

Theology 101 – An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine

Doctrine of God – Providence and The Plan of God

I. Doctrine of God – Biblical Affirmations Regarding God’s Plan (Decree)

A. The Basic Concept of Providence and the Plan of God

1. The concept of ‘God’s Plan’ refers to God’s eternal plan, based on His most wise and holy counsel, whereby He freely and unchangeably, for His own glory, ordained either efficaciously or permissively everything that actually happens.
 - a. The plan of God renders certain all things that will actually come to pass
 - b. God’s plan is also commonly referred to as God’s Decree
2. God’s Providence is a bigger idea summarizing God’s relationship with his creation
 - a. Through His providence, God is actively involved with His creation
 - b. God upholds and maintains his creation – Heb. 1:3
 - c. God directs His creation in order to fulfill his plan/decreed
 - d. It is the continuous activity of God whereby He makes all the events of the physical, mental, and moral phenomena work out for His purposes
 - e. The extent to which God directs his creation is debated

B. Some Key Teachings Regarding the Plan of God

1. Isa. 37:26 – What is happening now was planned long ago. (verse is concerning the destruction wrought by the king of Assyria)
2. Ps. 139:16 (NIV) – It appears that the days of our lives are in some sense ordained by God – written in His book before we are even born.
3. Isa. 46:10-11 – God will certainly bring to actual occurrence everything in his plan. See also Isa. 14:24-27
4. Prov. 16:4 – The idea that all things made by God serve a purpose
5. Prov. 16:33 – Even chance events may be orchestrated by God
6. Prov. 19:21 – God’s purpose cannot be affected by the plans of man
7. Lk. 21:20-22 – Large and even catastrophic events may be part of God’s plan
8. Mt. 26:24 – Seemingly small details, such as a betrayal, may also be part of God’s plan
9. Mk. 13:7 & 10 – According to Christ, at least some events “must occur.” See also, Lk. 4:43; Jn. 3:14-15

10. Acts 2:23; 4:28 – Events surrounding Christ’s death were “according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.” See also Acts 1:16; 2:16-21; and 2:24-28.

11. Acts 17:26 – The life spans and boundaries of nations have been determined by God

C. Characteristics of God’s Plan

1. God’s plan is from all eternity and is eternal
 - a. Eph. 1:4 – before the foundation of the world
 - b. Eph. 3:11 – eternal purpose
 - c. 2 Tim. 1:9-10 – before the ages began
 - d. Ps. 33:11 – His counsel stands forever
2. God’s Plan is based on His Character
 - a. Omniscience – knows all things actual and possible
 - b. Wisdom – Wise enough to always know the best course of action
 - c. Omnipotence – there is no need for a ‘Plan B’
 - d. Gracious – His plan involves a relationship based on grace
3. God’s Plan is free from constraints beyond his own character
 - a. Ps. 115:3 – He does all that he pleases
 - b. Ps. 135:6 – Whatever the LORD pleases, he does
 - c. Dan. 4:35 – He does according to his will... and none can stay his hand
4. Ultimately, the purpose of God’s plan is his own glory
 - a. Col. 1:16 – All things were created... for Him (Christ)
 - b. Eph. 1:4-6 – He chose us... to the praise of his glorious grace
 - c. Rom. 9:23 – To make known the riches of his glory
 - d. Isa. 48:9-11 – God does things for his own sake; for his names sake (Ez. 20:9)
 - e. The glory of God is the primary purpose of God’s plan, but there are many secondary purposes and motives.
5. God’s plan affects his actions, not his nature
 - a. God’s plan includes decisions about what he will do, not about who he is
 - b. In other words, God is loving because that is part of who he is – it is an immutable attribute.
 - c. God is not loving because it suited his plan, or because his plan depends upon his love, for example.
6. God’s plan relates primarily to what God does, but it also relates to the actions of people
 - a. The extent to which people’s actions are affected by God’s plan is debated

- b. There are examples of specific individuals fulfilling aspects of God's plan unawares – Isa. 44:28
 - c. There are also indications that other aspects of our actions are part of God plan – Eph. 2:10
7. Are all parts of God's decree (plan/will) absolutely certain?
- a. Evidence for yes
 - 1) Isa. 14:24-27 – What God has purposed from eternity will happen
 - 2) Isa. 46:10
 - 3) Acts 2:23
 - 4) Acts 4:27-28
 - 5) Eph. 1:11-12 – God brings into actual occurrence what is in His plan
 - 6) Ps. 139:16
 - b. Evidence for no
 - 1) Isa. 1:1-20 – Israel's history is marked by disobedience of God's decrees
 - 2) Isa. 5:1-7
 - 3) Ps. 106:13-15
 - 4) Mt. 21:43
 - 5) Jn. 7:17 – *If anyone's will is to do God's will...*
 - c. Some elements of God's decree are made absolutely certain, while other elements are by His command, but with the possibility of disobedience.

D. The Extent of God's Plan and Providence

- 1. Extent of Providence (Sovereign Control)
 - a. God is able to do as he pleases in heaven and on earth, without limitation
 - 1) Ps. 135:5-6
 - 2) Dt. 10:14; Job 9:5-9; Ps. 89:11; Ps. 103:19; Amos 9:5-6; Acts 17:24-28
 - b. God has control over life and death
 - 1) Dt. 32:39 and 1 Sam. 2:6
 - 2) Job 14:5; Ps. 41:1-2; Ps. 79:11
 - c. God has control over natural occurrences
 - 1) Job 37:15-16; Ps. 135:7; and Mark 4:41
 - 2) Job 9:7; 37:3-6; 38:22-23; Jer. 31:35; Matt. 5:45; Ps. 104:19-20; Ps. 147:8, 16; Zech. 10:1; Ps. 89:9; etc.
 - d. God does as he wills, even among the supernatural host of heaven

- 1) Dan. 4:35
 - 2) Job 1:12; 2:6; 2 Thess. 2:7
- e. God's control even extends to 'evil things.'
- 1) Isa. 45:7 – The words translated "well-being" is Hebrew *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם) and "calamity" is the Hebrew word *ra* (רָעָה), which is most frequently translated as "bad" or "evil."
 - 2) Gen. 45:8; 50:20; Ex. 4:21; Deut. 8:2; Judg. 9:23; 2 Sam. 24:1; Ps. 81:11-12; Prov. 16:4; Isa. 53:4, 10; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Rom. 1:24-28; 9:17-18; 11:32; 2 Thess. 2:9-12
- f. God has control over people and nations
- 1) Ps. 33:10
 - 2) Job 12:23; Ps. 22:27-28; Ps. 47:8; Isa. 14:25-27; 43:14; 48:14-15; Ezek. 29:19-20
- g. God has meticulous control over individuals
- 1) Ex. 12:36 and James 4:13-15
 - 2) 2 Sam. 17:14; 1 Chron. 5:26; 13:2; 2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 6:22; 7:27; Neh. 6:16; Acts 18:21; Rom. 15:32; 1 Cor. 4:19; Eph. 2:10; Heb. 6:3
- h. Examples like those above seem to be normative
- 1) Eph. 1:10-11 – Here Paul says God "works all things according to the counsel of His will."
 - 2) Jack Cottrell argues that the "things" of verse 11 are limited to only those things that are directly relevant to Israel and the Church.
 - 3) However, Eph. 1:10 establishes a context for "all things" that appears to be very inclusive.
 - 4) In Eph. 1:10 Paul refers to God's "plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."
 - 5) This plan for the fullness of time includes a new heavens and new earth,¹ where all of creation will once again be as God intended.
 - 6) In this context, "all things" is inclusive of literally, all things in heaven and on earth. The "all things" in verse 11 has the same referent as the "all things" in

¹ The "fullness of time" is a reference to the Kingdom of God (see Mk. 1:15) which has an ultimate eschatological fulfillment in the new heavens and new earth (Isa. 65:17; 66:22).

verse 10; therefore, God does literally work "all things," inclusively and exhaustively, according to the council of His will.

E. Efficacious vs. Permissive Will

1. Efficacious (Purposeful) Will

- a. Eph. 1:11 – God actively brings into actual occurrence what is in His Plan
- b. Isa. 14:24; 27; 46:10 – What God has purposed from eternity will come to pass
- c. This does not necessarily mean that God everything that happens is a direct result of God's direct action

2. Permissive Will

- a. Permissive isn't a great word choice, especially in relation to sin, because it suggests that God has give us 'permission' to sin. Actually, this is meant to say that God allows sin to occur and his plan accommodates the sin that occurs.
- b. God commands righteousness and forbids sin, but He does not force our 'decision'
- c. God allows a creature to disobey his law, but he never gives 'permission'
- d. God promises judgment as a consequence of disobedience

3. God 'permits' some sin and prevents some sin

- a. 2 Chron. 32:31 – God puts no hinderance in the way of sin, but allows the individual "to himself, in order to test him."
- b. Ps. 81:12-13 – God desires his people to walk in his ways (v13) but 'allows' them to sin by giving them over to their stubborn hearts
- c. Gen. 20:6 – he prevents Abimelech from sinning
- d. Gen. 31:24 – God warns Laban not to say anything to Jacob when Jacob was fleeing Laban, with God's help
- e. Ps. 19:13 – David prays to be protected from presumptuous sins

4. God also determines the limits to which evil and its effects may go

- a. Ps. 124:1-5 – God restrained the sin of Israel's enemies
- b. 1 Cor. 10:13 – God is able to limit the temptation that we must endure
- c. 2 Thess. 2:7 – God is actively restraining lawlessness

5. Does God use our disobedience in order for his plan to work, or does God's plan work in spite of our disobedience?

- a. Many Calvinists will argue that Gods plan includes our disobedience in such a way that our breaking of God's commands is actually fulfilling God's will.

- b. Many Arminians will argue that God's plan is able to accommodate our disobedience without relying upon that disobedience for the success of the plan.

F. God's Sovereign Will and Human Free Will

1. God's Sovereignty and the working of His Providence

- a. Definition: God plans and carries out His perfect (efficacious) will as He alone knows is best, over all that is in heaven and earth, and He does so without failure or defeat, for the glory of His name and the benefit of His children.
- b. The question for us about God's Sovereignty is whether He "ordains all things" or "works *through* all things"
 - 1) Conservative Calvinism – God causes all things to happen; He is the ultimate cause of everything. Nothing happens apart from God's purpose and without His approval. The world as it actually happens glorifies God maximally. (Meticulous providence; script theory)
 - 2) Moderate Calvinism – God is at work in all things, but He does not cause all things. There are decisions that He permits but does not make Himself. These decisions do not threaten or frustrate His plan. (Active providence; compatibilist freedom; inclinational free will; ship theory)
 - 3) Arminian (and many Wesleyan Centrists) – God is working everywhere in the world, but He does not interfere in the free choices of man. God knows what is going to happen, but He does not force things. (Free will providence; free will theory; libertarian freedom and contrary choice)
 - 4) Open Theology – God is dynamically developing and adapting His working to the decisions of creatures, risking His plan against the freedom of man. If God can know the outcome of a decision in advance, then it is determined. True contrary choice means that God cannot know them in advance.

2. Free Will (Freedom)

- a. Libertarian Freedom or Freedom of Contrary Choice (Arminian)
 - 1) Jack Cottrell says, "To be considered free with respect to any particular situation, a person must have alternative choices and the ability to actualize more than one choice." (p306-307)
 - 2) Regardless of the logic and considerations that contributed to the making of a decision, if there could not have been an alternative decision, then that decision is not truly free.

- 3) If a decision is truly free, then it must be free from any third-party constraints or covert manipulation – meaning, without interference, coercion, or fore-ordination by God in the regular course of history.
 - 4) This does not mean that the decision must be indifferent, but there must be more than one ‘actual’ choice available.
 - 5) God sovereignly chose to create man with a measure of self-determination; thus, God sovereignly limits himself and does not intervene with the free decisions of man, “unless his special providential purposes call for it.” (Cottrell, p188).
 - 6) God reserves the right and the power to intervene in man’s decision-making process, if necessary to preserve the eternal plan and purpose of God.
 - 7) Through perfect fore-knowledge, God is able to incorporate and accommodate all the free actions of man, including prayer, into his plan and purpose.
 - 8) God has simple foreknowledge of free acts; He does not cause free acts.
 - 9) The libertarian freedom of man does not threaten or jeopardize God’s will. “God still has the ultimate word in everything...” “...God is ready and able to enter the stream of history when He chooses and to control men’s actions in a direct way according to His purposes.” (Cottrell)
- b. Inclinational Free Will or Compatibilist Freedom (Moderate Calvinism)
- 1) Freedom is the ability to choose in a way that is consistent with one’s own inclination, desire, or volition.
 - 2) Bruce Ware says, “Our freedom consists in our choosing and doing according to what we are inclined most, or what we desire most, to do.”
 - 3) Meaning, that if we are able to do that which we most desire, then we are truly exercising free will in those decisions.
 - 4) This concept is distinct from freedom of contrary choice because all things being equal, a decision based on one’s strongest desire after considering all options will theoretically always be the same. In that exact moment, under those exact conditions and my nature being what it is, my strongest desire will always be the same.
 - 5) This concept of inclinational freedom is based on the belief that our strongest desires are derivative of our nature.

- 6) Jesus describes this relationship between our desires and our nature in Luke 6:43-45
 - 7) God's sovereignty and human inclinational freedom are compatible – God is able to influence man's moral decisions without coercion by appealing to man's strongest desires.
 - 8) God is able to 'control' the choices and actions of free moral agents through indirect means by using compatibilist middle knowledge to know conclusively how one would actually respond in any possible situation.
 - 9) By using middle knowledge, God is able to provide influences that result in a particular definite action. , and thereby God is able to direct evil actions meticulously and exhaustively without actually causing the action.
- c. Concurrent Free Will (Calvinism)
- 1) God cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do.
 - 2) God directs and works through the distinctive properties of each created thing, so that these things themselves bring about the results that we actually see.
 - 3) God is the 'primary cause' of all things that actually happen – However, humans have real choices to make and those choices bring about real results.
 - 4) This is the heart of the 'concurrency' doctrine – That God causes all things that happen, but He does so in such a way that he still upholds our ability to make willing, responsible choices that have real and eternal results for which we are also held responsible.
 - 5) Exactly how God combines his meticulous and exhaustive providential control with our willing and significant choices is a mystery.
 - 6) Just as both William Shakespeare and Macbeth are responsible for the death of King Duncan, so it is that both God and man are responsible for actions.
 - 7) Scripture nowhere says that we are free in the sense of being outside of God's control or of being able to make decisions that are not caused by anything.
 - 8) We make willing choices that have real effects and we are not aware of any restraints on our will when we make decisions. Therefore, we have the power of willing choice.

3. God's Sovereignty, Man's Freedom, and Evil

a. Libertarian Free Will and Evil

- 1) God is perfectly good and all-powerful. God did not deliberately cause evil.
 - 2) "In the world that God created, evil was a possibility but not a necessity... God created the world with neither moral evil nor natural evil existing in it; he did create free-will beings for whom moral evil was a possibility...with natural evil following from it as its consequence." Cottrell, p398
 - 3) The moral creatures that God created with libertarian free will chose to exercise their freedom to do evil – contrary to the desire and instruction of God.
 - 4) These events did not (do not) surprise God, because he foresaw them before creation.
 - 5) God is able to allow or prevent evil, and to work evil for good.
- b. Compatibilist Freedom / Inclinational Free Will and Evil
- 1) God's meticulous sovereignty operates differently with regard to good and evil.
 - i. God's control over 'good' is direct, active and causative
 - ii. God's control over evil is indirect and permissive
 - 2) Moral evil is the result of sinful creatures acting in accordance with their own desires; God is not the cause of the desires that produce evil, nor does God tempt anyone to evil.
 - 3) Sinful individuals are solely responsible for their evil actions.
 - 4) God meticulously, specifically, and particularly permits natural and moral evil to occur only when it is compatible with His ultimate purposes.
 - 5) By using middle knowledge, God is able to provide influences that result in a particular definite action -- and thereby God is able to direct evil actions meticulously and exhaustively without actually causing the action. God is therefore able to control evil and use evil actions to fulfill His plan – without being the actual cause of evil. (unlike classic Calvinism)
- c. Concurrent Free Will and Evil (Grudem)
- 1) Scripture nowhere shows God as directly doing anything evil, but rather as bringing about evil deeds through the willing actions of moral creatures.
 - 2) Scripture never blames God for evil or shows God as taking pleasure in evil, and Scripture never excuses human beings for the wrong they do.
 - 3) However, God can and does bring about evil events or evil actions of others through indirect means.

- 4) Both God and man are concurrently at work to bring about evil actions that God uses for His purposes.
- 5) God is glorified, even in the punishment of evil. God uses evil for his own glory and for the good of his people.
- 6) Secondary causes (humans, angels, and demons) are real and humans do cause evil and are responsible for evil – though God ordained that it would happen, both in general terms and in specific details, yet God is removed from actually doing evil.
- 7) God brings evil about through secondary causes and this does not impugn his holiness or render God blameworthy.
- 8) Scripture consistently teaches that we never have a right to do evil and that we should persistently oppose evil in ourselves and in the world.
- 9) We confess that we do not understand how it is that God can ordain that we carry out evil deeds and yet hold us accountable for them and not be blamed himself.

G. Election

1. Basic Definition

- a. Before the foundation of the world, God chose to give certain people – those who are ‘in Christ’ – every spiritual blessing.
- b. The people whom God chose before the foundation of the world to receive every spiritual blessing are ‘The Elect.’
- c. Calvinists, and Wesleyan-Arminians agree on this basic definition
- d. The debate is how one becomes ‘in Christ.’

2. Eph. 1:3-5 is a watershed verse in the Election debate

- a. Believers from different viewpoints (Arminian or Calvinist) tend to read into verse 4 in a way that supports their beliefs
 - 1) Calvinists tend to see: “For He chose us **to be** in him before the foundation of the world...”
 - 2) Arminians tend to see: “For He chose us **whom He foreknew would choose to be** in him before the foundation of the world....”
- b. Everyone (Arminian and Calvinist) agree that those who are in Christ will receive every spiritual blessing – whatever that is....

- c. However, the debate is over God's role in moving one from the position of sinner to that of 'in Christ.'
- 1) Calvinists (generally) believe that God select certain sinners based on His sovereign choice alone. This choice has nothing to do with our actions or personal faith (God provides the faith).
 - 2) Arminians generally believe that God selects certain sinners based on His foreknowledge of their decision to accept His free gift of salvation. The emphasis is on the sinner responding to God, seeking Him and accepting His offer.
- d. Analysis of Eph. 1:3-5
- 1) The passage of Eph. 1:3-13 is all one sentence in Greek.
 - 2) Verse 3 emphasizes the blessing believers have "in Christ" – the verses that follow expand upon this thought.
 - i. Cottrell views the first person plural pronouns (our, us) as referring to Jews and the second person pronoun, beginning in v13 as referring to Gentiles. Cottrell, p340
 - ii. So, in Cottrell's view, the context of Eph. 1:3-5 would be limited to Jews.
 - iii. However, the introduction is to "the saints who are in Ephesus" with no distinction between Jew and Gentile.
 - iv. In addition, vs 2 refers to "our Father" and must be inclusive of the whole church in Ephesus (actually, the whole church et al)
 - v. There is no grammatical, syntactical, or contextual reason for Paul to switch to an exclusively Jewish "us" in vs 3.
 - 3) Vs 4 begins with *kathos*, which commonly means "just as" (NAS, NKJ) and may indicate causality, such that we as believers know that God has blessed us in Christ because He chose us in Him.
 - i. The purpose of this choosing was so that we would be "holy and blameless before Him."
 - ii. Parallel to this purpose, is the purpose stated in vs 3 of blessing the Church in Christ before the creation of the world (*cosmos*).
 - 4) The word 'chose' is from the verb *eklego*

- i. *Eklego* is used in the LXX to translate *bachar*, as used in Isa. 49:7-9 to say, “The Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”
 - ii. Paul seems to be using *eklego* in a similar way to Isaiah, referring to God’s choosing in a salvific context – though not limited to Jews.
 - iii. However, it is unclear whether Paul is speaking of corporate choosing or individual choosing – although Paul uses the plural “us” and the parallel of Isa. 49:7-9 is a corporate choosing.
 - iv. The “us” could either be “you and I” or “the Church” – either way, it is Christ who is the elect one (Lk. 9:35; 23:35) in whom the Church is included.
- 5) “...He predestined us for adoption....”
- i. This predestination (*proorizo*) is through Christ and refers to a decision made before the creation of the cosmos.
 - ii. Paul uses this term in several places
 - a) Rom. 8:29-30 – conform believers to the image of Christ
 - b) 1 Cor. 2:7 – that wisdom achieves the glory of His people
 - c) Eph. 1:11-12 -- that believers be for the praise of His glory
 - iii. The only other use of term is Acts 4:28 in reference to God’s special determination of the details of Christ’s death.
 - iv. The use of the word in Acts 4:28 argues against mere foreknowledge – Christ’s death and the details of his death were not merely foreknown by God but decreed by God to take place the way He determined.
 - v. Given that, it seems that Paul uses the term to affirm that God determined in advance to adopt believers into His family through the redemptive work of Christ (1:7).
 - vi. The death of Christ was part of God’s predetermined plan to redeem a select group of people to be His sons and daughters in Christ.
 - vii. It is worth noting, that Paul’s use of *proorizo* is used in corporate terms and in the context of God’s goals or purposes, but not necessarily the context of an individual’s salvation or faith – whether it is individual or corporate depends on how “us” is understood.
- 6) Paul’s purpose is not to define election, but to emphasize the greatness of the Father’s blessing for believers.

- i. If Paul had wanted to make a clear statement about individual election, he probably would have used terms that are more precise.
 - ii. In regard to 'election' – Paul is saying that God chose before the foundation of the cosmos to grant blessings to those who are in Christ so that we would be holy and blameless before God.
 - iii. In this context, it is unclear whether Paul is speaking in personal or corporate terms, making it difficult to use this passage to support either Arminian or Calvinistic concepts of election.
- 3. Can unconditional election include choices by both God and Man?
 - a. Can the same act be determined by God as well as chosen by man?
 - 1) Acts 13:48 says, "...as many as were appointed [by God] to eternal life believed..." – God appointed some to eternal life, and they are the one's who believed the preaching of Paul and Barnabas
 - 2) Then in Acts 14:1 we see, "Now at Iconium, they [Paul and Barnabas]... spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed." – Here, the same author (Luke) indicates that persuasive preaching led many to believe, no mention of election.
 - 3) In one case, only those who were predestined to be saved believed, but it is also true that persuasive preaching is a means by which people come to faith.
 - 4) So, it seems that both predestination by God and human responsibility (choice) are affirmed in the same context by Luke.
 - 5) Just as both God and Pharaoh were responsible for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, both God and man are involved in the same act leading to salvation.
 - 6) There is does not have to be a conflict between God's choice and man's choice, because the choices are compatible (compatibilist freedom) and God is also involved in the means (preaching), the drawing of God (Jn. 6:44) and the enabling of God (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25)
 - b. Must there be a contradiction between unconditional election and free choice?
 - 1) Jesus and the Cross
 - i. God knows all things actual and possible
 - ii. God knew from eternity that Christ would die on the cross (Acts 2:23)
 - iii. Thus, Jesus had to die on the cross, it was fore-ordained.

- iv. However, Jesus also freely chose to die on the cross (Jn. 10:17-18)
 - v. Therefore, the same event is both predestined and freely chosen.
- 2) Salvation chosen by both Man and God
- i. John 6:37 – “All that the Father gives to me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”
 - a) On the one hand, only those the Father predestines to do so will come forward. See also Jn. 6:44.
 - b) On the other hand, it is also true that ‘whoever’ chooses to come (Jesus says, “...whoever comes to me...”) will be saved eternally.
 - c) So, in one verse, we see actions by both God and man related to individual salvation
 - ii. 2 Thess. 2:13 portrays this as well...
 - a) “But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”
 - b) God chooses, but man’s belief in the truth is part of the equation
 - c) The choice is unconditional on God’s part, but conditional upon faith on the man’s part
 - iii.

4. Major Views of Election (i.e. How we become ‘In Christ’)

a. Arminian / Wesleyan

1) Basic Definition

- i. Before the foundation of the world, God – on the basis of His foreknowledge of human faith – chose individuals in Christ to be heirs to eternal life.
- ii. Election occurred before creation
- iii. Election is to those who receive and keep the free gift of salvation

2) Explanation

- i. All persons are dead in sin, separated from God and totally unable to repair the relationship on their own

- ii. (Wesleyan) By means of prevenient grace, God frees all persons from depravity just enough that they can make their own free choice for or against Jesus.
 - iii. (Arminian) Because God limited the consequences of Adamic sin, all humans have innate free will so that they can make their own free choice for or against Jesus
 - iv. Before the foundation of the world, God elected (chose) those whom He foreknew would respond positively to His grace-enabled call to salvation.
 - v. He chose from eternity to bless the ones who will receive and keep the gospel with every spiritual blessing. Because God's foreknowledge is perfect, those whom He elected (chose) will all be saved.
 - vi. However, persons who would have believed, may die in sin because they did not hear the gospel preached.
- b. Calvinism (Classic and Moderate)
- 1) Basic Definition – Classic Calvinist
 - i. (Classic) Before the foundation of the world, God chose certain individuals to be recipients of eternal life solely on the basis of His gracious purpose apart from any human merit or action.
 - 2) Explanation
 - i. All persons are dead in sin, separated from God and totally unable to repair the relationship on their own
 - ii. Before the foundations of the world, God chose (elected) some for salvation.
 - iii. This choice is based wholly upon His own purposes and had no basis whatever in human merit or actions.
 - iv. Because He is sovereignly able to bring His plan to fruition, those whom He elected (chose) will all be eternally saved.
 - 3) Basic Definition – Moderate Calvinist
 - i. (Moderate) Before the foundation of the world, God chose certain individuals to be recipients of eternal on the basis of His gracious purpose and the faith of that individual.
 - 4) Explanation

- i. All persons are dead in sin, separated from God and totally unable to repair the relationship on their own
- ii. Before the foundation of the world, God chose (elected) some for salvation, unconditional but not without a reason for choosing.
- iii. This choice is based upon His own plans, purposes and perfect knowledge of all things actual and possible – including the faith of each individual and how that person would exercise faith in response to the gospel of Jesus. No one is saved ‘against their will.’
- iv. Because He is sovereignly able to bring His plan to fruition, those whom He elected (chose) will all be eternally saved. Unlike Arminianism, God’s choosing is effectual rather than passive.
- v. God’s election is unconditional, but receipt is conditional on faith. Unconditional from the standpoint of the giver (God), but conditional from the standpoint of the receiver - faith.

5. Is Faith entirely a Gift to the Elect?

a. Eph. 2:8-9

- 1) Read Eph. 2:1-9 for the whole context.
- 2) Question: What is the gift?
 - i. Classic Calvinists sometimes take “it” as a reference to faith (Houdmann – GotQuestions.org; R.C. Sproul – www.ligonier.org)
 - ii. However, the context seems to suggest that “it” is almost certainly a reference to salvation as a whole, esp. in light of vs 9
 - iii. It is salvation that is not the result of works, not faith.
- 3) Classic Calvinism generally believes that faith is entirely a gift from God because total depravity makes man incapable of genuine faith in any amount.

b. Saving faith seems to be something that all people have capacity for

- 1) Faith is a requisite for salvation, and throughout the NT salvation is offered to all men, which implies that all men are able to respond to the call
- 2) Every verse that calls upon unbelievers to repent implies the ability to repent and believe – which requires faith
- 3) Lk 13:3; Jn. 3:16-18; Acts 16:31; 20:21; Heb. 11:6; etc.

c. Scripture refers to faith as ‘ours’ using possessive pronouns even prior to regeneration

- 1) Lk 7:50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42
 - 2) Mt. 9:2; 9:22; 9:29; 15:28
 - 3) Rom. 4:1-5
- d. If it is 'our' faith, then does that make our faith a 'work'?
- 1) Throughout Scripture faith is contrasted with works – Rom. 3:26-27; Gal. 3:11; Rom. 4:1-5 – Therefore, even faith that is not a gift is view as a work.
 - 2) Salvation is a gift itself – a gift gained by faith is no more meritorious than a handout given to a beggar. Just because part of the faith is our own does not mean we deserve any credit for the gift of salvation we have received.
 - 3) A gift may be received on the basis of conditions (repentance and faith) but it still cannot be earned.
 - 4) Faith itself is not a work – it is not something that we 'do' in the sense of work, but faith is something we have as an act of will prompted by God's grace. Faith is something we must have as a condition for salvation (along with repentance) – and this is because there is nothing we can do to earn salvation.
 - 5) Receiving a gift (salvation) is not meritorious. Salvation is clearly a gift, and if there were any way to 'earn' it, it would cease to be a gift.

6. TULIP – Classic and Moderate Views

a. T – Total Depravity

- 1) Classic – Intensive and destructive depravity. The image of God has been destroyed utterly by the depravity of sin.
- 2) Moderate – Extensive and corruptive. The image of God has been extensively corrupted and marred by the depravity of sin.

b. U – Unconditional Election

- 1) Classic – No conditions for God or man. Man contributes nothing, even faith is a gift from God.
- 2) Moderate – No condition for God; one condition for man – faith. Man contributes nothing to his salvation but receiving the gift of salvation is conditioned upon the faith of the individual.

c. L – Limited Atonement

- 1) Classic – The atonement provided by Christ's death is only sufficient for the sins of the elect and only available to the elect.

- 2) Moderate – The atonement of Christ’s death is sufficient for all sins and is available to all people but is limited in application to the elect, chosen by God.
- d. I – Irresistible Grace
- 1) Classic – God’s grace is irresistible in a compulsive sense. It cannot be resisted; man’s will cannot resist God’s grace.
 - 2) Moderate – God’s grace is irresistible in a persuasive sense. God’s irresistible grace is compatible with man’s inclinational free will. God’s grace is irresistible to all those who are receptive to the gospel, the elect.
- e. P – Perseverance of the Saints
- 1) Classic – No saint will die in sin; or at the very least – all the elect will be eternally saved.
 - 2) Moderate – No saint will ever be lost, even if he dies in sin. All the elect will be eternally saved.