***Called, Chosen, and Faithful  
  
RV215-02***

Our subject is "Ecclesiastical Babylon," and this is segment number 15 in Revelation 17:1-18.

**The Two Religions of the World Today**

The angelic warfare which swirls around humanity daily, we have pointed out, is expressed through two religious systems. There are only two religions in the world. All others are segments (or variations) of these two basic religions. First of all, Judeo-Christianity represents theistic creationism, and worships the Living Creator God. The other religious system is summed up in Hinduism, which represents evolutionary humanism, and worshiping Satan through idols which are empowered by demons. Judeo-Christianity is the revelation of spiritual truth from God which is recorded in the inerrant Bible. Hinduism is the creation of Nimrod of ancient Babel, and is a revelation of spiritual lies which are recorded in the sacred books of the world's religions. That's the way the sides line up. That's the way the opponents in the angelic conflict are identified today.

The antichrist in the future tribulation era, we have learned, will be ruling over a confederacy made up of ten nations in Western Europe, and it will be dominated by the religion of Nimrod from Babel, which was the progenitor of modern day Hinduism, which has now evolved into the New Age movement. It's all the same thing. At the heart of it is the concept that man is a potential deity himself.

The antichrist and his ten kings, we read in the book of the Revelation, unbelievably decide near the end of the tribulation to go to war with the Lamb. This is a tender word that the Scripture uses there. The war is against the Lamb of God, of all things, the very person who has already paid for all their sins. The antichrist; the ten kings; and, all those who follow them have no sin problem with God. The death of Christ upon the cross covered, with unlimited atonement, all of their moral evil. Yet, this is the one whom they hate without a cause, and whom they attack.

However, we are told immediately that the Lord Jesus Christ and his biblical Christians are going to be victorious. They are indeed hated by the confederacy, which seeks to destroy God's lamb. The reason these believers are hated is because these believers are condemning what the antichrist and his kings are doing with the Word of God. They are pointing to the principle of the authority of Scripture.

Today, we are having a preview of that. The political attack of the liberals is directed against what? And listen carefully, because you will notice that very often they do not speak about the religious right. They now use the word "Christians." The liberals are recognizing that their opponents are Christians, and they are speaking now against the Christians who are irritating them for the very same reason that these believers will irritate the antichrist in the tribulation. They are quoting the Bible to them. They are pointing to the fact that there's a higher authority over man and his laws: the laws of God. So, the attack is against the Bible; it is against God's word; and, it is against the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord tried to prepare us for this on one occasion when speaking to His disciples in John 15:18-21, when Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. That's very important. We should not fall into the Samuel Syndrome. You remember when Samuel was in such personal distress because Israel foolishly decided that they wanted to have a human king over them like the other people, like the other nations about them. Samuel said, "That's a bad deal. This king will take your young men and kill them in war. You're young women will be taken into his harems. Taxation will be placed upon you by this government for his building projects and his governmental activities. It will be a misery." But they would not listen. Samuel felt personally rejected. He felt personally intimidated by all this because he was the representative of the King of Kings, the Lord God. Samuel was saying to them, "God is our king. We have a theocracy. It is better that God should rule us than a human agent." They would not listen. And Samuel felt that he had failed God.

So, God came to him and said, "Samuel, do not berate yourself. Don't feel bad about this. They have not rejected you. You have been My man of integrity. You have sounded forth the truth to them. Who they have rejected is Me. You have informed them. They are not ignorant of what they are doing."

So, "If the world hates you," Jesus said, "you know that it hated Me before it hated you. He is the one that the liberals are attacking when they say, "You Christians." What they're saying is, "You, Jesus Christ." Jesus said, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore, the world hates you. Remember the Word that I said to you: A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My Word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name sake, because they do not know the one who sent Me."

It is entirely possible for a person to be a born-again believer, and be out of the inner circle of temporal fellowship, because of resistance to the will of God at some point and resistance to the confession of sins, so that he has lost his way, and he too is opposing Jesus Christ. Suddenly, he finds himself in company with the aliens of the world who are in opposition to the Lord.

Notice the sobering verse of John 15:22: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sinned. But now they have no excuse for their sin." When I speak to a liberal on some biblical subject, and inform him of what the Bible says, I then finish and say, "I have now done you an enormous disservice if you do not change your mind, because I have informed you what God thinks on this subject." The Bible says that, having been informed of what God thinks, then if you pursue in your ways, violating the Word of God and the mind of God, the punishment that will come to you will be compounded many times.

That is true of us as Christians as well. Some people have caught on to that, and they have evaporated from the Berean congregation, because they have a problem with God that they don't want to resolve. They know that if they keep hearing the truth, I just may be right about this, because I'm quoting the Scripture; and, the Bible just may be right that the knowledge of error now brings upon them the greater responsibility which will bring greater punishment.

It is serious business to sit in a congregation like this where you cannot help but grow in the knowledge of the Word of God. You walk out of this room after every service, and your knowledge of God has been expanded, even if half of your brain is tied behind your back. You're going to come into a lot of knowledge of the Word of God. So, I want you not to be intimidated when people say, "You Christians," and then the liberal speaks his nonsense and his anti-God thinking.

This is what's going to happen in the tribulation era. But evil has in it the seeds of its own defeat. Jesus Christ will totally defeat this Western Confederacy in the war that they wage against Him. The basis of Christ's victory will be the fact, we're told, that He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings. We have pointed out to you that He is superior to all created beings as Lord, which means He is deity, because He is the God-man. And He is superior to all kings because he is the sovereign of all the universe. That's the significance of that title. We showed you how many times in the Old Testament we saw God referred to as Lord, because He is deity. He's referred to as King because he is the total sovereign of the universe. This is now applied to the God-man, Jesus Christ, which makes the antichrist and his forces a pushover for Him on the field of battle. The antichrist, who claims therefore to be God, the Great I Am, will be will be conquered by Jesus Christ, and become the great "I ain't." He will go down in total humiliation.

We're also told that Jesus is accompanied on this occasion of this battle by His saints. He is accompanied, in conquest of the antichrist and the confederacy at the end of the tribulation, by His saints. In Revelation 17:14, these will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them because He is Lord of Lords and King of kings. And He proceeds to identify those who are with Him – these who accompany Jesus Christ from heaven in the Armageddon battle. They join Christ in the final tribulation battle of the angelic conflict.

**The Armies of Heaven**

This refers to those described in Revelation 19:14, which says, "And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses." That's the connection. He is coming with His army of believers. This army is now identified.

**Called**

It is, first of all, identified as those who are the "called." The Greek word looks like this: "kletos." "Kletos" is a word connoting an invitation. It is an invitation here to be saved. When God invites you to be saved under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, it is an efficacious invitation. You can't resist it. You will say, "Yes." So, God calls (invites), with an efficacious invitation, sinners to salvation on the basis of His sovereign purpose. This is one of the good things referred to in Romans 8:28. They are the called ones.

**Chosen**

The second thing to identify these in the Army of God is that they are the "chosen" ones. The Greek word looks like this: "eklektos." So that you'll know that I'm not making up this word, this is the other main word (with "kletos"). These are the two main words for the fact that God selects those who are going to be saved. The word here means "chosen." It means the act of God looking down on the mass of lost humanity, all of whom have nothing that they deserve but a destiny in hell. He picks some out of that, and He doesn't let them go into the lake of fire. It is a divine selection which was made in eternity past at a conference of the Godhead when some lost sinners were selected for salvation, and placed in the divine decree.

**Faithful**

The third factor characterizing this Army is that they are the "pistos." They are the "faithful" ones. Believers in God's heavenly army demonstrate personal consistency in Bible doctrine truth and in their service to God. That is not an easy thing to do. It is hard for many Christians to be consistent as believers with the principles of the Word of God. It is hard for Christians, as well as anybody else, to be consistent with the moral standards of the Word of God, and to be faithful and trustworthy in terms of their relationships to people and in their service to God. These are the people who are consistent in serving God with divine good works, for which there will be a reward for them at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**Rewards**

This principle of rewards and Scripture is not dealing with salvation because this is something you earn. You don't earn salvation. This is referred to in 1 Corinthians 3:14, for example: "If any man's work (that is, his life that he lived) which he has built upon it" (that is, built upon his salvation – the foundation referred to in verse 11): "If any man's work which he has built upon the foundation of his salvation remains, he shall receive a reward." Verse 15 says, "If any man's work is burned by the evaluating judgment of God at the Judgment Seat of Christ, he shall suffer loss. But he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire," through the fire of divine judgment. Yes, he'll go to heaven, but you're not going to be as rich in heaven as you could have been, had you not wasted your life in not fulfilling your particular mission for God. The first step in fulfilling your mission for God is to be in church services where you can be taught the Word of God. That's what the whole system is all about.

It is interesting when we come down to the very end of the Bible. I point this out to you because I take flak sometimes from Christian sources who don't like to hear about the fact that not everybody is going to be equal in heaven. One man who has good reason to be worried about that (because I know him so well) said, "I thought everybody in heaven was going to be equal." Well, they are as far as salvation, but they're not as far as their capacity to enjoy their eternity and the rewards (whatever they are) that will accompany that life in heaven.

We come to the very end of the Bible, and God thinks it's important enough to remind us once more that what your life is all about is earning rewards. That's it. From the moment you wake up in the morning until the time to go to sleep, the focus of our lives is to earn rewards by our divine good Holy Spirit-directed Christian service, which includes your livelihood; your social life; your Christian ministries; and, everything that you are. "What shall it profit a man," the Bible says, "if he gains the whole world, and loses his life" (wastes his life because he has not fulfilled his calling before God). If you are not earning rewards, that means that God's work is not being done on this earth. When you are serving God, His work is being done, and you are rewarded. That's the connection.

So, we come to Revelation 22:12, and of all things, what does He say just before he shuts down the whole Bible? "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done." The Greek word for "man" there is "anthropos," which means humanity, so the women are included – to every human being. Got it? Jesus says, "I'm coming very quickly. I'm bringing rewards with Me, and I'm going to give to every one of you (My believers in the body of Christ) a reward on the basis of the way you have lived your life, and how you have served Me. Lived your life how? Yow you lived your life as the called, the chosen, and the faithful. There is a consistency here.

**The Church**

It is interesting that the same three words which are used to describe the heavenly army (of which we are a part), are also use of the church, very specifically, as the bride of Christ.

**Called**

Please notice in Romans 1:6-7: "Among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ, to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Christians are those who have been called by God into their position of salvation in the family of God. This word "called" is applied in 1 Corinthians 1:2 as well. I remind you that this was a very carnal church. A lot of these Christians were not very nice people here in Corinth, and yet Paul says, "To the church of God which is in the city of Corinth, to those who have been sanctified (set apart) in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all, who in every place, call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours." So, what is used to identify this military force as called ones is also true, very specifically, of those of us who are Christians, which means that we're part of that army.

**Chosen**

Ephesians 1:4 now moves to the word "chosen." The word "chosen" is also applied to the church as the body of Christ: "Just as He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him."

Then 1 Peter 2:9 also add to this concept of being chosen: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation," and so on. You are a chosen race.

So, Christians are referred to as those in the body of Christ who are called, and they are chosen.

**Faithful**

Then they are also described as those who are the faithful ones. Ephesians 1:1 says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, who are faithful in Christ Jesus."

Colossians 1:2 does the same thing Colossians: "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae, grace to you and peace from God." These are the saints and the faithful ones.

So, the Christian believers are part of this army which comes from God, and they share the same titles: the called; the chosen; and, the faithful. They who have been in the world, standing true for Jesus Christ, are now going to be with Him in the hour of His final triumph.

Revelation 19:14 refers to fine linen, white and clean. This is also used to describe the church as the bride of Christ in Revelation 19:7-8.

This strikes me as being a terrific recruiting slogan. How about this? "God is looking for a few good people: the called; the chosen; and, the faithful." Doesn't that strike your heart? Wouldn't you want to join up? Some military force ought to take that and make a variation on that. They would find it extremely profitable. People would rush. God is looking for a few good people: the called; the chosen; and, the faithful. That's the kind of an army that returns with Him. What a recruiting slogan!

There are going to be other bodies of believers, of course, in that army coming from heaven, besides the church. We have that described for us in Hebrews 12:23-24. We church-age believers are part of that called and chosen and faithful group, but there are others from the Old Testament era: "To the general assembly and the church of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood which speaks better than the blood of Abel." So there, in verse 23 are described, in various ways, those who are part of the church; those who are saints from the Old Testament era; and, those who are saints who have been martyred during the tribulation. They're all included.

So, isn't that amazing? Here we come, once more, to a high point in the work of God – a climactic point here in the tribulation era. And what should we come across again is the doctrine of election, which is so hated and so despised in certain Christian circles, and considered so unfair and so improper of God to act upon.

So, in view of this emphasis, once more, God calls to our attention: who are we as believers? We are people that he selected out of the mass of doomed humanity. Once you get hold of that, you will change your perspective on who you are, and what you should be doing with your life so that you do not trivialize yourself, and fail to execute your mission, and thereby to carry your cross.

The primary illustration (example) that God gives in the Bible for this whole concept of election is to be found in Romans 9. Please turn to it. This is the greatest extended treatment in the Bible of the doctrine of election, and I'd like to read it with you, so that you have a feel and an understanding for the importance of what God has done to enable you to escape the lake of fire, and enjoy the eternity in heaven. What this does is emphasize the election of Israel as a nation which has been given special promises from the Abrahamic covenant, which was directed to the Jewish people. This is the election on the basis of a nation, but the same principle applies to individuals. One person being chosen from among many is the same as one nation chosen to be God's client nation from among many. The election of one nation, of course, is, in effect, the election of the individuals who compose that nation.

Romans 9:10-13, we will see in a minute, indeed does refer to election in terms of individuals in the case of Jacob and Esau. So, in verses 1 through 5, Paul says, "I am telling the truth in Christ, and I'm not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brother and my kinsmen according to the flesh." The apostle Paul is in deep sorrow here because the Jewish people, who were once under great blessing of God, are now in apostasy because their rulers have rejected and crucified the Messiah King Jesus Christ. The people have follow their rulers in this blindness, so that none of them are going to heaven.

The apostle Paul says, "Here I am, a Jew. I'm going to heaven. The vast number of Jews are not going to heaven, for the simple fact that anybody who refuses to accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior goes into the lake of fire. That is why Jews are not going to happen today. Anybody else who reject Jesus Christ as personal Savior goes into the lake of fire. And anybody who accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, and adds a work, Romans 11:6 says that you have contaminated your faith by adding water baptism; the Lord's Supper; circumcision; or, some human act of religious ritual, goes into the lake of fire. You can say, "I believe in Christ as Savior, and I'm providing you with this water baptism to regenerate me." Or you can say, "I'm taking the Lord's Supper (like the Catholics do in the Mass) to have my sins forgiven." You have denied God the ground upon which He will save you, which is grace, and grace alone.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says that He saves you by grace. If you take away the grace basis by adding your human works in any smidgen, then God says, “You've tied My hands. I can only give you salvation as a gift.” If you contaminate it by something you have done, then you do not go to heaven. You may consider Christ Savior, and believe all that, but you have not trusted Him. You have trusted in your works. If you are that kind of a person, we may ask you, "Are you going to heaven?" You may say to us, "I hope so." That signals to us that you're not sure you have behaved yourself enough. You are not sure that you have kept yourself neatly clean from evil sufficiently to be accepted by God. You do not understand that it's not how good you are, but it's only how good Jesus Christ is. That's all that counts with God.

So, here Paul said, "The Jews don't understand that they're keeping of the 613 rules of the Mosaic Law is not taking them to heaven. It is keeping them out of heaven because they have refused to trust in Christ alone for salvation.

So, he goes on in verse 4. Who are these people who are losing their salvation in this way? These are people who have seven things going for them. He says, "They are Israelites (Jewish people), to whom belongs the adoption as sons (special adoption into God's family); the glory (the glory of God upon them – the "Shekinah"); the covenants (the Abrahamic covenant and subsequent covenants reinforcing that in the Palestinian Covenant; the Davidic Covenant; and, the New Covenant); the giving of the Law (the possessing of the moral code, and all that accompanies it; and, number five:) the temple service; (number six is) the promises" (from God to the Jewish people that accompany that ritual which portrayed Christ in His work). Number seven: "Whose are the fathers, and from whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." Here are seven things going for the Jews. And in spite of all that, they have rejected Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Their negative volition toward Him is horrendous in view of the privileges to have known better.

In verses 6 through 13, He proceeds to give a biblical history which gives a clue to the Jews of what is going to happen to them in the future. Verse 6 says, "But it is not as though the Word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." Paul says, "It isn't that the promises of God are not going to be kept to this nation." Israel's current loss of national blessing doesn't mean that God is unfaithful to His promises to them. Paul is talking here about two kinds of Jews. Not all Jews are Jews. He is talking about believers and unbelievers. The only true Israelite is the one who believes in Jesus. Some people believe that Israel became the church. That's the fallacy of amillennialism and of post-millennialism, and it has devastated all meaning of Scripture, and especially the prophetic Scripture. A gentile never becomes a Jew. He may act like one, but he never becomes one.

In Verse 7, only Jews born in the line of Isaac are under the national blessing, because: "Neither are they all children, because they are Abraham's descendants, but through Isaac your descendants shall be named. The line of Ishmael, from whom the Arab world is partly descended, did not come under God's national promise of blessing as God's chosen people.

Islam lies about this. Islam says that the promise to Abraham of great national blessing came through Ishmael, the oldest son. But the Bible is very clear that that is not the case. It is through Isaac, and the Old Testament is clear about that too.

So, not all Jews born through Sarah's line of Isaac are going to be enjoying national blessing. So, now you're beginning to see that here's a selectivity coming into the picture on the part of God.

Verse 8 says, "That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise who are regarded as descendants." Just because you are a Christian parent, the children born to you do not automatically become Christians who enjoy the blessing of salvation. Only those of the promise are counted as Jewish seed, who come through Isaac – not those who come through Ishmael, nor any of those who come through the seven sons that Abraham had born to him through his other wife, Keturah, who also produced part of the Arab world.

So, God is very clearly involved in choosing some from among all the descendants of Abraham. They're not all going to enjoy the national prominence in the Millennial Kingdom that the Jews will enjoy.

Verse 9: "For this is the word of promise. At this time, I will come, and Sarah shall have a son." Sarah was promised a son. This son was to be the line through which the children of Abraham's seed, which were destined for blessing nationally, would come. A true Jew must be born from the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Arab world is completely denied that that line of descent, though they are indeed descended from Abraham. So, they do not have national blessing.

Verse 10 says, "And not only this, but there was Rebekah (Isaac's wife), also when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac." One emphasizes Isaac as the father of two sons. There was one source, and two sons. Notice again, in comes the selectivity of election.

Verse 11 says, "For though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose, according to His choice, might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls." Here you have a clear statement of the doctrine of selectivity, the doctrine of election. These twin boys in the womb were not guilty of any sin, nor were they responsible for doing anything good. And yet unborn, their destinies were decided by God, and the decision was made on the basis of God's sovereign purpose. That's all. Neither one of these boys was going to heaven. They both had upon them the condemnation of Adam's moral guilt. The moment they were born, they were now scheduled for the lake of fire, protected only until the age of accountability, when they could make a rational choice for or against Christ as Savior. But once they reached that point, the seeds of death were already in them. Once they reached that point of accountability, then their lot was cast.

However, the selection of one against the other was not based on anything that was in them. It was based upon God's purpose, and it was according to God's choice. God's plan, and not man's works, is the basis of divine election: "Because of Him who calls." That's the only reason you and I are going to heaven – because of God who calls. That's why God is so proud. When he's coming back from heaven, He's got this mighty army. He's going to whip the tar out of the antichrist and his associates. And the Lord Jesus Christ looks back, and He is so proud that that army made up of the ones that He has called. He has chosen them, and they are, therefore, His great faithful ones.

You have no idea how proud God is of each of you in your worst moment, simply because He chose you. He elected you. The next time your husband or your wife is particularly irritating to you, and upsetting to you, just remember how proud God is of him or her. It will help mitigate your indignation.

So, in verse 12, the divine choice comes into action: "It was said to her, 'The older will serve the younger.'" The older was Esau, and the younger was Jacob.

Verse 13 says, "Just as it is written (quoting Old Testament Scripture), 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." On the divine side, there is God's election. But indeed on the human side, there is Jacob, who was a believer in the coming Messiah Savior; and, Esau, who was not a believer in the coming Messiah Savior. Why? Because God said, "Jacob, I'm going to select you for heaven. You're going to trust in the Messiah. Esau, I'm going to pass you by. I'm going to bless you because you're Abraham's descendant, but I'm going to pass you over, and I'm not going to select you to be in the line of promise."

When it says that God hated Esau, this does not connote in Scripture a personal animosity. The word "hate" is used in the Bible with the concept of prefer. In Luke 14:26, this same word is used. The true followers of Jesus Christ are told that they must hate their families. This means that they must prefer Christ to their families, and place His interests above theirs. This does not mean that you have an animosity toward your family.

Matthew 10:37 is the parallel passage to Luke 14:26. It uses the words, "Love more than Me." So, "to hate" in Luke 14 means to love more: "Love more than Me." When He says, "I hate Esau," it means, "I don't love him as much as I love Jacob."

So, God preferred Jacob to Esau by His sovereign choice, not according to what each had done, because actually He did bless Esau as well.

The point of this is that God's dealing with Jacob and Esau did not depend upon what either one of them had done, or what they would do. They were selected for their role in history apart from any of that. Any question now about the fairness of God at this point only comes from your sin nature, and it causes us to go negative to the doctrine of the essence of God, because God is just. He will never be unfair. But it does take spiritual maturity to understand the doctrine of election, and to be able to comprehend it such that you can believe it and not impugn the character of God.

So, Paul, knowing that people are going to impugn the character of God, takes up the attack in verses 14-29: "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be." Here's that beautiful phrase that Paul loves to use so often. We have come to it before. It looks like this in the Greek Bible: "megenoito." "Megenoito" is an idiom. It means "may it not come to be." We sometimes translated as "God forbid." It really means "not at all." It is a strong expression. If you want to impress your Christian friends of how much you know about the Bible, ask them about Paul's great, powerful negative that he uses repeatedly in his writings: "megenoito." When Paul says this, you know that he really means absolutely "no." God forbid. Forbid it. Forbid the thought that God should, in any way, be unjust." That would violate His essence in the doctrine of election.

Verse 15 says, "For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I'll have compassion on whom I will have compassion." God has the sovereign right, as God, to decide where He will direct His mercy, and where He will direct His compassion. He's not obligated to do so.

Verse 16 says, "So then, it does not depend on the man who wills, or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. God's expression of blessing of eternal life is not governed by human will or by merit because of somebody's effort. Positive volition in salvation is a result of the fact that God has already moved your human will to believe. It is not governed by the one who tries harder ("by the one who runs"). At the very beginning of the gospel of John, this concept of salvation as an act of God is summed up in John 1:12-13: "But as many as received Him (Christ), to them, He gave the right (or the authority) to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name," which is how you receive Christ. You believe the gospel, and you trust Him to take you to heaven, and you don't add anything to it: "Who are born not of blood (not because your parents are Christians), not of the will of flesh (because you're going to behave yourself, and promise to do good, and obey all the moral laws), nor of the will of man (because you decided to be saved), but of God." The whole system of salvation is of God. He put it together. He keeps human hands out of it. He does not allow you to perform any human ritual, because you will contaminate the process. It's a grace operation from start to finish.

So, men are not born-again by exercising some decision of their human will. Man exercises His positive volition because God moves him and initiates the idea in him to begin with.

Philippians 2:12-13 tells us to work out our salvation with great concern and with great diligence. He's not talking about keeping our salvation. It says, "He wants us to do God's good pleasure." God has moved us to salvation, and He moves us to what we are doing. Philippians 2:12-13: "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who is at work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. The Christian is not working to get saved, but once you are saved, you are obliged to use your life to fulfill your mission. Don't waste your life. If you do, you'll be one of those who stands before the Judgment Seat of Christ with those tears running down your face, that Revelation tells us God will be wiping away.

If it were mere human will that moves us to salvation, then the one who goes positive has something that the one who goes negative does not have. But the Bible gives us a sobering statement as to what exactly we have in our attitude toward God. If I have the capacity to decide that I'm going to be saved, and this fellow says, "No, I'm not," then that means that I have something more than he has. I have a capacity that he doesn't have that enables me to do that. But God says, "No, all of you are totally spiritually bankrupt."

Romans 3:10-11: "As it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become useless. There is none who does good. There is not even one.'" That's very amazing. There's none who seeks after God. There is none who is useful. There is none one who does any good. Oh, you thought you were doing good. You thought you were behaving yourself, and that that counted. God says that everything that you do that's good comes out of your sin nature. The only good is what God the Holy Spirit produces in you, because you're a born-again believer. And you're a born again believer because you didn't try to do any good through your sin nature for the process. So, all actions of our will are the expressions of what we already are. So, we who believe are those who, by God's grace, have been predisposed to do so.

Romans 9:17-18: "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose, I raised you up to demonstrate My power in you that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.'" Pharaoh was an example of God using election to demonstrate His glory and His power. Pharaoh's heart was actually hardened by God because God didn't move his heart to believe: "So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires." He hardens by just leaving you the way you are.

Please notice something in verse 17: "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh," and then God starts speaking. Are you telling me that the Scriptures are the Word of God? "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh." Then God says, "For this very purpose I raised you." Scripture (the Bible) is the Word of God. So, when you give us that snide remark about the Bible not teaching something and not standing with it, you better remember that you're talking about the Word of God. That's why you don't want to say, "I believe; my church believes; or, I have been taught." That's nothing. Always say, "This is what the Bible says," so that people are pushed to the mind of God. I give you Greek words here so that you are pushed to what's in the Greek text, so that you can't pretend you're arguing with me. You have to argue with God if you don't like what those words say.

That was the Godward aspect. Now, in verses 19-29, here's the manward aspect in election: "You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault, for who resists His will?" There we have objector. He says, "That's not fair for You to pick some, and pass others by:" "Who can be said to have resisted the will of God." The person who has resisted the will of God is the one who has been left in his sinful condition, and this is a condition from the past. Paul doesn't answer the question, "Why does he find fault, for who resists His will? How can anybody say "No" to him? Paul doesn't answer the question.

Instead, he goes on in verse 20 and says, "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" You lost helpless, hopeless, hell-deserving sinner. Just who are you to be criticizing the essence and character of God? "The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?"

The picture here of the analogy of the potter and the clay stresses the effrontery of challenging God in selecting some for salvation. God is the potter, and He can make out of that same lump of clay, a dainty and exquisite vase, or he can make a cooking pot. He can do it either way. If he doesn't like what he sees, he can smash it down and make it over again. God has the authority that a potter has over a piece of clay. And God exercises patience toward those who merit His destruction, but He reveals to them His great mercy.

Remember that God does not have to save anybody. Everybody, under his own right, is under divine condemnation. So, God would still be fair if He didn't save anybody. If His grace didn't take a single person to heaven, God would still be fair, because that is leading people to what is their just desserts. God is not obliged to transform any of us who are ripe for receiving His wrath in hell.

Verse 22 says, "What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much patience, vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?" This is done so by the individual's own negative volition to the gospel.

Verse 23: "He did so (tolerating these vessels of destruction – some of them) in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy which He prepared beforehand for glory." The vessels which He prepared beforehand for glory are God's sovereign election to lead some to positive volition to the gospel. So, Paul is saying that God, by picking some for salvation, and leaving some in the horrible contrast of their lost condition, shows the glory of God, and demonstrates the power as well as the mercy and the love of God.

Verse 24 says, "Even us, whom He also called, not from Jews only, but also from gentiles." From Jew and gentile, God has brought us together by His choice into eternal life. We don't deserve it. We don't have it coming. It is His sovereign choice. If He has chosen you, and you have demonstrated that by trusting in Christ as Savior (and that's how you demonstrate your election), then thank God that He put His finger on you, and pulled you out from that sphere.

We close with a beautiful summary of all this – this army which has been chosen; which has been elected; and, which has become faithful to its commander-in-chief, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is beautifully summed up for us in Ephesians 1, where the apostle Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." What a great future in that heavenly place – a future enhanced by your rewards because you have stored your treasures up there through your service: "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestinated us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the beloved."

Many years ago, we used to have a delightful choir number that we used to sing. The title of it was In the Beloved. It had one of those haunting melodies and powerful words. To be in the beloved means to be in Jesus Christ. You who are in the beloved are there because He has selected you to be so. He has selected you to be there. And He has selected you to be in that position of a great honor in order that you might become the servant of the Most High God. That is your mission, and that is what you are to prepare to fulfill for the days of your life. We keep doing it with crises; with hindrances; with roadblocks; and, with whatever the devil may be permitted to throw in our way. But in the finest tradition of American military men, we do not give in, for greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world. For that reason, the Scripture says, "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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