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Christology and Security Dialogue

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Week Eight: Security—an On-Line Class

1. The Bottom Line in the Security Issue: Did God choose me for salvation because I chose Him, or did I choose God for salvation because He chose me?

Introduction

Before looking at the teaching of Scripture in regard to this question, we must first clear up some misconceptions. When we talk about “God choosing me,” we do not mean that His choice merely gives me the freedom to choose Him, though that is true, just not the whole picture. And we do not mean His choice of me only leads me to serve Him, though, again, that is true, just not the whole picture. When we talk about “God choosing me” what we mean is His choice of me for salvation, to be saved, as the Scripture will indicate. Likewise, when we talk about my choice of God, we are also referring to salvation.

Now, there are those who quickly object when we talk about God choosing some for salvation because they automatically think that is unfair to those whom God does not choose. In regard to this issue we must maintain the following:

1. We must leave fairness up to the will of God, not my emotions.
2. We must let God do what He wants to, not necessarily what I like or understand.
3. We must believe what we believe because the Scripture teaches it, not because it fits into my theological framework.
4. We must maintain the same balances in understanding these truths that the Scriptures maintain.
5. We must realize that there is no answer to the above red question that does not fit into one scenario or the other.

Regarding number “5” above, let me point out the following. There are two basic views in theology regarding salvation and who ultimately is responsible. These two views are known as “Calvinism” and “Arminianism.” These terms come from popular Reformation and Medieval theologians who wrote about these issues.

“Calvinism” is known as the belief that “I chose God because He first chose me.” In other words, I would never have chosen to believe in Jesus Christ had God not first chosen me as one of His elect who would believe. This belief is named after the Reformation

theologian John Calvin, thus it is called “Calvinism.” However, this belief is as old as the Scriptures themselves.

“Arminianism” is known as the belief that “God chose me because I chose Him.” In other words, God “elected” me to receive salvation because He looked into the future from Eternity Past and saw what choice I would make, to believe or not to believe, and then based upon this “foreknowledge” of my belief, He “elected” me, or “chose” me, to be saved. So, God’s choice of me is actually and ultimately based upon my choice of Him. This belief is named after the Medieval theologian Jacobus Arminius, thus it is called “Arminianism.” However, this belief is also as old as the Scriptures themselves. (NOTE: It has been said that Jacobus Arminius was not actually “Arminian,” but was personally more “Calvinistic.” Whether that is true or not, I really am not sure. However, that does not matter for our discussion because we really are not ultimately interested in these men, but in the teaching of the Scriptures.)

Often Christians argue and debate over these “election” and “predestination” issues without ever defining their terms, and so actually they are saying very little in their arguments. I have found that many Christians think they are “Calvinistic,” but when they explain what they truly believe, they explain the “Arminian” perspective. So, I use these terms of “Calvinism and Arminianism” simply to help the class understand these issues and how to talk about them. However, I would emphasize that you and I should not ultimately be “Calvinistic” or “Arminian,” but rather “Biblical.” In the end, this important theological issue must not be resolved by what the theologians say, but by what the Scriptures say.

So, don’t be Calvinistic, or Arminian, be Biblical, without any concern over what label someone may place on you.

The reason I called the “who chose who” question the “bottom line” in the Security question is this. As I stated before, Christians will often debate these things, talking in circles and getting nowhere. We can cut through a ton of misunderstanding and wasted debate if we understand the whole question comes down to “Who chose who first?” Did I choose God because He chose me, or did God choose me because I chose Him? If we focus our discussion on this question, then we can get a handle on what the real issue is in the election/predestination debate (even if we never get a handle on the answer).

One other important point before we examine the Scriptures is this: Total Depravity. Do you remember back in Week Four when we discussed this question: Just how sinful is man? Is man so sinful that he will not choose God? We know that man is depraved, being lost and steeped in sin and his own evil. But, Calvinism and Arminianism offer two different views regarding depravity.

Calvinism says that man is “**Totally** Depraved,” or so sinful, so “dead in trespasses and sins” that man simply will not choose God and will not turn to Jesus in salvation. Arminianism says that man is, yes, very sinful, even “dead in trespasses and sins.” However, man does have the ability to choose Christ.

In Calvinism, God elects some to salvation because man is Totally Depraved and will not turn to Christ on his own. Therefore, if anyone at all is to be saved, God must choose

some and overcome their Total Depravity and lead the person to choose Christ. In Arminianism, man is messed up in his own sin, but man still can turn to Christ. So, ultimately, salvation is the choice of man because man does have the capability to receive Christ.

So, the issue of how “totally” man is “depraved” is key to this issue and debate.

With these things in mind, let’s now examine some Scriptures.

Men are required to Choose God

Deuteronomy 30:19-20

. . . I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now *choose life*, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life . . .

John 17:6-8

“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and *they accepted* them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and *they believed* that you sent me.”

The fact that man must choose God, must choose Christ, is not debated by either the Arminian or the Calvinistic view.

However, God Chooses Men

Psalm 33:12

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people *he chose* for his inheritance.

Matthew 11:27

“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom *the Son chooses* to reveal him.”

Matthew 22:14

“For many are invited, but *few are chosen*.”

According to this statement of Jesus, we could **not** say that the Scriptures teach that God chooses “everyone,” as some Christians are prone to say. Jesus said “**few** are chosen,” not “everyone is chosen.”

John 15:16-19

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other. “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but *I have chosen you* out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”

Note that in this passage Jesus seems to be answering our “bottom line” question: Did God choose me because I chose Him, or did I choose God because He chose me? When Jesus said to His disciples, “You did not choose me, but I chose you,” is He not answering

our question? Obviously He is saying that the disciples ultimately chose Him only because He first chose them.

Ephesians 1:4-5

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--*

The choice of God and the “predestination” of God concerning our “adoption as his sons” is “in accordance with his pleasure and will.” In other words, God does not choose us based upon something in us, but rather He chooses us on the basis of something in Himself, on the basis of “his pleasure and will.”

II Thessalonians 2:13

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.

I Peter 2:9

But *you are a chosen people*, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

The “Election” of the “Elect” is a Biblical Truth

The word “elect” means “chosen.”

Matthew 24:22-24, 31 (and the parallel passage in Mark 13:20-27)

If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of *the elect* those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even *the elect--* if that were possible. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather *his elect* from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Romans 11:4-8

And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 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. What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but *the elect* did. The others were hardened, as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day."

II Timothy 2:10

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of *the elect*, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Titus 1:1

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of *God's elect* and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness--

II Peter 1:1, 10

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make *your calling and election sure*. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Notice that while God elects, we do not know whom He has elected, including ourselves, except as we see and experience faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot assume we have been “elected,” but need to make it “sure” by exercising faith in Jesus Christ. While election is an objective reality in the plans of God, we do not know to whom it applies beyond our experience as humans.

So, the Bible clearly teaches that man must choose God in salvation, and God also chooses man in salvation. Now, how should we understand those choices? Calvinism says that, because man is “totally depraved” and will not choose good, or God, or Christ, in salvation, then God must choose some for salvation so that some will be saved. When God chooses those whom He will save, He then “draws” those persons to Christ with “irresistible grace” as described by Jesus in John 6:44:

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

According to Calvinistic thinking, there is a general call to salvation where everyone is called to come to Christ, and then there is the effectual call to salvation where those who are called actually respond with saving faith. These are illustrated by the following Scriptures:

“General Call” to everyone to come to Christ:

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. Revelation 22:17

God will not stop anyone from coming to Christ who wants Him. The problem is this: no one wants Him. So, God must choose, must elect some for salvation. In fact,

“The Lord . . . is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” II Peter 3:9. God wants all to come to repentance, but since they simply

Since no one responds to the General Call without God opening the sinner up and leading the sinner to Christ, then God must extend the . . .

“Effectual Call” that results in belief and salvation for those to whom the call is extended:

Matthew 22:14 "For many are invited [the “General Call”], but *few are chosen* [the “Effectual Call].”

Romans 1:6 And you also are among those who are *called to belong to Jesus Christ*.

Romans 1:7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and *called to be saints*: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:28 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*.

Romans 8:30 And *those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified*; those he justified, he also glorified.

Romans 9:24 even us, whom he also *called*, not only *from the Jews* but *also from the Gentiles*?

1Corinthians 1:9 God, who has *called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*, is faithful.

1Corinthians 1:24 but to those whom *God has called, both Jews and Greeks*, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1Corinthians 1:26 Brothers, think of what you were *when you were called*. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.

1Corinthians 7:18 Was a man already *circumcised when he was called*? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man *uncircumcised when he was called*? He should not be circumcised.

Galatians 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting *the one who called you by the grace of Christ* and are turning to a different gospel--

Galatians 1:15 But when God, who *set me apart from birth and called me by his grace*, was pleased

Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers, were *called to be free*. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Ephesians 1:18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know *the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints*,

Ephesians 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit-- just as *you were called to one hope when you were called--*

Philippines 3:14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which *God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus*.

Colossians 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body *you were called to peace*. And be thankful.

II Thessalonians 2:14 *He called you to this through our gospel*, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II Timothy 1:9 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*,

Hebrews 9:15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that *those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance*-- now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

I Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of *him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light*.

I Peter 3:9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because *to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing*.

I Peter 5:10 And *the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ*, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

II Peter 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of *him who called us by his own glory and goodness*.

Jude 1:1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To *those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ*:

Revelation 17:14 They will make war against the Lamb, but *the Lamb will overcome* them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings-- and *with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.*"

So, the Calvinistic view is that God chooses, or “elects,” and effectually calls men to salvation through His irresistible grace because men will not come to Christ without the election, the irresistible grace, and the effectual call of God.

The Arminian view is that God chooses, or “elects,” also. Note that both views believe in God’s choice and in “election” because the Scripture plainly teaches these truths, regardless of how we understand them. In Arminianism, however, God bases His choice, His election, of who will be saved upon His “foreknowledge.” In other words, God only chooses a person to be saved because He has looked into the future to see whether that person would, of his own free will, accept Jesus Christ. If the person would accept Jesus, then God “elects” that person to salvation. Of course, in this scenario God bases His choice upon man’s.

There are two keys to this interpretation:

1. Man’s depravity is not so bad as to render man unable to choose Christ. Humans still have the capability to choose Christ and accept His salvation, not being “totally depraved” to the point where they are unable to choose God.
2. The word “foreknowledge” can refer to a “knowledge beforehand” of an event. In other words, the word “foreknowledge” can refer to the prior knowledge in eternity past by God of man’s choice, whether or not “I” would accept Christ or reject Him. It is upon this “foreknowledge” of the event of belief or unbelief that God bases His predestinating election of those who will be saved so that ultimately it is man who is choosing first and God is simply responding to man’s choice, basing His divine choice upon the “foreseen” choice of man.

It should be noted that this interpretation is entirely possible. The word “foreknowledge” **can** refer to a “fore-knowing” of an event:

Acts 2:22, 23

“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. *This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge;* and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.”

The event of Jesus being “handed over” for crucifixion seems to have been a result of God’s “foreknowledge.”

However, when we examine the other Biblical references to “foreknowledge” we see that it isn’t an event that is “foreknown,” it is someone who is “foreknown.” This causes Calvinists to argue that what the word really means, when it is used in conjunction with “foreknowing” persons for salvation, is actually a “fore-loving.” In other words, “foreknowing” is a “**foreknowing**” in the same sense that Adam “knew” his wife, referring to an intimate and personal communion (in Adam’s case, with sexuality involved). So, when the Bible says that God “foreknew” me, it means that God chose to “forelove” me, personally and intimately and compassionately, by electing me and saving me.

Let’s look at the other Biblical passages that use the term “foreknowledge” to see if what is “foreknown” is an event, or a person or persons.

Romans 8:29

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 11:1, 2

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject *his people, whom he foreknew*.

1 Peter 1:1, 2

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, *who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood:

Obviously, in each of these passages the objects of “foreknowledge” are persons (“those,” “his people,” and “who”). So, Calvinists would state that the Bible is not saying that God “foreknew” **these persons’ choices**, but rather He “foreknew” **these persons** in the sense that He “foreloved” them.

Now, I realize this is “heavy stuff.” But, it is theology, and these are Scriptural issues. I have found that most evangelical Christian laypersons tend to be Arminian, while most evangelical Christian teachers, ministers (maybe), and scholars tend to be Calvinistic. There are exceptions, of course. And, there are good, godly men and women in both camps. So, while we want to understand the Scriptures as best we can, we do **NOT** want to make one’s

understanding of these issues a test of fellowship. We can have, and Christians often do have, great Christian fellowship and even partnership with both Arminianistic and Calvinistic Christians, regardless of which camp I myself might prefer.

However, our goal in this class is not just to fellowship, but to examine the Scriptures on these important theological matters. So, one more question before we press on to the second FORUM question from Week 8 (the next two questions will not take nearly as long to answer).

Is there a passage in the Bible which examines these exact issues about choice and ultimate responsibility?

Well, interestingly enough, there is. Let's look at **Romans 9**, as Paul speaks about **God's choice** of the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (as opposed to Abraham, Ishmael, and Esau):

- 6 It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.**
- 7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."**
- 8 In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.**
- 9 For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."**
- 10 Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac.**
- 11 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad-- in order that God's purpose in election might stand:**
- 12 not by works but by him who calls-- she was told, "The older will serve the younger."**
- 13 Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."**
- 14 ¶ What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!**
- 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."**
- 16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.**
- 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."**
- 18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.**
- 19 One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?"**

- 20 **But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"**
- 21 **Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?**
- 22 **What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-- prepared for destruction?**
- 23 **What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory--**
- 24 **even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?**

Now, let's repeat this passage with some commentary and paraphrasing for interpretative reasons:

- 6 **It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.** (Not all the descendents of "Israel," that is, Abraham, are "Israel," that is, members of God's chosen nation, Israel.)
- 7 **Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."**
- 8 **In other words, it is not the natural children** (such as the Arabs who are descendents of Abraham's child, Ishmael, and today are mostly Muslim) **who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.**
- 9 **For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."**
- 10 **Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac.**
- 11 **Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad-- in order that God's purpose in election might stand:** (Even though Jacob and Esau had not yet been born, so they could not have "done anything good or bad" so as to give God reason to choose one and not choose the other, nevertheless, God "elected," or "chose," one and not the other.)
- 12 **not by works but by him who calls-- she was told, "The older will serve the younger."** (God's basis for choosing one and not the other was "not by works," it was not because of what Jacob or Esau did or did not do, including whether or not they would choose God, rather, God's basis for choosing one and not the other was "him who calls," or, His own self. God chose one and not the other for some reason internal to God, by His own self "who calls." Esau was to "serve the younger," Jacob, simply because that is what God determined. We know no other reason as to why God chose Jacob, and not Esau.
- 13 **Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."** (Not only did God chose Jacob and not Esau, but the Scripture describes the choice as "love" and the nonchoice as "hate." Was God serious about this choice, or what? So much for those folks who say that God doesn't "hate" anyone -?-)

14 ¶ What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! (Well, Paul asks the obvious question here! I mean, how could God “hate” someone BEFORE they were born and BEFORE they “had done anything good or bad”? I mean, it is simply not fair for God, or anyone, to “hate” someone BEFORE they are born, so, “Is God unjust?” Well, the answer is, according to Paul, “Not at all!” And then Paul proceeds to explain why God is not unfair despite His “election.”)

15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

(So, why is God not “unfair” despite the fact that He “elected” not to choose Esau and to allow the Scriptures to describe His emotions toward Esau as “hate”? Well, it’s because God “has mercy on whom” He wants to “have mercy” and He “has compassion on whom” He wants to “have compassion.” God chooses or doesn’t choose based upon HIS will, on HIS desires, on what HE wants to do. God isn’t asking me, or you, or anyone else what we think about what He does or whom He chooses, He just does what He wants to do. He is God, the Potter. You see, being chosen by God does not, ultimately, “depend on man’s desire or effort.” No one comes to Jesus because they were kind enough to choose God and accept Christ. Rather, those who come to Jesus do so because God has mercy. “It (that is, being chosen by God) does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.” God does not choose, does not elect, those who will be saved because something we have done, or even will do, but the choice of God depends upon the simple mercy of God. Therefore, God’s choice is not dependent upon a “foreknown” acceptance of Jesus, which would be “man’s desire or effort,” but rather God’s choice depends upon HIS mercy, period, ultimately.)

17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." (God even has “purpose” in not choosing those whom He does not choose.)

18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. (God even hardens those whom He does not choose. Of course, since no one will come to God unless He chooses them, anyway, due to Total Depravity, there is no problem with God “hardening” those who will not choose Him. God does have mercy, however, on those whom He wants to have mercy. God does what He wants to do. He is “sovereign.”)

19 One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" (Good question, Paul. I mean, if God hardens some people, and if those who come to Him only do so because of His mercy, then how can God “blame” anyone, or hold them responsible, for their rejection of Christ? Especially since HE has mercy **and** HE hardens, and especially since no one can resist the ultimate will and plan of God, then how can God hold anyone responsible for rejecting Him?)

20 But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" (What, Paul? Do you mean, Paul,

that the answer to the question about “Why does God still blame us?” is simply: Don’t question God? In other words, we are simply not to “talk back God,” realizing that HE is God and we are mere “man,” and realizing that HE is the Creator and we are mere creatures? Is Paul suggesting that we must trust in the sovereign will of God so much that we cannot question Him regarding why He has created many who will reject Him and whom He has not chosen?)

- 21 Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?** (Evidently Paul is clearly stating that we have to bow to the sovereign rule of God, even in election and salvation. We have to allow God to be who He is, “The Potter” who can create his creatures for whatever purposes He chooses.)
- 22 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-- prepared for destruction?**
- 23 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory--**
- 24 even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?**

(Despite the fact that God is the Sovereign Potter who can do as He pleases, what if He withheld His judgement against sinful man and instead gave man the opportunity to turn to Him before the judgement, even giving folks years and lifetimes to turn to Him? And what if God not only granted time to turn to Him, but also granted the way of forgiveness and salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ? Of course, these things God has actually done, already. God cannot be called unfair for not choosing everyone because He has made salvation available to anyone who wants it. God will not stop anyone from coming to Christ. The door to salvation is open. However, because no one enters that door of their own initiative, and because no one chooses God of their own accord, then God must choose some for salvation, granting them repentance and faith.)

But what about evangelism?

One other issue we need to mention regarding this issue is **evangelism**. If the Calvinistic viewpoint is true and God is the One who chooses first, then there is no need for evangelism of the lost since no one will come to God unless they have been chosen, and, if they have been chosen they will come to God, regardless of evangelistic efforts. Right?

While this may be the “logical” conclusion of Calvinism, it isn’t the Biblical perspective and it doesn’t agree with the commands of Christ. We must realize that “logic” has nothing to do with the issue. While evangelism may not seem like a “logical” thing to do in a Calvinistic world, we must understand that “logic” is a simply the arrangement of truth so that it makes sense to the human understanding. God does not have to make sense to us, nor does He even have to answer to us. God does not have to be “logical.” God does not have to fit into the box that has as its boundries the understanding of our finite, “logical,” fallen minds.

Because the Scripture clearly commands Christians to carry out the evangelization of the lost, we must do it. The Calvinist ultimately evangelizes for two reasons:

1. God has commanded it.
2. Since God is the One who saves, HE is responsible for the fruit of our evangelistic efforts. So, we evangelize expecting God to work and to save, and then we enjoy experiencing His grace as He saves some of those with whom we share the gospel.

Evangelism for the Arminian is a bit different. The Arminian evangelizes because, if he doesn't, those who go to hell will do so because of our negligence. Since ultimately it is man's responsibility to choose God, and since man has the ability to choose God, then Christians are also responsible to get the word of salvation to the lost, not just because God has commanded it, but because salvation is ultimately in the hands of men.

So, the Arminian evangelizes, ultimately, for two reasons:

1. The lost cannot be saved without being evangelized (hearing the gospel).
2. Christians bear the responsibility to evangelize.

Now, one last point about this debate. I hope you have noticed that I have used the word "ultimately" many, many times. That is because Calvinists and Arminians both believe many, many things in common, but just view those things differently. For example, both camps acknowledge the following truths of the Scriptures:

1. Mankind is lost and depraved, born without Jesus, and in need of salvation.
2. Each person must turn to Jesus and believe to be saved.
3. No one will turn to Jesus without the work of God in his heart.
4. Evangelism is important because God has commanded it and because no one can be saved without hearing about Jesus.

However, when we understand the differences in Calvinism and Arminianism, and how these two different viewpoints answer the question, "Did God choose me for salvation because I chose Him, or did I choose God for salvation because He chose me?", then we can understand how these two groups can make many of the same statements about the gospel, about salvation, and about evangelism, but mean differing things.

2. Can a true believer in Jesus Christ who possesses salvation lose his salvation?

Now, I hope you see that when we understand the Calvinist and Arminian debate (if you do), this second question of "losing salvation" is ultimately dependent upon my stance in the Calvinism/Arminian debate. I find it a very interesting phenomenon that many, many Christians state that they believe in "Eternal Security," that a true believer in Jesus Christ cannot "lose his salvation," but, when many of those same Christians are asked the Calvinist/Arminian question they express belief in an Arminian understanding about who makes the ultimate choice in salvation.

These two things do **not** go together: Arminianism and Eternal Security. If the ultimate choice in salvation is man's, then man, being the sinful, wisheyyashey being that he is, can

“unchoose” his salvation, can he not? Eternal Security is not only based upon the clear teaching of Scripture, it is also based upon the fact that God’s choice is the ultimate choice in salvation. That is why our salvation is secure: it rests in the work of Christ and the choice of **God** to save.

So, despite the fact that Arminianism and Eternal Security do not go together, many Christians believe the two together as if they do go together. Of course, the reason for this is that most Christians do not understand the Calvinism/Arminianism issues. Most Christians, because they believe in the free will of man, think that the reality of “free will” cancels out the reality of God’s choice, God’s election, and God’s predestination. It doesn’t.

So, theologically, the reason to believe that I cannot lose my salvation is simply because salvation, all the way from the plan of the Father in eternity past -- to the work of Christ on the cross which provide forgiveness -- to the irresistible drawing of the Holy Spirit and His granting of repentance and faith, is the work of God – not me. I cannot lose my salvation because it is **God** who has saved me, and not me myself. Not even the fact that I believed puts salvation, ultimately, in my hands. Even my repentance and faith, by which I was converted, were gifts from God.

With that in mind, let’s look at some Scripture concerning Eternal Security.

Matthew 28:20

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Will Jesus promise to be with us “always,” and then leave us?

John 6:39-40

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

If it is the Father’s will that Jesus “lose **none** of all that” the Father “has given” Jesus, then how could any who has ever been “given” to Jesus become lost again? After all, “everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have **eternal** life.” If my salvation is “eternal life,” and I later lose it, then obviously it wasn’t really “eternal.” In addition, it was Jesus Himself who promised to “raise” the believer “up at the last day.” Now, will He fulfill that promise, or not?

John 5:24

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

Again, if Jesus gives “eternal life” and removes “condemnation,” then can He not make good on that promise and bring it to fulfillment? You see, it all depends upon Him, and that is just the way He wants it. Indeed, that is the way it must be if anyone is to be saved.

John 10:28-30

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.

Jesus gets a bit radical and even says that His children “shall never perish.” If that be the case, then can anyone “snatch them out of His hand”? The obvious answer is: no way, man. Now, the Arminians say that, while no one can snatch me out of the hand of Jesus, I can choose to get out of His hand by choosing not to believe. So, again, the issue is clear: If ultimately I am saved because God chose me only because I chose Him, then, indeed, I can unchoose God and “get out of His hand.” However, if I chose God only because He first chose me, then, “no one,” including myself, “can snatch me out of the hand of Jesus.”

Romans 8:15-17; 38, 39

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

If God has made us His “sons,” and we even can call him “Papa,” or “Dada,” or “Abba,” then will He kick us out of His family and excommunicate us from being His children? We are even “heirs” of all the glory that Christ will receive because we have been made “sons” of God, “children” of God.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

At the end of Romans 8, Paul goes through a long list of things that cannot separate us from the love Christ to say that there is **NOTHING** that can separate us from the love us Christ. So, if we cannot be separated from His love, and we are His children, how could He ever disown us?

Ephesians 1:5; 2:8, 9

He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—

He “adopted” us. Will He disown us? An adopted child in our country cannot be unadopted. Would God do something to us that we as humans do not even make legal to do to one another?

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.

Our salvation is a gift from God that we can do nothing to earn. We cannot work our way into heaven. So, why should we think that we can unearn our salvation if we cannot earn it to begin with, or work our way out of our salvation if we cannot gain it by works to begin with?

1 John 5:13

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know** that you have eternal life.*

If we can lose our salvation, then can we ever really “**know** that we have eternal life”? If we can lose our salvation and not really “**know** that we have eternal life,” then why did John say “that you may **know** that have eternal life”?

Hebrews 13:5

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

If God “will never leave” us, then how could we ever lose His presence with us by losing our salvation?

3. How do we know that the death of Jesus Christ provides forgiveness for ALL persons in the world, at least potentially, and not just the “elect”?

The clear reason that we cannot believe that Christ died only for the elect is because of the clear teaching of Scripture that He died for **everyone**:

John 1:29

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

The sin of “the world” is taken away for every person today and every person throughout history, for every person in the “world,” at least potentially, for those who reject Christ will not experience the benefit of the forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

John 3:16-17

*For **God so loved the world** that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not **send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.***

God sent His Son to “the world” to offer salvation to “the world” and to give the potential to “the world” to be saved.

II Corinthians 5:19

*God was **reconciling the world to himself** in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

God “reconciled the world to Himself in Christ” in that, through Christ, anyone who wants forgiveness can have it.

I John 2:2

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

The “whole world” has its sins “atoned for” by the “atoning sacrifice” of Jesus Christ in that every person in the world may have forgiveness by accepting Jesus Christ.

The “5-point Calvinists” believe that Jesus only died for the sins of the elect, and that when the Scripture speaks of Jesus dying for the sins “of the world,” it means “the world” of the elect. However, the Scriptures never suggest such a restriction. Jesus died for the sins “of the world,” obviously meaning every person “in the world,” in all of history.

In order to help you understand Calvinism a bit better, I list below the 5 “TULIP” points of Calvinism:

T = Total Depravity: Each and every man is so enslaved to his own sinfulness that he simply will not choose God, although God would not stop the man who wanted to (although no one wants to).

U = Unconditional Election: Because no one will choose God, God must choose some to save. Whatever basis God uses to choose some and not others is unknown, except that it “unconditional” as far as the goodness of man is concerned. God chooses no one on the “condition” that they be good, or worthy, for no one is. God chooses on the basis of something within Himself, such as mercy, grace, compassion, etc.

L = Limited Atonement: Christ died only for the sins of the elect. Note that many evangelical theologians accept four points of Calvinism, but not this point. These theologians are known as “4-point Calvinists.” I would venture to say that most (but not all) evangelical theologians are “4-point Calvinists.”

I = Irresistible Grace: God “draws” the elect to salvation through an “irresistible” grace that the sinner will not resist, resulting in regeneration, justification, and conversion (and probably in that order, although these events happen simultaneously in history).

P = Perseverance of the Saints: Those whom God saves are never lost. From the human perspective, these “Saints” never fall away, but have “Eternal Security.” Because it is God Himself who saves, from start to finish, God never loses those whom He saves.

Questions about Eternal Security, etc.:

In week eight, I found myself struggling and wondering about the same question that Jill had. I don’t want to think that God only chose particular people and His salvation is not granted, by the death of Christ, to all that believe in Him.

HH answers in blue:

Salvation IS available to ALL who believe in Him. The problem is that, because of TOTAL Depravity, no one will believe in Him unless God elects. So, God elects.

The key to many of your questions revolves around TOTAL Depravity. In other words, God chooses some for salvation because, if He didn’t, not one person would accept Christ.

10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one;

11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.

12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

13 "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips."

14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;

16 ruin and misery mark their ways,

17 and the way of peace they do not know."

18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Romans 3:10-18

Because man is as described here in Romans 3, God must elect if any are to be saved. No one will choose Christ if He doesn't. The reason for predestination, election, irresistible grace, etc., is all because of Total Depravity.

It doesn't seem that the loving, forgiving God that I know would automatically exclude me from His Kingdom, even though I have faith in Him.

God will not exclude anyone who has faith in Him. However, you, I, and no one else will have faith in Him unless He chooses some to do so.

However, I do think that God has and does know everything about us even before we were born. I also think that He knows whether we will praise or reject Him.

Of course, if we say that God made His choice of me based upon His foreseeing of my choice of Him, then I have accepted the Arminian view (which isn't necessarily a tragedy, it is, however, Arminian).

That is my dilemma. Why would He allow us to live if He knows that we will not be faithful in our belief?

Well, God's creation does not exist for us. It exists for Him. If God created knowing that there would be sin, and unbelief, and hell, then why did He create?

God obviously knew what He was doing. We may not like the fact that He created a universe where sin was allowed. But, He did, and He didn't ask us our opinions of doing so.

Doesn't God give us the will to pick salvation or condemnation?

Yes, we have free will. We can choose Christ, or we can reject Christ. However, since not one human will choose Christ on his own free accord, God has elected some to do so. Yet, even those who choose Christ (the elect) still do so freely, although they have been irresistibly drawn by God. Although grace is "irresistible," God is able to bring us to Christ in such a way that we also choose Christ freely.

In other words, somehow (we don't understand how), God can render an event of history, and even a choice of history, both CERTAIN to happen, and yet He can allow it to occur FREELY. Think on that one for a while.

Under God's sovereignty, history is both CERTAIN and FREE.

How do I know, or is it possible for anyone to know if we are one of the elect; I doubt it sincerely. I don't think we actually know who God has set apart for Himself in order for them to become holy, as the definition of sanctification calls for. Can you set me a little straighter on this Mr. Harriss?

We cannot know who is ultimately elect and who isn't, except to say that those who

truly believe in Jesus Christ are most definitely elect, and the only elect. Predestination and election and all such that goes with it occurs in the realm of God's decree, or His ultimate plan. We do not know the details of God's decree.

However, we do know God's commands. We are to live our lives by God's commands, not His decrees, although we do want to know as much as we can about His decrees. We do evangelism because God has commanded us to, and because we do NOT know who is elect and who is not.

I hope that I am not the only one in our class that is torn by this. It has left me feeling as though I am out of the race before I am even entered into it.

The fact that you are struggling with this is good. It shows that you are truly thinking about this week's material. Many students do not put enough thought into these things to come to the point of struggling. Anyone who seriously thinks about these things will struggle. Sometimes we have to "wrestle" with God, as Jacob did (though Jacob's wrestling was also literal), in order to even begin to comprehend who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do.

Wrestling with God is good. It's like a child wrestling with his dad. When they're done, the child knows his dad a little better.

Isn't my security eternal by persevering in my faith towards God?

Yes, our security is eternal, and we must persevere. However, I think we must conclude that, in the end, those who do persevere will be those whom God has chosen. We can only persevere by the grace of God. But, it is true, that we MUST persevere, especially since we really don't know if God has "chosen" me. Our responsibility is not to figure if God has chosen me, or anyone else. Our responsibility is to believe. We know God chooses, but our knowledge stops there. We don't know whom He has chosen. So, we focus on our personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, not God's choices in salvation.

John 12:32 says that, "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." I am not real clear on the issue that if just because I am drawn by God, I am not necessarily an elect?

This verse is speaking of what theologians have termed the "General Call." In other words, because Jesus was "lifted up" (probably a reference to the cross), then "all men" are "drawn" to Christ by His sacrificial death for us. In other words, all men are invited to come to Christ in His sacrifice for us. However, no one will come to Christ, ultimately and effectually, unless they are a part of the "few" that are "chosen."

Theologically, the elect are irresistibly drawn to Christ. Through the General Call to the world, others may be "drawn" to Christ somewhat, as far as their own human interests lead them. However, again, since we do not know who the elect are, we cannot discern in our lives when a "call" or "drawing" is general or effectual. We simply know the reality of these two calls theologically, in the workings of God. We

must live our daily lives and carry out ministry and evangelism by simple faith in God's clear commands.

I feel like I have Accepted Christ, but He may have not accepted me.

It would be impossible for you to truly accept Christ and He not accept You. The Bible is clear, "whoever believes in Him will have eternal life." If you have "believed" in Jesus Christ in the Biblical sense (accepted Him as Lord and God, turning to the forgiveness effected by Jesus Christ for us on the cross), then you can safely assume, in fact, you **MUST** safely assume, that Jesus Christ has saved you – thus making you "elect" and accepted by Christ.

One person put it something like this:

When I by faith entered the door of accepting Christ as Lord and Savior, the sign across the top of the door read: "Whosoever will may come."

When I walked through that door and entered into eternal life in Jesus Christ, and then turned around to look back at the other side of the door through which I had entered, there was a sign across the top of the other side of the door that read, "Elect from the foundation of the world."

I think that the author basically and unknowingly accepts the Arminian position. He produces scriptures that ultimately point to the fact that God knew what we would do before we were of the earth. He lists Romans 8:28-30 and Jeremiah 1:15 as verses to support his belief. In fact, both tell us that God has predestined the ones He has chosen.

Your conclusion here is exactly right.