election, we are sometimes told, is not consistent with human freedom and responsibility. How can you say that somebody is elect by a sovereign decision of God and then say that he has the free will to decide whether to go to heaven or not? So, what's the meaning of "free agency"? Romans 9:19 says this, "Thou wilt say then unto me, 'Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?'" And the Apostle Paul is posing this objection. He's raising an objection that somebody says, "Why does God find fault with us when we won't believe the Gospel and then sends us to hell for all eternity when He is the one whose will determines this? Have we resisted the will of God? How can we resist His will?"

That's the question: can a person be a free, responsible agent if his actions have been foreordained, and that from eternity past? Well, "free agency" means a person is not forced to act contrary to his will. From the human side, a person actually feels that he is the author of his own acts. From the human side, particularly in a country like ours that knows personal freedom and liberty in a very large degree, most people feel that what they do is the result of the fact that they decided to do it.

When some of you will not listen to me, you will not show up with your youngsters to Sunday school, you don't feel that somebody forced you to do that. You're perfectly free. You're perfectly conscious that you decided to say, "No," to that invitation. And free agency means that you are not under a sense of compulsion. People view themselves as acting according to their own views, their own convictions, their own inclinations, their own dispositions when it comes to salvation.

So, Christians that believe in Jesus Christ as Savior feel that they have decided by their own positive volition to trust Him. But, the doctrine of election reveals the divine side of free agency too. God in eternity past already chose you to make that decision. The Holy Spirit in time moved upon your will to bring it to where you are willing to receive Christ. The Holy Spirit's activity was secret in your heart. You weren't even aware of His presence, but this is the one thing that He does for the unsaved person since you have a dead human spirit. The Living God, the Holy Spirit comes in, and He substitutes for your dead human spirit. You must have a living human spirit to have a point of contact with God, you see. That is the point of your God-consciousness. And so, He brings you an awareness and an understanding of the Gospel and moves upon your heart to accept it.

So, free agency does not mean that the will is sovereign free. It only seems to you that that's how you are, but you're not that way. From the human viewpoint, you think that that's how you are. It does not mean that you are able to change your character by some act of your own will. Man's will is enslaved to sin, so he's not going to be able to change himself. He is a slave of the sin nature, so he's not free to choose salvation.

That was made very clear to us in Romans 3:11. And remember, we can't deal with this on the basis of human reason contaminated by the sin nature. We have to see what God says. Romans 3:11 says, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." that takes a lot of arrogance for you to say, "Oh yes, I seek after God." No, you don't! If you did reach out and accept salvation, it's because God moved you. The Bible says there's not a human sinner upon the face of the earth who is not born again who reaches out after God. And he never will reach out after God. There is none that seeketh after God. Nevertheless, you yourself are not under the impression of being forced to act contrary to your own will.

So, that's what we mean by free agency. It seems free to us, but there is a, an overriding sovereignty of God in it. And this question of free agency and foreknowledge, some people don't find any problem with election and human freewill in the sense that God had foreknowledge of who would exercise faith. And we've already touched upon that, so we've pointed out to you that this is not true. Foreknowledge does not mean (though the word "foreknowledge" does mean sometimes knowing some things ahead of time period, and God has that knowledge, because of His omniscience), but foreknowledge in terms of our salvation does not mean God sees ahead of time who decides to believe. God knows who decides to believe because he has decided that issue.

Foreknowledge is used in the Bible in terms of a personal intimacy and association that God establishes with the person. Nothing is changed by saying you will accept foreknowledge but not foreordination. If God has foreknowledge of you relative to accepting Christ as Savior, it is because He has foreordained you. And some people try to separate these two. Foreknowledge demands foreordination. God knows because He has that if you say, "God knew what was going to happen but He didn't determine it," it raises the question of whether there was a time when He didn't know something. He knows what's going to happen but He didn't determine it. That raises the question, "When did he discover that this was going to happen?"

Free agency was actually consistent with certainty. The claim is made that a thing cannot have freedom of choice and the outcome be certain. You cannot say, it is said, that you have freedom of choice and yet while you have freedom of choice, you're certain of the outcome. Freedom is equated here to uncertainty because of the unknown quantity of the human will. Well, that's the natural way for the sin nature to reason. But there are no unknown quantities with God.

Let me show you an example. Acts 2:23 shows you how there is full certainty with God in the process of people making decisions to act according to what is certain to God. Acts 2:23, "Him [the Lord Jesus Christ], being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

You people who executed Jesus Christ are taking someone who was delivered into your hands by Almighty God by his determinate counsel and foreknowledge. Determinate counsel is that in the council of the Godhead, they decided that God the Son would pay for the sins of the world and by the foreknowledge of God means that therefore, God knew what was going to happen with Christ in paying for the sins of the world. This expresses the certainty of the crucifixion. Once God had determined in the council of the Godhead that this was going to happen, there was nothing that was going to keep this from happening. It was the determinate council of God; therefore, God had the foreknowledge. Here, it is knowing ahead of time, indeed, what is going to happen.

Then, it says ye human beings, on the background of this, have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. "You have taken," which expresses the fact that all those Jewish leaders and Roman authorities thought that they were making the decision on their own. They were only conscious of the fact that they were deciding what to do with Jesus Christ, but in the background this is what God had already determined they were going to do, and they were simply playing out the script. Both are true at the same time then. There is the sovereign decision of God, and there is the free agency of man to execute. It is not true that you cannot have certainty and choice at the same time.

For example: you have a small child. You're out at one of the great national parks. You're out some place, say, like Mesa Verde, where you have these places, you come to the edge of a cliff. And there's the valley, and there's all the caves with the adobe houses in them. And you have to be careful when you're around places like that. And you have a small child. But if you saw this youngster going toward the edge of that cliff, what are you going to do? Is there any uncertainty as to what you as a parent would do? You could let him, of course, go over and learn a good lesson. [Laughter] But in all likelihood, while you have that freedom of choice, it is certain that you are going to go storming after this guy and catch him and stop him.

We were in Florida once when our two older boys were very small, and we were sitting around talking. They were out in the yard playing, and all of a sudden it was quiet, and we looked up, and they weren't there. Well, there was like a block down to the lake. And what they had decided is, the older brother decided that they ought to take their pails and go down to the lake. And so, these dudes go down to the lake. And when we came out there, they were halfway down there. And so, when we called to them, and they didn't want to come back. They just kept heading down. So, I had a run like a real athlete, and those little legs started pumping, and you know they're close to the ground, four-on-the-floor [revving sounds], they're going along, and they were to the lake before I finally caught up with them. And they were determined they were going to go in to have their own program.

Well, we could have let them go, and they would have run right off the dock, and they would have learned a good lesson. But, it was certain what I was going to do once I saw them heading for the lake. What the parent will do will be certainty.

Or take a case where you have a pilot who is instructing a student. The pilot is instructing him on recovery from stalls. And so, he explains to the student that he has to pull the stick back and to let the airplane come up until it finally hits the stall point but that then he has to bring it out of the stall, recovery with the wings level. In order to do that, he must not use the stick left and right, which will bring in ailerons, because that will not keep the wings level; it will cause the wings fall off into a tailspin. You must use the rudder in order to keep the wings level because of the altitude of the plane, because it falls through and you recover from the stall.

But, this student is careless. He pulls up into the stall beautifully. He comes in, the engine starts laboring, and it's slower and slower and slower, and finally it begins to fall over, and a wing drops, and he tries to correct it with opposite aileron, and it flops over to one side and it goes into a tailspin period now it's falling like a rock. It's a free-falling rock, corkscrewing itself down toward the earth.

Now, the instructor can sit back there and say, "I told you not to use the ailerons! And I'm going to just show you what's going to happen now!" And the student doesn't know what to do. He thinks, "I'll pull back on the stick! I've got to get this thing up!" Well, of course, that's the worst thing to do. That will certainly tighten you into the spin.

The instructor has freedom of choice, but it is also predictably certain what he will do. He will not teach him the lesson that he should teach him: let him corkscrew into the ground. The instructor is going to say, "I've got it," and the student is going to understand that means, "Let go of the controls," and the instructor will kick the opposite rudder to the spin to stop the spin and slam the stick forward, and then he will very quickly bring the aircraft out of the dive, because now it's flying again, so as not to create too much strain upon the wings by getting too steep a dive. It is predictable that the instructor is going to do that. But he had freedom of choice to make the decision.

So, you see, there is a relationship between being free to make a choice and what is predictable in the choice that you will make. We don't have all the details as to how this fits in with our sovereign God choosing us to salvation, but there is a relationship just like that. Truth of the matter is, God's the only free person in the universe. He's the only One that has absolute freedom. He's the only One who may do and does do according to his good pleasure. He is the only One who's absolutely free.

And yet, even God is limited. What limits Him? His own essence. His own holiness. He cannot violate his own character. He is limited by what He is. Therefore, He cannot do the things that would violate His own integrity in any way. Will God who is absolutely free always do what is right? Yes, it is absolutely certain that God who is absolutely free, the one absolutely free person of the universe, he will with certainty always choose to do that which is right. So, again, you see, freedom of action can exist in the climate of certainty.

There is a certain relationship between free agency and divine limitations. We have freedom to choose, but we have divine limitations with a promise. You cannot go to one of the tall buildings in downtown Dallas and jump off the building and halfway down decide that this was not a good idea and that you will now stop the force of gravity from pulling you down. You have freedom to make the decision, but there are limits on upon your freedom. You cannot will yourself back up to the top of the building, nor can you will yourself to have a soft landing at the bottom. So, while man is the free agent, he does not really have ultimate free will, you see. He has limitations upon himself in spite of the fact that he's free to make a lot of decisions. Man's freedom of will is restricted by divine laws.

Then there's the fact that divine persuasion is also affecting our free agencies. Is it possible to be a free agent and yet to have God persuade us to a line of action which we must follow? Divine persuasion means that God so directs our inward disposition and our external environment that a person freely follows his will. And the Lord often does this.

When we are rebellious against a course of action that God has designed for us, he will begin to bring pressures upon us. He will use all kinds of persuasions for us to change our mind about what we're doing. And the worst thing in the world for a person to do is when you are aware that God is putting some pressures upon you, that God is giving you some good advice, some direction, and you in your independence and freedom to do your own thing ignore the fact that there are pressures being put upon you of various kinds. God is closing doors. God is making things hard. God is giving you good wisdom. He's giving you good counsel from somebody. Whatever it is, you can indeed reject that divine persuasion, but God is going to win out.

You can make your move against wisdom, but the pressure will mount. It will mount. It will mount. That's why it is smart always when you do stuff out of line to say, "Lord, it's not worth it. Forget it!" Stop bucking the tiger, because God is going to win. And why deal yourself that misery? You can be sure that your free agency is going to be affected by God's divine persuasion. Divine persuasion is going to come out. Christians are glad to be saved, but they're not under this sense that they were compelled to it. They wanted to choose it, and the reason for that is because God persuaded them to choose it. Persuasion of God acted on their unsaved, resisting wills and so made them desire to accept the offer.

The way the Bible presents this on one occasion, the Lord Jesus described this persuasion of our free agency by the word "draw." John 6:44 puts it this way. Jesus says, "'No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent Me draw him.'" There you have exactly what Paul said in Romans. "There is none that seeketh after God, no, not one." The Lord Jesus says, "No one can come to Me and accept Me as Savior, nobody can come into the royal family of God through Me unless God the Father draw him." And the word "draw" there in itself would be a very fascinating study. It is a very fascinating word study in the New Testament. But basically, what it means is unless God persuades my will to it so that my free agency is affected by the persuasion of God. And those who then are drawn to Him are going to be raised up at the last day, he says.

In Philippians 2:13, Paul puts the same idea in this way, the divine persuasion of our free agency. Philippians 2:13, "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." See, there is divine persuasion of our free agency. God, thus, and election causes the unbelievers will to go positive to the gospel to receive Jesus Christ as savior. How he does this: we're not told. But to us, it seems we simply decide on our own to do it. The ultimate issue is: what does the Bible teach about all this? Foreordained, divine plan of the cross worked in perfect harmony with the voluntary sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God decided what the Son would do. It was in perfect harmony with the human will of Jesus Christ to perform that.

In Luke 22, this coordination of the divine and the human will, verse 21-22, "'But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table." They're sitting at the Last Supper. Jesus Christ says, "'The man that is going to betray me [referring to Judas Iscariot] is right here on the table eating food with me.'" Verse 22, "'And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined.'" And we already read the other scripture that told us that the death of Christ was predetermined by an act of God's sovereignty. "'And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!'"

Now, there you have an interesting combination. Here you have the clear declaration that it was determined that Jesus Christ would die for the sins of the world. He would die at the hand of treachery of Judas Iscariot, at the hand of betrayal of Judas. Well, was Judas going to be scot-free for that action because it was a divinely-determined decision? No. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "Woe to the poor man who betrays Me to the authorities." 'Cause Judas chose to do the betraying. Human responsibility with divine sovereignty. Jesus Christ acquiescing to it all.

**Paul's Shipwreck**

Another illustration in Acts 27. The apostle Paul is on board ship. He's on the way to Rome for his trial, and a storm comes up. It's a terrible storm. It does not look like they are going to be able to survive. Now, notice here again the relationship we have with the sovereign divine decision of what is going to happen, and yet the human element that has to be involved in coordinating with that decision. Free agency and divine persuasion working together. Acts 27:24, "Saying, 'Fear not, Paul.'" This was the message from God. "'Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.'"

The storm is raging. Everybody is fearful. They don't think they're going to make it. They're expecting to be wrecked, especially as they come close to the shore and they began to come to the reefs. God says to Paul, "Paul, put your mind at ease. This is a terrible storm. You will survive it, and Paul, everybody on board this ship is going to live. Not one sailor is going to drown."

"Wherefore, sirs." Paul is repeating, now, to the sailors what the message was that God gave him. "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." He understood the sovereignty of God, so the matter was settled. "However, we must be cast upon a certain island." Paul says, "We're all going to live. The ship is going to be sunk, but we will end up on an island all alive."

"But when the fourteenth night was come." Now, that means two weeks of this raging storm, seasick, struggling to hang on, struggling to keep the ship turned into the wind so to hopefully keep it from capsizing. "On the fourteenth night were come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the sailors deemed that they drew near to some country. [Finally, they had a landfall.] And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little farther, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms." So, they realized that they indeed were approaching a landmass and the water was rapidly shallowing out.

"Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out the stern, and wished for day." So, they immediately decided to stop their forward progress. The only way they could do that was to throw anchors out the stern of the ship in order to hold the ship against the blowing winds so they could not blow them any closer to the land. And as the sailors were about to flee out of the ship when they had let down the boat into the sea under pretense as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, then, daylight comes.

The sailors among themselves said, "Let's get out of here! Let's drop the small boat, and let's go!" But, apparently the captain believed Paul and gave orders that nobody was to leave, because Paul says you will be saved but you must stay with the ship. So, they were pretending that they were going to go out and put in more anchors at the fore of the ship, at the bow, in order to secure it from pivoting around. But Paul knew what was going on, and he said to the centurion, the military officer, and to the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

Now, here we have a decision to be made. God says, "All of you are going to be saved. We made that decision. We made that back in the eternal life conference of eternity past." Paul says, "If these men leave this ship, they will not make it." And Paul reminds the officer in charge hey of the guard who's taking him to Rome that that's going to happen. They have to stay with the ship, or they will not survive. Then, the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat and let her fall. So, the centurion, being a good officer, knew what to do, how to remove the problem. He gave the order, "Cut the lines." And the lifeboats go into the water, and the wind takes them away. That settles the question as to whether anybody is going to leave. As the rest of the story goes, they survive the storm. They did, indeed, end up on the island as the ship flounders on the reefs, but all got ashore safely.

So, here was again an incident that very clearly demonstrates the relationship between free agency and divine persuasion. The Bible says, then, that our election is foreordained by God's sovereign choice, but at some time, we must freely decide, indeed, to respond in faith due to God's persuasion. The elect will come to heaven just as the sailors eventually came to shore. But, no one shall see heaven who does not believe in Jesus Christ, as the sailors had to believe Paul's message to them.

Free agency and responsibility, along with election, are both true Bible doctrines. It's all in the Word of God. We wish that we had a better understanding of the relationship between the two. But, we know as much as we need to know. We know that we preach to everybody the Gospel, then we see who the elect are as some believe. We see who the non-elect are, as some do not believe, and eventually go to their physical deaths in that condition. Our job is to tell everybody. But having believed it, you cannot, I'm sure, but be humbled and have a deep sense of gratitude to the God who chose you and gave you the capacity to believe.

Why waste your life in all the trivial things that you can waste your life in when the best is to serve such a God, to maximize your position now with Him in eternity, and to maximize your rewards? That's the ultimate joy of having been elected to eternal life. Let us capitalize upon it.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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