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Challenges to Unconditional Election (Part 2)



God's Sovereignty and Man's Salvation - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the challenges to the doctrine of unconditional election. He acknowledges that while the Bible states that "No one unless the Father sent draws him," it doesn't necessarily support the Calvinist idea of predestination. Gregg argues that election is a corporate concept, not an individual one, and that all who believe in Jesus become a part of the chosen tree of God. He emphasizes the importance of faith in salvation and the dangers of pride and unbelief.

Transcript

I ended the last session, oh, a few verses short of what I wished, because we were talking about challenges to unconditional election, and our format for each of these challenges is to first reexamine the positive evidence, which we've been doing, and then to get to the second part where we look at the contrary witness of Scripture on the subject. And we almost made it to the end of that first part, but not quite. I always like to end at a good stopping point, and it just didn't happen.

We were talking about predestination, and we talked about Acts 13.48, a very important verse, about as many as were appointed to eternal life believed, very important to the Calvinists. But as I pointed out, even if we retain the translation as it is, those who are appointed to eternal life, it doesn't tell us how long ago, how long previously they were appointed. Maybe God, a moment earlier, said, I see a good heart there.

I'm going to appoint that person to become one of my disciples. See, God, Arminians don't have to pretend that God isn't very active in drawing a person to himself. Of course God is.

She said, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them. This is not a strictly Calvinist acknowledgement. I truly believe, I've heard so many testimonies where people didn't seem like they were actively searching for God or not, and they stumbled across the gospel and suddenly got saved.

Or I've talked to people who were just in their kitchen doing things and hadn't ever been evangelized, but they knew something about God, and they just got converted as they

stood washing the dishes. I mean, weird things happen like that. A friend of mine who's also a Bible teacher, and like myself, he's not a Calvinist, and he had an experience like that in his kitchen.

He said, you know, if I were to go by my experience alone, I'd have to be a Calvinist because I don't remember that I was seeking God. It seemed like God apprehended me and I wasn't even looking for him. And I'd have to say, if I went by my experience, I'd probably have to be a Calvinist because I can't even imagine ever losing my faith.

I just can't imagine knowing God and then someday denying that I know God. So, I mean, Calvinistic assertions sometimes fit very well with our experiences. And if only I could find a way of making the Bible really teach them, I could be a Calvinist.

But I don't think the Bible does teach them. But as a non-Calvinist, I have to say that real experience often conforms very much to something close to what we would expect with Calvinism, namely that God has said, I'm taking you. It's your time.

And it may be that you're not even aware that you're searching for God. You may just have an empty place in your heart and you don't even know it's God you're looking for. And God, as long as he doesn't find you saying no, he can have you.

He can get you. I believe that. God draws people powerfully to himself.

He convicts with his spirit. He does those kinds of things. And he might even do it even in a way similar to what Calvinists think in some special cases.

We think of Saul of Tarsus or Jeremiah. Jeremiah, God said, I chose you when you were in your mother's womb. Well, that certainly was unilateral.

And Paul said that God separated him from his mother's womb and called him to be an apostle. That is to say, the prophet and the apostle recognized that they kind of were born to this mission. God had designs on them for this particular calling before they were born.

Now, God has every right to do that. He certainly picked Moses before Moses had any real interest. I mean, God often calls people for himself because he has something specific he's going to do through that person.

And we don't want to, we're too democratic to want to believe that we're not all equally important. But frankly, probably we're not. We're all loved, but we may not all be that important.

I personally think that God probably loved Ishmael as much as he loved Isaac. But Ishmael wasn't as important. God had something in mind for Isaac.

Different. Some people clearly change the world or change the body of Christ or have a

significant impact. Others, less so.

That doesn't mean they're less loved. It just means God has the right to say, I've got something really special in mind. I think I'm going to use him and I'm not going to let him get away.

You know, I mean, now of course that doesn't mean the person couldn't, if he wished, resist ultimately and say, no, you're not. But I mean, in some cases, resisting God might have to be much more determined in order to avoid getting saved, depending on how much God is out to get somebody. But we're just talking in general, what Calvinist teaches that it's always this way, no matter what every person who gets saved, it's because God wanted to, not because they wanted to.

And that's what I don't think the Bible necessarily teaches. Anyway, the point here is that even the word appointed, *tasso*, could be translated disposed. It's a legitimate translation of that word.

And Luke may be saying, as many as were disposed to eternal life, believed. And that would change the whole complexion of what would be affirmed there. By the way, if Luke was trying to say those who are predestined for eternal life from eternity past got saved, it's like the only time he ever mentions believing such a concept.

And it stands out like a sore thumb in contrast to the other records in Acts of people being converted. Because we read of people being converted a lot in the book of Acts, and this is the only time that this kind of wording might seem to support a Calvinist thing. Usually it's certain people were persuaded by what Paul said, or they were cut to their heart and they said, what must we do? Or they have, you know, in other words, all the cases really other than this seem to be indicating that people were just open to something or they were persuaded by someone said, or they were convicted, just the kind of things an Arminian might say.

Of course, the business about God opening Lydia's heart to hear Paul, we've talked about that enough to know that God was simply continuing his work in his child, Lydia, who was already his person. And now he moved her to the next step into understanding who Jesus was just like many. See, Jesus and Paul lived in a generation that was transitional between those who were already God's people before the Messiah came, who were, you know, they were already the faithful remnant.

And in that generation, God made the transition for them to step from the previous revelation to the new revelation. Here's the new message. Here's the gospel of Jesus.

And it's the most natural thing in the world for those who are already following the old one to just make that transition. So that when Jesus said, all that the father gives me will come to me, and they says, but the people who the father gives me, they were God's

people before. That's not like God's overcoming total depravity in somebody to get them saved.

It's a logical step for them. In Romans 8, 28 through 30, Paul said, for whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he predestined, these he also called, whom he called, these he also justified, and whom he justified, these he also glorified.

This verse is sometimes cited for more than one of the points of Calvinism. And particularly, of course, election and predestination are usually discussed together. Because Calvinism teaches that people were elected before the foundation of the world to be saved.

That's sort of the same thing as predestination. And there is some overlap in the concepts, but predestination is a word used not very often with reference to human salvation. It's used in fact twice exactly in that way.

Once here in Romans 8, 29, and then in the next verse that's in your notes in Ephesians 1, 4. These are the only, and Ephesians 1, 11 in the same context, these are the only places that the Bible uses the word predestination with reference to humans. I mean, Jesus is said to be predestined before the foundation of the world and things like that. But with reference to human salvation, predestination is an unusual word in the scripture.

And this is one of the two. And what does it say? Now, Calvinists believe predestination means that God looked on a world of sinners and predestined some of them to become Christians instead. That predestination has to do with actually coming to Christ out of being a non-Christian.

And therefore they believe that of course the decision to become a Christian on your part isn't yours. God made that decision and predestined you for it or not before the foundation of the world. You've got nothing you can do to change it.

But that's not how Paul uses the term. He says, whom he foreknew, he also predestined. There's a group of people that are already defined before the predestining part.

Before predestining, he foreknew them. The ones he foreknew, the ones that already fit that category, he also predestined. What did he predestine them to become Christians? No.

He predestined them to be conformed to the image of his son. Now that's sanctification. That's coming to be like Christ.

God has predestined that his people will someday be like Jesus. Paul said, all we with

unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed from glory to glory into that same image. That's Christians.

Christians are being changed. We're being sanctified. We can be more like Jesus.

That's God's purpose, his work in our lives. In 1 John 3, it says, Beloved, now we are the children of God. It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we will be like him.

For we shall seem as he is. This is our destiny as Christians. God has predestined that Christians will someday be conformed to the image of his son.

That's his goal for us. It does not say that he predestined anyone to become a Christian. The predestination is something that applied to a group of people that foreknew.

The ones he foreknew, that's the starting point of this chain. Those ones, he predestined that those ones will be conformed to the image of God's son. Now, presumably, those that he foreknew means the Christians, the church.

So, essentially, he's saying God has predestined that the Christians will become like Christ. He's predestined that the church will be conformed to the image of Christ. That's his goal for the church, and he's determined it's going to happen.

Did he determine who would be a Christian? Well, that'd have to be addressed somewhere else. It's not addressed here. He doesn't say anything about God choosing who will be a Christian.

Now, what can we say about this word foreknew? God foreknew. This is the word *genosko*, to know, with the word *pro*, which means in advance, beforehand, attitude, to know beforehand. The ones that he knew beforehand, knew what about them? Now, this is where it gets controversial.

The Calvinist points out quite correctly, it doesn't say that God knew something about these people beforehand. He just knew them beforehand. Like, they say, in this sense, the word know means sort of like you know a friend, like you know them in a favorable way.

It's not just intellectual knowledge of facts about them, but to know somebody, just like we talk about knowing the Lord. You know, when we say, do you know the Lord? We don't mean do you have a theological degree. We're saying, do you have a relationship with God? And they say, to foreknow means to be in a relationship or that God, before people were even born, knew and approved of them as his future friends.

Now, that's reading a lot into this word. The word foreknow can, in some situations, have a meaning sort of like that, but it's also the ordinary word for knowing something in

advance. It's not the case that the Calvinist can say, well, this translation of it works for me, so that's what it means.

Maybe it does. Maybe it doesn't. It doesn't have to.

All we know is there's a group of people that are foreknown to God. Now, it is possible that he foreknew the sum total of people who would be believers. That is to say, he knew they would be believers.

He knew there'd be a category of people in the world that were believers in Christ, and he approved of them in advance. As he approved of the category, that he foreknew. It doesn't even say, I mean, it may be he just foreknew Christ would have people attached to him, and those ones he, in advance, decided he would approve of, and that he decided he'd make a plan for those who would be attached to Christ.

This is not very explicit. It allows more than one possible nuance in the business of foreknowledge. There's a similar verse, or at least these words are similarly found in 1 Peter, chapter 1, and verse 2. 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 2, describing the readers, the Christians, he says that they are elect, that is chosen, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

So, the Christians are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Now, it's not at all impossible to imagine that what this means is that God, knowing the future, who would believe, knew who would follow Christ, knew who would persevere, knowing who they were, he chose them and predestined them to be in the group that would be, or predestined for them a destiny of being conformed to the image of Jesus. Foreknowledge and election are mentioned together here and also in Romans 8, 29, and really nowhere else.

But the exact relationship to foreknowledge and election, or foreknowledge and predestination, is not clear. One thing is clear, that the word predestination is not talking about being predestined to become Christians, but people who clearly are Christians are predestined to become like Jesus. That's what Paul says in really no uncertain terms in Romans 8, 29.

And that, I think, leaves open the possibility that foreknowledge could mean a number of things. It could mean that God knew a category of people without determining who would be in it. He just knew there'd be a body of Christ.

He knew there'd be followers of Jesus. He knew that he was going to send his son and he's going to gather out of the world people who would be his friends and loyalists. And God, knowing that in advance, determined that whoever they would be, he's going to turn them into the likeness of Christ somewhere down the road.

That's not an unreasonable rendering of the words, although the Calvinist also wants it.

It's not unreasonable for the Calvinist to say foreknew means foreloved. They often say that.

Foreknew means foreloved. But one thing we can definitely say is that foreknowledge is not the same thing as predestination, or else Paul's being redundant. He foreknew them before he predestined them, and therefore foreknowledge and predestination are not the same thing, even though some Calvinists talk as if it is.

All we know is there's a group of people that God foreknew in one sense or another. He may have just known that they would believe. He may have known that some group, the constitution of which, as far as who is in it, was not necessarily the issue, but the category.

He chose that category. Whoever believes in Christ, I'm going to do this for them. And I know there's going to be some people like that.

It's ambiguous, and that's why it doesn't settle things for us. That's why there are Arminians and Calvinists, in spite of the fact that there's verses like this, because it can be seen more than one possible way. Which way it should be seen? It'd be hard to be dogmatic.

But since I don't believe that it's, no matter what we interpret foreknowledge to be, I don't think it tells us anything about people being predestined to be saved. Just foreknown to be saved, and predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ. And we have a similar verse, or verses in Ephesians 1. In verses 4-6 and 11, Paul says, Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, by which he made us accepted in the beloved, in him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

Now this is a very Calvinistic sounding verse, not least the very last line, that God works all things according to the counsel of his will. But there's also, he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. That sounds like predestination.

And then the word predestined is twice in the passage too. So this is a, you know, this is hog heaven for the Calvinists, this passage here, because it's got a lot of verses and phrases that are favorites of theirs, and understandably so. We won't blame them for that.

But what is Paul saying, necessarily? Now, one thing that that Arminians often point out is that God does, Paul does not say that God chose us before the foundation of the world to be in Christ. It says he chose us in Christ. Now you might say, well, that's just a, that's

just a, you know, semantic difference.

No, that's a conceptual difference. You see, to say that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, what does it mean to be chosen in Christ? It's not the same thing as unbelievers chosen to come into Christ. That's another issue.

It means that there are those in Christ and in Christ they are chosen. Just, you know, Paul's favorite expression is in Christ. And what he means by it is something many Christians don't understand, clearly.

It's a, it's a corporate concept that we don't use really in very many modern settings, but Paul was very fond of. He sees Christ as corporate. Sometimes he describes him as a body, a head, and we're the members, you know, but just like the organs are in your body, they are in you.

And, and the identity of your body is the same as the identity of your head. And no one, no one when I walked in here this evening said, oh, here comes Steve and his head, or here comes Steve and his body. If you saw either my head or my body, you knew this was Steve and both are Steve.

There's only one Steve and his head and body. So Paul sometimes speaks about the church as if the church is Christ. For example, in the last verse of Ephesians one, Paul said that God gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The church is his body. The church is the fullness of him. Just like my head is incomplete without my body.

My body fills out the identity of my head, which would be very incomplete without the body. So Christ is the head and he himself would be incomplete without a body. He, the church is his body, the fullness of him.

In another place in first Corinthians 12, I believe it's first 12, Paul's giving the illustration of a human body being like the church. In fact, first Corinthians 12 is the earliest point we know where Paul even used the imagery of a body as the body of Christ to talk about the church. And he's trying to introduce this subject to the Corinthians.

He's saying, you know, a human body, he gives the example of a human body. He says, as a body or as the body, the generic human body is, has many members distinct and yet is one body. So also is Christ, he says.

Now he's describing the church, the body of Christ. He says, you know, there's a, it's like a body. There's lots of members of it, but they're all different members, but they're one body.

So also is, we'd expect him to say the church or the body of Christ. He says, so also is Christ. To Paul, there's an identity between Christ and the church that's organic, just like a head and a body.

Of course, we can speak of the man, Jesus as Christ in some connections, but Paul likes to speak of Jesus as the head and Christ is the whole organism, head and body. We share his identity. That's why he's our head.

That's, there's some mystery. Paul calls this a mystery, but Paul is very fond of this, a corporate concept of the body of Christ is the corporate Christ. That's why he says some people are in Adam, some are in Christ corporately.

Adam has a body too. He's the head of the lost body of all humanity. Christ is the head of the redeemed humanity.

And so when Paul talks about us in Christ, he says, we, we died in Christ. We rose in Christ. We are righteous in Christ.

We are accepted in Christ, the beloved. We are seated in Christ in the heavenly places and so forth. What he's saying is what is true of our head is true of us too, because we're one with him.

He and we are the same identity. I am in Christ. Therefore, if he's in the heavenlies, I'm in the heavenlies in him.

Did he die and rise again? Then I'm in him. I died and rose again. These are very important concepts to Paul because they have to do with why we are accepted to God, because he sees us in Christ.

I sometimes like to use the illustration of organs of a body if, if, uh, because Paul actually encourages that. And if you imagine a case where a man is a criminal who's committed crimes, he's on death row and he's going to, he's going to die. He's condemned to go.

He's a bad man and he's doomed to die. And then there's another man who's just been elected president of the United States. He's going to be the most powerful man in the world.

Trouble is the president has a liver problem and needs a transplant or he's going to die. This is some of this is not analogous. I'm just trying to put something together that makes a measure of sense.

And the man on death row says here, take mine. And so he donates his liver and it's transplanted in the president. Now that liver has just had a change of identity.

It was the liver of a condemned man who's about to die a wicked man at that. Now it's the, it's the liver of somebody who's not only not condemned, I'd be destined to rule the

most powerful nation in the world. It's a, it's a place of honor.

It's a, you know, it's a place of power. It's a place of significance. Now the liver is the same liver, but it's in a different body now.

And its identity is with the body it's now in the liver was going to die in the body of its original possessor, but now it's going to rule the nation in the body of another. We were in Adam condemned to death. We were like members of his corporate body, but we've been transplanted into the body of Christ.

Now we're going to rule the universe with him. We're going to reign with him because we're in him and no status distinction or no destiny distinction can be made between him and his body. And so to Paul being in Christ means whatever advantages and privileges accrue to Christ are ours now.

Now he says we are chosen in Christ. What he really means, at least most Arminians would say is that Christ is chosen. I'm not chosen.

You're not chosen. Christ is chosen, but I'm in him and you're in him. So we are chosen in him.

The president who gets the liver transplant, the liver transplant is now elected president, but no one voted for that liver. They voted for the man. And that liver happens to be in the man.

And in the man, that liver has been voted president. And as it's been chosen to lead the country in him. And this is how Paul is thinking.

Many people believe, I certainly believe this, that Christ is the one that God has chosen to give all things to. He's the heir of all things. He's going to rule all the universe.

And we are now in him. His chosenness becomes our chosenness. We are chosen in him.

Not chosen to be in him, which could be true, but that's a different concept. But we are chosen in him. Now when it says that God chose us in him before the foundation of the world, Paul's meaning, the awkward as it is to us in our modern way of thinking, would be before the foundation of the world, God chose Jesus and whoever would be in him.

God had a plan before the earth was made to elevate Christ, to give him all things. And whoever's in him, it applies to them too. They are chosen in him before the foundation of the world, because he's chosen before the foundation of the world, and they're just in him.

Now this would be true whether God decided who would be in him or whether that decision was left up to the individuals. It doesn't matter. However you came to be in him, you are chosen in him because he's the chosen one.

Now let me give you another example, and this is taking longer than it might be thought desirable, but these concepts are important biblical concepts. In the New Testament, Christ is considered to be the new Israel. We see this indicated in a number of ways in scripture.

For one thing, in the Old Testament, Israel is God's vine. Jesus says, I'm the true vine. He's the true Israel.

When Jesus was born and was taken into Egypt as a baby to escape Herod's attempts on his life, and then later his family came out of Egypt, Matthew says, this happened that it might fulfill what was written in the prophet, I've called my son out of Egypt. Well of course, Jesus, his son, God's son, came out of Egypt. Matthew says, this fulfilled what was said in Hosea the prophet, Hosea 11.

What does Hosea 11 say? Hosea 11 says, when Israel was young, I loved him and called my son out of Egypt. Israel was God's son. That's what God had Moses say to Pharaoh, Israel is my firstborn.

If you don't let Israel go, I will kill your firstborn. God saw Israel collectively as if it was his son. But when Jesus came, Jesus was that son in one person.

He's the quintessential Israel. The nation of Israel was a type and a shadow of Jesus in many respects, not in all respects, but in some, in being the chosen one. In the Old Testament, Israel was the chosen nation, but it was a corporate entity.

It wasn't chosen to go to heaven because not all Jews go to heaven. The Pharisees, Jesus said, they're going to go to Gehenna. Caiaphas, I don't expect to see him in heaven.

You know, I don't expect to see Korah in heaven. He was Israelite too. Being in the nation of Israel didn't mean you had a ticket to heaven.

It meant you were chosen for something. Israel was chosen to be, as we've said earlier, the nation through whom the Messiah would come. That's what they were chosen for.

But to be in Israel or not was an individual decision. You might say, no, people were either born in it or not. True, but they could leave or come in.

A Jew could be cut off from Israel by denying the covenant. A Gentile could come into Israel by becoming a proselyte. That is, to say that Israel was chosen by God just means collectively whoever happened to be in Israel was part of that chosen nation that God was dealing with as an entity.

If you are a Jew who defected and became a pagan, well, you were not in Israel anymore. You weren't chosen anymore. You were when you were in, but you're not anymore when you're out.

If you're a Gentile, you're not chosen. But if you become a proselyte, you are chosen. See, the choosing isn't taking place before eternity, in eternity past.

It's choosing when you decide to be in or out. You choose to be in the chosen group or not in the chosen group. In the Old Testament, if you were in Israel, you were chosen in Israel.

In the New Testament, the new Israel is Christ. If you're in Christ, you're chosen in him. You see, Israel a nation was the chosen people in the Old Testament.

Christ is the chosen one in the New Testament. Being chosen in Christ is the same concept as being chosen in Israel. Another example might make sense to us is if your church had a choir and the President of the United States, the next one, not this one, was elected and he was going to choose a choir, a church choir to sing at his inauguration, a great privilege, I'm sure.

And your little church happens to be picked out of a hat. Oh, it's the Brunswick Baptist Church Choir. They're going to go to Washington, D.C., and they're going to sing at the inauguration of the next President.

And the members of that choir could say, we've been chosen for this great privilege, and they'd be right. But the President didn't choose the individuals. He chose the choir.

He doesn't know who's in it. He doesn't care who's in it. The constituency of the choir might change between now and the time that the song is sung.

Someone in the choir might die or leave or move out of the area. Someone else might join. The actual constituency of the choir, as far as who's in it and who's not, is not the issue.

The choir as a whole was chosen. If you happen to join the choir, then you're chosen. Though you aren't personally chosen, you have become chosen.

You have become chosen in the choir because the choir was chosen. And so this is how Paul sees Christ. We are chosen in him.

He is not necessarily saying that we were chosen to be in him, which we might have been, but Paul doesn't say so. That's making a different kind of a statement. So before the foundation of the earth, God chose Christ and whoever would be in him to be treated with deference and great honor and to rule the world.

And we're in him. So we're chosen in him. Now, going further, he says, he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy.

Now, we is collective. We often think of we as just so many individuals. Paul thinks of the church as one body.

When he says we, more often than not, he means just whoever is in the church collectively as we. Remember he said there's no Jew or Gentile, male or female, bond or free. All are one in Christ, which is one of us.

We are one. We are the body of Christ, the one new man. God took the Jew and the Gentile, broke down the middle wall and made in himself one new man, the church.

So we are that one man. We are the body of Christ. Now, God chose us collectively, whoever happens to be in that group, the body of Christ, and he chose us to be holy and unblameable in his sight.

That is to live a certain way that other people don't live for the glory of God. Beyond that, verse five, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself. Now, you might say that sounds like we're predestined to be saved because he's predestined us as sons.

But if we think that way, it's because we've been taught to think that way. The truth is he's saying we have been predestined, as Christians, we've been predestined to experience adoption. Just like the other passage said, we are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ.

This is the destiny of the Christian. It's not conversion. It's actually glorification that's being discussed here.

Look at Romans chapter eight, and I'll show you what I mean and what I think Paul means. Romans chapter eight, verse 23, Paul said, not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the spirit, that's us Christians who are in the church, even we ourselves grown within ourselves eagerly waiting for what? The adoption, which he identifies as the redemption of our body. I think that's a reference to the resurrection.

I think that's the reference to being glorified when Jesus returns, being made like him, being conformed to his image. This happens at the resurrection. Paul refers to that as the adoption.

Now in Ephesians, he says God has predestined us to adoption. As far as I can tell, he's saying the same thing here as what he said about predestination in Romans 8, 29. He predestined that those that he foreknew before the foundation of the world, the ones that would be in Christ, that they would be conformed to the image of the Son.

That's also the adoption. That's actually glorification. That's resurrection and being transformed into the image of Christ.

This is the destiny that he has predestined the church to experience. That's what I think. You could see another way, but I don't think it'd be as good, as helpful.

According to the good pleasure of his will. Verse 6, to the praise of the glory of his grace by which he made us accepted in the beloved. That's in Christ.

Christ is accepted, so I'm accepted because I'm in him. We're accepted in him. In him also we have obtained an inheritance.

Why? Because he has an inheritance. Remember what God said to Jesus according to Psalm 2, verse 8. God says to Jesus, ask of me and I'll give you the heathen for your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. That's promised to Jesus.

He's going to receive the whole world as his inheritance. We are joint heirs with Christ. We're going to inherit with him because he has obtained it.

In him we have obtained it too. Just like in the illustration of the liver. Because the man has obtained the office of president, the liver has obtained the office of president in him too.

We are just like livers in the body of Christ. We are just lowly livers, but we're in a body that's going to rule the nations and be glorified and inherit all things. So that's our inheritance in him.

In him we have obtained an inheritance being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the council's will. All things in this case I'm going to suggest means all the things he's just been discussing. All these things we've been discussing, he has worked this out.

This is his purpose and he's worked it out according to the power of his will. Of course he's worked all things or he works all things according to the council's will. For some people means he is meticulously provident in all activities of the world.

Taking the word all things absolutely, that would perhaps be one possible meaning. Although even then it could mean something else. It could just mean that everything that happens he works it out to conform to his will.

Just like all things work together for good to those who love God. Even if not all the good things that are working out are where his will initially, he can manipulate that. He can exploit that.

He can work that out. He can take that raw material and make from it what he wants to have as a result. All things can work together for good and he can work all things according to the council's will.

It does not necessarily speak out predestination or meticulous providence. It could simply be saying if he's involved in everything, he's just involved in the way that he's

going to take that and that and that and everything else and just kind of exploit it all to bring about what he wants to see happen. Not necessarily in the micro, although it could be that too.

I'm trying to grant that the Calvinist view of this verse is possible. I'm not trying to just be unfair to Calvin. I think that some of the interpretations they use in the verses would work for them.

I'm saying they don't have to be seen that way. They work for another view too. When a verse can be seen supporting one view and also supporting the contrary view, it's not a verse that supports either view.

It's just a verse that needs to be understood, but it isn't a very good proof for anything in an argument if it can be used both ways. 1 Thessalonians 1, 4, and 5, knowing beloved brethren, your election of God for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. Now again, if Paul's thinking of election as corporate and he's saying to this baby church that had just been founded a few weeks before he wrote the letter, we know your election of God.

Does that mean that he's talking to every individual in the church that says, you personally, we know you were elected by God, you were elected by God, maybe, but he could be saying you people, the church, we know that God has elected you, the church in Thessalonica because he has, when we showed up, he showed up. When we preached the word, God made that word come forth in power so that a church was planted. We are so glad to see that there's a chosen group in Thessalonica that God, you know, brought about through his wonderful power, enabling the word to come in power and conviction and so forth.

It is the church that is elect. If Paul is saying the individuals are elect, he might say it the same way, but he might not. He doesn't specify that every individual is seen as an elect person so much as you, plural, the church.

He's addressed the epistle to the church in Thessalonica. You, church, you're elect. Yeah, well, the church is elect in Christ, but that's not necessarily teaching predestination of individuals.

Actually, no passage in the Bible necessarily does. And then 2 Thessalonians 2.13, similar. We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit in belief of the truth.

Now, this is saying the same thing to the same people. It only says he did it from the beginning, that God chose you, the church, to be saved. He chose the church to be

saved through their faith and through the sanctification of the Spirit.

Calvinists sometimes use this verse to say that God preordained who would believe, because it says he chose you from the beginning to be saved through faith. But the thing that he was chosen that it specifically says to be saved, the fact that they're saved through their faith, it doesn't mean that God chose who would have faith. He chose that those who would be saved would be saved through faith.

And there is a church that he has chosen there that exists now that's shown itself to be, as he said in the first epistle, they're elect. They're part of the true church. They're really part of the body of in him.

They're elect. If you get the idea that election is corporate rather than individual, all these verses work perfectly well. And election was corporate in the Old Testament in Israel.

And Christ Paul seizes the new Israel. And so if you understand the corporateness of election rather than individuality and particularness of election, you don't find this predestination doctrine in these passages. Only an affirmation that the church is elect of God.

The church as an entity is chosen by God. And a person who has trouble with that can go back to the more Calvinistic way of thinking about it if they want to, but they need to know they're doing something that is not mandatory. And in my mind, not probable in terms of Paul's meaning.

By the way, this does have the term from the beginning, which encourages the idea of maybe a predestination. Dave Hunt talked about that very verse. He says the meaning of from the beginning is in question or is the question.

Paul uses this expression three other times. He quotes Acts 26.5, who knew me from the beginning? And Ephesians 3.9, from the beginning of the world. And in Philippians 4.15, in the beginning of the gospel.

So from the beginning or in the beginning doesn't always mean the same beginning. In Ephesians, it looks like it means in the beginning of the world. But when he says, you knew me from the beginning in Acts 26, he doesn't mean from the beginning of the world.

It means from the beginning of my ministry. Also in Philippians, it means from the beginning of his preaching the gospel. It's very possible that since the Thessalonian church is one of the early churches that Paul evangelized, and they were among the earliest epistles he wrote, that he means you've been Christian from the beginning of the of the Gentile mission, from the earliest times of my ministry.

Or it could mean that before the foundation of the world, God chose the church and you're it. You're now in it. So you're chosen from the beginning.

There's ambiguity here. I hate to keep saying that. And when I debated James White, he hated the fact.

They said, this is ambiguous. This is ambiguous. He wanted me to be an ironclad, you know, and he doesn't think they're ambiguous.

They are. These verses have phrases in them that clearly are used different ways in different passages. And therefore, you know, see where I'm at, and this is maybe where James White was not at, and many people are not at.

I don't mind not having it all nailed down. If the Bible is ambiguous, I'm fine with that. I don't have to make a decision about things that God hasn't made clear.

If he wanted me to make a decision, he should have made it more clear. If he left some things obviously open to interpretation, more than one possibility, it must not be one of those things I have to know right now. I trust God to be clear about the things he wants me to know.

And so, I can study it. I can try to gain more insight into it. I might even hope that someday it will be more clear to me.

But at this point, these things are ambiguous, and I'm not willing to take something that's ambiguous and say the Calvinist interpretation is the one I'm stuck with. I'm not. There are other possibilities equally good.

Just the not knowing which one is intended means, of course, these verses don't really settle any matters. Some verses might, but these ones can't. As long as you're dealing with a verse that could mean one thing or another, you can't settle the question with that verse.

You've got to have something more clear than that. Okay. Contrary witness of Scripture about unconditional election.

God's election is according to foreknowledge. We already saw that. Romans 8, 29, whom he foreknew, he predestined.

1 Peter 1, 2, we're elected according to the foreknowledge of God. And many Armenians believe that God foreknew who would believe. And knowing that about them, he already made plans for them before they were even born.

Because he knew what they were going to do. Calvin didn't like that suggestion. In the eternal predestination of God, Calvin wrote, it's a piece of futile cunning to lay hold on the term foreknowledge and so to use that as to pin the eternal election of God upon the

merits of men.

Which election, the apostle everywhere ascribes to the purpose of God alone. See Calvinists believe that if you say God elected us because he foreknew we'd believe, it means that we did something. We believed.

It's just that God knew we were going to do it before it happened and chose us because we did it. And therefore he says it pins the election of God on man's merit. Now see, this is something Calvinists don't understand.

Being saved by faith is not being saved by merit. There's no merit in having faith. It's a requirement, but it's not an accomplishment.

A child trusts their father. It's not an accomplishment. It's just a relationship.

It's just, you know, if you don't believe you're insulting him. If someone tells you something, say I don't believe it, you're saying they're a liar. Believing is not meritorious.

Unbelief is an insult, but belief is the default. You believe somebody unless you have reason to disbelieve them. When you read the newspapers, you don't even know the person who wrote the story, but you believe it's probably telling a true story that really happened unless you catch them in a lie or something.

Our default approach to people, unless we don't like them and don't trust them, is we believe what they say. Just like you believe I'm from California. None of you knows that to be a fact from experience.

You only know it because I told you what Tim knows it and I guess Sue does, but the point is you believe it. You didn't even ask for proof. You didn't ask to see my driver's license or anything.

You just believed it because you heard it and we do that. We believe people unless we have a reason not to. We should believe God unless we have a reason not to.

We have no reason not to. It says in 1 John, if we receive the witness of men, which we do, the witness of God is greater. So we receive the witness of men on a regular basis, habitually, by default even.

How much more should we receive the witness of God? Believing God isn't doing something meritorious. It's just not stooping to the point of insulting him by disbelieving him. It says in 1 John, whoever doesn't believe the witness has made him a liar.

Well, I don't do that. I'll just believe him. That doesn't make me a good person.

That doesn't earn me brownie points, but he requires that before I can really be in a relationship with him. And frankly, that makes sense. Anyone should require you to

believe them before you have any kind of a significant relationship with them.

I don't think my wife and I would be in a relationship if we couldn't believe each other. It's a relationship of faith. We need promises to each other.

We believe them. Now, that's why we're married. If she didn't believe my promises, I didn't believe hers, we wouldn't be married.

Relationships need trust. A relationship with God needs trust. Having that trust doesn't mean you're good.

In fact, if anything, it means the other person is good. Because you naturally trust someone that you think is good. To trust someone is to credit them, not you.

If I say I don't believe you, I'm insulting you. If I say I do believe you, I'm saying I think you're an honest person. That's a statement about you, not about me.

To say I believe in God, that doesn't tell you anything good about me. It just means I think God is good. He's trustworthy.

What would you do but trust him? Calvin thinks that faith is itself meritorious. Paul thinks the opposite. In fact, John Calvin also said, we would not give all the praise for our election to God if it were not free and undeserved.

It could not be so if it was based on future good works of any individual. Good works? No, we say, well, we're not talking about good works. We're talking about faith.

But Calvin says faith is a work. Because if you say I contributed my faith to the relationship, that is, I decided to believe God, then you did something. You get some of the credit.

You're a better person than the person who didn't choose to have faith. Therefore, you're boasting. And is a boast, then.

Well, Paul says the opposite. In Romans 3, 27, Paul says, where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? The law of works? No, by the law of faith.

That is, the principle of salvation by faith excludes boasting. In Romans 4, verses 4 and 5, he says, now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes, on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.

He contrasts believing with works. In fact, he says, the one who doesn't work but who believes. You see, to Paul, works is one way of being saved.

It doesn't work. And faith is a different way. To the Calvinists, they're all the same.

And I was talking to a Calvinist, debating a Calvinist once, and in a question and answer period afterwards, one of the guys raised a question. Steve, do you think that the reason that Calvinists always speak about faith as a work is because for them it's a lot of work to believe? I'd have to work real hard to believe what they believe. First of all, I'd have a hard time believing the doctrines of Calvinism.

That's a lot of work. I'd be strenuous to make myself believe that. Furthermore, to believe in and love a God, such as the God they believe in, that would be hard work, too.

And it's interesting. They do think faith is work, but they must find it so. I don't find it so.

To me, faith is resting. Faith is not working. Faith is resting.

To him who does not work but who believes. That's what the opposite of salvation is. Paul says it's the opposite of salvation by works.

And he says, therefore, it is of faith that it might be according to grace. So, if you want it to be by grace, it's got to be through faith, Paul says. It is of faith so that it can be through grace.

It's not a works thing. It's the opposite of works. Ephesians 2.89 says, by grace you have been saved through faith.

And that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not of works. Salvation is the gift of God.

Salvation is not of works. Salvation is by faith, not works. It's being saved by faith is not another way of saying I'm saved by my good works.

Calvin didn't understand that. He said, if it's my faith, then it's my merit. It's my good works.

He didn't understand, Paul. He didn't understand faith and works. Clark Pinnock, a non-Calvinist in a big way, he said, the standard criticism leveled against a theology of this kind is synergism.

Remember that word? More than one person working together. Calvinists believe in monergism. Only one person working God.

Pinnock says, the standard criticism about this theology is it's a kind of synergism. It's supposed to bring into the event of salvation a decisive human work and thereby destroy its purely gracious character. But this is simply not the case.

Faith is not a work at all. It is not an achievement and has no merit attaching to it. It is simply the surrender of the will to God.

The stretching out of an empty hand to receive the gift of grace. In the act of faith, we

renounce all our works. We repudiate completely every claim to self-righteousness.

Far from encouraging conceit and self-esteem, faith utterly excludes them, as Paul says. I think that's a good quote. Now, not much time left.

Let's look at the next page. God responds to man's choices. Now, this is what the Calvinists would call synergism.

We do something and God does something. We believe and God accepts. They don't want us doing any part.

Yet, the Bible always teaches that God responds to man's choices. Now, Calvinists, Kenneth Talbot and Gary Crampton don't think so. They say, how could a sovereign deity who has foreordained all things from all eternity have his decrees changed by the wiles of man who is a creature of God and dependent on him for his own existence? But notice what they're presupposing.

God's a deity who has foreordained all things and has sovereign decrees that can't be changed. Well, if there is a God like that, then Arminians are certainly on the wrong track. But if there's a God like that, the Bible doesn't seem to know about it because the Bible doesn't teach that kind of a God.

James White, obviously another Calvinist, says all the religions of man, which he includes Arminianism among, require the creaturely will of man to stand sovereign over God so that no matter how much weight is given to God and his grace, in the final analysis, it is man who is in control of the final decision regarding his salvation. Well, that is in a sense true, but not true. No one says that man can stand sovereign over God.

If God determines that this man should be saved and determines it, no one can stop it. But we don't know that God determines that an individual man will be saved. He leaves that up to the individual.

That's not a violation of God's sovereignty. It's his exercise of his sovereignty to sovereignly make people who have that ability to choose one way or the other. This is not contrary to the definition of God's sovereignty, and it's not contrary to it.

What could be more appropriate for a man who's either going to be eternally in bliss or eternally in torment, if that's how Calvinists believe, what could be more appropriate than for the man to have final say about such a thing? Now, if God wants to have the final say, he's entitled to it. But what is inappropriate about God letting man have the final say about something that affects man more than it affects anything else? You know, I mean, if my daughters came to me and said, you know, this man wants to marry me, and I would need your approval about this. I'd say, well, what do you want? What do you think? I mean, if I think the man's inappropriate, I'd say, I don't think it's a good call.

But if I don't have any objection, I'd say, well, how do you feel about it? It's going to affect you more than it's going to affect me. I'll let you choose. Your happiness or your misery is what's in the balances.

Why shouldn't you have the decision to make? Now, I'm not against kids yielding that decision to their parents' wisdom, but I'm saying there's nothing inappropriate about saying, hey, this is going to affect you more than it affects me. I'm going to let you decide. And yet James White acts like that's the most inappropriate of all possibilities.

He almost states that as something that is self-evidently wrong. That's like giving man the final say about his own salvation. Yeah, in a way it is, isn't it? Dave Hunt responding to that says, non-Calvinists do not require the creaturely will of man to stand sovereign over God.

He's saying we Armenians don't do that. We don't have the human will stand sovereign over God so that man is in control of the final decision regarding his salvation. That is like saying that because a criminal broke the law, he stands sovereign over the judicial system and controls his own sentence.

Obviously, that's not the case. Now, here's a really important verse. Genesis 4, 6 and 7. This is Cain being addressed by God.

And the Lord said to Cain, why are you so angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. Its desire is for you, but you should rule over it. Now, how did Cain turn out after this? Not good.

It was after this that he killed his brother. Before this, he offered the wrong sacrifice. And God accepted Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's.

And Cain was angry. And God said to Cain, hey, what's the problem with you? If you do the right thing like Abel did, you'll be accepted like Abel was. It's just that easy.

If you don't do the right thing, you're likely to be overpowered by sin, but you've got to make sure that doesn't happen. It looks like God's given him a bona fide option. You can and must resist sin.

If you don't, it'll capture you. But if you do well, you'll be in as good graces with me as Abel is. It sounds like it's up to you, Cain.

God didn't say, I've predestined you to be a child of hell. That's why you didn't offer the right sacrifice. I said, if you do what Abel did, you'll get the same approval Abel got.

Now it does say in 1 John chapter 3 that Cain was a son of the devil because he killed his brother. And remember, children of the devil murder people. But even though he was a

child of the devil, that doesn't mean he was, there's a sovereign decree of reprobation against him.

He turned out to be a child of the devil, but God said, you don't have to be one of those. You could do good and be accepted. Unless God was into him, then God had not made some sovereign decree that Cain would turn out this way or that way.

He left the choice with Cain as he leaves it with every man. Jeremiah 18, 7 through 10. Talk about God's sovereign decrees.

The instant God says, the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to pluck it up, to pull it down and to destroy it. If that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. Okay.

I've decreed I'm going to destroy this nation. Oh, they changed. Okay.

I'll change too. Didn't he do that with Nineveh? 40 days Nineveh will perish. They repented.

God repented too and didn't do it. Doesn't God respond? Wasn't that one of the decrees of God that Nineveh would perish in 40 days? Contingent on man's responses, not unchangeable decrees. The passage goes on.

And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to build and to plant it, if it does evil in my sight so that it does not obey my voice, then I will relent concerning the good that I said I would do to it. In other words, I'm going to pretty much respond to the people. If they're doing bad, I threatened to destroy them.

If they change, I'll change. If they're doing good and I promise to bless them, if they change, I'll change. I'm an interactive God.

I'm not just some kind of a concept out there that has impersonally or personally issued all these unchangeable decrees and the world just runs like a clock along the lines of what I said it would do. I'm going to interact with you people because I'm a real person and you're real people and I want a relationship. I will say things and you have the chance to change my mind if you want to.

I respond to man. Proverbs 3, 34, surely God scorns the scornful but he gives grace to the humble. This is quoted in James 4 and 1 Peter 5, 5 where it's rendered God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

Who does he give grace to? The ones he sovereignly chooses who are equally wicked as the ones he doesn't give to? No, the ones who are humble. How do you get humble? Well, everything I read about says humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due

time.

Humble yourself, humble yourself. This exhortation, you're expected to do this yourself. If you humble yourself, you'll be receiving grace.

If you remain proud, you won't. God will resist you. Psalm 18, 25, with the merciful you will show yourself merciful.

Matthew 5, 7, blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Romans 10, 9, that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised from the dead, you'll be saved. You won't be if you don't.

You do the right thing in this matter and God will respond favorably. Do the wrong thing, it'll go otherwise. It doesn't sound like God has set in stone all the outcomes.

Even when he decrees one thing, it can change if people change. It's a clear teaching of scripture that God responds to man. This is an anathema to the Calvinist.

Sometimes I'll actually say to suggest that God would respond to man, you know, that lowers God. Well, no, God lowered God. He existed in the form of God and he emptied himself and took on the form of a servant.

He lowered himself. We're not saying that God is obligated to pay attention to us or to honor our decisions, that he chose to. That's his sovereign desire to relate with us, to interact with us, to respond to us.

Yeah, the sovereign God didn't have to do that, but the sovereign God wanted to do that and that's what he does and Calvinism can't take that right from him because he's sovereign. Now I mentioned, and we'll quit here, actually five minutes, pretty good, I think, election as corporate not individual. I've already made this point and I've shown you some of these scriptures, but notice Ephesians 5, 26 and 27.

It says that Christ gave himself for the church, his bride, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she should be holy and without blemish. Now the reason I mention that is because in Ephesians 1, 4, it says just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame. God chose us that we'd be holy and without blame.

He chose the church that we'd be holy and without blemish. Us is the church, not you and me and everyone individually, it's the bride. He has chosen the bride.

He wants the church to be a spotless bride and for that he chose us in him. For that it's a corporate thing. The church itself was chosen to be holy and without blame and without blemish.

In 1 Peter 2, 9 and 10, Peter says, but you are a chosen generation. A generation is a lot of people. Not you are a chosen person or that you are all chosen persons.

Collectively you're a chosen generation or race. Some translations translate it as a chosen race of church. A royal priesthood, again not just royal priests but a priesthood.

That's a collective. A holy nation. His own special people that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light who once were not a people but you are now the singular people of God.

That is a people who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. The main thing here Peter is talking about election. He says you are a chosen what? Group, generation, nation, priesthood.

These are collectives. The collective was chosen. Individual participation is not mandatory but is available.

1 Thessalonians 1, 1 he addresses to the church of Thessalonians in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 4 he says knowing beloved brethren your election by God. Who is he talking to? The church in Christ.

We are elected as a church in Christ. Now we mentioned the olive tree and the branches and this is a very good illustration of this corporate election idea. If you'll look with me at Romans 11, this is worth actually looking up and going through it to follow Paul's thought here.

In Romans 11 verse 16, for if the first fruits is holy the lump is also holy. Holy means set apart for God. So if a crop, if you took the first fruits of the crop and dedicated the first fruits to God it was emblem that the whole crop was God's.

If the root of the tree is holy then all the tree is holy. The branches are holy. Now he's going to give an illustration of an olive tree and he's going to talk about branches being broken off the olive tree.

This imagery comes from Jeremiah 11, 16. In Jeremiah 11, 16 Israel is said to be an olive tree with some of its branches broken off. The same image Paul uses.

In Jeremiah though the olive tree Israel has its branches broken off. The ones broken off are the Jews who have been cut off from Israel by being taken into Babylon. Paul says the branches broken off are the ones who are unbelievers and they've been broken off the tree.

In any case they've been separated from Israel. They're not part of Israel. The tree is Israel.

The branches are individual Jews. The tree is holy. The root is holy.

The tree is elect. It's the chosen tree. The branches, they can come and go but the tree remains the same tree and it's chosen.

And he goes on, look, if some of the branches were broken off and you, meaning the Gentiles, being a wild olive tree were grafted in among them and with them became partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree. That is you part of the identity of the olive tree now because you're a foreign branch grafted in becomes part of the tree. If the tree is Israel then a Gentile who's grafted in is part of the new Israel.

And some branches that were Jews are broken off because they aren't believers. The tree is comprised of branches that believe in Christ. It is the new Israel.

Christ is the new Israel. The tree is Christ. And those who are in Christ are those who believe whether Jew or Gentile.

A Jew that doesn't believe is not a branch on the tree anymore. A Gentile that does believe is grafted in. Jews and Gentiles together in one organism, the tree.

Do not boast against the branches. He means the ones that were cut off. Don't you Gentiles boast against the Jews just because the Gentiles have moved in in force and are the predominant demographic of the church and the Jews are mostly unbelievers.

Don't boast against them. But if you do boast, remember that you don't support the root. The root supports you.

You weren't individually chosen. The root was chosen. You enjoy chosenness by being attached to the root.

The tree is what's chosen. You happen to enjoy the status of being chosen in the tree because you're attached to it. It's the root that supports you, identifies you, not you the root.

You will say then branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off and you stand by faith.

Now you see, how do you become part of the chosen tree? By believing. How do you stop being part of the chosen tree? By not believing. The branches are broken off because of their unbelief.

You get in by faith. You get cut off by unbelief. In other words, you choose whether you'll be on the tree or not.

The tree is chosen. It doesn't matter what branches are there in the end. The tree is God's tree.

That's the chosen organism. That's the chosen tree of God. That's the elect.

You, you can come or go. The tree remains elect, but not necessarily you. Depends on your status with the tree.

That seems to be your response because he says, do not be haughty but fearful if God did not spare the natural branches that didn't believe, he may not spare you either. Wait a minute here. I'm a believer in Christ.

I'm attached to the tree. I'm participating in the root and the fatness of the tree. I'm a real Christian.

The life of the tree is in my book is in me. I'm a branch. Yeah, but you might not be spared if you don't continue to be a branch.

He says, therefore, consider the goodness and severity of God on those who fell severity, but toward you goodness. If you continue in his goodness, otherwise you also will be cut off. So I'm in, I'm really genuinely in.

And if I continue to be in, I won't be out, but otherwise I will be out. I can be cut off too. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief will be grafted in for God is able to graft them in again.

So here's the tree. It's Israel, originally all Jewish branches, but now God is going to identify Israel as those who believe in Christ. Oh, that eliminates some of the branches.

Some Jews don't believe in Christ. They're locked off. They're not on the tree.

They're not part of Israel anymore. Now here's some Gentiles who do believe they become part of the tree because they believe, but Paul says, you know, those ones who don't believe they could become believers. They can come in and you believers could become apostate and be cut off.

In other words, no one has a guaranteed position on the tree apart from their own faith and perseverance. But if you're in, you are in the tree. It's a chosen tree.

You're chosen to, if you're out, you're not chosen. You see the choosing has to do with the corporate tree, not whether, not the individual branches. The branches decide if they're gonna be in the tree or not.

And the same is true when we come to Christ himself, another illustration of branches when he said, I'm the vine and you're the branches, right? And Jesus said, and that's on the next page of your notes. Jesus said, I am the vine. You are the branches.

He who abides, that means remains in me and I in him bears much fruit for without me, you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain or abide in me, what happens to him? He's cast out as a branch and is withered and they gather them and throw them into the fire and they're burned. Now you are the branches and you better stay with me because

otherwise you can be withered and burned.

If you don't, now see, here's what we have to understand. People often say, well, wait, the Bible says, whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Well, that's true.

But where is the life? The life, as if you look at first John chapter five, and I guess this will come up again when we get to perseverance, but I'm there now. So I'll just give it quickly here. In first John chapter five, verse 11, this is the testimony that God has given us eternal life.

Good. And this life is in his son. He that has the son has life.

He that has not the son of God has not life. The life is steady, but my participation is dependent on me being in him or not being in him. The life is not in me.

It's in him. Some people say, well, if I have eternal life, I can never lose the life. Well, that that's not guaranteed.

The life you have is in Christ because you are in Christ. You are alive with his life. You abide in him like a branch and you keep drawing on his life.

You'll always have that eternal life. It's an eternal life. You don't abide in him.

You get cut off. The eternal life is still eternal and it's still in him, but you're not your participation ends and the branch withers up and they gather them and burn them because they're not part. They don't have life in them anymore.

You see, it's corporate. Christ is the chosen one, the chosen vine. You want to be chosen one.

You can be abide in him because we are chosen in him. The branch that abides in him will be fruitful. The branch that does not abide in him is thrown away.

You see, whether Paul's talking about Israel in the form of the olive tree or Israel, Paul, Jesus talking about Israel in the form of the vine, both are old Testament images of Israel. They're both really Christ, the new Israel. You abide in Christ.

You're chosen because he's chosen. You don't abide in him. You're not chosen anymore.

In other words, being chosen doesn't have something to do with some eternal decree God made in the eternity past that you personally are chosen to be a Christian. No, Christ is chosen. You've got some decisions to make about whether you're going to be in him or not.

If you abide in him, good on you. If you don't, it's a bad, bad prospect for you. Now, I'm

not going to go any further.

There's one other point in your notes. You can read it if you want to. The main thing is that Peter exhorts Christians to make their calling and election sure.

The word sure means stable, secure. If God had elected us for the foundation, how could we do anything to make that election more stable or more sure? Obviously, we need to be secure in Christ. We need to remain in Christ.

Our election is in Christ. We need to make sure we don't fall away. That same word sure in that verse is also translated firm or steadfast in Hebrews 3, 6, and 14, which I've given you there, which says, if you continue in the faith firm, continue steadfast in faith, making your election secure is something that you are told to do.

I thought God was the one who did that. I thought God elected me. I thought God, before I was born, decided if I'm going to be in or not.

But Peter says, you better make sure your election is secure. What can I do about that? Hold fast to Christ because that's where your election is. Election is corporate in Christ.

A hard concept for many people to grasp. Whenever we read chosen or elected in the Bible, we always want to make it individual, but it's not the way Paul or apparently Peter or apparently Jesus were thinking when they talked about that. The vine is chosen.

The olive tree is chosen. Branches, you decide if you're going to abide in him or not. In a sense, you thereby decide your faith.

It's not an unconditional choice that God has made. Okay, we're done.