

# DESTINY BULLETIN

A commentary sent to the supporters of the ministry of Christian Destiny.

Dear “Special Friend” of Christian Destiny,

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## “ELECTION, PREDESTINATION, GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY AND MAN’S FREE WILL”

by Margaret Riedel

### ELECTION

When man believes the Gospel, the Good News that sin is paid for by Jesus Christ the Son of God, he is placed in union with Jesus Christ. In other words, he places his faith in the finished work of Christ—His death as payment for sin, His burial and resurrection. Positionally then, the believer has died with Jesus, is buried, and is risen from the dead with Jesus. God sees the believer in union with Jesus, sharing all that Jesus Christ is and has. This union with Christ includes Christ’s election, for Jesus is called My Servant, My Elect One in Isaiah 42:1.

Also in I Peter 2:4-8: “...Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, *elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.*’ (Isa. 28:16) Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, (man’s free will) ‘*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,*’ (Ps. 118:22) and ‘*a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense...*’” (Isa. 8:14). Paul declares that the believer shares Christ’s election and destiny in Ephesians 1:1-14. This wonderful passage gives all glory and honor to the Lord Jesus Christ. He gets the credit for every aspect of our salvation. So we see then: Christ is chosen (I Peter 2:6). We choose Christ (free will—Rev. 22:17). Because we are then IN CHRIST (Eph. 1:4), we are chosen IN HIM.

Another wonderful election verse is in II Thessalonians 2:13,14. “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has **from the beginning chosen you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth**, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

How are we chosen from the beginning? The Holy Spirit sets us apart, makes us holy ones, places us in God’s family **when** we believe the truth. Man **believes**, then he is chosen, set apart to God by the Holy Spirit who now indwells him; and he shares:

**Christ’s Life:** “and this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (I John 5:11,12).

**His Righteousness:** “for He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor. 5:21).

**His Sonship:** “for you are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (Gal. 3:26; John 1:12).

**His Priesthood:** “but you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” (I Peter 2:9).

**His Heirship:** “the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Rom. 8:16,17).

**His Sanctification:** “to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (I Cor. 1:2).

**His Destiny:** “having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” “In whom 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” (Eph. 1:5,11).

**His Election:** “just as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1:4).

Jesus Christ is the Elected One – Man shares this election by choice. From eternity past man is chosen in Christ. Chosen in Christ is God’s plan for mankind. Anyone can enter God’s plan of salvation by faith—hence, **ALL** members of the human race are **potentially** elected. The **whosoever wills are the elect. The whosoever won’ts are the non-elect.** We choose Christ by faith which is simply believing. The ability to believe is common to all mankind. The synonyms for faith are looking, eating, drinking. Faith in itself is a system of perception that we all possess. It is the **object** of faith that saves—it is not believe on Buddha, or Mohammed, but “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved” (Acts 16:31). A wonderful passage on Salvation by faith is: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8,9,10).

Even in this passage some would try to twist the meaning to say faith is the gift (not salvation) and that God gives the gift of faith to certain chosen ones. We turn to Dr. Kenneth Wuest’s **Word Studies in the Greek New Testament** to dispel this erroneous teaching:

“The words, ‘**through faith**’ speak of the instrument of **means** whereby the sinner **avails himself of this salvation** which God offers him in pure grace. Expositors says: ‘Paul never says ‘**through the faith**’ as if the faith were the ground or procuring cause of the salvation.’ **Alford says: ‘It (the salvation)** has been effected by grace and apprehended by faith.’ The word ‘that’ is *touto*, ‘this,’ a **demonstrative pronoun in the neuter gender.** The Greek word ‘**faith**’ is **feminine in gender** and therefore *touto* could not refer to ‘faith.’ **It refers to the general idea of salvation** in the immediate context. The translation reads, ‘and this not out from you as a source, of God (it is) the gift.’ **That is, salvation is a gift of God.** It does not find its source in man. Furthermore, this salvation is not ‘out of a source of works.’ This explains salvation by grace. It is not produced by man nor earned by him. It is a gift from God with no strings tied to it. Paul presents the same truth in Romans 4:4,5 when speaking of the righteousness which God imputed to Abraham, ‘Now, to the one who works, his wages are not looked upon as a favor but as that which is justly or legally due. But to the one who does not work but believes on the One who justifies the impious, his faith is imputed for righteousness.’

One reason why salvation is a free gift of God and not earned by works, is given us in the words, ‘lest any man should boast.’ Grace glorifies God. Works would glorify man. Commenting on the words, ‘For we are His workmanship,’ Vincent says: ‘A reason why no man should glory. If *we* are God’s workmanship, our *salvation* cannot be of ourselves.’ Expositors comments: ‘We ourselves are a *work*, the handiwork of God, made anew by Him, and our salvation, therefore, is due to Him, not to ourselves.’ The word ‘workmanship’ is *poiema*, from *poieo*, ‘to do, to make.’ Thus, *poiema* means ‘something that is made.’

The words, ‘created in Christ Jesus unto good works,’ Expositors says are ‘a further definition of His workmanship. We are God’s spiritual handiwork in the sense that we were *created* by Him, made a new spiritual *creature* by Him when His grace made us Christians. This new creation was *in Christ*, so that except by union between Him and us it could not have taken place (Eph. 2:15, 4:24; II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Col. 3:10). Also it was with a *view* to good works. . . We ourselves then having been created anew by God, and good works being the *object* to which that new creation looked, not the cause that led to it, all must be of grace—not of deeds, and there can be no room for boasting.’

‘We were created in Christ Jesus for good works,’ and these good works are described as those good works ‘which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.’ The word ‘ordained’ is *proetoimazo*, ‘to prepare before, to make ready beforehand.’ Vincent says: ‘God prearranged a sphere of moral action for us to walk in. Not only are works the necessary outcome of faith, but the character and direction of the works are made ready by God.’ Expositors says: ‘Before He created us in Christ by our conversion, He had destined these good works and made them ready for us in His purpose and decree. There is the unseen source from which they spring, and there is their final explanation.’

These good works were prepared beforehand ‘that we should walk in them.’ The word ‘walk’ is *peripateo*, ‘to regulate one’s life, to conduct one’s self, to order one’s behavior.’ ‘In them’ is *en toutois*, ‘in these,’ namely, the good works, locative of sphere. We are to order our behavior within the sphere of these good works. Expositors comments: ‘God’s purpose in the place which He gave to good works in His decree was that they should

actually and habitually be done by us. His final object was to make good works the very element of our life, the domain in which our action should move. That this should be the nature of our walk is implied in our being His handiwork, made anew by Him in Christ; that the good works which are the divine aim of our life shall be realized, is implied in their being designed and made ready for us in God's decree; and that they are of God's originating, and not of our action and merit, is implied in the fact that we had ourselves to be made a new creation in Christ with a view to them.'

Translation. *For by the grace have you been saved in time past completely, through faith, with the result that your salvation persists through present time; and his (salvation) is not from you as a source. Of God it is the gift; not from a source of works, in order that no one might boast; for we are His handiwork, created in Christ Jesus with a view to good works which God prepared beforehand in order that within their sphere we may order our behavior.*" Wuest, Kenneth—**Word Studies Ephesians and Colossians (p. 65-71).**

Even a simple sentence diagram of Ephesians 2:8,9 shows that salvation is the subject, the believer is the object, and by grace through faith are prepositional phrases which refer to the subject and object. **Salvation by faith is the gift.**

A gift must be appropriated, accepted by the recipient, just as the gift of salvation must be accepted and received. Though the offer is universal, to every man, not every man will receive the gift of God. In the much loved passage, John 3:16, we see that God so loved **the world** that He gave His son. Why then aren't all men saved? Verses 17 through 20 tell why. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. It is so simple to receive a gift. It is so simple to believe in Jesus and have eternal life. We stated earlier that the synonyms for believing or faith in the Bible are looking, eating, drinking; things that any normal member of the human race can do.

Why did Jesus in John 3:1-15 use the story of the serpent in the wilderness to show the way of salvation? Let's look at that story: "Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.' So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, 'We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us.' So Moses prayed for the people. Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.' So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he **looked** at the bronze serpent, he lived" (Numbers 21:4-9).

All the people had to do was look at the serpent to be healed—not look and put liniment on, look and pay money, or **do** anything but look. As they looked at the serpent, so we must look (believe) in Jesus for salvation. Too easy? I'm glad little children can believe in Jesus, as well as old folks on their death beds, and all of us in between—just by believing the Gospel. What about the other synonyms eating and drinking? Look at John Chapter 6:22-69. All the faith in the world will not save. It is faith in Jesus Christ that saves. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). **Believe and you are elected.**

### PREDESTINATION

The omniscient God knew and designed a perfect plan before the world began. Jesus Christ is the focal point of the plan. Election is a place in the plan. A person enters the plan when he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. He then shares all that Christ is and has, including His destiny. Therefore, predestination applies to believers only. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:28-30).

The order is that God planned a destiny for man in eternity past. He invited all to enter the plan. Those who responded by faith He justified or declared righteous and glorified.

### FREE WILL

The unbeliever is **not** predestined to hell, he chooses his destiny. Christ died for everyone. "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life**" (John 3:16).

Those in hell are there because they rejected Jesus Christ as Savior. If anyone goes to hell he goes there because **his free will** has operated independently of **God's will** for him (II Peter 3:9: "God is **not** willing that anyone perish."), and God's provision for him (the cross).

### **FOREKNOWLEDGE**

Foreknowledge is God's omniscience in operation. God has always known everything. "To the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2,3). "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands having this seal: 'The Lord knows who are His'" (II Tim. 2:19).

God does **not** coerce or influence man's free will, yet God knew beforehand what every free will would decide at any given point in time. Since God knew what every free will would decide, He makes "all things work together for good" (Rom. 8:28) in the life of each believer.

### **SOVEREIGNTY**

God is sovereign. He has a will. He is eternal, infinite, self-determining (Dan. 4:34,35). God makes decisions, policies, sets up principles. This is Divine volition. God is also omniscient—He has all knowledge. There was never a time when He did not know everything that would ever happen. "For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and **knows all things**" (I John 3:20).

The Triune God planned a plan of grace for man. In eternity past Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity was elected to be the executor of the plan. He would create, hold all things together, bring salvation, and ultimately have a kingdom. God the Father called God the Son "My Servant, My Elect One" (Isa. 42:1). Christ's election occurred in eternity past. Because of the doctrine of unlimited atonement, all members of the human race are potentially elected. "My little children, these things I write to you that you not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but **also for the whole world**" (I John 2:1,2). "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even **denying the Lord who bought them**, and bring on themselves swift destruction" (II Peter 2:1). God cannot be unfair nor unrighteous, nor unjust (Ps. 145:17), (Ps. 18:30), (Deut. 32:4). Furthermore, God is not willing for anyone to perish. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, **not desiring that any should perish** but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

Romans 10:13 says, "**Whoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." God gives the whole world a choice, not just certain individuals. The disputed passage in John 6:44 which says "no man can come except the Father draw him" is explained further in the same chapter where Jesus said he made the statement because He knew there were unbelieving Jews in the crowd. John, a few chapters later (John 12:32), quotes Jesus "and I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw all men** to Myself."

Never take an obscure verse to explain away a crystal clear one. Believe God when He tells you He loves you so much that He sent His only Son to die and pay the penalty for your sins and that He rose from the dead after three days and three nights in the tomb. "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (I Cor. 15:1-4).

When a sinner believes this Gospel, God saves him, and places him in union with Jesus Christ. **IN CHRIST** the believer is now elect—with a destiny that is eternal—what's more, this choice did not take our omniscient God by surprise.

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