

RUMINATIONS OF A FORMER HEATHEN

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Election and free will are fascinating subjects. There is no end of looking at them. The spreading of the Gospel is tied directly to election and free will. The effectiveness of the Gospel, and even the reason for spreading it, are all mixed in there. Election and free will are matters directly related to salvation. Is there election? There sure is. Is there free will? There sure is. Is there election beyond one's ability to resist? Yes, there is. Can the election of God be resisted? I don't know. In some cases no, you cannot resist, in other cases I don't know. Jeremiah was chosen before he was formed in the womb. He had no say about it, there is no way he could have resisted.

But God doesn't do that to everybody. Are there different modes of choosing? And what is the choosing for? Is the choosing to be saved, or is the choosing to receive the information needed to be saved? Is the choosing a prodding, like a stone in your shoe that you have to, absolutely have to take your shoe off and get rid of the stone? Or is it like a tiny sliver of wood that at first you don't pay attention to but eventually you have to get a needle and dig it out? But maybe if you shake your foot enough the stone will dislodge a bit and quit bothering you. The same with the sliver, the skin will thicken and grow around it. We grow callous to the insistence of the Holy Spirit. Can free will resist election? Can a person elected of God resist election? Can a person who is elected to be saved resist God to the point of losing his salvation? I don't know, but some examples in the Bible puzzle me. Saul, the first King of the Israelites, was elected of God to be King. Samuel anointed him with oil and declared to him that the LORD had anointed him to be captain over his inheritance. This is said of Saul in the Bible (Samuel 10), "God gave him a new heart," he was "turned into another man." "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, etc."

Was he saved? He tried to murder David, though David had done nothing deserving of such hate. David was completely faithful to King Saul. Toward the end of his life Saul was even consulting with a woman who had a familiar spirit, to get an answer regarding an imminent battle against the enemy. Why did he do it? Because he had sought an answer from God and did not get one. By consulting

this woman who had a familiar spirit, he showed he did not trust God. Was he saved? How can you be saved and not trust God? Personally, I don't think that is possible. If you are saved you will trust God, no question about it. Solomon is another one clearly chosen by God but who went completely astray toward the end of his life. Was he saved? God appeared to him twice, gave him everything he wanted. Solomon gave a great prayer at the dedication of the Temple. When he first became King, he entreated God for wisdom, because he did not see himself capable enough to be able to judge God's people. He was completely humble toward God, acknowledging his shortcomings and totally expecting, trusting in, God's help. Yet, Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel. If his heart was turned away from God, was he ever saved? If he was of us, how could he go away from us? Did Saul and Solomon resist God? How much more elected that either Saul or Solomon can you get? Yet, at one point in their lives they did not put their trust in God neither did they fear him. Looking at it from here, I am not going to bet the farm on that they were saved. They were very elected, but they look lost to me. But who knows? Maybe God has some other plans he has not told me about.

Regarding the spreading of the Gospel there is one commandment that goes to the center of our love for Christ. That commandment is: Feed my sheep. The obedience to the commandment to feed the sheep, his sheep, is directly proportional to our regard for Christ's wishes. In John 21, verses 15 to 17 Jesus asks Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? And Peter responds, Yea, Lord thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Yea, Lord thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, LORD, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. All this was happening after the resurrection. Peter was still feeling very guilty for having denied Christ prior to the crucifixion. But Jesus was not chastising Peter, he was pointing out what the priority was, and is today. Jesus was indicating what the priority should be if we love him. If we love him the priority should be working to feed the sheep, strengthen them, nourish them, put them on

the right path home, assure them of their salvation. The word of God is marrow to the bones. The assurance of salvation brings good physical and mental health. We care for the sheep because Jesus has said that if we love him we will feed his lambs. He loves his lambs and he wants them to be happy and healthy and strong, but many of them are miserable because of false teachings. Loving Jesus means at some point working to alleviate the suffering of his sheep. How does one alleviate the suffering of the sheep? By assuring, reassuring, and more reassuring, them of the eternal covenant God has made, Jesus is the complete payment for our sins.

But we don't know who the sheep are, and many times the sheep themselves don't know who (or whose) they are. At the very least, it comes down to sprinkling a word here and there, sometimes it takes only one word to plant a seed or to strengthen someone.

How is God fair? When I hear "chosen from the foundation of the world," I wonder. Is everybody who is saved, saved only from the foundation of the world? If the people who are saved are *only* those who were chosen to be saved from the foundation of the world, then, there is absolutely no need or reason to spread the Gospel. Those who are saved are saved and those who are not are not. That's it. It would mean that spreading the Gospel is a charade, a meaningless exercise. Busy work. It would also mean that God has chosen to save only a limited number of people and would allow other millions of people to be born knowing full well that they would go to hell without a chance to be saved. They would go into the place of torment where is dark and hot and the weeping does not stop and teeth grind in some kind of terrible desperation. It is just not possible that God would do that. And it is not possible because it is not in his character. God is extremely merciful, he finds all kinds of excuses for people. He bends over backwards to give people another chance, and another, and another, seventy times seven, at least. Now, will there be people who will go to hell? Oh, yes, absolutely, millions of them. This is where free will comes in. Free will is the main ingredient in our self-inflicted destruction. What about the Book of Life, and those people "found written in?" The expressions used in the Bible regarding the Book of Life are: "written in," "found written in," and "blotted out." Those "found written in," are saved. Those not "found written in," are lost. But are those "written in" written in until, or unless, they get "blotted out?" I know God's character, I know his wrath and I know his love. There is no way that God is not fair. The only action that

seems to happen in that Book is that some people who are written in, for one reason or another they get blotted out. Everybody starts out “written in.” But they get blotted out as their rebellion endures to the end of their lives.

In Exodus 32 we have a situation where the Israelites made a golden calf to worship, instead of worshipping God, and God says to Moses he is going to destroy all the people and make of him, Moses, a great nation. Moses speaking and God answering, in Exodus 32: verses 31-33; And Moses returned to the LORD, and said: “Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them a god of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou has written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.” Moses seems to assume that his name was written in the Book of Life (and God does not contradict him). Moses does not say “don’t write me in,” (don’t save me) he says “blot me out” (nullify my salvation). He could not be “blotted out” unless he was “written in.” That is how God is fair. People get their names written in at birth (and since I’m guessing, why not even the unborn?) and eventually they either remain “written in” so that their names are “found written in,” or, they get “blotted out.” God gives everybody a chance until the very end of their lives and only at the very end do their names get blotted out. But, how can people in other religions who never heard of Christ, and therefore never have or will appropriate the blood of Christ, be saved? I don’t know how it could happen but I know that God is fair. I know he is fair because he could not be not fair. God has said that a humble and contrite heart he will not despise and here is where adherents of other religions may have a chance. There are many people around the world who are doing the best they can to comply with the commandments of their religions, but know deep in their hearts they don’t measure up. Even if they don’t know Christ, they know they fall short. God will not accept pride, but a humble and contrite heart he will not despise. Will he impute salvation to those who will come to him as ultimate beggars? Or will he deny it? The atonement of the soul can only be accomplished by a death, by the shedding of blood, the death and the blood of Christ. There is no way around that. Nobody can be saved other than by the blood of Christ. How then would it be possible for God to save people who by their very upbringing never heard of Christ? I have no idea, but it surely would be nice if he would do it. I don’t know much, but I do know this: God is not willing that any should perish,

a humble and contrite heart he will not despise, and his mercy endureth forever.