



August 24, 2008

### ***Predestination 4: Free Will Or Inevitable Salvation***

Over the past two weeks we have looked at statements in the Bible that on one hand state that God is no respecter of persons and that all who desire to be saved can and will be if they are willing to follow what the scriptures say. On the other hand we have examined scriptures that speak of God's predestination, or adoption, of those who are referred to as the elect and the inevitability of salvation having been chosen by God for His purpose. So which is it? Are we all just playing out some grand master plan and have no idea of about who is lost or saved arbitrarily in spite of what we do or say? There are major belief systems that would tell us that this is so. Calvinism, for instance, presents the idea that we are so spiritually and morally depraved that we cannot save ourselves (a half truth) and that only the elect will achieve salvation (a half truth) and those who are appointed to salvation will be irresistibly drawn to God at some point in their lives whether they are actively seeking God or not (a non truth). If we hold to such ideas where does the idea of free will come in? If God has created beings that do not have a choice and are already appointed to salvation, or doomed to eternal loss, does that not portray him as a sadistic entity that shows preference to some while inflicting pain and agony on others before condemning them eternally? If that is so why are there so many appeals in the scriptures to obey the Lord. Those appeals occur in both the Old and New Testaments, so this is not a characteristic limited to "grace" (the New Testament), but is a principle found throughout the Bible which records the spiritual history of mankind and our inherent tendency to reject the Lord. If we adopt the idea of predestination we create a paradox that cannot be explained. This perhaps accounts for so much of the false doctrine and variations in "Christianity" as these explanations become more convoluted and complex. This is exactly what happened to the Jews as Rabbis offered their own commentary on the Law to the extent that their teachings supplanted the body of doctrine given to Moses and which earned the condemnation of Christ (**Matt 15.9**). The Gospel is

far simpler than the endless permutations created by the mind of man and it is interesting that people will adopt systems of belief that present more problems in understanding the scriptures than the scriptures ever could if left to speak for themselves. We also find that this has spawned a variety of splinter groups as agreement cannot be reached on what we are to believe and how we are to live. Are atheists and critics of the Bible more reasonable in their assertion that the Bible is the product of man's imagination and is filled with such contradictions that a sensible person would, or should know better, or, as we shall examine, is there a need to understand the statements presented within the context of the narrative and find the harmony that exists between them? Many subjects in the Bible are misunderstood for the simple reason that people find it difficult to read and follow what is presented in the scriptures without changing anything. If we take a prescription to a pharmacist, he or she will not change the medication or dosage but will fill it as written. The Bible is the same way. If we accept what it has to say we will begin to see how the scriptures work together without the difficulties created by human reasoning. Failure to understand the scriptures within their context is an inability to rightly divide the word of truth (**2 Tim 2.15**). Engineers who fail to understand the physical properties of materials and stress created by the elements would create structures that will fail. Doctors who fail to understand the effects of certain drugs or procedures on the human body will have scores of dead patients. Religious practitioners who fail to comprehend the nature of the scriptures will lead souls to eternal doom in the same manner. We must understand how the scriptures work together or we will create spiritual chaos. Many false notions in religion are not so much failures in understanding the Bible but represent opposition to the ideas of other humans who themselves failed to go back to the source, the Bible, for their information. Can we harmonize these two apparent contradictions without creating more problems? Yes, I believe we can.  
***Next: A Harmonious Framework***

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