

Question # 10: When it comes to a Man's Salvation ...

“Does ‘Man Choose God’ or does ‘God Choose Man’?”

After Jesus died to make our salvation possible, who takes the next step to initiate the process that ultimately leads to one's salvation?

There are only two possibilities, either “*Man Chooses God*” or “*God Chooses Man*”?

So ... Which is it?

Does it really matter?

Is it important to God?

How does it personally affect me?

Which claim has the proof of Scripture?

Though it might seem surprising, there is a major difference of opinion among evangelical Christians (i.e., Protestant and other non-Catholic Christians) as to exactly how the salvation process unfolds. The main difference centers around –

“*Who?*” makes the initial and critical choice or decision that ultimately results in a sinner's salvation?

Again, there are only two possible choices, God or Man. So, our Question is ...

“*Who Moves or Chooses First?*” –
“Does Man Choose God?” or “Does God Choose Man?”

In case you are wondering ...

There are five very good reasons “Why” you should “*read this paper*”

First, the issue itself is very important to God. In fact, we would submit that the viewpoint of this paper, the viewpoint that “*God Chooses Man*” for salvation, is one of the most, if not the most, important things that God wants you to know about Himself. God's utter sovereignty in the salvation of man is especially important to Him.

Second, whether “*Man Chooses God*” or “*God Chooses Man*” has tremendous implications for you personally – from your peace, comfort and joy in the Lord to

your very motivation for rendering service to God and His church, and much more besides.

Third, there are some very troublesome implications for the “*Man Chooses God*” viewpoint, which we will cover later.

Fourth, it is vitally important that the church have a correct understanding of the God whom it worships, so that it can worship Him properly and can correctly tell others of Him. Jesus told us that we must strive to “*worship the Father in spirit and truth*” (*John 4:23-24*), which means that we must strive to have as true and accurate a conception of God as is possible. Also, the church will never rise above its own conception of God. A weak and undersized view of God will not affect God Himself, but it will produce weaker and more ineffectual churches. On the other hand, a strong and correct view of God will produce strong churches, churches that will “*turn the world upside down*”.

Fifth, “*Who chooses?*” is a very fascinating study. In this Paper, we will cover many topics, including ...

“*You say one thing, others say another. Whom should I believe? And why?*”

“*What about ‘fatalism’ and ‘free-will’?*”

“*What are ‘Calvinists’ and ‘Arminians’ anyway?*”

OK, back to our Question # 10 ...

How did the Question ...

“*When it Comes to Man’s Salvation ...*

Does ‘Man Choose God’ or does ‘God Choose Man’?”

... arise in the first place? And, who believes what?

Well, the two main denominations to initially come out of the Protestant Reformation (circa 1517-1648) were the Reformed/Calvinistic and Lutheran denominations. They agreed on all major theological points, except for some differences in how to view the Lord’s Supper.

A Clarifying Note on the Difference Between a “Religion” and a “Theology”:

A “Theology” is a study of God and His relation to the world. So, to speak of someone as holding to the “Reformed or Calvinistic Faith”, is to say that they hold to “Reformed or Calvinistic Theology”. Reformed Theology is well-known for its very high view of God and its very high view of the worth and dignity of man who is created in His image.

A “Religion” is, for our purposes, an organized group of similarly-minded individuals founded upon a belief in God, an afterlife, and how one might attain salvation. It may or may not have creedal and confessional statements.

The “Reformed/Calvinistic Faith” (which we hold), for example, is not a “Religion”. It is a “Theology”. So, to say that “I am a Calvinist Presbyterian” means that I am a Presbyterian by religion that believes in Calvinist/Reformed theology.

Theologically-speaking, the Protestant Reformation moved along fairly smoothly until 1610, when the followers of Jacob Arminius (hence the term “*Arminian*”), a Dutch Reformed theologian, presented *Five Articles of Remonstrance*, challenging five points of Calvinist/Reformed theology. The so-called “*Five Points of Calvinism*” were formulated as a response to the Arminian challenge.

[To see the Five Points of Arminianism compared and contrasted with the Five Points of Calvinism, please go to Addendum 2 at the end of our Paper.]

The followers of Arminius put their “*Five Articles of Remonstrance*” up for consideration at the European Synod of Dort in Leyden, Holland in 1618, where they were rejected.

But the debate has continued on for well over 400 years, with the Arminian churches now in the majority.

And so ... Concerning Question # 10, the Question of ...

“When it Comes to Man’s Salvation,

“Does ‘Man Choose God’ or does ‘God Choose Man’?”

“Arminian” Theology asserts that “Man Chooses God”

“Calvinistic or Reformed” Theology asserts that “God Chooses Man”

We note that the term “*Calvinist*” is used interchangeably with the term “*Reformed*” to designate the beliefs of Protestant Reformed theology. John Calvin and Martin Luther were the chief theologians of the Protestant Reformation.

Note well that “*Calvinist*” or “*Reformed*” *theology* is NOT a new theology arising from the Protestant Reformation, but a return to the orthodox theology of the Bible (we will present 17 pages of Biblical Proofs later), as confirmed by many of the early “church fathers”, like Augustine. [John Calvin, himself a very modest man, would likely have vigorously opposed the use of his name in such a manner.]

In America today ...

Churches that are historically or confessionally “*Reformed/Calvinistic*” would include – Presbyterian, Lutheran, Christian Reformed, Episcopalian, and some Baptist churches

Churches that are “*Arminian*” would include – United Methodists, Wesleyan, Pentecostal, and most Baptist churches ...

[To see how the process of salvation unfolds under both Calvinistic and Arminian Theology, please refer to Addendum 1 at the end of our Paper.]

OK. So you are Reformed/Calvinists who believe that “God Chooses Man”.

**Would you please state very clearly exactly what it is that you are saying
and the main implications of it?**

Will do.

But, before stating our Assertions and their implications and backing them up with Scripture, there are three matters that we want to be very clear on

First, we want to be very clear on WHAT WE ARE NOT SAYING in our Paper

Second, as Reformed/Calvinists who are asserting that “God Chooses Man”, we fully realize that the burden of Proof is on us

Third, in all fairness, we also need to answer the Question ...

*You say “God Chooses Man” and others say “Man Chooses God”,
How do I know whom to believe?*

First, we want to be very clear on WHAT we are NOT SAYING in this Paper

First and foremost, we are NOT SAYING that you have to believe our two Assertions (stated below) or accept Reformed/Calvinistic Theology to be a Christian, or even to be a member of our church or denomination [for more on this, please see *Addendum # 3.*] Both Arminians and Calvinists, hold and embrace each other as Christian brothers and sisters. “*Who Chooses First?*” is not a question touching on salvation itself.

But WE ARE SAYING that “*Who Chooses First*” is nonetheless a very important Question [especially so to God Himself] – a Question whose answer has tremendous positive practical implications for you and a Question with some very troubling and negative implications from the Arminian viewpoint.

Second, as Reformed/Calvinists who are asserting that “God Chooses Man” for salvation, we fully realize that the burden of proof is on us.

We gladly accept the challenge of the burden of proof and will shortly make two “*Assertions*” that very clearly state *exactly what it is* that we are saying, *the implications of it* and will *thoroughly back up everything stated* in both Assertions with seventeen pages of Scripture references.

We will also provide abundant Scriptural “*proof*” for our claim that God’s sovereignty in the salvation of man, i.e., the Reformed/Calvinist viewpoint that “*God Chooses Man*” for salvation, is very likely THE most important thing that God wants us to know about Himself and that there are enormous *personal practical implications for you* arising out of it.

Third, we want to answer the Question ...

**“You say ‘*God Chooses Man*’ and others say ‘*Man Chooses God*’ ...
How am I to know whom to believe?”**

We would say ...

You should believe neither of us. You should rather be like the Bereans whom the Apostle Paul praised for being ...

“... more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11)

For the Christian, the final arbiter of all truth should always be the Bible.

And so, we only ask you to be like the “*fair-minded*” Bereans and “*search the Scriptures*” with us to find out whether our claim that “*God Chooses Man*” is “*so*” – which is why we have provided over one hundred strong Scripture references supporting our Assertions.

OK, with this background, let's get down to business ...

Let's start by clarifying and framing “*The Question*” at hand so that we all understand exactly what “*The Question*” is and what we are saying about it ...

Well, the Question (# 10) first arose for me when I was riding down the road one day and saw a billboard with a large picture of a nail going through Jesus's hand into a crossbeam and a caption that read “*The next move is yours*”.

I thought, “*Is that how it works?*” Is “*the next move*” really up to man to make? Has God only made salvation “possible” and then left it up to us to decide on our own whether or not to take Him up on His offer of salvation? In short, in reference to his salvation, “Does Man Choose God”?

Others claim that man is so entrapped by the fallen sin nature that he inherits at conception that he is totally “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (*Ephesians 2:1*) and will only consider the things of the gospel to be “*foolishness*” (*I Corinthians 2:14*). In short, natural unregenerate man will *never* come to choose or decide for God *on his own*.

Under this viewpoint, if man is to be saved, *a sovereign God must first choose* to have mercy on him, *regenerate* his heart, give him the “*gifts*” of “*faith*” and “*repentance*”, and make him into an entirely “*new creation*” (*II Corinthians 5:17*) before he will ever come to freely and willingly make a choice or decision *for* God.

I thought again, “*Is that the way it is?*” Must *God* first choose to have mercy on a sinner and regenerate their heart before they will freely and willingly come to make a choice or decision for God? In short, in one's salvation process, “Does God Choose Man?”

The hermeneutical (i.e., interpretive) key to our Question is your view of sin and its effects on man. Are we truly “*dead in trespasses and sins*” such that we would never come to make a choice or decision for Christ on our own, or are we just “sick” and still able to make a choice or decision for God on our own. That's pretty much it.

All Christians would certainly agree that Christ's atoning death on the cross *at the very least* made our salvation ‘*possible*’. Without His atoning death on the cross, we would have no legal ground or foundation whatsoever for any hope of salvation.

But – and here is where we find the heart of our Question # 10 –

“*Is that all that God does – make salvation possible?*”

Does God's work in a man's salvation stop at the point of making his salvation merely *possible*? Does God just make our salvation *possible*, and then, so to speak, sit-on-the-sidelines and leave it ALL up to us to *choose or decide on our own* whether to take Him up on His offer of salvation or not?

And so, with a little refining, our Question becomes ...

"After Christ's death on the cross has made salvation 'possible', 'Who?' makes the next really crucial 'move' – the 'move' that ultimately results in a man's salvation.?"
In short, "Does Man Choose God or Does God Choose Man?"

**Before making our two Assertions, we also need to clarify a few terms
to make sure that we are all on the same page ...**

We need to clarify what we mean by the terms – "saved" ... "not saved" ... "in Christ" ... "in Adam" ... "regenerate man" ... "unregenerate man or natural unregenerate man" ... "new creation" ... and ... "born again". And we also need to take a look at the Arminian concept of "prevenient grace."

To start with, we can theologically divide all men into two groups, those that are "saved" and those that are "not saved". A "saved" person is a person who has Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and is said to be "in Christ". An "unsaved" or "not saved" person is a person who does not have Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and is said to remain "in Adam", their natural born estate. These groups are mutually exclusive, i.e., you can only be in one of the two groups. You are either "saved" and are "in Christ" or you are "not saved" and are "not in Christ", but are "in Adam".

The two other theological terms that we need to be clear on are "regenerate" and "born again".

To be "regenerate" means that one's heart has been radically changed, or recreated, or 'regenerated', by God's Holy Spirit. The change in the regenerated person's heart is of such a radical nature that a 'regenerated' person is referred to in the Bible as an entirely "new creation" ...

"... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

Indeed, in His discourse with Nicodemus in John 3:1-2, Jesus Himself speaks of the change of heart wrought by regeneration as being so radical that a person who has undergone it is said to have had a new birth and to have been "born again", which according to our Lord, is absolutely indispensable to entering heaven ...

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’” (John 3:3)

“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, and cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3: 7-8)

So, a ‘regenerate’ person is a ‘saved’ person, a person who is ‘in Christ’, a person who has been ‘born again’ and is a “new creation”.

On the other hand, an unregenerate person does not possess a *regenerate* heart. His heart has not been changed and remains in the same state and condition that it was in at the time of his conception. For this reason, we can also refer to unregenerate man as a “natural” man. Spiritually, the unregenerate person remains in his original “natural” state. So natural unregenerate man is ‘not saved’, not ‘in Christ’ and has not been ‘born again’.

We also need to clarify exactly what “Prevenient Grace” is and claims ...

Those who claim that “Man Chooses God”, i.e., *Arminian* Christians, claim that God gives a certain amount of “prevenient” or “preparatory” grace to man that enables him to “*cooperate*” with God, and choose or decide “*for God*” on his own without any further help from God. IF he chooses “*for God*”, God will then come and regenerate his heart.

Note closely that man is still in his “unregenerate” and “natural” state when he, *on his own*, develops “*faith*” from within himself and *chooses or decides* to accept God’s offer of salvation, thereby *allowing* God to save him. Here, in Arminianism, Belief (Faith) comes from within a man and precedes regeneration.

Concerning “prevenient grace” and the Arminian view of its role in the salvation process, we would note three very important things ...

First, do not miss the point that under Arminian “prevenient grace” the crucial soul-saving decision of whether or not to take God up on His offer of a *possible* salvation and turn it into a *reality* for oneself is left *entirely* up to the individual to make *on his own* without any additional help from God. Individual men determine *on their own* whether they will be saved or not. Again, Jesus only made salvation “*possible*” and it is up to individual man himself, with no further help from God, whether or not to turn’s Jesus’s offer of a *possible* salvation into a *reality* for himself.

Second, a concurrent belief under “prevenient grace” is that since the decision of whether he will be saved or not is left entirely up to man, God has to “*peek ahead, down the corridors of time*” into the future to see if man will, on his own, choose or

decide “*for Him*”, so that He can then ratify that man’s choice or decision as His own Divine decree.

This is, of course, a totally nonsensical belief. This idea not only changes God into some kind of a “*cosmic cheat*”, but also does irreparable damage to God’s supposed attributes of omniscience and omnipotence, as well as making the idea of God’s having a “*sovereign will*” illogical and irrational. God does not have to “*learn*” things from the future decisions of men and then claim that they are His own sovereign will and decrees.

No! God is not a “cosmic cheat” who has to look ahead to see what unregenerate man will choose or decide on his own before He can make up His own mind on a matter. Rather, God Himself tells us in Isaiah ...

*“Remember the former things of old,
For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like Me,
Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things that are not yet done,
Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,
And I will do all My pleasure’” (Isaiah 46:9-10)*

Third, and most importantly, we would claim that there is *no real sustainable or conclusive proof* for “*prevenient grace*” to be found in Scripture – as opposed to the numerous very strong and very clear Scripture Proofs that we will give for the Reformed “*God Chooses Man*” viewpoint. With all due respect, “*prevenient grace*” is simply a humanly devised concept to try to make the Arminian system workable, which it isn’t. Arminianism is attractive because it satisfies the craving of man to be in control of every aspect of his life, including salvation.

In sum ...

... under the Arminian “*Man Chooses God*” scenario, Jesus Christ only makes a man’s salvation “*possible*” and God (rather pathetically in our view), must sit on the sidelines (unless, of course, He decides to “*peek ahead*”) and wait to see what man, on his own, with no further help from Him, will do about His offer of a merely “*possible*” salvation won for him by Christ – i.e., to see whether he will turn Christ’s “*possible*” salvation into a “*real*” salvation for himself, or not.

Under the Arminian viewpoint, salvation truly is ALL up to man. If man on his own “*chooses*” to turn God’s “*possible*” salvation into a “*reality*” for himself, God will then come and regenerate his heart. Again in the “*Man Chooses God*” scenario, belief (i.e., faith) comes before regeneration. “*Faith*” is the sinner’s “*gift*” to God, not God’s “*gift*” to the sinner.

Those who believe that “God Chooses Man”, the Reformed/Calvinistic viewpoint, claim that man must first be “regenerated” or “born again” before he can, as Christ said, “see the kingdom of God”. In this case, the Holy Spirit must first regenerate a man’s heart and give him the “gifts” of “faith” and “repentance” before he will freely and willingly choose “for God”. In the Calvinistic viewpoint, regeneration comes before belief. “Faith” is God’s “gift” to the sinner, NOT the sinner’s “gift” to God.

[If you would like to see a side-by-side comparison and contrast of the Salvation Process under the Calvinistic and Arminian viewpoints, we refer you again to our Addendum # 1: The Process of Salvation Under Calvinism and Under Arminianism]

OK, having “framed” our Question and having “defined” our terms ...

We will now look exclusively to the Bible to show there is an overwhelming amount of very clear Biblical testimony and proof, from virtually every Biblical author, for the following two Assertions:

ASSERTION # 1: That when it comes to our salvation, GOD CHOOSES MAN.

ASSERTION # 2: That in the matter of salvation, NATURAL UNREGENERATE MAN WILL NEVER COME TO CHOOSE OR DECIDE FOR GOD ON HIS OWN.

More specifically ...

Assertion # 1: God Chooses Man

By asserting that “God Chooses Man” we are claiming that God is sovereign in the salvation of man. By this we mean that it is God, and not man, that takes the initiative and makes the crucial ‘move’ that results in a man’s salvation. God must first ‘move’ to perform radical “heart” surgery upon individual men, removing their “stony” hearts and replacing them with “hearts of flesh”, before individual men will ever come to ‘choose or decide’ for God. Indeed, both “repentance” and “faith”, the absolutely necessary prerequisites for one’s ever ‘choosing or deciding’ to come to God, are “gifts” that come from God to individual men.

God’s choice as to which individual sinners will be the recipients of His mercy and His “gifts” of “repentance” and “faith” flows entirely from His “grace”. By this we mean that God’s choice of which sinners will be saved originates solely from within Himself, flows entirely out of “the good pleasure of His will”, has nothing whatsoever to do with “the will of the flesh, nor the will of man”, and does not come in response to any prior

‘choice, ‘decision’, ‘move’, ‘act’ or ‘work’ of any kind on the part of the sinner, either now or in the future. God’s grace, mercy and gifts are totally unmerited, undeserved, unearned and unasked-for on the part of the sinner. Salvation is indeed “not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”

Assertion # 2 – Natural Unregenerate Man would never choose or decide for God on his own

Natural unregenerate man is characterized in the Bible as being spiritually “dead in trespasses and sin”, a “slave” of sin, a “captive” of his “father, the devil” (who wants only to do “the desires of his father”), an “enemy” of God, alienated from and at “enmity” with Him, as “lov(ing) darkness rather than light”, and as one who can only consider “the things of the Spirit of God” to be nothing more than “foolishness”. Rather than ever coming to the point of choosing or deciding for God on his own, natural unregenerate man will instead actively work to “suppress” any true knowledge of God that might come his way.

Being thus constituted from conception, and because “the flesh profits nothing”, because “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells”, because “the flesh lusts against the Spirit”, because “that which is born of the flesh is flesh”, and because “a bad tree (cannot) bear good fruit”, natural unregenerate man is wholly, completely and irretrievably predisposed to rebel against and disobey God.

Indeed, natural unregenerate man’s aversion to and animosity toward the “the things of God” extends naturally beyond God Himself even to those who believe in Him.

In sum, natural unregenerate man will never respond to “the things of God” unless and until the voice of God summons him, just as it did physically dead Lazarus, to spiritually “come forth” and live.

In reality, our two Assertions are really only one Assertion, stated in a “*positive*” and a “*negative*” manner

Our “One Assertion” is that the Bible unmistakably and overwhelmingly teaches that

‘It is a sovereign God that saves sinners by His grace alone’.

Stated positively: In the matter of a man’s salvation, God must ‘*move*’ first if a man is to be saved. “*God Chooses Man*”.

Stated negatively: In the matter of a man's salvation, *natural unregenerate man* never can and never will 'move' first *on his own*. Individual man can be saved only by the electing, redeeming, and actionable *grace* of a sovereign God.

So, though we really have only "*One Assertion*", we will treat the issue from both its *positive* and *negative* perspective.

**As promised, we will now follow up with abundant Scriptural proof
for each part of our two Assertions ...**

Again, we are going to look exclusively to the Bible to establish and affirm that there is an *overwhelming* amount of very clear Biblical testimony from virtually every Biblical author for our two Assertions:

So, let's go with ...

ASSERTION # 1: GOD CHOOSES MAN.

By asserting that "God Chooses Man" we are claiming that God is sovereign in the salvation of man. By this we mean that it is God, and not man, that takes the initiative and makes the crucial 'move' that results in a man's salvation. God must first 'move' to perform radical "heart" surgery upon individual men, removing their "stony" hearts and replacing them with "hearts of flesh", before individual men will ever come to 'choose or decide' for God. Indeed, both "repentance" and "faith", the absolutely necessary prerequisites for one's ever 'choosing or deciding' to come to God, are "gifts" that come from God to individual men.

God's choice as to which individual sinners will be the recipients of His mercy and His "gifts" of "repentance" and "faith" flows entirely from His "grace". By this we mean that God's choice of which sinners will be saved originates solely from within Himself, flows entirely out of "the good pleasure of His will", has nothing whatsoever to do with "the will of the flesh, nor the will of man", and does not come in response to any prior 'choice, 'decision', 'move', 'act' or 'work' of any kind on the part of the sinner, either now or in the future. God's grace, mercy and gifts are totally unmerited, undeserved, unearned and unasked-for on the part of the sinner. Salvation is indeed "not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy."

Proof-Quotes for Assertion # 1

By asserting that "God Chooses Man" we are claiming that God is sovereign in the salvation of man. By this we mean that it is God, and not man, that takes the initiative and makes the crucial 'move' that results in a man's salvation. God must first 'move'

to perform radical “heart” surgery upon individual men, removing their “stony” hearts and replacing them with “hearts of flesh”, before individual men will ever come to ‘choose or decide’ for God.

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“Then I will give them one heart and I will put a new spirit within them, and take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people and I will be their God”. (Ezekiel 11:19-20)

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“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him (John 6:44)

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“Now when the Gentiles heard this they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” (Acts 13:48)

*

“Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:44-45)

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“we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation ... to which He called you by the Gospel” (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)

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“For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as our Lord God will call.” (Acts 2:39).

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“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me” (John 6:37)

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“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

*

“Again He said to me, ‘Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!’ Thus says the LORD GOD to these bones: ‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD’.” (Ezekiel 37:4-6)

*

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit” (John 15:16)

*

“Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’ Therefore prophecy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it”, says the LORD.’” (Ezekiel 37:11-14)

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“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Romans 8:14)

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“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.” (I Corinthians 3:5-7)

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“They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they were also appointed.” (I Peter 2:8)

*

“Then His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘What does this parable mean?’ And He said, ‘To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that “Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand”’” (Luke 8:9-10).

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“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (I Peter 2:9)

*

“But He answered and said, ‘Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.’” (Matthew 15:13-14)

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“Again the word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, “Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: ‘Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. As for your nativity, on the day you were born your naval cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling clothes. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born.’”

“And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed and your hair grew, but you were naked and bare.’”

“When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love, so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine’, says the Lord God.”

“Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you’ says the Lord God.” (Ezekiel 16:1-14)

Indeed, both “repentance” and “faith”, the absolutely necessary prerequisites for one’s ever ‘choosing or deciding’ to come to God, are “gifts” that come from God to individual men.

*

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*

“When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’” (Acts 11:18)

*

“The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul” (Acts 16:14)

*

“Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven’ (Matthew 16: 16-17).

*

“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2)

*

“A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven” (John 3:27)

*

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth ...” (John 16:12-13)

*

“It is written in the prophets ‘And they shall be taught by God’. Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me” (John 6:45)

*

“And as Isaiah said before: ‘Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.’” (Romans 9:29)

*

“Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations ... They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people and I will be their God.” (Ezekiel 37:21-28)

*

“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin” (John 16:8)

God’s choice as to which individual sinners will be the recipients of His mercy and His “gifts” of “repentance” and “faith” flows entirely from His “grace”. By this we mean that God’s choice of which sinners will be saved originates solely from within Himself, flows entirely out of “the good pleasure of His will” ...

*

“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world ... having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace.” (Ephesians 1:4-6)

*

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son ... Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Romans 8:28-30).

*

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11)

*

“For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will” (John 5:21)

*

“Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure ... Indeed, I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.’” (Isaiah 46:9-11)

*

“But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?”

What if God, wanting to show His wrath and make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” (Romans 9:20-24)

*

“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.’ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.” (Romans 9:17-18)

*

“At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for it seemed good in your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.’” (Matthew 11:25-27)

*

“Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.” (Romans 11:5-6)

*

“but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began”. (2 Timothy 1:8-9)

*

“What then? Israel has not attained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: ‘God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day.’” (Romans 11:7-8)

*

“But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You are the potter; and all we are the work of Your hand.” (Isaiah 64:8)

... has nothing whatsoever to do with “the will of the flesh, nor the will of man”, and does not come in response to any prior ‘choice’, ‘decision’, ‘move’, ‘act’ or ‘work’ of any kind on the part of the sinner, either now or in the future. God’s grace, mercy and gifts are totally unmerited, undeserved, unearned and unasked-for on the part of the sinner. Salvation is indeed “not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”

*

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”. (John 1:12-13)

*

“And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our Father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, ‘The older shall serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.’” (Romans 9:10-13)

*

“I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” (Romans 11:4)

*

“... without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5)

*

“We love Him because He first loved us” (I John 4:19)

*

“For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion’. So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.” (Romans 9:15-16)

*

“Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father” (John 6:65)

*

“But Isaiah is very bold and says: ‘I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me’”. (Romans 10:20)

*

“When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, ‘Who then can be saved?’”

But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’ (Matthew 19:23-26)

Assertion # 1 Summed-up ...

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy Name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you had profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgements and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people and I will be your God. I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. Not for your sake do I do this,” says the Lord God, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel”’”. (Ezekiel 36:22-32)

**ASSERTION # 2: NATURAL UNREGENERATE MAN WILL NEVER CHOOSE OR
DECIDE FOR GOD ON HIS OWN**

Natural unregenerate man is characterized in the Bible as being spiritually “dead in trespasses and sin”, a “slave” of sin, a “captive” of his “father, the devil” (who wants only to do “the desires of his father”), an “enemy” of God, alienated from and at “enmity” with Him, as “lov(ing) darkness rather than light”, and as one who can only consider “the things of the Spirit of God” to be nothing more than “foolishness”. Rather than ever coming to the point of choosing or deciding for God on his own, natural unregenerate man will instead actively work to “suppress” any true knowledge of God that might come his way.

Being thus constituted from conception, and because “the flesh profits nothing”, because “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells”, because “the flesh lusts against the Spirit”, because “that which is born of the flesh is flesh”, and because “a bad tree (cannot) bear good fruit”, natural unregenerate man is wholly, completely and irretrievably predisposed to rebel against and disobey God.

Indeed, natural unregenerate man’s aversion to and animosity toward the “the things of God” extends naturally beyond God Himself even to those who believe in Him.

In sum, natural unregenerate man will never respond to “the things of God” unless and until the voice of God summons him, just as it did physically dead Lazarus, to spiritually “come forth” and live.

Proof-Quotes for Assertion # 2

Natural unregenerate man is characterized in the Bible as being spiritually “dead in trespasses and sin” ...

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom we also all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” (Ephesians 2:1-3)

*

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive” (Colossians 2:13)

... a “slave” of sin ...

“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin” (John 8:34)

*

“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now you present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.”

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:16-19)

... a “captive” of his “father, the devil” (who wants only to do “the desires of his father”) ...

“I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.

But now you seek to kill Me ... You do the deeds of your father.

If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God ... Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do ... But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me ... And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.” (John 8:37-38,40,41,42,43-44,45,46-47)

*

“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” (II Timothy 2:24-26)

*

“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God should shine on them.” (II Corinthians 4:3-4)

*

“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.” (Matthew 13:18-19)

... an “enemy” of God, alienated from and at “enmity” with Him ...

“... you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind” (Colossians 1:21)

*

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His son” (Romans 5:8-10)

*

“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” (Ephesians 4:17-19)

*

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Romans 8:5-8)

*

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” (Genesis 3:15)

... as “lov(ing) darkness rather than light” ...

“... and men loved darkness rather than the light” (John 3:19)

*

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:4-5)

... and as one who can only consider “the things of the Spirit of God” to be nothing more than “foolishness”.

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

*

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing ...

“For Jews request a sign and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

(1 Corinthians 1:18,22-24)

Rather than ever coming to the point of choosing or deciding for God on his own, natural unregenerate man will instead actively work to “suppress” any true knowledge of God that might come his way.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.” (Romans 1:18-23)

Being thus constituted from conception, and because “the flesh profits nothing”, because “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells”, because “the flesh lusts against the Spirit”, because “that which is born of the flesh is flesh”, and because “a bad tree (cannot) bear good fruit”, natural unregenerate man is wholly, completely and irretrievably predisposed to rebel against and disobey God.

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” (Psalm 51:5)

*

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.” (John 6:63)

*

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells” (Romans 7:18)

*

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” (Galatians 5:17)

*

“A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.” (Matthew 7:18)

*

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:6)

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like ...” (Galatians 5:19)

*

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5)

*

“What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written:

*‘There is none righteous, no, not one;
There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.
They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one.’
‘Their throat is an open tomb;
with their tongues they have practiced deceit’;
‘The poison of asps is under their lips’;
‘Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.’
‘Their feet are swift to shed blood;
Destruction and misery are in their ways;
and the way of peace they have not known.’
‘There is no fear of God before their eyes.’” (Romans 3:9-18)*

*

“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is no one who calls on Your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of You” (Isaiah 64:6-7)

*

“Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopards his spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to evil.” (Jeremiah 13:23)

*

“Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pain and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.”
(Revelation 16:8-11)

*

“neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.” (Luke 16:31)

*

“If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” (John 3:12)

*

“For even His brothers did not believe in Him.” (John 7:5)

*

“But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep” (John 10:26)

*

“If you love me keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” (John 14:15-17)

*

“But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him (John 12:37)

“So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one”. (Ezekiel 22:30)

*

“To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but even their mind and conscience are defiled” (Titus 1:15)

*

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, back-biters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy,

unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” (Romans 1:28-32)

*

“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.” (John 1:10-11)

*

“And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, ‘He has Beelzebub,’ and ‘By the ruler of demons He casts out demons.’” (Mark 3:22)

*

“And as Isaiah said before:

‘Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.’” (Romans 9:29)

*

“Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts, and turn, so that I should heal them.’” (Isaiah 12:39-40)

*

“But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that

*‘Seeing they may see and not perceive,
And hearing they may hear and not understand;
Lest they should turn,
And their sins be forgiven them’”.* (Mark 4:10-12)

*

“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.’” (Romans 9:30-33)

Indeed, natural unregenerate man’s aversion to and animosity toward the “the things of God” extends naturally beyond God Himself even to those who believe in Him.

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you ...” (John 15:18-20)

*

“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers ...” (Acts 7:51-52)

*

“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.” (John 16:1-2)

*

“the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” (John 17:14)

*

“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:11-12)

*

“Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.” (John 12:9-11)

In sum, natural unregenerate man will never respond to “the things of God” unless and until the voice of God summons him, just as it did physically dead Lazarus, to spiritually “come forth” and live.

Having stated our Assertions and given overwhelming conclusive proof for them, we would like to address six issues that usually arise about them.

They are ...

1. *How can you claim that “God Chooses Man” for salvation is one of the most, if not the most, important things that God wants us to know about Himself?*
2. *What are the very positive practical implications that you claim for the “God Chooses Man” viewpoint?*
3. *What are the very troublesome negative implications of the “Man Chooses God” viewpoint?*
4. *But doesn’t the Bible say, “...whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved”?*
5. *How can a sovereign God hold individual men responsible for actions that He Himself has ordained and decreed? Does natural unregenerate man have any “free-will” at all?*
6. *Isn’t holding that God foreordains and determines all that comes to pass a rather “Fatalistic” viewpoint?*
7. *How can you say that most Arminians are really Calvinists at heart?*

We will answer them in order:

Our first issue is ...

1. **How can you claim that “God Chooses Man” for salvation is one of the most important things that God wants us to know about Himself?**

We not only claim that God the Father’s sovereignty in the salvation of man is one of the most important things that God the Father wants us to know about Himself, but we would also claim God’s sovereignty in the salvation of man is an extremely important matter to the other two members of the Holy Trinity as well.

Where do you get that!

Well, let’s start with God the Father ...

In Exodus 33:18, sometime after the incident with the golden calf, Moses makes a request to God the Father to “*Please, show me Your glory*”.

God the Father’s response to Moses’ request is quite instructive. We are told in Exodus 33:19-23 ...

“Then He said, ‘I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.’ But He said, ‘You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.’ And the LORD said, ‘Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see my back; but My face shall not be seen.’”

We need to grasp the significance of just what God the Father has said here. When God the Father condescended to show Moses a veiled glimpse of “*all My goodness*”, to “*proclaim the name of the LORD before you*”, and to have all of “*My glory to pass by*”, of all the things that God the Father might have chosen to say He specifically chose to proclaim His total and utter sovereignty in the salvation of man. i.e., “*I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*” (Exodus 33:19).

Lest there be any question at all about what God actually did say or mean here, Paul, in Romans 9:14-18, quotes the Exodus 33:19 passage, and beyond all doubt shows that God is most certainly speaking of His total sovereignty in the salvation of man ...

“What shall we say then? Is their unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.’ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.”

So, beyond a shadow of a doubt, according to Paul, when God stated to Moses “*I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion*”, God proclaimed nothing less than His total sovereignty in and over the salvation of man, the conclusion of the matter being, according to Paul ...

“So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” (Romans 9:16)

... and ...

“Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens” (Romans 9:16, 18).

Note well that this is not an obscure or uncertain point. That the one, and, mind you, only, thing that God chose to disclose about Himself when He consented to show “*His goodness*” and to “*proclaim the name of the LORD*” before Moses “*while My glory passes by*” was His

total sovereignty in the salvation of man shows that it is an extremely and singularly important matter to Him and is thereby a very serious topic for our consideration.

It is really hard to understand how the truth and importance of the Reformed/Calvinistic "God Chooses Man" viewpoint could be made any clearer.

And what of our Lord Jesus Christ on the matter?

That the sovereignty of God in the salvation of man is also very important to God the Son is evident in the fact that He lays so much stress on it. For instance, if we just look at John Chapter 6 alone, following His declaration that "*All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me*" (itself a declaration that we are sovereignly "*given*" to Him by the Father), Jesus additionally declares the sovereignty of God in the salvation of man no less than four more times in the same Chapter ...

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44)

"It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me" (John 6:45)

"It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing." (John 6:63)

"Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to Him by my Father." (John 6:65).

When our Lord Jesus Christ clearly states the sovereignty of God four times over in one chapter of Scripture (not even counting His original declaration), we may rightly conclude that it is subject of great importance to Him.

And what of God the Holy Spirit?

We note that God the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, the Author of our Bible and the Regenerator of all Christian hearts, is mentioned very little in the Bible, as His chief work is to point us to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and not to Himself.

Therefore, it is very significant that in one of the very few times in the Bible that our Lord discourses on the work of the Holy Spirit and the nature of it, He uses it to describe the Holy Spirit's work in the *regeneration* of a man's heart as sovereign, mysterious, and totally unpredictable.

The passage to which we refer is John 3:6-8 wherein our Lord tells us ...

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it

wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:6-8)

Thus does our Lord instruct us that God the Holy Spirit’s regenerative work in the salvation of man is sovereign, mysterious and unpredictable – for He, the Holy Spirit, comes like “*the wind*” which “*blows where it wishes ... and you cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes*”, to perform His work. Clearly, the Holy Spirit does not come in response to man’s summons or in response to anything that man does or has done, for that would make His coming predictable. No, He instead comes like “*the wind*” ... which “*blows where it wishes ... and you cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes*”. It is the same for all Christians, for “*So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.*”

Our Lord also tells us in this passage that the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit is utterly vital and necessary because natural unregenerate man will never choose or decide “for God” on his own – for ...

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”

... wherein our Lord plainly and clearly tells us that “*the flesh*” can only beget (i.e., bring forth) more “*flesh*” and cannot beget matters of “*the Spirit*”, for “*that which is born of the flesh is flesh*” – and only flesh – and “*that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*”.

This teaching of our Lord lays the axe to the root of the Arminian claim that man can *in the flesh* make a decision “for God” on his own. Our Lord teaches that this cannot be, for matters of “*the spirit*”, such as making a choice or decision “for God”, must have their origin in “*the Spirit*”, and not in “*the flesh*”, which can, *on its own*, only beget more “*flesh.*”

That man’s salvation cannot be initiated or come through the action of his own unregenerate *fleshy* heart and that the Holy Spirit must do His regenerative work in the heart of a man before he will choose or decide “for God” is completely confirmed in another of our Lord’s rare teachings on the sovereign life-giving work of the Holy Spirit, when He said ...

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing” (John 6:63).

Note well the complimentary twin teachings of our Lord here ...

“It is the Spirit who gives life” ... and ... “the flesh profits nothing”

If natural unregenerate man can out of his own *unregenerate* “*flesh*” make a choice or decision “for God” – then we must concede that according to our Lord his decision “for God” ... “*profits [him] “nothing.*” Certainly the absurdity of that is self-evident and needs no further comment.

The teaching of our Lord that “*the flesh profits nothing*” and that “*It is the Spirit who gives life*” give a second swing of the axe to the Arminian claim that natural unregenerate man can

on his own, while still in the “flesh”, prior to the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, initiate faith from within himself and make a choice or decision “for God” on his own.

The Apostle Paul gives a third swing of the axe when he confirms that “*natural unregenerate man*” is unable to “*know*” or “*receive*” spiritual instruction in “*the things of the Spirit of God*” while he remains a “*natural*” man, i.e., a man without the prior sovereign regenerative work of the Holy Spirit on his heart ...

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14. See also John 14:16-18.)

... and, again, elsewhere from the pen of Paul, concerning those in the “*flesh*”, we are told

“There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God.” (Romans 3:11)

For a third testimony, after that of our Lord and the Apostle Paul, of the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of man, we turn to the Apostle John who writes in John 1:12-13 ...

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

Clearly, all Christians, all of those “*who believe in His name*”, are those who “*were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*”.

And so, for the fourth time we see the axe laid to the root of the Arminian teaching that unregenerate man can on his own make a choice or decision “for God” – for all Christians, all those “*who believe in His name*”, “*were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*”

If you are a Christian, if you “*believe in His name*”, it is because you were “*born ... of God*” – i.e., you were “*born*” of the *sovereign, mysterious, and unpredictable* work of the Holy Spirit – and were, *very specifically*, born “*not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*”

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Thus does the Holy Spirit, the Author of all Scripture, record in the Bible for our instruction and edification the multiple teachings of our Lord Himself and two of His Apostles’ that the Holy Spirit’s work is *sovereign, mysterious and unpredictable* and must come before he can exercise “*belief*” (i.e., faith).

Confirm Ephesians 2:8-9 ...

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”

Clearly the total sovereignty of God in the salvation of man is as important to the Holy Spirit as it is to the Father and the Son.

In sum ...

That “God Chooses Man”, i.e., that God is *totally sovereign* in the salvation of man, cannot be made any plainer or clearer than it has just been made by the witness and testimony of all three members of the Holy Trinity.

Christian, with such a three-fold witness, you should give ALL of the glory and credit for your salvation to the sovereign triune God alone, for, as we have just seen, each Person of the Holy Trinity clearly declares it to be so!

I think that we have given clear, sufficient, abundant and very formidable proof that God’s sovereignty in the salvation of man is one of the, if not the, most important things that God the Father wants us to know and understand about Himself. The same can be said of the other two Persons of the Holy Trinity.

Again, it is hard to imagine how any of it could be made any clearer.

Issue # 2 asks ...

2. What are the Positive Practical Implications that you claim for the “God Chooses Man” viewpoint?

To think this through, let’s consider the cases of Mr. A and Mr. C ...

“Mr. A” is an *Arminian* that holds the “Man Chooses God” viewpoint

“Mr. C” is a *Reformed/Calvinist* that holds the “God Chooses Man” viewpoint.

Mr. A and Mr. C are both saved men. Both have freely and willingly exercised repentance and faith. Both are very thankful to God for their salvation and both diligently seek to be good and faithful servants and to increasingly bear the fruit of God’s Holy Spirit in their lives to God’s glory.

In viewing his salvation, Mr. A ...

... believes that God has done all that He can or will do with Christ's dying on the cross to make Mr. A's salvation "*possible*". After making salvation "*possible*", God then, so to speak, sits on the sidelines and waits to see what Mr. A will do, because it's now all up to Mr. A to choose or decide *on his own* whether or not to take God up on His offer of a "*possible*" salvation. If Mr. A, on his own, without any further help from God, chooses to accept God's offer of salvation, he will be saved. If he chooses not to accept God's offer of salvation he will be lost.

It is especially important to note that, under Arminian theology, Mr. A does not have to be "*born again*" or have his heart *regenerated* by the Holy Spirit to be able to choose or decide *on his own* "for" God. In "*Man Chooses God*" theology, "*Belief precedes Regeneration*".

And so, let's say that Mr. A, *on his own*, with no further help from God, wisely chooses "*for*" God. He exercises *belief* (i.e., he exercises "*faith*") which has arisen from within himself, out of his *unregenerate* heart, and *on his own* chooses "*for*" God, at which point the Holy Spirit comes and *regenerates* his heart and, though he is already a *believer*, he is "*born again*". His inwardly-developed faith is his "*gift*" to God.

Although he may deny it, Mr. A has to be inwardly very glad and very happy with himself for being innately good enough and wise enough to *on his own* (remember that God had nothing more to do with it) overcome the combined forces of sin, the devil and the temptations of the world to choose "*for*" God, and turn God's merely "*possible*" salvation into a "*real*" salvation for himself.

[And, as we all know, it is much better to have a "real" salvation than just a merely "possible" one. Just ask anyone in hell, they all had a "possible" salvation but not a "real" one.]

Again, Mr. A does truly love God and is very thankful to Jesus for providing for the "*possibility*" of his salvation.

Mr. C, on the other hand ...

believes that he would never have come to exercise faith and repentance on his own. He believes that if God had not chosen to have pity on him, extended mercy to him, regenerated his heart, and given him the "*gifts*" of "*faith*" and "*repentance*", he would have remained lost. He believes that every aspect of his salvation flows from God's pure grace and mercy ... and that he did nothing on his own ... performed no deed ... thought no thought ... made no choice or decision ... that would have induced God to give him these gifts as a reward conferred or as the payment of a debt owed. No, he knows that every aspect of his salvation is entirely of God's grace. He knows that "*God Chooses Man*" and "*Regeneration*" *precedes* "*Belief*".

Mr. C also loves God and is very thankful to Jesus for providing for his salvation.

***So what are the Positive Practical Implications of Mr. C's "God Chooses Man"
Theology over Mr. A's "Man Chooses God" Theology?***

(1). A Greater Love of God: In talking to Simon the Pharisee in Luke 17, our Lord says ...

"Simon, I have something to say to you.

So he said, 'Teacher, say it.'

There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"

Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more.'

And He said to him, 'You have rightly judged.'"

Mr. C will *know* that he has been forgiven much more by virtue of the fact that he knows that he was God's "*enemy*" and "*at enmity with him*" when God saved him. He knows that rather than making a choice or decision for God on his own, he instead actively "*suppressed*" all information about Christ that came his way and considered it to be "*foolishness*". He knows that he owes all aspects of his salvation to the grace and mercy of God.

Mr. A has been forgiven just as much as Mr. C, but *does not realize it*, because, again, he sees God as just having made his salvation *possible*, whereas he on his own made his salvation a *reality* for himself.

(2). Thankfulness to God: Mr. C *knows* that he has much more to be thankful for in the matter of his salvation. Whereas Mr. A believes that it was he himself that turned a merely *possible* salvation provided by God into a *real* salvation for himself, Mr. C knows that he owes it all to God, and will therefore be more thankful.

(3). Worship: The bigger your conception of God and what He has done for you in your salvation, the deeper will be your worship of Him.

(4). Prayer: The more a man correctly understands the total sovereignty and acts of God in his salvation, the more active will be his prayer life.

(5). Evangelism: Knowing that the salvation of his lost family members, relatives, friends, co-workers, and neighbors is in God's hands, and not their own, Mr. C has more incentive to take the God's Word to them and to pray for their salvation.

[Note: It is always very intriguing to me how Mr. A prays to God for the salvation of his family and friends, even though he claims to believe that it is all up to them to decide on their own and God has nothing more to do with it. In truth, they still pray to God anyway for the salvation of their family and friends because they innately know in their heart of hearts that God is in control of their friends and relatives' salvation. We may refer to them as Arminians that are "on-their-knees Calvinists."]

(6). Comfort in Life's Hard Times: Mr. C can view all of life's afflictions and sufferings as coming from and through the hands of an all-sovereign, wise and loving Providence.

(7). Assurance of Salvation: Because he knows that God, not himself, was responsible for every aspect of his salvation, Mr. C will have much greater reason to have a full assurance of his salvation. Most Arminians, on the other hand, will admit that if they get their salvation "on their own", they can also lose it "on their own".

(8). Motive for Service to God: Having a greater assurance of his salvation, Mr. C can more fully serve God out of love and thankfulness rather than trying to earn Brownie Points or Merit Badges on God's tote board in the sky to help keep or maintain their salvation.

(9). Humility: Mr. C, knowing that God provided for all aspects of his salvation, will be more humble than Mr. A who pictures himself as having been innately good enough and wise enough to have chosen for God *on his own* and turned God's merely "*possible*" salvation into a "*real*" salvation for himself.

(10). Consistency of Belief with Scripture: As we have already shown, Mr. C's beliefs are overwhelmingly much more consistent with the teachings of Scripture.

Issue 3 concerns ...

3. The Very Troubling Implications of "Man Chooses God" Theology

We open this section by again explicitly stating that we in no way hold that one has to accept the Reformed Faith or our two Assertions to be a Christian. We love and totally embrace our Arminian brothers and sisters as fellow Christians.

But that being said, there are at least four very troublesome *implications* of holding to the Arminian teaching that "Man Chooses God" for salvation. They are ...

Implication # 1: It produces a rather pathetic view of God.

Implication # 2: It strikes a direct blow at God's Self-disclosed Attributes of omniscience and omnipotence.

Implication # 3: It makes natural unregenerate man, next to God Himself, the most powerful force in the universe ...

Implication # 4: Most troubling of all, Arminianism elevates man to the status of being the primary determiner of his own salvation, rather than God.

You may well reject some or all of these implications and say “*I don't believe that at all!*” We certainly hope you don't. But though these *implications* may not represent or fit with your personal beliefs, they are the direct, undeniable, inescapable, logical and necessary implications of the Arminian theology that you profess to believe.

Let's take them up individually ...

Troublesome Implication # 1: Arminianism produces a rather pathetic view of God.

Arminianism claims that Jesus's death on the cross only made a man's salvation “possible” and that after making salvation possible, God retires to the sidelines and leaves it entirely up to man to choose or decide on his own whether to take Him up on His offer of salvation or not. Again – It is left entirely up to man, on his own, to turn God's offer of a possible salvation into a reality for himself. If he chooses “*for God*”, he is saved. If he does not choose “*for God*”, he is lost.

And so, the God and Creator of the universe makes man's salvation “possible” and then, rather pathetically, must sit on the sidelines waiting to see if man will on his own take Him up on His offer of salvation or not. He has done everything He can or will do, and now must await and learn from man what he is going to do.

[Note: To say, as some do, that God's sovereign will is whatever man decides or chooses on his own is illogical and nonsensical, and totally overthrows, as shown in Implication # 2, any notion of God being omniscient or omnipotent.]

We of the Reformed Faith would say that God *does not sit idly by on the sidelines* or *stand impotently at the door of a sinner's heart* seeking to be let in. No, He, rather, comes to the “door” of a sinner's heart ... kicks the door down ... reaches in and grabs the sinner by the scruff of his neck ... pulls him out ... breathes new life into him ... regenerates his heart ... gives him the “gifts” of “repentance” and “faith” ... makes him into a “new creation” such

that he will freely and willingly, but irresistibly, come to Him. That is the action of a strong, sovereign, omnipotent, Calvinistic God.

Troublesome Implication # 2: Arminianism strikes a direct blow at God's Self-disclosed Attributes of Omniscience and Omnipotence.

The proposition that God does *'all He can'* to save a man and then rather pathetically sits on the sidelines waiting to see if individual men will choose or decide *"for"* Him *on their own* does grievous injury to God's Self-disclosed personal attributes of *omniscience* and *omnipotence*.

First, it strikes at God's *omniscience* because it suggests that God does not *'know'* beforehand who will choose Him or not and must await man's decision on the matter. God must *learn* things from man.

This is directly contrary to Scripture, where God says of Himself ...

*"Remember the former things of old,
For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God and there is none like Me,
Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things that are not yet done,
Saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
And I will do all My pleasure'" (Isaiah 46:9-10)*

God does not *"learn"* from man.

Even worse, some claim that God really can *'know'* beforehand who will come to choose Him or not – but only by *"peeking ahead, down the corridors of time"* to see what decision men will make about Him on their own. Surely, to say that the God that created the universe gains *'knowledge'* in such a degrading manner as *"peeking ahead"* (like some kind of cosmic cheat) is demeaning at best, and most certainly does not qualify to go by the title of *Divine sovereign omniscience*.

Second, the Arminian viewpoint that God awaits man's decision in the matter of their own salvation also strikes at God's self-disclosed attribute of *omnipotence* because whether a man will be saved or not is entirely in his own hands and under his own control, not God's. In no way can God be said to be *omnipotent* or *sovereign* if such a vital thing as a man's salvation is not under His control. Because, if God must await man's decision in the matter, then both God's Divine omnipotence and will *must* be said to *give way to* and *be dependent upon* man's independent choice – which is entirely contrary to the very meaning of the words *"sovereign"* and *"omnipotent"*.

Once again, it certainly does not sound like Isaiah's God, of whom it is written ...

*“I am God and there is none like Me,
Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things that are not yet done,
Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,
And I will do all My pleasure’” (Isaiah 46:10)*

And it certainly does not sound like the God of the Apostle Paul who wrote ...

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1: 3-6)

With all due respect, we would say that even suggesting that God’s *sovereign* will is determined by whatever man decides or chooses to do *on his own* is totally illogical and nonsensical and most certainly does not even remotely resemble *Divine sovereign omnipotence* in any way, shape, or form.

Troublesome Implication # 3: Arminianism makes natural unregenerate man, after God Himself, the most powerful force in the universe ...

Just think about it! If natural unregenerate man really is able *on his own* to choose whether or not to turn the merely ‘possible’ salvation that God has provided for him into a ‘real’ salvation for himself, then he truly has to be an extremely powerful entity.

For to do so, natural unregenerate man must innately be able *on his own* ...

to overcome “*the wiles of the devil*” ...

to triumph over all of the “*principalities ... powers ... rulers of the darkness ... (and) spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*” that were arrayed against him ...

to personally prevail over “*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*” ...

all in order to choose “*for*” God *on his own*.

Unquestionably, *natural unregenerate man* is something indeed!

Troublesome Implication # 4: Most troubling of all, Arminianism elevates man to the status of being the primary determiner of his own salvation, rather than God.

Now, this may be the farthest thing imaginable from your mind, and, again, we certainly hope that it is! But man's becoming the primary determiner of his own salvation is the inescapable implication of holding that individual man must *choose or decide* for Christ on *his own* without any further help from God. For if it is true that it is '*all up to man*', that God does not intervene, and it is truly man's '*move*' to make or not make, then by irrefutable logic and necessary consequence it must and has to follow that *man* is the primary determiner of his own salvation.

[Let us also note that to say that there is some sort of 'Prevenient Grace' which God gives to all men that enables them to make a choice or decision for Christ on their own only adds one more step to the salvation process without changing the means or the end. If, purely for argument's sake, we should momentarily accept that 'Prevenient Grace' exists, individual man is still left as the crucial decision maker and determiner of whether he is to be saved or not. He is still in charge of his own salvation in every sense of the word.]

“But”, you might say, “I have never felt or believed or even thought of anything like that! In fact it makes me mad that you would even suggest that to me.”

Again, we're glad to hear it. But, even though “*man being the primary determiner of his own salvation, rather than God*” may be the farthest thing from your mind, it is still the *direct, unavoidable, and necessary* implication of holding that, in the matter of salvation, it is man that, on his own, chooses God.

If you simply think about it, it must be so ...

If God only makes salvation '*possible*' and a man's personal salvation depends upon a choice or decision that he must make on his own ...

Then, by necessary and logical consequence, man inescapably has to be - and does become - the primary determiner of his own personal salvation. For ...

A man will be saved only if he on his own correctly makes the crucial choice or decision for God ... and ...

He will be lost if he does not make the crucial choice or decision “for” God.

Clearly, *if* a '*possible*' salvation can be turned into a '*real*' salvation only by a man making a choice or decision “for God” on his own, then man's personal salvation most assuredly rests entirely in his own hands and is totally under his own control. This inescapably makes man the primary determiner of his own salvation. *To hold differently is to uproot and overthrow all the laws of logic, reason, judgement and common sense.*

Even worse, holding that “*Man Chooses God*” not only makes man the ‘*primary determiner*’ of his own salvation, but it also results in his actually playing the “*bigger and more important part*” in the attainment of his own salvation.

This conclusion is also inexorable, unavoidable, and inescapable.

All Christians will readily admit that it was absolutely essential and necessary for Jesus to suffer and die on the cross in order to atone for our sins and make our salvation ‘*possible*’. His atonement for our sins and the imputation of His righteousness to our account are the legal basis and foundation of our salvation. All true Christians are very deeply thankful to Him and look forward to praising Him throughout eternity for it.

But it still must be admitted that it is *far better* and *far more important* to the individual to have a ‘*real*’ salvation than just a ‘*possible*’ salvation. As we said earlier, if you don’t believe us, just ask anybody now in hell. They all had a ‘*possible*’ salvation, but not a ‘*real*’ one.

Finally, and worst of all, it must also be admitted that if man is the ‘*primary determiner of*’ and plays the ‘*bigger and more important part*’ in the attainment of his own salvation, he really ought to get some of the ‘*glory*’ for it!

As we said above, it was absolutely necessary for Jesus to suffer and die in order to make salvation ‘possible’, and we are very thankful to Him for that. But, IF it was *natural unregenerate man acting on his own that actually turned God’s ‘possible’ salvation into a ‘real’ salvation for himself*, THEN man should at least be accorded some of the glory, if not the greater share of it, for the attainment of his own salvation. For if man *on his own* had not so wisely chosen the right course he would still be unsaved. Ipso facto, he is saved *only because* he *on his own* made the right choice and did the right thing. Certainly, then, he should get at least *some* of the glory for it.

In sum ...

Whether you claim to believe it or not, holding that “*Man Chooses God*” necessitates man becoming the primary determiner of his own salvation in the fullest and truest sense of the word. For if Jesus only provided us with a ‘*possible*’ salvation and it is up to us to turn this ‘*possible*’ salvation into a ‘*real*’ salvation for ourselves, then natural unregenerate man, in regards to his own personal salvation, is truly the ‘*master of his own soul and captain of his own fate*’. He escapes hell only if and only because, he, *on his own*, wisely chose or decided “*for*” God.

And so, if it is true that “*Man Chooses God*”, even though you might be reluctant to admit it, man truly is the ‘*primary determiner*’ of and plays the ‘*bigger and more important part*’ in the attainment of his own salvation. By necessary consequence, God ought at least to split both the glory and the credit for a man’s salvation with him.

That is the terrible but indisputable logic of holding to Arminian theology.

Truly, man has increased and God has decreased.

Issue # 4 raises the point ...

4. But doesn't the Bible say that ...

“... whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved”?

It most certainly does say that ... in Romans 10:13 to be exact. God will never reject one who comes to Him in true faith.

Our Lord Jesus likewise said

“... the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37)

Reformed/Calvinists who believe that “God Chooses Man” fully believe that if the worst and vilest sinner that is alive today truly “*calls on the name of the Lord*” and sincerely “*comes to*” Jesus, he will indeed be received by Jesus and will be granted eternal life. Indeed, we would rejoice with the repentant sinner and would praise and thank God for the grace and mercy that He has shown toward yet another undeserving sinner.

So, please be fully assured that our two Assertions raise *absolutely nothing* that is in any way contrary to either of the two verses quoted above. We wholeheartedly and enthusiastically agree and assert that “*whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*” and that Jesus “*will by no means cast out*” any sinner who “*comes to*” Him.

Our Assertions have only to do with “WHY” people “*come to*” Jesus or come to “*call on the name of the Lord*” in the first place. Our Assertions only say that if a sinner “*calls on the name of the Lord*” or “*comes to*” Jesus, it is only because God has first removed his “*stony*” heart and given him the “*gifts*” of “*faith*” and “*repentance*”, so that he freely and willingly wants to do so.

Issue # 5 takes up two intriguing Questions ...

5. How can a sovereign God hold individual men responsible for actions that He Himself foreordained and decreed?

Does natural unregenerate man have any “free-will” at all?

The knee-jerk reaction of most people to this issue is to say that the question of how God can decree and determine everything that comes to pass, yet still hold individual men responsible for performing what He Himself has determined and decreed, presents us with the choice of either (1) *admitting to an outright Biblical contradiction* or (2) *having to accept that the reconciliation of these two truths is simply beyond our comprehension*.

But the *conflict* is only apparent and not real and the reconciliation of these two truths is very much within our grasp.

In reconciling these two seemingly irreconcilable truths it is necessary that we first deal with the question of man's *free-will*. Can man really have a *free-will* in the face of a "*sovereign*" omnipotent God? How can man be said to be "*free*" if God foreordains and predetermines all that will come to pass?

It will be a great help to us if we start by defining our terms.

First, what does it mean to say that God is "*sovereign*"? In dealing with the present question, by calling God "*sovereign*" we mean that He decrees and foreordains all events that come to pass, with nothing being left outside of His control.

[Note: We do need to make a very important distinction here. In calling God "sovereign" we must keep in mind that there is a very big difference between God's being sovereign in decreeing and foreordaining the occurrence of a sinful act and His being the "Author" or direct cause of that sinful act itself, such that He should bear the moral responsibility for its occurrence and not men who enabled or performed it. We shall say more on this shortly, after further defining our terms.]

We also need to define what we mean when we say that man has a "*free-will*". We would submit that man's "*will*" is "*free*" in the sense that he is able to follow and act out the innate desires and wishes of his own heart, without any external force or compulsion being applied to make him do what he does. Certainly the essence of being "*free*" is being able to do what you want to do in the absence of any external force or compulsion to the contrary. Thus, we can say that natural unregenerate man is "*free*" and has a "*free-will*" in the sense that he is able to *freely and willingly choose* to follow the dictates and desires of his own heart.

But just because a man is *free* in one respect does not mean that he is *free* in *all* respects.

We saw earlier that Adam was the "*Federal Head*" of the whole human race. As such, he stood in the place of all humanity to come after him and represented them before God. When Adam fell, he legally plunged the whole human race along with him into ruin [save our Lord Jesus Christ who was not conceived by natural human generation']. All human beings now inherit a fallen nature and alienation from God at their conception. This is called the "*Doctrine of Original Sin*."

And so, natural unregenerate man is, as we have said, *free* in respect to being able to do what he wants to do in accord with the desires of his own nature, but is *not free* from his own nature and is bound by it and the desires that it produces. Our Lord Jesus Christ clearly affirmed this when He said

“Most assuredly I say to you whoever commits sin is a slave of sin” (John 8:34)

The Apostle Paul in his instructions to Timothy likewise confirms that natural unregenerate man is enslaved and bound by his nature ...

“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” (II Timothy 2:24-26)

Given all this, we can readily see that even though sinful events may be foreordained and decreed by a *sovereign* God, individual men can still be justly held responsible by a *sovereign* God for their actions *because* even though their nature is fallen, they *freely and willingly* acted according to the desires and dictates of their own hearts in committing them. Again, they *freely chose* and *wanted to* commit their sin and *were under no external compulsion or force* to do so when they *chose* to do it. They did what their fallen nature prompted them to do. It is precisely for this reason that their moral responsibility, their blame, and their punishment are all fair and just.

A good example of God’s foreordination of an event and man’s responsibility for it is found in *Acts 2:22-23*, where Peter addresses a crowd in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost ...

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know – Him, being delivered by the determinate purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death”

In these verses the Apostle Luke tells us that Jesus was “*delivered by the determinate purpose and foreknowledge of God*” to be crucified ...

In other words, a sovereign God decreed and foreordained the act.

But Luke also tells us that Jesus was put to death “*by lawless hands*” ...

In other words, the men that crucified Christ did so because they freely and willingly wanted and chose to do so ... and were not forced to do what they did by God or by any other external force.

Thus we see that while a *sovereign* God foreordained and decreed the crucifixion of Christ, the actual deed itself was still done “*by lawless hands*” that justly bear the responsibility for it. So, even though God Himself foreordained and decreed Christ’s crucifixion, both the sin and moral responsibility for the crucifixion itself attaches to and remains with the “*lawless hands*” that crucified Him ... and not with God.

Thus, it is perfectly reasonable, fair and just for a sovereign God to foreordain and decree the occurrence of sinful events, with no blame or moral responsibility whatsoever attaching to Himself for the occurrence of the sinful event, and still hold the men perpetrating the event to be morally responsible for carrying it out. Again, the men acted *freely and willingly* in *choosing* to call for and perform the crucifixion. They were morally responsible for it even though God Himself decreed and foreordained it. There is NO real conflict here between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility because man is perfectly free to act within the limits of his fallen nature and is not externally forced or compelled to do anything that he does.

We would refer you to our Question # 8 for a much more in-depth treatment of ...

God’s Sovereignty vs Man’s Responsibility

If God is sovereign and ordains and decrees all things that come to pass and if unregenerate fallen man is bound by his own fallen and corrupt nature to always sin, then how can a “fair” God hold them morally responsible and send them to hell for actions which He Himself has ordained and decreed and which they are bound by their own corrupt nature to perform? Do natural unregenerate men have any “*free-will*” at all in the matter?

Our sixth issue looks at ...

6. How it is that holding that God has foreordained and determined all that will come to pass is not a “Fatalistic” viewpoint?

We can perhaps best answer this question by taking up a specific example, that of a Christian who has been experiencing and is still in prolonged pain and suffering. The Christian continues to pray for relief, but when and if it does not come, try their best to live in “Quiet submission to God’s will.”

OK. So, again, “How is ‘*Quiet Submission to God’s Will*’, by a Christian going through extended pain and suffering, not Fatalism?”

In “*Fatalism*” human pain and suffering come by random chance and impersonal fate and have no real meaning, cause, or purpose. The sufferer is nothing more than an incidental

victim of random chance and must simply resign himself to his “fate”, with no real hope at all.

On the other hand, the Christian living in “*quiet submission to God’s will*” knows that pain and suffering purposefully come from a good, loving, and caring heavenly Father who works all things for the personal good of each of His children and for His own glory.

The Christian sufferer continues to pray for and has true hope of relief, but is assured that if it does not come while on earth –

that God loves him ...

that God is good ...

that God knows what He is doing ...

that God is not in any way punishing him for anything because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for all his sins on the cross and God, being a just God, would never punish him a second time for a sin that has already been punished by Christ on the cross ...

that God is working for his own personal good ...

that he is personally glorifying God by his patient submission to His will ...

that God has exceedingly great, eternal rewards for his exercise of simple faith and trust in His goodness, love, and providence ...

So, in reality, we see that “*Quiet submission to God’s will*” is the exact opposite of “*Fatalism*”.

[Note: If you would like to look more deeply into these matters, we have a Nine Paper series on the topic “Pain, Suffering and Death and the ‘Whys?’ Thereof” also on our website.]

Our seventh and last issue asks ...

7. How can you say that most Arminians are really Calvinists at heart?

Don’t believe us? Then let’s look at a couple of Proofs.

Proof # 1: Ask your Arminian friend to pray the following prayer ...

Dear God,

I want to thank You for the “part” that You played in my salvation.

And, Lord Jesus, I really do appreciate it that You, by your death on the cross, made my salvation “possible”, so that I could on my own, without any further help from You, turn Your “possible” salvation into a reality for myself, and “allow” You to save me.

We bet that they not only wouldn’t consider praying this prayer to God, but would actually lecture you for even suggesting it.

But, that, prayer is, nonetheless, what they *profess* to believe.

Proof # 2: Ask them to pray to God with you for the salvation of their family members, neighbors, friends, and co-workers ...

Strangely enough, even though they profess to believe that “*It’s all up to them*” and that “*God has nothing more to do with it,*” they will do this.

They may try to cloak their requests to God for the salvation of others in somewhat different terms, but upon examination it all collapses into an innate knowledge on their part that it is God that is responsible for every aspect of their own and others salvation, and not they themselves.

No, on their knees, your Arminian friends can no more refrain from praying to God for the salvation of their friends and loved ones than they could on their knees, in His very presence, thank God for the *mere* “part” that He played in making their salvation ‘possible’, while they, on their own, turned God’s “possible” salvation into a “reality” for themselves, and *allowed* Him to save them ...

Which is why we would again submit that “*Most Arminians innately believe our two Assertions, no matter how much they might protest to the contrary.*”

We hope you have enjoyed and profited by our look at ...

HATHQ Question # 10:

When it comes to a Man’s Salvation ...

“Does ‘Man Choose God’ or does ‘God Choose Man’?”

We have endeavored to show

That the weight of Scriptural proof for the Reformed/Calvinistic viewpoint that “God Chooses Man” is overwhelming

That our knowing that “God Chooses Man” is a very important matter to God Himself

That the “God Chooses Man” viewpoint has many positive practical implications for you personally

That the Arminian “Man Chooses God” viewpoint has some very negative and troublesome implications

We have three Addendums that follow ...

Addendum # 1: The Process of Salvation Under Calvinism and Arminianism

Addendum # 2: The Five Points of Calvinism vs the Five Points of Arminianism

Addendum # 3: The Five Questions Asked for one to become a Member of our Reformed/ Calvinistic Church and Denomination (Questions which any Christian Should be Easily be Able to Answer)

Addendum # 1: The Process of Salvation under Calvinism and Arminianism

The Salvation Process Under Calvinism

God Chooses Man

God, in eternity past has "chosen" for Himself an "elect" people to whom He sends a special inward call that is efficacious to their salvation.

Natural unregenerate man is "dead in trespasses and sins", considers the message of the cross to be "foolishness", "does not receive the things of the Spirit of God" and "loves darkness rather than light". Being enslaved to his unregenerate nature, he cannot and will not of himself respond to and believe in the gospel.

The Holy Spirit regenerates the hearts of the "elect" and gives them the "gifts" of "faith" and repentance. They are thus "born again" and have become a "new creation".

Regeneration Precedes Belief

"Faith" is God's "gift" to the sinner

Salvation is certain for God's "elect" people, as they are willingly and freely, but irresistibly, drawn by the Holy Spirit to exercise their "gifts" of "faith" and "repentance". [Man freely and willingly "exercises" "faith" and "repentance", but does so only because God has previously given him these "gifts".]

Christ's substitutionary atonement on the cross was for and actually did secure the salvation of His "elect" people.

The "elect" are eternally saved and will persevere to the end, "being kept" by the power of God.

The Salvation Process Under Arminianism

Man Chooses God

Natural unregenerate man is not dead in trespasses and sins, but only sick.

Through a measure of "*prevenient grace*" God enables every sinner to be able to repent and believe *on his own*, BEFORE being "*born again*" or having his heart regenerated.

Belief Precedes Regeneration

Jesus Christ's death on the cross made salvation POSSIBLE, but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone, because it is left entirely up to the sinner to decide on his own whether he will be saved or not. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who ALLOW Him to do so.

And so, if man *on his own* chooses "*for*" God he is saved. If he does not so choose, he is lost. God does not and will not intervene in his decision.

"Faith" or "belief" wells up from within the heart of natural unregenerate man, and he, on his own, chooses "*for*" God.

"Faith" is the sinner's gift to God.

God looks down the corridors of time to see who will freely and of themselves alone choose "*for*" Him and ratifies their decision as His sovereign will. The Holy Spirit now regenerates the sinner's heart and he is "born again".

Those who believe and are saved can, for various reasons, lose their salvation.

**It is God's sovereign choice of the sinner,
not the sinner's choice of Christ, that
is the ultimate cause of salvation.**

**It is the sinner's choice of Christ, and not
God's choice of the sinner, that is the ulti-
mate cause of salvation.**

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

"When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God also has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.'" (Acts 11:18)

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." {John 1:12-13}

[Addendum 2 follow below]

Addendum 2: The Five Points of Arminianism vs the Five Points of Calvinism

The Five Points of Arminianism

1. Free Will or Human Ability

Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man is not in a state of spiritual hopelessness. He is not "dead" in sins and trespasses, only sick. God has graciously enabled every sinner to be able to repent and believe on his own. He does not have to be regenerated before he can believe. Faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God and man's contribution to his own salvation.

2. Conditional Election

God's choice of individuals for salvation was conditioned upon His foreseeing who would of themselves freely respond to his call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. It was left entirely up to man's free will whether he would believe or not believe the gospel. It was the sinner's choice of Christ and not God's choice of the sinner that is the ultimate cause of salvation.

3. Universal Redemption or General Atonement

Christ's redeeming work made it POSSIBLE for everyone to be saved, but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. It becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.

4. The Holy Spirit Can Be Effectively Resisted

The Holy Spirit does all He can to bring everyone to salvation, but man is free and

The Five Points of Calvinism

1. Total Inability or Total Depravity

Because of the fall, man is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God, and is unable of himself to believe this gospel. His will is not free, but is in bondage to his evil nature. He will not, and cannot choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. The Holy Spirit must first make him alive, give him a new heart, and the gifts of repentance and faith before he will believe. Faith is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.

2. Unconditional Election

God's choice of individuals for salvation rested solely in His own sovereign will - and was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, nor conditioned upon or determined by any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Thus, God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

3. Particular Redemption or Limited Atonement

Christ's redeeming work was intended to save only the elect and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in their place.

4. The Efficacious Call of the Spirit Irresistible Grace

In addition to the outward general call to salvation, the Holy Spirit extends to the

can resist His call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes. Faith precedes regeneration and makes possible the new birth. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who will ALLOW Him to. God's grace can be, and often is, resisted.

5. Falling from Grace

Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up with their faith, etc.

elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. This internal call, made only to the elect, cannot be rejected and is not dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Holy Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to believe, repent, and come willingly to Christ - having given him a new heart and the gifts of faith and repentance.

5. Perseverance of the Saints

All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Holy Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in the faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.

NOTE: Both the "Five Points of Arminianism" and the "Five Points of Calvinism" given above are taken "from *Romans: An Interpretative Outline* (pp. 144-147), by David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas (who) served for several years as co-Pastors of a Southern Baptist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas". Both sets of Points were found in the book *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* by Loraine Boettner, a book we highly recommend to anyone wanting to look further into the subject.

[Addendum 3 follow below]

Addendum # 3: The Five Questions

We have stated several times in our Paper that we in no way hold that one has to accept the Reformed Faith or our two Assertions to be a Christian and that we lovingly embrace our Arminian brothers and sisters as fellow Christians.

Indeed, to become a member of our Reformed/Calvinistic Church or Denomination (the Presbyterian Church in America, PCA), there are only five questions of faith that one has to answer positively – Questions which any Christian should be able to answer. We put no restriction on entry into God's church, beyond those which our Lord Himself has set.

The Questions are ...

1. *Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?*
2. *Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel?*
3. *Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?*
4. *Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?*
5. *Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?*

Again, any Christian should be able to positively answer these five Questions.

A person standing for election as an officer of our church (i.e., a Deacon or Ruling Elder) and a person called to be a Teaching Elder (i.e., Pastor) at our church would have to subscribe to our doctrinal standards – *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, *The Larger Catechism*, *The Shorter Catechism*, and parts of the *Book of Church Order*. But, again, that is only for those standing for election as officers of the church or called as Pastors, not members.