

thoughts and actions are included in that purpose. “He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth” (*Job 23:13*). God did not consult with us, not even by foreseeing what we would say or do. He consulted only with himself within the Trinity (*Eph 1:11; Rom 11:34-35; Isaiah 40:13-14*). With all this in view, then, we see that there is no such thing as chance, luck or accidents. There are no coincidences; everything has been purposed by God. God has even determined in advance the flipping of a coin (*Prov 16:33; Jonah 1:7*).

“The Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (*Rev 19:6*). God is an absolute Monarch, King over everything that is, was, or ever shall be (*Psal 93:1; 99:1; 103:19; Rev 19:16*). This is what is meant by **the Sovereignty of God**. He has *absolute authority* over everything. The universe is not a democracy; it’s a kingdom ruled by God. And not only has he purposed all that happens in time, but in time he sovereignly guides all things by his all-wise Providence (*Rom 8:28; Eph 1:11; Isaiah 46:11*). You may object that this doesn’t seem right, but God reminds us that the universe is his property and he can do with it as he pleases (*Matt 20:15*).

The question then arises, “What is the final purpose for which God does all things?” Though God has not told us all the details of his secret plans (*Deut 29:29*), he has told us the bottom line. The final goal of the whole universe is **the glory of God**. “Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be *glory* for ever. Amen” (*Rom 11:36*). He foreordained and created all things to display his glory, and everything will give him glory and praise at the end of time and throughout eternity (*Prov 16:4; Psalm 145:10; Phil 2:11; Rev 4:11*). God is the First Cause and Last End of all things. The universe has meaning, and so do we. We exist to glorify God.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

God is sovereign, but he made man a responsible being. This is a paradox. We must believe both truths, for they are both taught in Scripture. Man is certainly accountable to God (*Rom 14:12; Eccl 12:13-14*). God created Adam and Eve as morally responsible persons. In fact, they were created without any sin (*Eccl 7:29*); but they fell into sin (*Gen 3*). Since Adam was the head of the human race, and we are all descended from him, his sin affected all of us (*Rom 5:12-19*). Human nature ever since has been contaminated by sin, and every human being except Jesus Christ has inherited Original Sin (*Psal 51:5; 58:3; Rom 3:9-19*). As a result, we all sin by nature and by choice.

Man is born in sin with an evil and wicked nature (*Eph 2:3; Matt 7:11*). In fact, we share the same evil nature as Satan (*John 8:44*). We sin because it’s our nature to sin. Sin completely fills every aspect of our beings from head to toe (*Isaiah 1:5-6*). Our hearts and minds are filled with sin (*Eccl 9:3; Titus 1:15; Eph 4:17-19; Isaiah 64:6*). “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (*Jer 17:9*). There is no good left in man whatsoever (*Rom 3:10-12; 7:18*). Man is basically evil, not good.

The Bible paints an awful picture of us, far different than the beautiful idea we imagine of ourselves. Man is dead (*Eph*

2:1; Col 2:13), and blind (*2 Cor 4:3,4*), with a heart as hard as a stone (*Ezek 11:19; Jer 23:29*). By nature we are slaves of sin (*2 Peter 2:19; John 8:34; Rom 6:16,20*) and slaves of the devil (*John 8:44; Eph 2:2; 2 Tim 2:26*). Contrary to popular opinion, the idea of man’s “free will” is a myth. How can it be free when Scripture so frequently says it’s a slave? Man is enslaved to his sinful nature. And more, he’s a willing slave, and doesn’t want to be free. He would rather be a slave to sin than serve God as his king.

There’s more still. Because of the utter sinfulness of human nature, man does not have the moral ability to change his nature (*Jer 13:23*). He cannot stop sinning, nor does he even want to (*2 Peter 2:14*). Everything he does has a sinful motive behind it, even when he does what outwardly appears to be “good.” “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (*Gen 6:5*). Man is unable any longer to truly obey God (*Rom 8:7-8; Matt 7:18*). He never seeks God (*Rom 3:11*); he is unable (*John 6:44,65*).

Nor is man morally neutral (*Matt 6:24*). Man is always set against God. His will is not neutral or self-determining. He always wills, that is, chooses, according to his natural desires. Since his nature is evil, his thoughts and motives are always evil. But this moral *inability* does not leave him without *responsibility*. Quite the contrary—it compounds his guilt. Remember, this sinfulness is self-inflicted. God does not cancel man’s debt simply because man has squandered the loan and is unable to pay God back. Man is guilty and deserves to go to hell (*Rom 6:23*). Yes, there are degrees of sin. Some sins are worse than others, and some sinners are worse than others (*John 19:11*). But even the least sinner is totally depraved and morally unable to obey. At heart, all men love sin and hate God (*John 3:19-20; Prov 21:10; Matt 6:24*). The natural man is totally without hope (*Eph 2:12*), without strength to obey (*Rom 5:6*), and without excuse (*Rom 1:19-20; 2:1*).

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

We cannot save ourselves in whole or in part. Only God can save us. The good news of the gospel is that God has provided a way of salvation; and it’s not centered *in man*, it’s centered *in God*. Before all things were created, God foreordained to divide all mankind into two groups. Some would be his people and the rest would be left in their sins (*Rom 9*). First, let us look at what the Bible teaches concerning the doctrine of *Election*. In its simplest form, it is this: “He hath chosen us” (*Eph 1:4*). God did this in eternity past, not in time (*2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 1:9; Eph 1:4*). Those whom he chose are called “the elect” (*Matt 24:22,31; Mark 13:20; Luke 18:7*). They are sinners who have been chosen to receive salvation (*1 Thess 5:9; 2 Thess 2:13*). What moved God to choose them in the first place? God chose them by *sovereign grace* alone (*2 Tim 1:9; Deut 7:7-8*). God elected them to receive mercy (*Rom 9:23*), to go to heaven (*Matt 25:34*), to be made perfectly holy (*Eph 1:4*), and to be totally glorified (*Rom 8:29-30*). God chose the elect “in Christ” (*Eph 1:4; 2 Tim 1:9; Rom 16:13*).

In a general sense, God wills all men to be saved (*1 Tim 2:4*). But in another, higher sense, God chose only some sinners to be saved; and he put their names in the Book of Life (*Luke 10:20; Rev 13:8; 17:8*). The Father chose the elect and gave them to Christ (*John 17:2,6,9,24*). Christ is also God, so he had a vital part in this choice. Jesus chose his own bride from among the mass of sinful humanity. This was his right and privilege. “Ye have not chosen me,” he said, “but I have chosen you” (*John 15:16*). Nor did he choose the elect on the basis of anything he *foresaw* in them, for all that was to be seen in their nature was sin. He “foreknew” the elect in the sense of *knowing them in love* from all eternity (*Rom 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2; see Gen 4:1; Amos 3:2; Matt 7:22-23*). He did not choose us because he foresaw we would choose him. Rather, he chose us solely because of his free grace.

This election is personal; the elect were chosen by name. And since it’s not conditioned upon anything in us, it’s certain that all the elect will be saved. It’s unconditional and irreversible. When we come to Christ, we then have the privilege of knowing that we are of *the elect of God* (*John 6:37; 1 Thess 1:4-5; 2 Peter 1:10*). God did not elect Satan or any of the fallen angels, and he did not choose *all* of Adam’s rebellious race. Some are elected, the rest are left in their sins (*Rom 9*); and they will receive the due penalty for their sins—eternal wrath (*1 Thess 5:9; 1 Peter 2:7-8; Prov 16:4*). Their names were not written in the Book of Life in eternity past (*Rev 13:8; 17:8*), nor were they ever *known* by Christ in electing love (*Matt 7:23*). These are left by God in their evil nature, their hearts are hardened, their minds are blinded (*John 12:37-40; Rom 9:18; 1k7; Deut 2:30; Joshua 11:20*). They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath all their lives (*Rom 2:5*).

But lest anyone think this is unfair, God replies, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” (*Rom 9:20*). No man can blame God, for man is sinful and God is holy. No man deserves the mercy of God; all men deserve his judgment. The wonder is not that God rejected some sinners; the wonder is that he chose to save any sinners at all.

LIMITED ATONEMENT

God, then, chose some sinners to save. This did not make them saved at that time. It only guaranteed that they certainly would be saved. Two more things needed to be done: prepare the means for their salvation and apply it to them. God foreordained that Christ would become a man and would die on the cross as the means of salvation (*Acts 2:23; 4:27-28*). Christ died as a *substitute* for others, standing in their place, bearing their sins (*1 Cor 15:3; Rom 5:8; 1 Pet 2:24*). He suffered the infinite wrath of God for sin, and satisfied that wrath, something *no angel* could have ever done. This is called propitiation (*1 John 2:2; 4:10*). Because Jesus was a perfect man and God in the flesh, his sacrifice had *infinite* value. He did not pay an exact equivalent for our sins; he paid a *super-abundant* payment infinitely above what we owed. All that he endured would have been necessary had only *one sinner* been chosen, but he would not have had to endure any more had *all sinners* been chosen.

There is a sense in which Christ died for all men everywhere (*John 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 6:33,51; 2 Cor 5:14,19; 1 Tim 2:4-6; 1 John 2:2; 2 Peter 2:1*). He purchased the common bounties of life for all; he also secured a delay of judgment. The fact that all men are not already in hell is due to the atonement of Christ. Moreover, on the basis of this universal aspect of the atonement, salvation is offered freely to all: “all things are ready: come unto the marriage” (*see Matt 22:2-14; Luke 14:16-24*). And Christ also died for all men in this sense: in order to be *Lord of all*, whether alive or dead, elect or non-elect (*Rom 14:9; Phil 2:10,11*).

The death of Christ, being of infinite value, is *sufficient* for all men, but is *efficient* only for the elect. There is a sense in which he died for all, but there is a sense in which he died “especially” for the elect (*1 Tim 4:10*). He purchased some blessings for all men, but all blessings for some men. Since the elect are scattered throughout the world and mingled together with the non-elect, Christ purchased the whole world with the special intent of owning the elect (*Matt 13:44*). This special aspect of the atonement is what is called *Limited Atonement*, or *Particular Redemption*.

Scripture says, “Christ also loved *the church* [the elect], and gave himself for it” (*Eph 5:25*). A man loves all other persons, but has a special love for his wife and will do some things for her that he will not do for others. The same is true with Christ. He has a general love for all and did something for all men at the cross because they are his creatures. But he has a *special* love for his bride, and something *special* for her happened at the cross. He died for her in such a way as to *guarantee* that she would be saved, made perfectly holy and fitted for heaven (*see vv26*). God’s people can say with Peter that Christ “*bare our sins in his own body on the tree*” (*1 Peter 2:24*). God’s elect will surely be saved because *their sins* have been put away! Their sins were laid on Christ. He died specifically in their place as their substitute. Isaiah prophesied of these things when he spoke of the sufferings of Christ: “*he shall bear their iniquities*” (*Isaiah 53:11*). It was John Owen who said: Either Christ died for **(1) all** of the sins of *all* men, or **(2) some** of the sins of *all* men, or **(3) all** of the sins of *some* men. There’s only one option here that will square with the Word of God—**#3!**

There are other verses that indicate this special intent of the atonement. “The Good Shepherd” died for “*the sheep*” (*John 10:14-18*). This cannot include everyone, for Christ goes on to say that *some are not his sheep* (*vv24-26*). In this sense he died for the sheep (the elect) and not for the goats and wolves (the non-elect). Christ said he laid down his life for “*his friends*” (*John 15:13-14*); but not all men are his friends. Isaiah 53:8 prophesied that Christ would die for “*God’s people*,” but not all men are God’s people, only the elect. Acts 20:28 says that Christ purchased “*the church*” with his blood, but not all men are the church. Further, Romans 8:31-33 says that if God gave Christ to *die for us*, then he will *surely give us all things*. Since he does not give all these things of salvation to all men, then it follows, Christ was not given for them at the cross in this special way.

The Doctrines of Grace

If you wanted to sum up what the Bible teaches about salvation, then you need to learn the meaning of the words **Sovereign Grace**. This phrase exalts the free will of God in salvation, not the free will of man. The saving grace of God is given freely to those of God’s choosing. As Jesus said, “The Son quickeneth whom he will” (*John 5:21*). God is sovereign in dispensing his grace. *The Doctrines of Grace* set this truth forth supported by an abundance of Scripture. As all doctrines must be tested by the Word of God (*Acts 17:11; 1 Thess 5:21; Isaiah 8:20*), you’re invited to search the Scriptures and see if *the Doctrines of Grace* are indeed the teaching of God’s Word.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

We need to think back into eternity past when God alone existed. “In the beginning God” (*Gen 1:1*). God has always existed. He is self-existent, therefore, he is totally independent of everything else (*Rev 1:8*). God alone is self-sufficient and absolutely free. He does not need man or anything in all of creation (*Acts 17:25*). He is perfect (*Matt 5:48*), and therefore perfectly happy in himself. God is so far above man that we cannot even begin to comprehend him of ourselves (*see Isaiah 57:15; Rom 11:33-36*). In sum, God is God (*Exod 3:14*).

We know that God created all things, but have you ever wondered why God created the universe? What moved him to do that? Or even more, why does God do what he does? David said: “Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased” (*Psalms 115:3—see Psalms 135:5,6; Job 23:13; Eph 1:11; Daniel 4:35*). God does whatever he wants to. This is the mere “pleasure” of God (*Matt 11:25-26*). God does as he pleases, always as he pleases, and only as he pleases.

God willed to create a universe. But before he created anything, he formed a plan. Scripture calls this his eternal “purpose” (*Rom 8:28; 9:10-12; Isaiah 46:9-11; Eph 3:11; Acts 4:24-28; 2 Tim 1:9*). It’s like a blueprint for everything (*see Luke 14:28-30; Jer 49:20; 50:45*). It’s not merely a wish, a desire, or a command, but it’s his decree; and it preprograms everything. He “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (*Eph 1:11—see Psalms 33:10-11*). Thus, it is absolutely essential to see that God foreordained everything that comes to pass. He predestined everything that will ever happen, down to the smallest detail. “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things” (*Rom 11:36*).

Moreover, God will never change his mind on his eternal plan. His purpose shall stand forever, for he never changes (*Jer 4:28; 23:20; 30:24; 1 Sam 15:29*). Therefore, his purpose shall most certainly come to pass exactly as he planned it. Nothing can prevent it (*Psalms 33:11; 148:4-6; Titus 1:2; Prov 19:21; Isaiah 14:24-27; Heb 6:17; Job 42:2*). Neither man nor demon nor angel can frustrate God’s eternal purpose from being accomplished, for all of their

Again, there are many objections to this truth, but they can all be answered by pointing out that no man deserved for Christ to die for him. Actually, there is no dispute that Christ did not die for Satan or the demons; the atonement is clearly *limited* there. But the non-elect are in the same situation as Satan: they were not chosen by God’s electing love, nor did Christ lay down his life for them. The thing to keep in mind is that the atonement was designed for the elect.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

God chose the elect and Christ purchased them, but this redemption must be *applied to them* in order for them to be saved. This brings us to what is known as *Irresistible Grace*, or *Effectual Calling*. First, let us get the general picture and then the precise focus. As we have shown, there is a general sense in which God loves all men as his creatures (*Matt 5:44-45; Luke 6:35-36; Psalm 33:5; 145:9,14-16*). We call this Common Grace. God gives them the bounties of life on this planet. Moreover, there is a sense in which it is the will of God that all men be saved (*1 Tim 2:4*)—salvation is preached indiscriminately to all. This is called the Free Offer of the Gospel, and it is seen in the Great Commission (*Matt 28:18-20*). God issues a general call to all who hear the gospel (*Matt 22:14*). All who hear are invited; but because all men are totally depraved and hate God, they *resist* this call and the work of the Spirit (*Acts 7:51*).

Now, because God has a special love for the elect, he does more for them than merely give an *external* invitation. He goes further and guarantees that they *will accept* this invitation. He *overwhelms* them with what is termed *Irresistible Grace*. In addition to the general call to all men, God gives them a special call (*Rom 8:28-30; 2 Peter 1:10*), or what Paul describes as a “holy calling” (*2 Tim 1:9*). It is a calling by special grace (*Gal 1:15-16*). God thereby draws the elect irresistibly to himself with special lovingkindness (*Jer 31:3; Hosea 11:4; Song 1:4*). He turns the elect and “*causes*” them to come to him (*Psalms 65:4; Prov 21:1*). This is irresistible. God “*draws*” us to Christ (*John 6:44*). He doesn’t merely *invite* the elect, he *draws* them as you would *draw* water out of a well! He compels us by divine omnipotence to come (*Luke 14:23*). He actually changes our minds and hearts so that we come most willingly (*Phil 2:13; Psalm 110:3*).

God sovereignly opens hearts (*Acts 16:14*). Christ is received not by sinners opening their own hearts; only as a *result* can it be said that they opened to receive him. He opens our hearts so that we can hear his voice (*John 10:16,27*), not in a literal sense, but *spiritually*, and life is graciously given. See it pictured here: “*Lazarus, come forth*. And he that was *dead* came forth” (*John 11:43-44*). It’s a new birth (*John 3:1-8; 5:21; James 1:18*), and it’s all by God’s free and sovereign grace (*John 1:13*). It’s a life-giving call: “The hour is coming, *and now is*, when *the dead* shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear *shall live*” (*John 5:25*). A dead man spiritually cannot make himself alive any more than a corpse can. The new birth is a new creation (*2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15*). It’s a spiritual resurrection (*Eph 2:1,5; Col 2:13*).

The elect are not born again because they believe; rather, they believe because they are born again (*1 John 5:1*). The new birth is a sovereign gift, and so is faith (*2 Peter 1:1; Eph 2:8-9; Phil 1:29; John 3:27; 6:65; 1 Cor 3:6; 4:7; Rom 12:3*). Repentance is also a free gift that is sovereignly bestowed (*2 Tim 2:25; Acts 5:31; 11:18*). Because the elect now have faith, God justifies them and they are saved.

“Salvation is of the Lord” (*Jonah 2:9*). Those who are saved are saved *only* by God’s free grace from first to last. Evangelicals in general will agree that salvation is by grace and not by works (*Eph 2:8-9*); but understand further, the Scriptures state that this *saving grace* is *sovereignly given* to the elect. It is not merely offered to them. It is irresistibly given to the elect and to them alone, and not to the non-elect. Hear it stated plainly: “*as many* as were ordained to eternal life *believed*” (*Acts 13:48*).

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

This doctrine is also known as *Eternal Security*. God expressly promised and swore in Jeremiah 32:40 these two blessings of salvation for the elect: **(1)** to keep them forever and never forsake them, and **(2)** to work within them so that they will not fall away from him. He promised to *preserve* the elect. Once they are saved they most certainly are preserved, kept and guarded by God himself (*Psalms 37:28; 66:9; 97:10; 145:14,20; 2 Tim 1:12*). God swore never to leave or forsake the elect (*Psalms 94:14; Heb 13:5*). They are kept in the same way in which they were saved in the first place, namely, by the invincible “power of God” (*1 Peter 1:5*).

This is especially explicit in John 10:28, where Jesus says, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” The elect are eternally secure in the hands of Christ and the Father. God keeps them safe from Satan (*1 John 5:18; John 17:11,12,15; 2 Thess 3:3; Luke 22:31-32*). It is true that the elect slip and fall into sin. But when they do God catches them (*Deut 33:27*) and makes them stand again (*Rom 14:4*). Even when the elect let go of God’s hand, God’s hand does not let go of them (*Psalms 37:24*).

So, the elect will be saved always. Why? Because they were eternally elected by grace (*Rom 8:29-30*). Christ loves his bride too much to let her go. He will not lose even a single one of those who were chosen (*John 6:39*). Romans 5:9-10 reasons that if Christ loved us enough to die for us, then surely he will do as much to keep us saved (*see 8:32*). God’s salvation is irrevocable (*Rom 8:1; 11:29; Eccl 3:14*). Furthermore, when the elect are irresistibly drawn to Christ and regenerated by free grace, they are “*sealed*” by the Holy Spirit as a guarantee that they will always be God’s property (*Eph 1:13; 4:30*).

Scripture most clearly teaches “*once saved, always saved*.” But this is only true of those who are *truly saved*! Those who *profess* Christ are one thing; those who *possess* Christ are quite another! The Bible says that one must persevere in faith and obedience to make it to heaven (*Heb 12:14*). Those persons whose lives are not characterized by this are *not saved*, and they will not make it to heaven (*1 Cor 6:9; Eph 5:5*). Only those who persevere

to the end will be saved (*Matt 10:22; 24:13*). But the glory of it all is that the elect most certainly shall persevere and continue in the faith (*Job 17:9*), for saving faith is a “gift” and Christ is “the author and finisher of our faith” (*Heb 12:2*). So, in reality, it is *the Perseverance of the Savior*.

The true believer has received a new nature in regeneration, and so is not completely bound by the total depravity in which he was first born. This new nature guarantees that he will not (indeed, *cannot*) live in permanent, perpetual unbelief and disobedience (*1 John 3:4-10*). Thus, the elect shall bear fruit (*Matt 7:17-18; John 15:16*) and continue in good works (*James 2:14-26*). The doctrine of *Eternal Security* totally excludes the possibility of a regular life of sin for true believers. The elect persevere because *God himself* perseveres in them! God promised to finish what he began in the elect (*Phil 1:6; Psalm 138:8; 1 Cor 1:8-9*). He preserves them, and thus will glorify them in the end (*Rom 8:30*).

Hypocrites who profess one thing and live another have *nothing* to do with *Eternal Security*. Nor do those who fall away by apostasy; these were *never saved* to begin with: “They went out from us, but *they were not of us*; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (*1 John 2:19*). *Eternal Security* thus teaches both the *preservation* and *perseverance* of the true saints of God, and all owing to his sovereign grace and power alone.

CONCLUSION

Many objections are hurled at *the Doctrines of Grace*. Most of them boil down to two. The first says that these doctrines are not true, for the reason that God is not totally sovereign. This objection is without foundation, for Scripture repeatedly states that God is *absolutely* sovereign. The second objection is founded on the mistaken notion of man’s free will. As we have shown, man is responsible but not free. He is a slave to sin until freed by Christ. Scripture teaches *free grace*, not free will. Underlying these objections is the secret (and sometimes open) objection, “But it’s not fair!” This is worst of all, for it is a direct accusation *against God*. It mistakenly presupposes that sinners, who are in rebellion against God, have rights. But sinful man has forfeited all rights through his insurrection and despising of God’s authority. Man is guilty!—a totally depraved enemy of God! Those who offer these objections would do well to read Romans 9:20 and Ezekiel 18:25.

The Doctrines of Grace have a twofold effect. First, they humble the sinner and encourage the saint. They put man in his due place. They also invigorate the believer, who knows that if a sovereign God is for him, who can be against him? (*Rom 8:31*). The second effect is that they give great glory to God. God is God, and he will not share his glory with another (*Isaiah 42:8; 48:11*). These doctrines recognize that man is man and God is God, and we exist for his glory. □

—Adapted from the writings of Curt Daniel