

The Importance of Scriptural Baptism

By Elder Herb Hatfield

Baptism is a very important Bible subject. The word “baptize” occurs nine times in the New Testament and “baptism” twenty times. Jesus Christ demonstrated the importance of a proper baptism by traveling (probably walked) sixty miles from Galilee to the Jordan River to be immersed by John the Baptist, the only man on earth at that time with authority from God to baptize. He further showed the importance of baptism by making it part of His earthly ministry. After His baptism by John, Jesus Christ went forth, preaching and baptizing. The fact that Jesus’ disciples made and baptized more disciples than John the Baptist was an issue that the Pharisees tried to use to provoke jealousy in John the Baptist. (John 4:1)

The importance of baptism is seen in the ministry of the apostles in the Book of Acts. They baptized about three thousand on the Day of Pentecost (Acts.2:41). Its importance can be seen in the ministry of Philip, the evangelist. The importance of baptism can also be seen in the conversion of Cornelius and his baptism by the Apostle Peter. Paul baptized Lydia and her household and the Philippian jailor and his household immediately after their conversion. If water baptism was so important to Jesus Christ, to the apostles and to those first century Christians, then it should be important to every Christian who has a God-given desire in their heart to follow Jesus Christ today.

I. WHAT IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO HAVE SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM?

Baptism must be administered according to the teachings of the Bible if it is to be scriptural baptism. Anything less than this is not true baptism, even though many might call it baptism. Four conditions must be met if we are to have Scriptural baptism.

A. SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM MUST HAVE A SCRIPTURAL SUBJECT – A Regenerated Child of God! Only those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and have made a confession of faith in Christ as their only hope of salvation are scriptural subjects for baptism. Jesus was never lost; therefore He did not need to be saved. He was already the Only Begotten Son of God. The Holy Spirit must regenerate all others before they can be scripturally baptized.

Scriptural baptism is believer’s baptism. According to the instructions of Jesus Christ in Matt.28:19, we are to evangelize by preaching the Gospel and then

baptizing those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, making disciples of them. In Acts 2:41 we read, “then they that gladly received his word were baptized”. In Acts 8:12, 36 & 37, they believed and then they were baptized. In Acts 10:43-44, & 47, they believed, received the Holy Ghost, and then they were baptized. (Unregenerate people do not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit). In Acts 16:30-34 the Philippian jailer asked, “What must I do to be saved?” They said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...” Paul did not tell him to be baptized to be saved! His baptism came after his believing! A person is regenerated by the Holy Spirit and converted when they are brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ through the Gospel. Only then is anyone qualified to receive scriptural baptism.

B. A SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM MUST HAVE A SCRIPTURAL METHOD – Immersion in water. Pouring and sprinkling cannot be scriptural methods because neither one can be found in the Bible. Immersion in water is the only scriptural method of baptism. Jesus was immersed in water; see Mark 1:9-10 and Matthew 3:13-16. John the Baptist needed “much water” for baptism (John 3:23). Sprinkling requires little water. In Acts 8:26-39, in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian, we are taught that baptism is by immersion. Baptism pictures a burial, (Rom. 6:4, Col. 2:12) which sprinkling can not do. All Greek scholars admit that “baptism” or “baptizo”, as it is in the Greek, the language of the New Testament, means to immerse, plunge, or dip. The Greek word for sprinkling is entirely different and is never used in connection with baptism in the New Testament.

C. A SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM MUST HAVE A SCRIPTURAL PURPOSE – Symbolic, it is a picture of certain Bible truths. Baptism does not regenerate or wash away any sins, as many try to teach. Any form of doctrine that makes baptism necessary for eternal life is unscriptural and destroys its scriptural purpose. I will explain more fully the purpose of scriptural baptism later.

D. A SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM MUST HAVE A SCRIPTURAL ADMINISTRATOR – By the authority of a New Testament Baptist Church. Not just anyone can print legal money, nor can just anyone practice medicine as a doctor, neither can just anyone be a lawyer. The laws of man regulate all these activities. Baptism is regulated by the laws of God. If any one of the above conditions is not met, then the baptism is not scriptural, and therefore, is invalid. Without scriptural authority, there is no scriptural baptism. It may be that both the administrator and the candidate for baptism are very sincere and devout, but neither sincerity or devoutness is a substitute for authority from God. Much dispute has centered on the subject of “Who has authority to administer scriptural baptism?” This is unfortunate and is the Devil’s work to discredit the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. A brief study of the New Testament, with an open mind, will clear up the confusion. John the Baptist was the first baptizer, and he got his authority from God (John 1:6). Jesus and all twelve apostles were baptized by

John (Acts 1:21-22). Jesus gave the apostles, who made up the first church (I Cor. 12:28), the authority to baptize. He commissioned that same church to send out authorized ministers to preach the Gospel and baptize converts (Matt. 28:19).

On the day of Pentecost 3,000 people who received the Word were baptized and added to the church (Acts 2:41). It makes sense that the same church to which those new converts were added was the church that had the authority to baptize them. Philip, an ordained minister authorized by the church at Jerusalem, preached in Samaria and baptized the converts. He got his authority from the Jerusalem church. Peter preached in the house of Cornelius and the whole household believed and received the Holy Ghost. He then baptized them in water by the authority of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 10: 47 and Acts 11:12). Paul baptized his converts during his preaching trips because the Holy Ghost, through the church at Antioch, had called and sent him to the work of evangelism. (Acts 13: 1-4).

When Paul found those disciples at Ephesus whose baptism was unscriptural, he did not hesitate to instruct them correctly and then give them proper baptism. Today, any child of God who may discover that for any reason their baptism is unscriptural should immediately seek to be scripturally baptized.

II. SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM PLEASES GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT AND GOD THE SON

When John baptized Jesus, God the Holy Spirit showed His approval by coming in the form of a dove and lighting upon Christ. God the Father spoke from heaven only twice during the ministry of Jesus Christ, once on the mountain of transfiguration and then at His baptism by John, when there came a voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt.3:13, 16, and 17). When we follow the example of Jesus, we most certainly please the Father and the Holy Spirit. Scriptural baptism is obedience to the scriptures, and obedience is better than burnt offerings and sacrifice (I Sam. 15:22; Acts. 5:29). “Then they that gladly received the Word were baptized.” Acts 2:41.

A. Scriptural baptism is the first act of obedience for the new convert Paul baptized the Philippian jailer the very night he believed. While immediate baptism is not necessary, baptism should not be delayed. Baptism was instituted by God as a means of publicly confessing faith in Christ as Saviour and as a means of identifying with Him before the world. It is the first act of obedience for the new convert. A believer is living in disobedience to God until they are scripturally baptized.

B. Scriptural baptism gives the new believer in Christ a scriptural home. “And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls...” (Acts 2:41).

Regeneration and scriptural baptism qualifies the new convert for membership in a New Testament church where they can be spiritually nurtured. Our Lord said we are to baptize the new converts and then teach them. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20)

C. Scriptural baptism pleases the Lord because it recognizes His authority. Baptism can only be administered on the authority given by Christ Jesus to His churches. The word for "power" in Matt. 28:18 means "authority". When Christ gave the Great Commission, He gave it to His "ecclesia"-called out assembly- His assembly and her ministers, not to any individual alone. Scriptural baptism at the hands of a scriptural administrator places a new convert in a scriptural home where they can grow and serve the Lord in obedience to Him.

III. SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM PROCLAIMS THE GOSPEL

The purpose of baptism is not for the forgiveness of sins, as some teach. Indeed, you cannot have scriptural baptism until the person to be baptized has been regenerated and professes faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Redeemer from sin. If the candidate for baptism has not been regenerated when they enter the baptismal waters, they go into the water a dry sinner, and come out of the water a wet sinner. In such a case, scriptural baptism has not taken place and the person is left deceived and confused by false teachers.

Baptism is a picture, type, figure, and symbol of our salvation. A picture or figure is not the same as the real thing. A man does not marry the picture of his bride, but he marries the bride. The picture of the bride is fine, but what man would settle for the picture only. You do not eat the picture of a loaf of bread, but you eat the bread. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." I Peter 3:21

The above scripture plainly tells us that baptism does not put away the filth of the flesh. It is only a figure, picture, or symbol of that salvation. To contend that the figure or picture is the same as the real thing is foolish indeed. "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, WHO is the FIGURE of HIM that was to come." (Romans 5:14) This scripture tells us that Adam was a figure of Christ. No one would argue that Adam was Christ. No, he was only a figure, or picture of Christ. Water baptism is the outward testimony of the believer's inward faith. If water baptism cleanses us from sin, then from what does the blood of Christ cleanse us? See I John 1:7 and Hebrews 9:11, 12, 22, 25 & 26. If the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, how can water baptism do any better? See Heb. 10:4.

A. Scriptural baptism PICTURES and PROCLAIMS the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. “Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.” (Col. 2:12) Water baptism is a visible, public and outward testimony of faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ as the sole means of salvation. I would hasten to add that, if God-given faith does not exist, then a scriptural baptism can not be administered; an unregenerate person cannot receive scriptural baptism.

B. Scriptural baptism PICTURES and PROCLAIMS the death of our old life to sin; the burial therein; and the resurrection to walk in newness of life. “Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:4)

C. Scriptural baptism PICTURES and PROCLAIMS our faith in the Triune God. “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Matt. 28:19) Where there is not a faith in the Holy Trinity, scriptural baptism cannot be administered.

D. Scriptural baptism PICTURES and PROCLAIMS our putting on of Christ. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal. 3:26-27) Christ Jesus indwells us by the Holy Spirit from the time of regeneration. In baptism, we personally and publicly put on Jesus Christ.

IV. SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM PROTECTS THE LORD’S TRUE CHURCHES

In many ways, scriptural baptism is a shield of protection to the Lord’s true churches.

A. Scriptural Baptism Protects the Lord’s Churches from Doctrinal Errors

1. Scriptural baptism protects the churches from the false doctrine of “baptismal regeneration.” In the 2ND century, some of the churches began to teach that baptism was necessary for salvation. In the 1st century, Paul had dealt with those who taught that you had to be circumcised and keep the law in order to be saved. He repudiated that doctrine. Even so, those preachers and churches who were sound in the faith during the 2nd century repudiated baptismal regeneration. However, large numbers continued baptizing for the wrong purpose. This eventually led to the formation of the Roman Catholic Church.

2. Scriptural baptism protects the churches from the false doctrine of “infant baptism.” Those who were teaching baptismal regeneration (salvation by baptism)

decided that, if baptism were so important, then the sooner it could be performed, the better. This led to infant baptism. At first, the infants were immersed because at that time, immersion was the only mode of baptism used in all the early churches.

3. Scriptural baptism protects the churches from the false method of “sprinkling” for baptism. The churches which believed in “baptismal regeneration and infant baptism” changed the method of baptism from immersion to pouring, and then later to sprinkling. By the 4th century, Constantine had formed the Roman Catholic Church, and in 416 A. D., infant baptism was established by law. The Protestants who teach baptismal regeneration, infant baptism, and sprinkling are merely following the example of the Roman Catholic Church.

The three doctrinal errors mentioned above violate the first three requirements for scriptural baptism. (1) Baptismal regeneration requires sinners to be baptized, while scriptural baptism requires the regenerated to be baptized. (2) Sprinkling requires little water, while scriptural baptism requires “much water.” (John 3:23) (3) Infant baptism requires little infants who are unable to hear and believe to be baptized, but scriptural baptism requires that believers only be baptized.

4. Scriptural baptism protects the churches from the evil of Open Communion

Scriptural baptism is a prerequisite for the scriptural observance of the Lord’s Supper. All who observed the Lord’s Supper in the New Testament had been scripturally baptized and were members of the same church with whom they were observing the Lord’s Supper. Open communion is the next step after we remove the bar of scriptural baptism.

5. Scriptural baptism protects the Lord’s churches from Protestant Denominationalism

Since all Protestant denominations came out of the Roman Catholic Church, it is not surprising that all of them contend for one or more of the above doctrinal errors. The Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Methodists all sprinkle infants, and all believe in some form of baptismal regeneration. All other Protestant denominations are branches either of the Roman Catholic Church, or one of the above Protestant denominations, and/or accept the baptisms of them. Church history will show that Baptists are not Protestants, but have existed separate in every century since the first century. They have existed under different names, such as Christians, Montanists, Donatists, Paulicians, Waldenses, Anabaptists, and Baptists. (A rose by any other name smells the same.) Baptists cannot accept the baptism of religious orders that are wrong on the doctrine of salvation. This is a doctrine that is vital to the Christian faith. Although it is not

generally acknowledged, all the Protestant denominations teach baptismal regeneration, as Dr. Roy Mason shows in his book, "The Church that Jesus Built".

The Episcopal Catechism says: "Baptism is that wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God."

The Presbyterian Confession reads: "Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and a seal of the covenant of grace, of his engrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sin..."

The Methodist ritual reads as follows: "Sanctify this water for His holy sacrament and grant that this child, now to be baptized, may receive the fullness of Thy grace, and ever remain in the number of Thy faithful and elect children."

The Methodist articles were based on those of the English Church (Episcopalian)...Concerning the articles of the English Church, to which he belonged, we find John Wesley writing as follows (Sermons, London, 1872, Vol. 2, sermon 45, p. 74): "It is certain our church supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again; and it is allowed that the whole office of the baptism of infants proceeds on this supposition."

"The Lutheran view: This is expressed by the founder in the Augsburg Confession as follows: "Concerning baptism, they teach that it is necessary to salvation...and condemn the Anabaptists, who hold ...that infants can be saved without it." (Neander's, HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN DOGMAS, Vol. 2, p. 693). (quoted by Roy Mason).

6. Scriptural Baptism Protects the Lord's Churches from Interdenominationalism

While there are many different forms of Interdenominationalism and Non-denominationalism, experience has shown us that none of those groups hold to the scriptural teachings on baptism and the Lord's Supper. All of them will accept people into their membership, regardless of who may have baptized them, as long as the person is satisfied with their baptism. Unfortunately, there are a growing number of so-called Baptist churches that have taken the same position. I believe that such Baptists should take down their sign and call themselves Interdenominational, for that is all they are. When a church is wrong on salvation and/or the ordinances of baptism or the Lord' Supper, it is not a scriptural church, regardless of its name. Many Interdenominational churches will accept into their membership those who have been sprinkled, or in some cases, even those who have received no form of water baptism at all. How sad to see people take this position and yet contend that they believe the Bible.

IF A PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH ACCEPTS ALIEN IMMERSION, THEY ARE HELPING TO PAVE THE WAY FOR THE ECUMENICAL ONE WORLD CHURCH

This is a serious statement, but I am willing to stand by it. Any Baptist church that accepts the baptism of Protestant churches is preparing the way for joining the Ecumenical Church later. It is a matter of record that the first step toward ecumenicalism is the accepting of alien baptism. "If their baptism is valid, then why not join them?" However, Protestant baptism is not valid because Protestant churches do not have scriptural authority, nor do they baptize scriptural candidates for a scriptural purpose.

How can Primitive Baptists fellowship with, cooperate with, or receive baptism from churches that may be Baptist in name, but who receive baptism from every religious order that comes along? Baptism does not hinge upon whether the person is satisfied with it, but the question is, is the Lord satisfied with it? Does it meet the teaching of the Scriptures? There are some Primitive Baptist preachers and Primitive Baptist churches that seem to be sound on baptism, as far as the local congregation is concerned; however, they are not embarrassed to receive members from non-Primitive Baptists churches. Those religious orders send out missionaries through mission boards, have Sunday schools, support Bible schools and other religious auxiliaries. How "can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3) "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (I Cor. 5:6)

Lest some misunderstand, I do not doubt that there are some of God's elect among other religious orders. Salvation is of the Lord and by His grace. A person can be regenerated by the Holy Spirit and still be a member of a false religious order. Salvation is of the Lord, but a properly authorized minister must administer baptism. We should seek to help deliver those regenerated persons from the false religious order that they are in and bring them to obedience to the Lord by administering scriptural baptism to them by proper scriptural authority. I believe that authority rests in a scriptural New Testament Baptist Church and I believe that New Testament Primitive Baptist churches are the closest to the New Testament than any other religious order that I know of today.

A Primitive Baptist Church that holds the line on SCRIPTURAL baptism will never be a part of the Ecumenical movement and the growing World Church. Already Catholics and many Protestant denominations are working toward unification and greater cooperation between them. They have united some of their Bible colleges, so that theological students from various denominations are studying in the same school. Steps have already been taken by some denominations to accept the ordinations of ministers from other denominations. A number of denominations have already merged and are considering returning to

their mother church, the Roman Catholic Church, the great Harlot Church of Revelation 17.

Scriptural baptism stands as an impassable barrier and an unbridgeable gap between sound Baptist churches and the ecumenical movement. As long as Primitive Baptist churches do not accept baptisms from the Catholic Church, from Protestant churches and those so-called Baptists churches that accept their baptisms, we will not ecumenicalize with them. If a Primitive Baptist church ever accepts any baptism from any religious order other than a New Testament Primitive Baptist church, that church will have started down the slippery slope of compromise and ecumenicalism that leads to apostasy. They will themselves cease to be a New Testament Primitive Baptist Church.

Elder Herb Hatfield, Pastor

Five Golden Links in God's Chain of Salvation

BY ELDER HERB HATFIELD

ABERDEEN PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Romans 8:29-30

Introduction: Salvation is a grand and glorious subject. The salvation of a Hell-deserving soul from the torments of an eternal Hell by the grace of God is both amazing and glorious. What a wonderful thing that a person can, by the grace of God, be saved from eternal Hell. However, salvation is more than just deliverance from Hell, it involves much more. It includes our Redemption, our Regeneration, our Adoption as sons of God, our Sanctification and our eternal dwelling with God in glorified bodies. Dwelling eternally in Heaven with Jesus Christ our Saviour in our glorified bodies is the final result of the whole process of our salvation.

There are only two places that a soul can go after death, either Hell or Heaven. Salvation is the whole process whereby God justifies and saves a Hell-deserving sinner by His free and sovereign grace and gives them eternal life. They are glorified so they can then live eternally with God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, all the Holy angels and all the redeemed from all ages in eternal glory with glorified bodies. That, my friends, is what salvation is all about; it is the delivering of a mortal soul from Hell's damnation and giving it eternal glory in Heaven. It is amazing! It is marvelous! It is wonderful and it is all true! God's plan of salvation ends in eternal glorification for all the saints of God.

These scripture verses set forth God's glorious program of salvation. These verses say that those whom God did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, and those whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified. There are five very important words in these verses. They are: Foreknow, Predestinate, Called, Justified and Glorified. These five words cover the whole program of God in the salvation of His people. This salvation is what I want to talk to you about, using these five words. I call them Five Golden Links in God's Chain of Salvation.

The Bible says that God has declared the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), so I want to take these five words in the reverse order that we have them here in Romans. The last word is Glorification. That's where salvation ends, it leads to our glorification, but I want to start with glorification first and then work backwards. I want you to think with me about each of these five golden links in this chain of salvation.

The FIRST link in the chain that I want to discuss with you is the last one, GLORIFICATION. What a wonderful subject. Do you ever think about it? The Bible talks about it right here in these verses. It is what happens to the saints of God when they are given bodies in which they shall live forever. In I Corinthians chapter fifteen, the Apostle Paul talks about the resurrection and the glorification of our bodies. He even says that every saint may not necessarily die, but that we all shall be glorified. He says: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, (that means die, that's what death is for the saints), but we shall ALL BE CHANGED, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:51-53). That's the same thing that the Apostle is talking about in Philippians chapter three where in verses 20 and 21 he says; "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall CHANGE OUR VILE BODIES, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body".

This is what all the saints of God are looking forward to, when we shall have glorified bodies. We will have bodies that have been changed by the power of God so that we put off mortality and put on immortality. Bodies that have been "fashioned like unto His glorious body"! That's what the Apostle John is speaking about in I John chapter three verses one and two where he says, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God:...Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we SHALL BE LIKE HIM, because we shall see him as He is."

Can you imagine it? Glorified bodies! Bodies that have been made like unto Jesus Christ's body. Not that we shall be gods, but we shall have bodies that will never die; there will be no pain and most of all, no sin in them. We shall possess sinless bodies so we can sing and praise the Lord our Saviour for all eternity with pure hearts and glorified bodies. That's what Romans chapter eight says that salvation is all about. It says in verse 29 that we have been PREDESTINATED "to be conformed (that means made like) to the image of His Son". All who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour in this life, shall receive glorified bodies in eternity. That's our hope, it's our comfort in the time of sorrow and trouble, it's what God has promised us, it is what He has predestined for us. Paul says in

Romans 8:18: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”. HALLELUJAH!!! This is what makes the struggle and suffering for Christ all worthwhile. We who are the saints of God shall all, some day, be given glorified bodies to enjoy for all eternity in Glory. That’s what David is referring to when he said, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Ps 17:15). That, my friends, has been the hope of all saints in all ages. Job, in the oldest book in the Bible said, “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” (Job 19:25-27)

I want you to see whom it is that is to be glorified. Paul says here in these verses that it is those who have been justified. In verse 29 of this eighth chapter of Romans, he says that those “whom He (God) justified, them He also glorified”. I want you to see here that ONLY those who have been JUSTIFIED by God are going to be GLORIFIED. That’s what the Bible says right here. It does not say those who live right, or those who joined the church or those who have been baptized or those who have done anything. No, it is ONLY those whom God has JUSTIFIED. This then is the second link in the golden chain of salvation, JUSTIFICATION.

JUSTIFICATION is a very, very important subject. It’s a legal term. It speaks about our standing before the bar of God’s Holy Law. The Word of the Lord says in Romans chapter three, that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”, and that “there is none righteous, no not one”. So before the bar of God’s Holy Law, all mankind stands guilty of sin. We are all sinners because we all sinned in Adam and we are therefore worthy of eternal death in Hell. (Rom.5:12). But God did a wonderful and marvelous thing. He sent His only begotten Son into the world and laid upon Him all the sins of all those whom He would ever justify. Therefore, since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God’s Law has forever been satisfied concerning the sins of those whom He would justify and the guilty sinner has been declared by God to be just.

First, I want to show you the KIND OF PEOPLE that God justifies. In Romans 4:5 we read, “To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him (God) that justifieth the ungodly”. There it is in black and white. Friend, read it and rejoice! The only kind of people that God justifies is “the ungodly”!. It is not good people, nor religious people, nor those that feel themselves to be good people, but ONLY UNGODLY SINNERS! Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:15, that Christ died to save even the chief of sinners. In Romans 5:6, Paul tells us that “when we were yet without strength, ...Christ died for the ungodly.”

I want to show you HOW it is that we are Justified. It is not by works that we do or by keeping the Law. In Acts 13:39, Paul says: "By Him (Jesus Christ) all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses". You see, the Law of Moses is good, but the Law can not justify, it only condemns. It shows us our sin. It is like a mirror that we hold up and look at our dirty faces. The mirror cannot cleanse our faces; we must use soap and water. Likewise, the Law of God shows us our sins, but it cannot justify us. The Bible teaches that it is God that justifies. In Romans 3:24 the Word of God says: "Being justified by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus".

You see, it is God that justifies us by His grace. Grace means without any merit, so God, by the good pleasure of His sovereign grace, justifies the guilty sinner. He does it "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." What that means is that Jesus Christ has paid the sin debt for all His people (Matt.1:21). The word "redemption" means "to deliver by paying a price". That's what Jesus Christ did. He paid the price of death for the transgression of the guilty sinner. We read in the Book of I Peter 1:18-19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation (sinful conduct) received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." There is only one thing that could pay the price of our redemption; it was "the precious blood of Christ." So we sing the song "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow".

I want to show you WHO it is that God justifies. In Romans 8:33, we read: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies! There it is in black and white again.

The people that God justifies are called "God's elect". They are the same people that we read about in Romans 8:28: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

This brings us to the third word in the Golden Link of the Chain of our Salvation, it is the word CALLED. It is right there in our text in Romans chapter 8 and verse 30: "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also CALLED and whom He called, them He justified..." Therefore, the people that God justifies are those who are "the called".

Paul began this Book of Romans by saying in chapter one and verse one: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." Then in verses six and seven, he addresses the book to "the called of Jesus Christ, to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints". The word "called" is the Greek word "kaleo". This word is used 145 times in the New Testament. It means to name, or to bid, or command to come. It is used in Matthew 2:7 where

we read “Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.” You see its true meaning here. King Herod called the wise men to come to tell him about the star they had seen. These wise men had no choice about this matter, it was an invitation from one with supreme authority and it was to be obeyed. The same word is used in Matthew 4:21-22 where we read that Jesus “saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him”.

Jesus Christ said in Matthew 9:13, “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Peter says in Acts 2:39: “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord shall call”. Again, Paul says in I Thess.2:12: “That ye would walk worthy of the God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory.” In First Peter 2:9, we read, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”. God, by His Holy Spirit, has called (commanded to come) us from the spiritual darkness in which we were born by nature into the marvelous light of the Son of God. It is what Christ did at the tomb of Lazarus in John chapter 11, when He said, “Lazarus, come forth” and next we read, “he that was dead came forth”. So the call of God by His Holy Spirit is both EFFECTUAL and IRRESISTIBLE.

If today you believe that, by the grace of God, you have been given a hope of your salvation in Jesus Christ, or if you shall ever be saved and glorified, it will be because God has called you. We would never have called on the Lord if God had not first called us. The Word of God says, “there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Rom.3:11) Jesus Christ said in John 6:44: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...”. We have all gone astray from God, so God must call us by His Holy Spirit and cause us to come unto Him. Psalms 65:4 says, “Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee”. You see Friend, we come to God because He calls us and draws us to Himself. So in Jeremiah 31:3, God says, “with loving kindness have I drawn thee”. Like Lazarus of old, we were dead in our trespasses and sins and God must first come to us and call us from darkness unto light. Whenever it is that the Holy Spirit comes to our dead hearts and calls us to Jesus Christ, we will be made alive and given eternal life.

You see, we manifest God’s spiritual life in us by believing the Gospel, by repenting of our sins, and by following Jesus Christ. All those that God has justified, that He shall call from deadness unto life by His Holy Spirit, every one of them He will also glorify. It is very important that we see this clearly. The Holy Spirit of God shall call everyone whom God has justified by the death of His Son

on the cross. This involves regenerating us so that we have faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour. This is the work of the Holy Spirit of God as the third party to the eternal covenant of our salvation. All of those, whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated, they shall follow Jesus Christ. Christ said in John 10:27-28, “My sheep hear my voice (that is by the work of the Holy Spirit) and I know them (set my love upon them before the foundation of the world) and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand”. This means that all whom the Holy Spirit genuinely regenerates will be kept by the power of God until they are glorified. They will not lose their salvation because they are in the Almighty hand of God the Father and God the Son. They are eternally safe and secure and shall all be glorified.

This brings us to the fourth word in the Five Golden Links of Our Salvation. It is the word PREDESTINATED. Again, it is right here in our text in Rom. 8:30 in black and white: “Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called.” You see, the reason God called us unto salvation is because He had predestinated us to salvation. Predestination simply means that God has predetermined things. Some people are afraid of this word, but don’t be. It is a blessed word and gives the saints of God great comfort to know that God, before the world ever began, purposed all things. Paul says in Ephesians 1:11 that, God “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Is that not a comforting verse? Is it not good news to know that God is in control of all things and that He is working all things after the counsel of His own will? We read in Daniel 4:35, “He (God) doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? God is all-powerful and all-wise and He is the sovereign ruler over the universe.

Therefore, God is in control of all events here on earth, working them to accomplish His predetermined will (Psa.76:10; Eph.1:11). If that were not true we could not believe a single word of prophecy, because that is what prophecy is all about. It is simply God foretelling what He has predetermined to do. Every prophecy in the Bible is true, because it is God telling forth what He has before predetermined. God then moves and controls all the necessary events in time to accomplish what He determined before the world began. Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, fulfilling the ancient prophecy found in Micah 5:2, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting”. It was by the will of God, “that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed” (Luke 2:1). This meant that Joseph must take Mary, when she was “great with child”, carrying our Lord and Saviour in her womb, from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judah, a distance of over 60 miles, to pay his taxes. It was while they were there that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah written about 700 years before the time of Jesus’ birth. This prophecy

was fulfilled because it was God's predetermined will and He brought it to pass just as He had foretold it by the prophecy.

It is the same with our salvation. Paul says in II Tim.1:9: Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began". Isn't that amazing? Before time began, before there was an earth, or Adam and Eve, God had already predetermined to give grace to all His chosen people. He purposed before the world began to save them and to call them unto salvation by His Holy Spirit. You see, God does it all. He purposed to save His people from their sins. He sent His only begotten Son to die for their sins, and then He sends the Holy Spirit to call them to this wonderful salvation.

The Apostle Paul says in Second Thessalonians 2:13, "But we are bound to give thanks alway 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". It is because God the Holy Spirit regenerates us, creating a new nature within us that causes us to have faith and believe the Gospel, which we hear with a quickened ear. The Word of God says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit:" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

You see friend, all of us were born dead in sin. We were born spiritually dead, so that we could not understand spiritual things. Paul says, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned". (1 Corinthians 2:14) Because of the spiritual deadness that we all were born into by nature, we cannot understand or know anything about the things of God until the Holy Spirit has regenerated us. That is why Jesus Christ told Nicodemus, and all of us, in John chapter three, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God". It must be that God the Holy Spirit comes to us while we are yet dead in our sins, spiritually blind with spiritually deaf ears. He regenerates us, give us a new birth that is from above, enabling the quickened soul to hear effectually the Gospel and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. So the saints of God can sing:

"My Lord, I did not choose You, for that could never be:

My heart would still refuse You, had You not chosen me.

You took the sin that stained me, You cleansed me made me new,

Of old You have ordained me, that I should live with You."

Now we come to the fifth word and final link in the golden chain of salvation, it is the word FOREKNOW. There are various ideas about what this word means. Many think it only means to foreknow things. They say that since God is all wise and eternal, He foreknows about events before they ever happen. It is certainly true that God is all wise and eternal and that He does foreknow all events before they ever happen. However, if you will think about it, you can only foreknow with any certainty what you have pre-determined to do. I have illustrated this by hitting another person. I foreknew that event because I had pre-determined that I would hit that person. However, I certainly did not know what would be the reaction of the other person whom I had hit. I did not foreknow whether they would hit me with a club or just laugh, but in no way did I foreknow with any certainty what they would do. The whole purpose of this illustration was to show that we could only foreknow with certainty what we had pre-determined to do. God foreknows all events with certainty. This is why anything prophesied in the Bible happened exactly as it was prophesied. God had before pre-determined the event and all the means necessary to accomplish that which had been pre-determined and prophesied.

However, the word “foreknow” as used in the Bible is not merely referring to God foreknowing events. The word is used in Romans chapter eight, verse 29 and Romans chapter eleven, verse 2. In both these cases, it is very clear that the writer is speaking about God foreknowing people. In Matthew chapter seven, the Lord speaks about the time of judgment when “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”(verses 22-23). Most certainly the Lord knew about these people, so when He says “I never knew you”, He is speaking about something other than just the knowledge of their existence and their activity. He means “I never knew you in a love relationship”. This can be more clearly seen when we look at some other scriptures:

Genesis 4:1 “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain,”

Genesis 4:17 “And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch:”

Genesis 4:25 “And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth”

Luke 1:34 “Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”

In each of these verses it can be easily seen that the word “know” is used in such a way as to mean much more than merely knowing about someone. The way the word is used in these verses means to have a love relationship. That is how we

should understand the word in Matthew 7:22-23, Romans 8:29 and 11:2. The very first thing that God did when He determined to save some and give them eternal life, was that He sovereignly set His love upon them and then predestinated them to eternal life and glorification. So we read in Romans 8:29, “For whom (not what) He did foreknow (know in a love relation) He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son...”

This is the same order in Jeremiah 1:5 where God told Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee (set His love upon him); and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations”. It is the same order in Ephesians 1:4-5 where we read, “according as He (God the Father) hath chosen us in Him (God the Son) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame, in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ...” Thus, we should learn that God has first set His love upon us and then He predetermines our eternal glorification.

This is the very order that is set forth here in Romans chapter eight. Read it again. The very first word in the order is foreknow. It is those, whom God did foreknow, He did predestinate to be glorified. This is the reason we shall be glorified, it is because God foreknew us. He sovereignly set His love upon us before the foundation of the world and predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His only Son in eternal glory.

This then is the Golden Chain of God’s Salvation. It reaches from eternity past where God did foreknow His people from before the foundation of the world and then did predestinate them to be conformed to the image of His dear Son. Those whom He did foreknow and predestinate, He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for, that they might be “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus’ (Rom.3:24). All those who were foreknown by God the Father in eternity past were also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. He has died for them, they are therefore freely justified, and the Holy Spirit effectually calls them in time. They shall also be glorified at the resurrection.

This is God’s plan of Salvation. This plan of God works! It works because it is all linked together. Like any other chain, take one link out and the chain is broken and will not do the job, but this chain is an unbreakable chain. It is held together by the all-powerful, sovereign will of God. It is an all-wise plan that glorifies God, its author and finisher. This plan works because it is all of grace. There is nothing for the sinner to do, God does it all. It is all by God’s free and sovereign grace that any are saved from the awful wages of sin. Yet, by the grace of God, all those whom He did foreknow before the foundation of the world are saved. They all shall be saved and they all shall be glorified.

Friend, if you have any hope of ever being glorified and dwelling in eternal glory with God the Father, with Jesus Christ the Son of God, with all the Holy Angels and with the redeemed saints of God, it will only be because The Golden Chain of God's Salvation included you.

“Unless Your grace had called me and taught my quickened mind,

The world would have enthralled me, to heavenly glories blind.

My heart knows none above You, for Your rich grace I thirst,

I know that if I love You, You must have loved me first.”

“Your love has been forever, from all eternity;

Its drawing power never shall be withdrawn from me.

I know that I am kept by the strength of love Divine,

And when I wake in Heaven, all glory shall be Thine.” Josiah Conder, 1789-1855

DOES THE DOCTRINE OF ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION MAKE GOD TO BE THE AUTHOR OF SIN?

By Elder Herb Hatfield

This question has been the source of much controversy and division for years among Christians. Those who believe that God is sovereign and has foreordained in eternity all things that come to pass in time have been accused of believing this error. God's absolute sovereignty and His foreordination can be easily shown from the scriptures. There are many scripture verses that could be quoted as proof, but just a few of them would be:

***Psalms 115:3**, "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased."*

***Isaiah 14:24, 27** "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, 'Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass: and as I have purposed, so shall it stand...For the Lord of Hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? Psalms 48:1-14 "Great is Jehovah, and praised greatly, In the city of our God--His holy hill. Beautiful for elevation, A joy of all the land, is Mount Zion, The sides of the north, the city of a great king. God in her high places is known for a tower. For, lo, the kings met, they passed by together, they have seen--so they have marvelled, They have been troubled, they were hastened away. Trembling hath seized them there, Pain, as of a travailing woman. By an east wind Thou shiverest ships of Tarshish. As we have heard, so we have seen, In the city of Jehovah of hosts, In the city of our God, God doth establish her--to the age. Selah. We have thought, O God, of Thy kindness, In the midst of Thy temple, As is Thy name, O God, so is Thy praise, Over the ends of the earth, Righteousness hath filled Thy right hand. Rejoice doth Mount Zion, The daughters of Judah are joyful, For the sake of Thy judgments. Compass Zion, and go round her, count her towers, Set your heart to her bulwark, Consider her high places, So that ye recount to a later generation, That this God is our God--To the age and for ever, He--he doth lead us over death! And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"*

***Daniel 4:35** "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, 'What doest thou?"*

***Ephesians 1:11** "...being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."*

In light of these scriptures and their truths, some have tried to allege that if one believes God is the absolute sovereign ruler of the universe, then you must also believe that He is the author of sin. Our Baptist forefathers very ably dealt with this issue in chapters three of both the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1646 and the London Confession of Faith of 1689 in which they said: “God hath decreed in Himself, from all eternity, by the most wise counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein;...”

Is God the Author of Sin? There is no more obscene or profane thought then to imply or suggest that the thrice Holy God would in any manner be accredited as the author of sin. The very idea is scandalous blasphemy and is most repugnant and repulsive to all moral minds. Yet, it is the very charge that some make against the teaching of the absolute sovereignty of God and His omnipotent control over all events in time.

This is no novel device by the enemies of truth. They attempt to set forth a completely absurd premise and then try to pass it off as the alleged teaching of others. This is the common, but dishonest means by which charges have always been brought against truth and it is the same today. The enemies of truth draw a false inference themselves, or suppose that the doctrine leads to such an inference, and then charge it as what others actually hold and teach. There is one maxim which should never be departed from among Christians: “A person is not to be held liable for the inferences which others may draw from his doctrine; and he is never to be represented as holding and teaching that which others suppose follows from his doctrine. He is answerable and liable only for what he avows.”

What is the source and cause of sin in the world and what is God’s relationship to sin? One of the references the framers of the Confession of Faith gave as a proof-text is **James 1:13**, “*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man.*”

First, we must make a distinction between, **evil** and **sin**. A simple distinction is that “**sin**” is the behavior of man in his relation to God. It is the transgression of the Law of God. It is an expression of man’s enmity against God. While it may involve our conduct towards others (murder, robbery) it is the product of the wickedness in our hearts. So David in the confession of his sin of adultery and murder said, “*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight...*” (Psa.51:4) and he prays that God would “*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*” (v.10)

Sin is the evil that man commits as the results of a sinful heart. **Evil** is the product and consequences of sin. It is what happens among humans. It involves sickness, death, sorrows, calamities, earthquakes and hurricanes. God warned

Adam, “*for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” (Gen.2:17) All evil is the product and consequences of Adam’s sin.

In **Isaiah 45:7**, God says, “*I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.*” The Hebrew word “ra” translated “evil” is in other places translated “sorrow,” “wretchedness,” “calamities, but never sin. God is not the author of sin. God is the source and cause of evil as an act of judgment against sin. The evil that God brings forth may not be His punishment for sin that the individual has committed, as in the case of Job and the blind man in John, chapter nine, or of the innocent who die in storms, earthquakes or wars, but it is always the product or consequences of sin.

In **Amos 3:6**, we have the question, “*Shall there be evil in a city and God hath not done it?*” Arthur Custance says in his **THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GRACE**, that “the Hebrew word “asah” rendered “done” in this passage is a word which may mean “doing” or “making” (nearly two thousand times), or it may mean “appointing.” The former is by far the more frequent rendering in the King James Version.”(Page 268)

If we understand the distinction between sin and evil, we will have a better understanding of this verse. Man, of his own initiative, never brings about judgment for sin. It is a manifestation of God’s holiness that produces His judgments as a consequence for man’s sin. The death of Jesus Christ was therefore both a wicked thing and an evil thing. It was an expression of the wickedness of men. It was an evil thing in that Sinless Christ suffered on the cross when He was made to be sin for us. The Holiness of God caused His wrath to fall on Christ and He died for sin.

The source of all sin can be laid on Satan. Our Lord said, that Satan “*was a murderer from the beginning...a liar, and the father of it.*” (**John 8:44**) It certainly is clear that Satan is the one that tempted Eve and Adam to sin. It is through Adam that sin “*entered into the world, and death by sin;*” (**Rom.5:12**) It is also very clear that Adam’s sin did not take God by surprise. We are told in **1 Peter 1:20**, that Christ was ordained to be the sacrificial Lamb of God for sin “*before the foundation of the world.*” Here then is the source of the problem in the minds of some, “If God ordained that sin should enter into the world by Adam, does this not make God to be the author of sin?”

The solution to the problem is to be found in the distinction between God’s *secret* will and His *revealed* will. Not that God has two wills, but rather that He has a will that has been revealed to man by His Word and another part of His will which has not been revealed. This is clear from the words of God in **Deuteronomy 29:29**, “*The SECRET things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are REVEALED belong unto us and to our children for ever,*

*that we may do all the words of His law.” Man is responsible to God to keep His revealed law. This is the basis of all judgment. The writer of **Ecclesiastes** summaries this in chapter 12 and verse thirteen, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”*

All men, in every place and in every age are responsible to God, to fear Him (reverence Him) and to “*keep His commandments.*” This is the bases on which God judges all people in every age and from all walks of life. Even those who have not a written copy of the Law of God, have both the witness of creation and “*the Law of God written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;*” ...so that they are without excuse... in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. (**Rom 1:20; 2:15, 16**) “*Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.*” (**Acts 17:31**)

Then every mouth will be “*stopped*” and “*the whole world*” will be made to acknowledge that it is “*guilty before God.*” (Rom.3:19) All people are “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (**Eph.1:2**) and since “*There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*” (**Rom.3:11, 12**)

How then does God deal with sinful man in order to accomplish His predetermined will? It has been expressed that there are four different ways in which God accomplishes His Holy will among the wicked.

1. God exerts upon the wicked a **RESTRAINING** influence by which they are prevented from doing what they are naturally inclined to do. The Palmist says in chapter seventy-six and verse ten, “*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the reminder of wrath shall thou restrain.*” It is important to note that it is “*the wrath of men.*” The case of Abraham and Abimelech, king of Gerar is an example. “*And God said unto him (King Abimelech) in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against Me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her (Sarah)*” (**Gen.20:6**)

The case of Joseph and his brethren is a similar proof case. His brethren had indeed meant to do him much evil, even conspiring to kill him. However, his half-brother Reuben intervened to spare Joseph’s life with the intention of returning him to his father. They then cast him into a pit and sat down to eat bread, at that very moment, “*they lifted up their eyes and looked and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels...going to Egypt.*” It was then that Judah, his brother, was able to intercede for him and say, “*Come, and let us*

sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.”(Gen. 37:10-27) Thus God restrained their evil passions. Later when Joseph revealed himself to his brethren, he told them *“As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive.”(Gen. 50:20)*

The death of Christ is another proof of this rule. When the soldiers came to break the legs of the three crucified people, they broke the legs of the first and of the other malefactor, however *“When they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water...For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, ‘A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, ‘They shall look on him whom they pierced.’” (John 19:33-37)* Those soldiers had no interest in doing the will of God, but were restrained by God to accomplish His predetermined will.

2. God exerts upon the wicked a **SOFTENING** influence disposing them to act contrary to their natural inclinations to do that which will promote His cause. When Israel was but few in number, *“When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes;” (Psa.105:13,14).*

Again the case of Joseph’s experience in the land of Egypt illustrates this. While Joseph was in the house of Potiphar, *“The Lord was with Joseph and his master saw the Lord was with him,”* and as a result, *“Joseph found favour in his sight and he made him over-seer over his house.” (Gen. 39:3,4)*

Later, when Joseph was unjustly cast into prison by Potiphar, even then, *“The Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.” (Gen. 39:21)*

So it was when Moses’ mother had hid him in the flags by the river where Pharaoh’s daughter would bathe, that God moved on the baby Moses that he should cry out just as Pharaoh’s daughter opened the little basket. It was God that touched the heart of this heathen woman so that she was moved by compassion to take the little Israelite boy baby and rear him as her own son. *(Ex. 2:1-10)*

The same is in the case of Esther, when it was the will of God that she should become the queen to Ahasuerus, king of the Persian Empire. When she was given to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women, she *“pleased him, and obtained kindness of him...and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.”* So when she went unto the king that *“the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins...” (Esther 2:9,17)*

Later, when Esther must go to the King to intercede in behalf of the Jewish people, she went in contrary to the law of the King, expecting to perish, but we read, in chapter five and verse two that *“She obtained favor in his sight and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter.”* Thus demonstrating that *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will.”* (**Prov. 21:1**)

A remarkable demonstration of God’s sovereign omnipotent power over the hearts of kings is seen in the case of Cyrus, the heathen king of Persia. Israel had been in Babylonian captivity for seventy years, but the prophesied end of their captivity was about to be fulfilled. God, by the prophet Isaiah, had told over 150 years previous how that Cyrus would be His anointed servant to allow Israel to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. (**Isa. 44:28**) The amazing story of how God worked in the hearts of Cyrus and the Jewish people is recorded in the Book of Ezra. *“Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.”* (**Ezra 1:1,2**) Ezra writes later, *“Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers which hath put such a thing as this in the king’s heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.”* (**7:27**)

3. God exerts on the wicked an **OVER-RULING** influence so that good is made to result from their evil intentions.

Again, the case of Joseph demonstrates this point. His brethren acted from envy and hatred towards Joseph and sold him to the Ishmaelites. To them, they were getting rid of a problem and making a financial gain. But see the hand of God working out His secret will over-ruling their wicked actions. Divine providence had sent the Ishmaelites by at the right moment for the brethren to sell Joseph to them and prevent him from being murdered. It was by the means of the Ishmaelites that Joseph was delivered to Egypt which was the very country where God had purposed for Joseph to be, in that he might save his father’s household when the great famine came later. Joseph pointed all this out to his brethren when he told them, *“God sent me before you to preserve your posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance... it was not you that sent me hither, but God...”* (**Gen. 45:7, 8**)

We see this in the case of the Israelites in Egypt land. In Psalms chapter one hundred and five we are told in verses twenty-four and twenty-five that *“He (God) increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies. He (God) turned their (the Egyptians) heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly*

with his servants.” Now all this was because it was time for Israel to be delivered from their Egyptian bondage. “The children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.” (Ex.1:7) The Egyptians feared the Israelites would join in a rebellion against them, so they dealt cruelly with them. “But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour.” (Ex.1:12, 13) All of this was by the hand of the Lord that “the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.”(Ex. 2:23)

When Samson saw the Philistine woman and desired her for a wife, his parents were displeased that he should want a Gentile woman for wife, because they “*knew not that it was of the Lord, that he (the Lord) sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.*” (**Judges 14:4**)

It was because of a wicked and evil action on the part of King Ahasuerus that Esther became his queen. But it was by the will of God that she might be the instrument of God to save the Jews from destruction. It was for an evil and wicked purpose that two of the king’s chamberlains sought to kill King Ahasuerus. But it was a means whereby Mordecai learned of the plot and revealed it to Esther, and she won the favor of the king. (**Esth. 2:21-23**) It was because of a wicked and evil purpose that Haman plotted to have all the Jews in the empire on a certain day. But God over-ruled and on that very day the Jews were able to slay “*of their foes seventy and five thousand*” and reverse the day of dread “*and made it a day of feasting and gladness.*” (**Esth. 9:16, 17**) “*And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.*”(Esth. 8:17)

Of course the greatest demonstration of the control and directing influence of God over the wicked actions of men is seen in the trial and death of Jesus Christ. It must be that He would be hung on a tree (**Deut.21:23; John 3:14**) that He should “*be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.*” (**Matt.20:18-19**) Later, Peter would say, “*Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*” (**Acts 2:23**)

4. God HARDENS the hearts of the wicked and **BLINDS** their minds to truth so they act in accordance to His predetermined will.

The hardening of the heart does not make the heart wicked or any more wicked, it only confirms the predisposition of the heart. All are born sinners because of our

lineage to Adam and we all act in accordance to our sinful natures. Hardening merely sets a heart or conscience so that it is not affected by external influences. Spiritual blindness is a judicial action on the part of God whereby the wicked are set in error and sealed to its falsehood in spite of eternal influences.

Before Moses ever went before Pharaoh, God had told him, *“I will harden his heart that he shall not let the people go.”* (**Ex. 4:21**) If it be questioned why God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, the answer is given by the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter nine; *“For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.”* (**Rom. 9:17-18**) Not only did God harden the heart of Pharaoh so that he only stubbornly let the children of Israel go, but when they had actually left Egypt, God told Moses, *“And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get Me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten Me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.”* (**Ex.14:17, 18**)

Pharaoh’s heart is not the only one that we are told God hardened. He hardened the heart of Sihon, king of Heshbon, so that he would not let the children of Israel pass through his land, *“that He (God) might deliver him in to thy hand.”* (**Deut. 2:30**) Also when Israel entered into the land of Canaan, none of the inhabitants there made peace with them except the Hivites, *“For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that He might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses.”* (**Jos.11:20**)

Nor is this judgment left to people in the Old Testament era alone. In the Gospel of John we read in chapter twelve and verse forty, *“He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.”*

Paul speaks of this judicial action by God in Romans chapter eleven and verse seven, *“What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded.”* They were warned by the Old Testament prophets, by Christ and by the New Testament apostles, yet in spite of those warnings and the judgments of God, the miracles wrought by Christ and the apostles, they believed not because some were hardened and blinded by God.

This is the same action by God that Paul describes in II Thessalonians, chapter two and verses eleven and twelve, *“And for this cause God shall send them strong*

delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

This hardening and blindness by God is a sealing to judgment upon the wicked. It is seen in Revelation chapter nine where we are told that in spite of the judgment plagues sent by God upon the wicked world they, “*repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold.... Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*” (Verses 20, 21)

Thus God exerts a restraining, softening, over-ruling and hardening influence over the wicked according to the dictates of His own eternal and secret purpose. God’s will and purpose is accomplished in spite of the wicked actions and enmity of wicked men. What He has ordained will come to pass. Man is bound in his own wickedness by God, but he acts totally and freely of his own volition so that he is account and responsible for his actions.

“How can this be,” some ask? The answer lies in understanding the difference between man’s **natural ABILITY**, and his **moral** or **spiritual INABILITY**. The sovereign will of God does not destroy the sinner’s accountability or responsibility, because he acts freely within the bounds of his own nature. Jeremiah says, “*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.*” (13:23)

Wicked men do wickedness, because it is their nature, not because of any compulsion from God. They act freely within the bounds of their depraved nature. I believe I can do no better than to quote here from Arthur Pink’s THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, pages 155-157. Pink asked this rhetorical question:

“How is it possible for God to **DECREE** that men **SHOULD** commit certain sins, hold them **RESPONSIBLE** in the committal of them, and adjudge them **GUILTY** because they committed them?”

“Let us now consider the extreme case of Judas. We are hold that it is clear from Scripture that God *decreed* from all eternity that Judas should betray the Lord Jesus Christ. If anyone should challenge this statement we refer him to the prophecy of Zechariah, through whom God declared that His Son should be sold for “*Thirty pieces of silver*” (**Zech.11:12**). As we have said earlier, in prophecy God makes known what will be, and in making known what will be, He is but revealing to us what He has ordained shall be. That Judas was the one through whom the prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled needs not to be argued. But now the question we have to face is, Was Judas a *responsible agent* in fulfilling this decree of God? We reply that he was. Responsibility attaches mainly to the *motive* and *intention* of the one committing the act. This is

recognized on every hand. Human law distinguishes between a blow inflicted by accident (without evil design), and a blow delivered with ‘*malice aforethought*.’

“Apply then this same principle to the case of Judas. What was the *design* of his heart when he bargained with the priests? Manifestly he had no conscious desire to *fulfill* any decree of God; though unknown to himself he was actually doing so. On the contrary, his *intention* was evil only, and therefore, though God had decreed and directed his act, nevertheless, *his own evil intention* rendered him justly *guilty* as he afterwards acknowledged himself—“*I have betrayed innocent blood*.”

“It was the same with the Crucifixion of Christ. Scripture plainly declares that He was “*delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*” (Acts 2:23), and that though “*the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ*” yet, notwithstanding, it was but “*for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done*”(Acts 4:26, 28); which verses teach very much more than a bare permission by God, declaring, as they do, that the Crucifixion and all its details had been *decreed by God*. Yet, nevertheless, it was by “*wicked hands*,” not merely “*human hands*”, that our Lord was “*crucified and slain*” (Acts 2:23). “*Wicked*” because the *intention* of His crucifiers was only evil.”

“But it might be objected that, if God had decreed that Judas should betray Christ, and that the Jews and the Gentiles *should* crucify Him, they could not do otherwise, and therefore, they are not responsible for their intentions. The answer is, God had decreed that they should perform the *acts* they did, but in the actual perpetration of these deeds *they* were justly *guilty*, because *their own purposes* in the doing of them was evil only. Let it emphatically be said that God does not *produce* the sinful dispositions of any of His creatures, though He does *restrain* and *direct* them to the accomplishing of His own purposes. Hence He is neither the Author nor the Approver of sin. This distinction was expressed thus by Augustine: ‘That men sin proceeds from themselves; that in sinning they perform this or that action, is from the power of God who divideth the darkness according to His pleasure.’”

“Thus it is written, ‘*A man’s heart diviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps*.’”(Prov. 16:9) What we would here insist upon is that God’s decrees are not the *necessitating cause* of the sins of men, but the foredetermined and prescribed *boundings* and *directings* of men’s sinful acts. In connection with the betrayal of Christ, God did not decree that He should be sold by one of His creatures and then take up a good man, instill an evil desire into his heart and thus *force* him to perform the terrible deed *in order to execute* His decree. No; not so do the Scriptures represent it. Instead, God decreed the act and selected the one who was to perform the act, but He did not *make him evil* in order that he *should*

perform the deed; on the contrary, the betrayer was a ‘devil’ at the time the Lord Jesus chose him as one of the twelve (**John 6:70**), and in the *exercise* and *manifestation* of his *own* devilry God simply *directed* his actions, actions which were perfectly *agreeable* to his *own* vile heart, and performed with the most wicked *intentions*. Thus it was with the Crucifixion.”

The Bible teaches that “*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*” (**Psa. 76:10**) It is thus perfectly clear to the honest student of the Bible that God, who is Holy, Omnipotent and Sovereign, is in no way the author of sin. He is the sovereign ruler of the universe, directing and restraining the actions of all His creatures and the powers of darkness to accomplish His Holy will. It should thus be understood that predestination of all things does not make God to be the cause of the sin that wicked men do, but rather the restrainer of evil so that they can do no more or less than what He has predetermined for His own Glory and the eternal good of His saints. (**Rom. 8:28**)

THE LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH OF 1689, Chapter Three, part 1:

“God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree.”