

Soteriology
Lesson 1
Predestination Part One

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Let's pray.

Father, we thank You so much for Your love for us and thank You for the joy that we have in Christ and for the wonderfulness of Your Word. We pray that You would bless our fellowship today as we study that we might grow and learn about these wonderful things that You have said in Your Word. Thank You that we are saved by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ making forgiveness possible for us by the gift of eternal life through faith in Christ alone. Thank You, Lord that we have been chosen. Thank You, Lord, for Your wonderful plan of predestination. And as we study these matters today, give us open teachable hearts we pray. Thank You for what You're going to do. And it's in the precious name of Jesus that we pray. Amen.

The doctrine of salvation—you'd think everybody had this one down; but interestingly, some of the great controversies that exist among Christians deal with the doctrine of salvation. Before we're done in the course, we're even going to show you the order in which these things take place, according to the Bible. But if you let books dictate what order they are in, you'll get confused.

I just read a book by a guy who calls himself an evangelical. He was so messed up on the doctrine of salvation, it's a wonder anybody will ever get saved. And I thank God for the privilege that you have to just sit here and think it through, even if you disagree with the professor. But seriously, we do want you to think. We do want you to learn. We do want you to look carefully at the Bible, for an example, the subject today.

People say, “Well, that’s Presbyterian isn’t it?” Like if they ask you, “Do you believe in predestination?” My answer is: “Is there an option? It’s in the Bible!” The problem is what we think it means. Not whether we believe in it. You’d better believe in it. God states it very clearly in the Bible. But what you believe about it becomes a part of that crucial issue that hopefully we’ll get into in our discussion.

Take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter 8. I just got back from Hawaii. We did a pastors’ conference with the pastors on the islands and also a men’s retreat. It rained most of the time I was there. And it poured. I mean, we’re talking fury from heaven came forth. It was unbelievable. But the moment you walk out from your tent, it’s so beautiful. You know and the doctrine of predestination’s a little bit like that. You can get so miserable in this thing, wondering if you’re ever going to come out, if the sun’s ever going to shine, if you’re ever going to understand it?

Human reasoning, I have found, gets us into more trouble than biblical statement. I want to repeat that again. Human reasoning gets us into more trouble than simple biblical statement. We have a hard time, don’t we, just taking what the Bible says? We have to reason with it a bit. And all of our human reasoning leads us into mass confusion. You need to come back sometimes and say, “I may not understand this, but I do understand this is what it (the Bible) says. This is what it says. I don’t understand how that works, but that’s what it says. So, I’m going to believe what God says even if I don’t understand it.

As a matter of fact, God told you in Proverbs 3:5 “to not lean to your own understanding.” God said, “Don’t even lean to your own understanding. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. In all your ways acknowledge [what?]—Him!”

The doctrines of salvation cannot be properly interpreted without acknowledging Him. You see, the doctrines of salvation are rooted in He who is the author of salvation. So to understand God is to understand the doctrines of salvation. To ignore God or to begin with a man-centered focal point, you're going to get confused.

If you begin with free will—a term by the way that is never used in the Bible except in reference to the sacrificial offerings—but we use it very loosely, don't we? Your will is not very free at all. It has now been completely enslaved by this school. Think of it. They want you to go here at this time. And end it here at that time. And they want you to take tests and all kinds of things. I mean, talk about infringing on free will!

You know what else? These guys drive around in these little black and white cars with their little bubble machines on top. I'll tell you, they can enslave your free will. You are not even free to go through a stop sign. It's red—hey, no problem. I've gone through this area before. But now it's got a red little deal and that supposedly that restricts my freedom. No, nobody is free. In fact, those who feel they have achieved ultimate freedom are the biggest slaves of all to themselves and to their own sins.

So even a term like “free will”...“Let's start doctrine of salvation with the will of man.” No. Wrong starting point! No, we start with God. Not with man. Once you understand who God is and what He has said in His word, then we'll start talking about man and what part he has in it.

By the way, the term free will simply means in Hebrew, voluntary. It was talking about voluntary offerings. It isn't applied to our will or volitional choice at all. Does man have a will? He certainly does. Can he exercise it with a measure of freedom? Yes.

We're going to learn in this course exactly what all these things mean. And hopefully they will open up our eyes to what it means to truly be saved, born again. It must be an important subject, because Jesus says that a lot of folks who say they are Christians in that last day, in fact, are not. And He will say, "I never knew you. Depart from Me ye workers of iniquity" (Luke 13:27).

So apparently this is a very important subject, the doctrine of salvation. Who is really saved? Big question! Apparently, from the Bible, it is not a few people who claim to be Christians but aren't. The Bible teaches it's a majority of those that claim to be Christians that aren't (Matthew 7:21-23). That's kind of scary isn't it? A lot of us apparently can say the words and even do some pretty neat things in His name, and yet, never know Him. Never be born again—that's scary! No wonder Paul said to "examine yourself whether you be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). No wonder why Peter said to "make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). Apparently this is a very serious matter.

Now in Romans 8 we have, of course, a fabulous book about salvation. Some call it even the Magna Carta or constitution of Christianity. And this is not a course in Romans, but what a delightful book to study in terms of salvation. Great principles are outlined in that book. For instance: why all men are condemned—the whole principle of condemnation—why the whole world is guilty. Also, how can a man be righteous before God? And how can a man be really sanctified or separated from sin? Where does the law fit into all of this? And how can a man keep it? And what about the struggle that goes on inside of everybody between that which is right and that which is wrong?

Then he kind of climaxes this wonderful, beautiful discussion with chapter eight, whose key word is the Holy Spirit. In chapter six the key word is sin. Don't take my word for it, count them up! In chapter seven the key word is the first person, personal pronoun I, me, or my. But in chapter eight the key word is the Spirit. It is, "the Spirit of life in Christ has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). And it ends with the fact that "nothing can separate me from the love of God" (Romans 8:39). It begins in 8:1 with "no condemnation" and it ends in verse 39 with "no separation." That's a pretty good outline of Romans 8.

Well in the middle of this, beginning at verse 28, there are some interesting words. Romans 8:28-30,

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed unto the image of His Son that He might be the first born 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."

Now, that's pretty interesting there. We have predestination, calling, justification and glorification. That's Paul's little neat outline on the doctrine of salvation.

There are three words in the New Testament that effect this doctrine that we need to know the meaning of—three words. It's interesting that the first one isn't always discussed in doctrines of predestination and that's the word "called." Yet in fact it appears 295 times and the Greek verb, "to call" 147 times. That's a pretty big subject,

isn't it? Now sometimes it's just a simple, you know, calling somebody over to you. But it refers to the doctrine of salvation on a multitude of occasions. As a matter of fact, the whole controversy related to Calvinism and Arminianism.... You say, "What in the world is that?" Oh, I'm so glad you feel that way. Be a Bible person. Not a Calvinist. Not an Arminian.

Now Jacobus Arminius was a Reformed pastor, interestingly, and was a Calvinist. A lot of people don't understand that either. He was Dutch. John Calvin, a lot of people know about him and they think he designed the doctrine of TULIP. Now those of you who are not familiar with what I'm talking about, take the acrostic tulip, T-U-L-I-P. And write out to the side of each letter. Just write it down the side of your page. T-U-L-I-P. Because we'll be referring to this many, many times and we want to make sure everybody's with us.

The Five Points of Calvinism

Total depravity ~ Man is born in sin and completely incapable of saving himself from eternal damnation

Unconditional election ~ God chooses the elect without any merit within the individuals themselves

Limited atonement ~ Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient for all, but it is only effectual for all who believe in Him

Irresistible grace ~ God extends His favor by calling individuals who cannot resist Divine grace

Perseverance of the saints ~ All who Christ saves will persevere in faith unto eternity by His grace

Okay, the T stands for total depravity. The Calvinist believes that man is totally unable to save himself. He is totally born in sin. He's depraved. He's conceived in sin.

Now, U stands for unconditional election. We're going to talk about election. It means to be chosen. And unconditional means that God chooses you without any regard for anything in yourself. He doesn't have a reason based upon your great potential. God just chooses on the basis of His own decision, not yours. He doesn't choose you because you chose Him, which many evangelicals teach. That is not taught in God's Word but a lot of people think that. No. He knows the exact day you're going to and how you're going to if you're not saved. And He wants you saved.

And by the way, anything God wants to do, He's fully able to do without your help. Do you believe that? God is a God of grace and love. Thank God for that! But He is powerful. He is all-knowing. And for anyone to argue that He can somehow wish something to be done, but can't do it because man is resistant to it, to a Calvinist seems philosophical nonsense. How could that be possible? You mean to tell me that God can't save you unless you let Him? Oh no. No, God is bigger than that, in case you didn't know. He's a lot bigger than that.

So we have the whole problem of God choosing us. And that's the word election. The same word every time you see the word elect in the Bible, or election, that's chosen. So we have first, total depravity; second, unconditional election. L stands for limited atonement. Calvinists believe that Christ died only for those who believe in Him. Now let me ask you a question. Did Christ die for those who believe in Him? Yes. It's that little word "only" that's troublesome.

I stands for irresistible grace. That means grace that gives you what you don't deserve, that comes from God, cannot be resisted, according to Calvinists. When God decides to do it, He's going to do it and it doesn't matter whether you have the ability to resist it or not.

The P stands for perseverance of the saints. The Calvinist believes that all who are truly born again will persevere to the end. God will see to it. Sometimes this is popularly known as the doctrine of eternal security. Maybe you know it by that better than perseverance of the saints.

Now Calvin did not come up with those five. His followers did. And actually they were answering the writings and teachings of both Jacobus Arminius and his followers. In studying the Bible, Arminius—who would be much more of a Calvinist than his followers are—but Arminius felt that the Calvinist was eliminating the will of man completely out of the picture. He saw things in the Bible such as, “You do always resist the Holy Spirit,” said Steven in Acts 7. He looked at that and said, “Wait a minute, if a man can resist it, then it's not irresistible grace.” Can people disobey freely of their own choice? Those are some of the questions that Arminius was asking. He lived in a day of Dutch Reformed theology

And what happened was that Arminius and his followers brought forth five subjects, of which this TULIP doctrine that we now know today and throw around were really answers to it. They were answers to all of their discussions. They narrowed it down to these five things. There was actually a trial that was called the Synod of Dort, D-O-R-T. And this Synod of Dort was in the early 17th century, early 1600s. And it lasted about seven months. As a result of that synod, the official Reformed Church called the

followers of Arminius heretics, and excommunicated them. They then decided well, because of this situation, we need to set out—this was 100 years after John Calvin see—they needed to set out the principles upon which their doctrine of salvation was built. And that’s how we came with those five principles that have sort of been coined with the word TULIP. But anyway, that’s how we get that word.

So what people say about Calvinism and Arminianism, I sometimes wonder whether they know what they’re talking about. We don’t want to divide the body of Christ. We want to endeavor or struggle or agonize to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). So we need to be open to hearing both sides, which we’ll be doing throughout this course; so that the doctrine of salvation is clear in our minds as to what God says and then we can set aside to look at, if we want to, human interpretations. But we’re not going to let those affect what the Bible actually says. And there’s where the problem is.

If I ask you about foreknowledge and predestination, would you agree that predestination is based on foreknowledge? Now, if you open up a book and discuss this subject, you will find page after page after page discussing whether that’s true or not. But now you’ve got your Bible open to Romans 8:29 and it says: “For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate.” So I ask you again, according to the Bible, is predestination based on foreknowledge? Yes. Absolutely! How could God plan something ahead of time if He didn’t know it ahead of time? Because He knows everything ahead of time, He can plan whatever He wants ahead of time.

You need to come back and look at the simplicity of God’s Word. So those five little doctrines we’re going to be wrestling with throughout the course. And hopefully

we'll come out as Bible people, neither Calvinist nor Arminian but just simply sticking with the Bible. So when we come to find the meaning of terms, we want to come to the Bible for the meaning of those terms. And as I said, there are three terms here that affect this doctrine of predestination. One is called, the other is chosen or elected. And the other of course, is the main word predestinated.

Now in looking at the word calling, the point from which we just departed a moment ago, there are two things that are clear in the Bible. No human reasoning here, just two things that are clear. One, it is very clear that it's an invitation to all people. You got your Bible, turn to Matthew 22. When you say we are called...in fact in the Bible it even refers to Christians as the called ones.

Now if we are called, how did this happen? Well, in the Bible there is what is sometimes called the universal call. A universal call—I prefer to call it an invitation. That's the way the Bible presents it. Matthew 22 there's a king who made a marriage for his son. And it says, verse 3, "He sent forth his servant to [what?] call them that were bidden" –Old King James for "invited." So is the call an invitation? Yes. In this particular case, let me ask you a question? Did all who were invited come to the wedding? No. So that's why we say it's an invitation to all people. Now we even have a conclusion here in verse 14, "For many are called, but few are [what?] chosen." Elected.

So you see there is a call that goes out. Sometimes we use this phrase: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). Now many, many Calvinists will say "But the "whosoever" are only those that God has chosen to believe." But it doesn't really say that. And in the illustration that is always used for calling, Matthew 22 the parable, in fact there are many people who were called or invited

who didn't come to the wedding. So you see again, the Bible brings some clarity here.

People say, "Well no, no, no! The only ones who are called, are those who believe." Now, is that true? Well, in a sense it is. Cause look at the second one. It is the initiative of God Himself. Does God call people? Well yes. In Romans 8:29 we just read it, "Whom He foreknew He predestinated. Whom He predestinated them He also called." Well that's interesting.

In 1 Corinthians 1:9 it says that "We are called into the fellowship of His Son." Jude 1—only one chapter—but the first verse says, "Jude the servant of Jesus Christ, the brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Christ Jesus and called." He identifies the Christians in three ways: sanctified, preserved, and called. We are the called ones. Are there any non-believers that are called "called ones"? Answer: no, not a one!

So do you see how Calvinism and Arminianism can fight right here? They can fight right here. Because the Calvinist will emphasize there's not one non-believer that is ever called "a called one." What they didn't say is what Matthew 22 teaches. Was there anybody called who did not respond? The answer is yes. Are you called by God whether you respond or not? Yes. Are you a called one, if you don't respond? No. You're only a called one if you respond. I hope it's obvious to you right off the beginning of this course that it's easy to tip to one side or the other and get out of balance.

So now what are we? Well sort of a Calvinian. We believe that God calls everyone to be saved. But we believe only a certain amount of people, namely those who believe, are going to be called "called ones." Okay. I don't want to overstep that. But that's a very important point.

Now the second word, chosen, or elected becomes a troublesome issue also. Why? Because the word elect doesn't always refer to believers or Christians who are believing. In one sense it can; in another sense it can't. And you're listening to me and say, "Which is it?" For instance in Matthew 24, God, according to the Bible, during the Tribulation period, is going to cut short the period of time we call Tribulation because of all of it's deception and disasters. He's going to cut it short for the sake of the elect. Wait a minute! If you're a pre-trib, the church isn't even in here. And if you're a Bible person the church isn't in Matthew 24 either.

All you need to do is go back to chapter 23 and realize that He was talking to the house of Israel. Oh. Wait a minute. The nation of Israel does not believe until the end of the Tribulation. They will look on Him whom they have pierced when He returns in power and great glory. If that's true—and it is—then you have Jesus referring to Israel in a state of unbelief during the Tribulation as being the elect. Well, that shouldn't bother you because in the beginning He did that for Israel. Israel as a nation, both believers and unbelievers within it, is an elect nation, chosen out of all nations of the world.

So you see, the word elect does not just automatically mean those who are believing Christians. No it doesn't. It has something to do with choice, which once again brings the problem to our hearts and minds.

The word to choose, or elect—now, by the way, the English word elect is said into English off of the Greek word which is *eklectos*. *Eklect*. So it doesn't really translate it. *Eklectos* means to select out of. If you choose out of then there are more that were not chosen. Hello? Is everybody listening? I believe in putting cookies on the bottom shelf as much as possible, so all of His kids can get them. Now if you choose out of—*ek* means

out of in Greek, proposition, *eklectos*—chosen out of, selected out of. If you choose out of, then you're choosing out of something, right? So there's something that wasn't chosen; otherwise, the word chosen has no meaning any more.

For instance, those who are Universalists and say that everybody will eventually be saved cannot explain election. Why? Because election means you chose out of a larger group a few to be your own. Now in the case of Israel God chose out of all nations, Israel to be His elect. In the case of all unbelievers in the world, God chose out of them, a people for His own.

This is a very difficult subject. It's right there in Matthew 22:14. Many are called—the universal invitation that goes to all people—but only few are elected or chosen, to choose out of the many who were invited. Let me ask you a question. Is Judas going to be in hell or in heaven? Hell. No doubt about it. The Bible says that he's a “son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Then what was Jesus doing at the Last Supper handing him the sop? Do you understand that even in the case of Judas whom the Lord knew was going to hell, He gave one gracious opportunity at the Last Supper to not do what He knew he was going to do.

Do you see what a delicate line it is between human will and God's knowledge and sovereignty of all things? See it's very difficult for us, very difficult. I like to say that the sovereignty of God and human will are like to two parallel lines that never intersect in our finite brains. Both are true, but it's very difficult for us to bring them together and understand them. So even in the case of Judas we have a problem. Why would the Lord even do that? Because the Bible teaches throughout that God is gracious and loving and kind even to the rebellious and wicked. By the way, the Lord takes no pleasure in the

death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). It's hard to understand. But He's God. I'm not. I just know that's what it says.

So chosen is a difficult one; out of many who are invited, only a few were chosen or elected. Now go to Ephesians 1 and look at verse 4. This word chosen or elect appears forty-nine times in the New Testament, but actually in Greek only forty-five of those times. Ephesians 1:4, "According as He hath [what's the next word?] chosen. [That's the word elected] chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." And notice the moment when these decisions occur. According to Ephesians 1:4, at what moment were you chosen? Before the foundation of the world, don't forget that. You'll see it again.

Well now wait a minute. You weren't alive, were you? You weren't born yet. You had never done anything to prove whether or not you deserved this. Is everybody following this? "Chosen before the foundation of the world...." Now when God chose you, did that mean, for sure, no doubt, you are going to be saved? What do you think? See the controversy has already begun. Now if God chose you before the foundation of the world, does that mean that you're saved regardless of when you receive Christ? Are you then saved, before you received Christ? But you're chosen, you said. Notice the yeah, got softer.

But I'm not going to give you all the answers at once. Some of you are going to be very impatient. You just wait. It will all come together. It will all be clear as mud. But understand that when God chose you, it says in Ephesians 1:4, "that we should be holy and without blame before Him." The reason He chose you before the foundation is so that you would be what He wants you to be. See if He left it up to you, you would mess it up. You never would be. And think of how much human performance is in

Christianity, trying to be holy and without blame. Excuse me? God already took care of that. Now does He want you to be holy? Yes. “Be ye holy for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:45). But I want you to know that positionally, God’s already taken care of it. He really doesn’t trust you to handle it. Why?—because He knows you. He knows you very well. He knows what you are going to do or not do before you do it.

It’s an interesting subject, isn’t it? But can you believe it, right after saying that, look at verse 5. “...In love, having predestinated us.” There it is again. So you see, it’s not just called, not just chosen, we also have predestinate. Now what does that mean? We have an English word in that word, right out of the Greek, just set into English. Here’s the Greek word, *pro*, meaning before. *Pro*. Before. *Proorizō*. Horizon. That’s where we get our English word horizon, right off the Greek word. Horizon means, you know, as you look at the sky and the sunset and all, what we’re really talking about is a boundary that you’re marking out in the sky, in that case. So what we simply have is God has marked out a plan, a boundary before hand.

Now according to Ephesians 1:5, the plan is to adopt you as a child by Jesus Christ to our heavenly Father. That’s the plan. Can you believe that before He ever made the world, He had a plan that included you? I mean I don’t know, class, there’s a certain sense in which we need to educationally and intellectually you know hassle through this. There’s another sense in which we need to just back off for a moment and reflect and worship the Lord. Imagine! He chose you and you and you before the foundation of the world and guaranteed that you would be adopted as His child. And if you’re adopted then you’re an heir of everything He has. (Romans 8:16-17) Man!

You see, you didn't really do anything to deserve this. Let me put it a little stronger to you. What you really deserve is hell. Isn't it interesting that God did not base it on what you deserve, or on your performance, or on your potential, or anything else. It was His own decision.

And let me tell you one other thing, in Greek we have three voices, where in English we have two. In English we have active and passive. Active means I did it; passive, it was done to me. The Greek adds a voice that's a lot like an English reflexive pronoun. What's a reflexive pronoun? The easy way to remember: just put the word S-E-L-F on it—himself, yourself, etc. So in a middle voice it's like our English reflexive pronoun. What it means is that whatever it's talking about, you do it in and of yourself. It means that there's no outside force acting on it. When God chose you, the Greek put the word in middle voice. Meaning He did it in and of Himself. There was no cause in you that caused Him to choose you.

Now if that doesn't make you, once in a while, fall on your face and praise His holy name, you probably are just sick, blind, indifferent, carnal, or an unbeliever. Can you believe that? In and of Himself! Nothing else, acting upon His own decision, He decided He wanted you as His child forever! And I've never even seen Him yet. But I already love Him. I know what He's like. I read about Him all the time. Greatest person I've ever known.

One of my former students called me last night and it's so good to see the hand of the Lord. He's one of those brothers that everything that comes out of his mouth is encouraging. He thinks I'm encouraging him, but he's encouraging me. And I see the beauty of the Lord in him because he was a mess. But God saved him. He came to this

Bible college, started learning the Word. God's going to use him greatly. He's all excited about serving the Lord. And I hope you will bless many, many people yourself. Just learn to be a blessing. Not a burden. Just learn to love folks and encourage them whenever you can. But I'll tell you, none of you come close to my blessed Lord. None of you do. And the only reason you are like you are is because of Him. Can you believe it? He actually wanted you to be His child before He ever made the world. Man. It's hard to fathom, isn't it? It's hard to really understand.

Let's go on. So when is the moment that all this occurs?—before the foundation of the world. 1 Corinthians 2:7 also says before the world, meaning the ages of time ever started. And of course Romans 8:29 says whom He did foreknow. So the answer to what predestination is based on is God's foreknowledge.

Now, if you're like me, I know I shouldn't question God. I read Romans 9. I've read "Who has a right to question Him? The clay doesn't have a right to question the potter." But I also know that He gave me a brain to think and a mind to think. I do ask a lot of questions. And I still do. I probably ask more questions now than I ever did. Cause I want to know. And as I'm thinking about God choosing me before the foundation of the world, do you know, I've got this question in my mind that everybody does ultimately, as they grow in the Lord. Why? Why me? It's a tough question isn't it. People say, "Well, because He loved you." Well, and He didn't love the others, right? That's hard for me.

I read in John 3:16, "God so loved the world...." Oh, well that's just the world of those who believe in Him. No, it's not! I looked that up. 1 Timothy 4:10 said, "He's the Savior of the world, and especially those who believe," which has to mean He's also somehow the Savior of those who don't.

“Well, God loves you. He really saw all the wonderful things you’re going to do for Him.”

No, I don’t believe that. I’m still asking why. And I have come up and you know you can see in your notes four things. You might be able to create a lot more, make a longer list. But there are four things that clearly tell me why. And I don’t understand them, but I know the Bible teaches them.

One, He just wanted to do it. God’s pleasure. He just wanted to do it. You know Psalm 115:3 and Psalm 135:6 both say that He does whatever He wants in heaven and earth, He does whatever He pleases. It’s remarkable. God does anything He wants. We just read in Ephesians 1:5, chosen, “predestinated according to the pleasure of His will.” God’s really delighted in this thing. He likes His plan. And you don’t have anything to do with it and He really likes that. Why did He do this? Because He wanted to! By an *a priori* argument, I mean, where was the competition? It was just God? There wasn’t anything else. So, who’s around to argue? No one! There wasn’t anything. There’s nothing, no one but God, and He can do whatever He wants to do. And so He decided that He’s going to do this. Why did He want to do it? Cause He wanted to! That’s what it says.

And did you know that it says all creation was for the same reason?

Revelation 4:11,

Thou art worthy O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, dominion for Thou hast created all things and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.

Why did He make so many galaxies?—cause He wanted to. Why did He make it so our telescopes going out there (the universe), we think now it's 20 to 25 billion years old from the standpoint of the speed of light, when the universe was created. Why did He make that like that?—because He wanted to. “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). We're to praise Him forever. Why did He do it? I don't know. He just wanted to. Some of us are never satisfied with biblical statements. We then go to human reasoning. Remember what we said earlier.

A second thing is God's providence. Why did God do all this? All I know is that the Bible says, “The king's heart is in the Lord's hand and He turns it however He wants” (Proverbs 21:1). God is in control. He puts up kings and takes them down. Nobody's telling Him what to do.

Everybody wants to know everything in advance. But the Lord's not going to give it to you. But it is definitely His motive to control. “We know that all things work together for good,” and how many Christians read that verse and hang on for dear life but don't believe it. “Oh great, the things that happen in my life is all for good. Yeah, right. Thanks a lot. I don't want to hear it anymore.”

But see, our God is so powerful. His providence, His control can take all that we call negative and bad and work it around for His glory and our good. He even takes “the wrath of men to praise His name” (Psalm 76:10). Isn't that great?

And He has a plan. He plans—what's His motive here? He plans to save some out of the many who are given the opportunity to believe. And you know right there, everybody just blows away. I mean, they go ballistic. They don't like God doing that. As

if we have a choice. Pardon the pun. We don't have a choice in this matter, folks. God did it.

Go to Romans 9. Now if you think your brain's hurting now, watch this one. We'll take a break here in just a moment. Hang on. Romans 9:8. It's a discussion about Isaac and Rebecca and Jacob and Esau. Talking about how the plan of God was throughout history. God's plan to bring a Messiah that would bring salvation. And there's a remnant, according to His grace. He has not cast away Israel. All of that's being discussed. He's going to prove it.

Romans 9:7-9,

7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children:

[That's an interesting question. People say, "Well, if they're born they are born." No. What he's talking about is spiritual versus physical.] but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. [Going to be a messiah had to come.]

8 That is, they which are the children of the flesh [born physically] these are not the children of God: [If that's all you've got, you're not saved because you're just alive.] but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. [Those who believe God's promise that He'd bring the Messiah]

9 For this is the word of promise, [Here's an example of it.] At this time will I come and Sarah shall have a son."

God promised something that seemed humanly impossible. Sarah is eighty-nine years old. And it wasn't just her problem. The guy she was married to, Abraham, was no spring chicken. He was ninety-nine.

And it says (Romans 9:10-12),

10 Not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived. [Rebecca was barren for twenty years. Verse 11 here we get down to the heart of it.]

11 The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God... [What's the purpose of God?] The purpose of God according to election—[His choice. There wasn't anything outside of Himself that caused Him to make the decision.]—the purpose might stand not of works but of Him that calleth; [Look how those words are blended together, and in order to demonstrate that He said to Rebecca before she ever had the boys born.]

12 The elder shall serve the younger.

Wait a minute! That's reverse from Jewish law. I know. But God says in order to show you that "My purpose" will always stand according to election, nothing else, I'm going to switch the order.

Romans 9:13-18,

13 As it is written Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated. [I'll do what I want to do.]

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? [How can God do that?] God forbid.

15 For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, I'll have compassion on whom I will have compassion,

16 So then it is not of him that willeth.' [He said, no, it's My will that counts. It's not of him that willeth,] nor of him that runneth. [Okay, so it's not my will, but it does take my obedience. No it doesn't. You can run around the church 36 times and it isn't going to help.] it is of God that shows mercy.

17 For the Scripture sayeth unto Pharaoh, for this same purpose...

Back in verse 11, this purpose of God behind His sovereign plan; that same purpose was operating when he raised Pharaoh up. Why? So He might show His power and His name would be declared. Is Pharaoh saved? No, he's lost. But God had a purpose in why he was here.

18 Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy and whom He will He hardeneth.

Boy that brings out a lot of things. People read the Book of Exodus and say, "I think God only hardened his heart because Pharaoh hardened his heart." Excuse me? God said He would harden his heart before he even had a chance to hear what God's message was. Did Pharaoh harden his heart? Sure. Why?—because God hardened it! Do you understand? Here we are back again to the good old Calvinist / Arminian struggle again. Do you harden your heart? Yes. Does God harden your heart? Yes. Well, which one?—both. Well, I don't understand. I know. He likes it. He likes the fact that you can't figure

this out. He wants to be praised for who He is. He wants to be trusted. He doesn't want you to lean to your own understanding.

Romans 9: 19-24,

19 Thou wilt say unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him who formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? [This is what we're trying to do here!]

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? [Of course He does!]

22 What if God willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, [as He did in the case of Pharaoh] endured with much long suffering [God is very patient] the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that He might make know the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared [Here, they don't prepare themselves. God did it.] unto glory,

24 Even us, whom He hath, [What?] called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Oh, this is a tough passage. It talks about God's plan to save some out of the many who are given the opportunity to believe. You see God has a purpose and that is

that He wants to receive glory through your life and mine. And do you know that God is glorified when you realize He did it and you didn't. God is glorified.

John 15:16, Jesus says, "You have not [elected] chosen Me, I have chosen you."