

PREDESTINATION

By Grace Alone

By Grace I'm Saved- LSB 566 v.1

By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless;

My soul, believe and doubt it not.

Why stagger at this word of promise?

Has Scripture ever falsehood taught?

No! Then this word must true remain:

By grace you too will life obtain.

Peer Olson Strømme

“But Halvor, tell me, what is really your opinion about this election or predestination business, or whatever you call it?”

“Oh, to tell the truth, I haven’t been lying awake nights thinking about it. It’s a very difficult and involved affair, perhaps a mystery best left alone by mortals. But in my one simple way I am inclined to believe what a certain wise man has said, namely, that one can’t expect to be elected unless he agrees to be a candidate.”

▣ How Halvor became a pastor-1894

Eternal Election

- *“The Lord is always voting for a man, and the devil is always voting against him. Then the man himself votes and breaks the tie.”*



Agree or Disagree?

- Is this how election works?
- Must we agree to be a candidate?
- Can we vote for salvation?



Election

- *When an elderly woman heard of some arguments going on about predestination, she said, “ Ah, I have long settled that point in my own mind. For if God had not chosen me long before I was born, I am sure He would have seen nothing in me that would lead Him to choose me afterward.”*
- Agree or disagree?

Can we choose to be elected?

- *“The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”*
 - Romans 8:6-8

Are we elected because of our works?

- *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*
- Ephesians 2:8-10

How are our works described?

*All of us have become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous acts are like **filthy rags**;
we all shrivel up like a leaf,
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

*No one calls on your name
or strives to lay hold of you;*

▣ Isaiah 64:6-7a



How are our works described?

*If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them **rubbish**, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

▣ Philippians 3:4b-11

σκύβαλον [*skubalon /skoō·bal·on/*]

- means literally “dung,” “scraps,” “refuse.” It finds transferred use as “dregs,” “filth,” “rubbish” to denote what is worthless.
- The only NT instance is in Phil. 3:8, where Paul evaluates as “refuse” or “dung” all that he has previously regarded as important. The vulgar term stresses the force of the renunciation he has made for Christ’s sake. He does not disown the divine privileges of Israel but unmask the striving for self-righteousness as a carnal enterprise that stands in antithesis to faith, serves the flesh, and is just as worthless as the flesh.

The Bondage of the Will

- Some theologians argue that since humans have free will, we can choose to be converted or not.
- But Scripture clearly shows that in our sinful condition, we are in opposition to God's will.
- Do we have the freedom to choose salvation?
- No Christian theologian would deny that human beings have some freedom.

The Bondage of the Will

- This ability to choose is sometimes called formal freedom.
- We decide on what clothes to wear, what university to attend, whether and who to marry, etc.
- Outwardly and formally there is genuine freedom of choice in many (but not all) circumstances.
- The human will, however does not act of its own accord but is always moved or influenced by something outside itself—events, circumstances, or ideas.

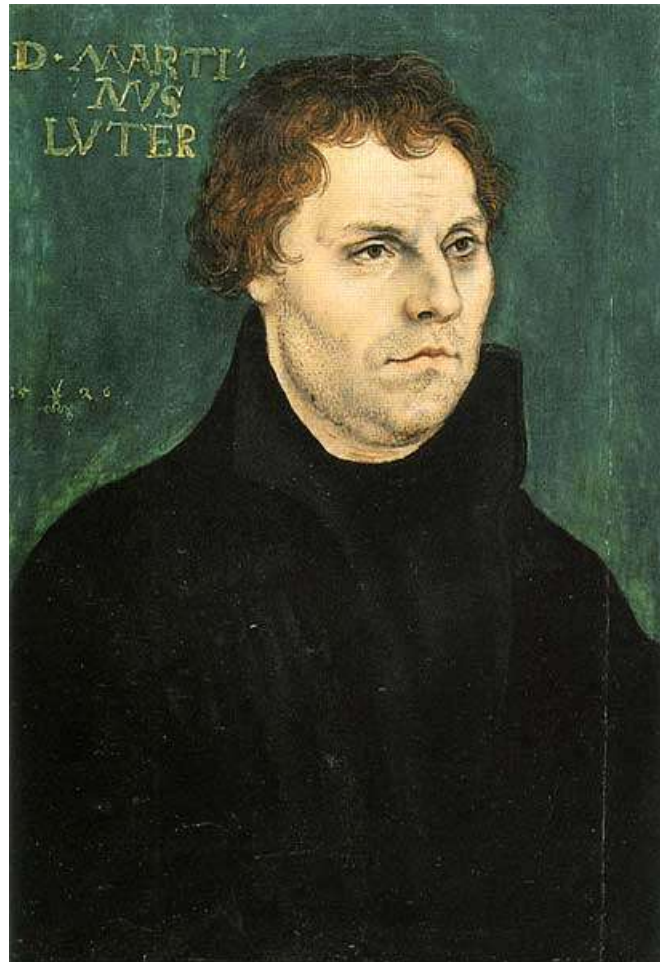
The Bondage of the Will

- Humans therefore do not have material freedom, real or complete freedom that allows them all options and choices.
- What actually occurs in our human experience of spiritual things is not a free will to do whatever we desire, but rather what Martin Luther described as “the bondage of the will.”
- The choices we make are bound and affected by sin, the world, and Satan; as a result, they are always choices against God, opposed to his will, and destructive.

The Bondage of the Will

- Luther considered *The Bondage of the Will* (A.D. 1525) to be one of his most important writings. He published it in response to Erasmus' writing, *On Free Will*.
- At issue was whether or not people are free to choose God. Luther argued that original sin makes us unable to choose God; that we can only do so after God's redemption has occurred in our lives.
- The debate between Luther and Erasmus is one of the earliest of the Reformation over the issue of free will and predestination.

The Bondage of the Will



The Bondage of the Will

- Luther maintained that sin incapacitates human beings from working out their own salvation, that they are completely unable to bring themselves to God.
- His conclusions are that unredeemed human beings are dominated by Satan: Satan as the prince of this world never lets go of what he considers his own unless he is overpowered by a stronger power, i.e. God. When God redeems a person, he redeems the entire person, including the will, which then is liberated to serve God.

Bondage of the Will

- *I say that man, before he is renewed into the new creation of the Spirit's kingdom, does and endeavors nothing to prepare himself for that new creation and kingdom, and when he is re-created has, does and endeavors nothing towards his perseverance in that kingdom; but the Spirit alone works both blessings in us, regenerating us, and preserving us when regenerate, without ourselves..."*
 - Martin Luther

Bondage of the Will

- *“They are the elect, not of themselves but according to God’s purpose; for we shall not be able to raise ourselves to heaven or to create faith within ourselves. God will not admit all to heaven. He will very accurately count those who are His own. The human doctrine of free will and of our spiritual powers is futile. The matter does not depend on our will but on God’s will and election.”*

- Martin Luther

A New Creation.

- *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation*
 - ▣ 2 Corinthians 5:17-18



Not Because of Works

- How is God's electing purpose described.
- *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will...And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ...In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will"*
 - Ephesians 1:4,5,9,11

Not Because of Works

- *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”*
- Romans 8:28-29

Not Because of Works

- *“But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”*
 - 2 Timothy 1:8b-10

Not by Works

- *“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.”*
- Titus 3:4-6

By Grace Alone

- *“So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.”*
 - ▣ Romans 11:5-6



Called Through the Gospel

- *But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because **from the beginning God chose** you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this **through our gospel**, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

Can the called/elected resist?

- One of the mysteries of the Christian faith is that the grace of God is resistible.
- While God does the converting/calling, a person can resist the grace of God as he comes to them through the various means of grace.
 - ▣ *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”*
 - Matthew 23:37

Can the called/elected resist?

- This should never be interpreted to imply that those who are converted resisted less than the unconverted.
- Scripture clearly teaches that some people reject.
 - ▣ *Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.*
 - 1 Timothy 1:19
- We cannot understand why this is the case, except that this is what God has revealed through His word.

How do the elect come to faith?

- *“For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”*
 - ▣ Philippians 2:13
- *“Jesus answered. ‘No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.’”*
 - ▣ John 6:43b-44



The Gift of Faith

- Our gracious God has done everything necessary.
 - ▣ He has created us.
 - ▣ He has redeemed us in Jesus Christ.
 - ▣ He calls us to faith.
 - ▣ He has chosen us before the foundations of the world.
- He does all the work and gives it to us as a gift.

The Gift of Faith

- Sinful human beings try to take credit for the gift through their supposed works, worthiness, cooperation, or by their decision.
- We contributed nothing but our sin.
- God has chosen us!



Francis Pieper

- *“The assurance of our election, however, we can and should gain from the Gospel. For the substance of the Gospel is that the grace of God in Christ is for all sinners without exception...”*



Francis Pieper

- *“...and that this grace is grace, contingent on nothing whatever in man. Every poor sinner therefore, who keeps his faith focused on the Gospel, without any side glances in the direction of the Law, is, by that very fact, believing his eternal election.”*



Martin Luther

- *“From this we should learn that predestination does not rest upon our worthiness and merit, but rests in the hand of God and is founded upon His mercy, which is unwavering and eternal; for that reason it is called the foreknowledge of God and hence is certain and infallible.”*

