

Predestined to Believe

An exposition of Acts 13:48

BELIEVER

Phillip G. Kayser

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Introduction

I read a tongue in cheek critique of both Arminianism and Calvinism in a little devotional guide called, *Today in the Word*. The story goes that there is

...a group of theologians who were discussing the tension between predestination and free will. Things became so heated that the group broke up into two opposing factions.

But one man, not knowing which to join, stood for a moment trying to decide. At last he joined the predestination group. “Who sent you here?” they asked. “No one sent me,” he replied. “I came of my own free will.” “Free will!” they exclaimed. “You can’t join us! You belong with the other group!”

So he followed their orders and went to the other clique. There someone asked, “When did you decide to join us?” The young man replied, “Well, I didn’t really decide--I was sent here.” “Sent here!” they shouted. “You can’t join us unless you have decided by your own free will!”¹

Both Arminians and Calvinists would say that this is a misrepresentation of their positions. But frequently people buy into an either/or dilemma because it is easier to do that. One expression of this either/or dilemma is to say that if God predestines all things then man cannot be responsible for his actions. They say, “It’s got to be either responsibility or sovereignty, but it can’t be both.” Well, the Bible rejects that false dilemma. Another false dilemma is to say, “either man has a free will or man is a robot.” And we just do not agree. And certainly Luke does not agree. Verse 48 of this chapter describes a joyful and free embrace of the Gospel by these Gentiles in the first half of the verse while the second half states the reason why they could joyfully submit themselves to God’s Word – God had predestined them to life. Arminians like the first half of the verse

¹ *Today In The Word*, August, 1989, p. 35.

– joyful, willing submission. But they don't like the second half, and have come up with all kinds of strange ways to explain this verse away. And since the second part of the verse is the one that is so vigorously contested, I will begin there.

The Unqualified Doctrine of Predestination (Acts 13.48b)

God chooses His own bride (“appointed”)

The second sentence of verse 48 says, “And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” Let’s analyze this sentence word by word.

The Greek word is *tasso* – to “determine, appoint, choose, ordain.”

First, I want you to notice the word “appointed.” The Greek word for that is *tasso*, and means to determine, appoint, choose or ordain. It’s a synonym for predestine. So this word is saying that God is the one who made a choice on who would get saved and who would not. Only a certain number were chosen, or ordained, or appointed to eternal life.

Now some people bristle at that. They don’t think that is fair. But what would be fair would be leaving everyone in their sin and rebellion like Paul leaves the Jews in verse 46. Paul said, “since you rejected it” [and that’s what we would all do apart from grace – “since you rejected it”], “and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.” God didn’t have to turn to the Gentiles. No one is truly worthy of eternal life. And the fact that God has chosen *anyone* to salvation is an incredible mercy. We were chosen! What a privilege! Why in the world would God choose any of us? That’s really the appropriate question to ask.

The verb *tasso* (“appointed”) is in the passive voice – we are acted upon.

The second thing that I want to point out about the word “appointed” is that the Greek voice is passive. This means that we are acted upon. God is the active agent and we are the passive agent. We are the recipients, not the movers of God’s election. And that fact reinforces the sovereignty of God’s free choice. People like to talk about our free choice, but let’s not forget that

God has a free choice. God is the active agent of this choice, and we are the passive agents.

The verb tasso (“appointed”) is in the perfect tense – this happened in the past with an abiding result.

The third interesting thing about this word “appointed” is that it is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense means that there was a past decision – long ago – that resulted in a present state. It’s because of the perfect tense that I say this is a synonym for “predestined.”

Compare this rejection of some (v. 46) and this appointment of others (v. 48) with Romans 9.

Now what is extremely unusual about this verse that every elect person who was alive at that time and from that city believed the Gospel at once. This means that the Jews who rejected it were not chosen or appointed to eternal life. When you couple that with verse 46 it implies that some were rejected while others were chosen. That is as bold and absolute a statement as you can get on the doctrine of predestination. And it bothers some people. They think it is just not fair. And I want you to turn with me to Romans 9 where Paul deals with this idea that predestination is not fair. Arminianism did not start with Arminius. It was alive and well in the first century. Arminianism is just the natural reaction of the flesh to God’s sovereignty. It is inescapable that in any age there will be Arminians until our flesh is humbled.

Romans 9:6 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel

Paul is dealing with the objection that if some people in Israel resist the Gospel, that God must not be sovereign (God promised to save Israel, some are not saved, therefore their wills thwarted God’s plan). But Paul denies that a person’s will can thwart God’s plan. Paul says that the reason there are so few Israelites who believe is not because God’s Word is powerless or has taken no effect. Instead, Paul says it is because not all who are of “Israel” outwardly are truly Israel. The elect are a subset of the

nation. Thus, God's purpose and election always stands. That is going to be Paul's theme.

Romans 9:7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."

Romans 9:8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

It's God's promise, not our desire that makes the children elect. So we have to analyze the promises.

Romans 9:9 For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

Romans 9:10 And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac

Romans 9:11 (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)

If you insert foreknowledge of their works into the equation as Arminius did elsewhere, it destroys Paul's whole equation. Paul is excluding anything man does. It is an unconditional election. That means that it was not conditioned on anything in us. He elected and reprobated these two brothers entirely without reference to their good or evil.

Romans 9:12 it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger."

Romans 9:13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

Romans 9:14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

Paul will not agree with those who say that God's rejection of some and choice of others is unrighteous. "Certainly not." He

has the right to reject anyone He wants and to save anyone He wants.

Romans 9:15 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.”

You can see here that God’s choice, not man’s is emphasized. He is totally sovereign in whom he chooses.

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

You can see that man’s free will, if he had one, would be completely excluded by this verse. This verse says that God doesn’t base our election on our willingness. That is as bold a contradiction of the Arminian doctrine that God foresees who will properly exercise their free wills as you can get. He says, “No. Man’s will is out of the equation.”

Romans 9:17 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.”

Wow! Paul is denying the silly contention of some that God was wringing His hands over Pharaoh and wishing that Pharaoh would believe and be saved. Quite the contrary. God raised up Pharaoh for the specific purpose of being a vessel of wrath. This means that even rebels have a purpose in God’s plan. As Proverbs 16:4 says, “The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.”

Paul’s conclusion is given in verse 18:

Romans 9:18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

Election is God’s choice, not ours. John R. Rice once gave the ridiculous definition of election as analogous to a democracy – God has cast a vote for you, Satan has cast a vote against you, and you cast the deciding vote. Well, I hope you can see that this contradicts Paul’s assertion here.

In verse 19 Paul anticipates that the reader is going to think this is not fair. You might think that he would try to soften the doctrine and make it more compatible with human desires. But if anything he makes it even more bold.

Romans 9:19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?”

In effect Paul anticipates the Arminian objection that if God is sovereign, then man is not responsible, and shouldn't be punished. He's just a robot who can't resist. But Paul doesn't even consider that a legitimate argument worth debating over. Instead, he says that such an objection is totally inappropriate for a mere creature to even raise before the Almighty God. “How dare you,” is what he is in effect saying. Look at how he words it in verses 20 and following.

Romans 9:20 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?”

Romans 9:21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

Notice he says, “from the same lump.” It's not that one is better than the other. Arminius's theology implied that some men were bad lumps who resisted and didn't have faith and good works. In fact, I have heard many Arminians use this analogy: they say that some people are like clay which the sun hardens, while others are like wax which the same sun softens. What's the implication? Some are saved because they are better lumps than others? But Paul says that everyone is of the same lump. And God took part of the lump and made it a vessel for honor and heaven, and He took another part of the same lump and made it into a vessel for dishonor and hell. Now look, I'm just reporting what Paul is saying, and we may not make his message easier than it is.

Verse 22 shows that it glorified God to raise up people for wrath:

Romans 9:22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

Romans 9:23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

Romans 9:24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

This is the doctrine of God's absolute predestination. It is His choice, not ours. It is His will, not ours. For those who insist that we must defend the free will of man, we ask, "Well, what about God's free will?" Does Jesus not have the right to choose who will be His bride? (We will get to the bride's choice in a moment.) She does have a glorious choice. But here I am trying to clearly articulate that God's choice was not based on the bride's choice. It preceded it, and the bride was wholly, wholly unworthy to even expect such a choice. It would be presumption for the dirty beggar who is also a harlot to think that the prince owes it to her to marry her. Preposterous! Jerom Zanchius wrote a remarkable treatise on Predestination. In the preface he said,

"When I consider the absolute independency of God, and the necessary, total dependence of all created things on Him their first cause, I cannot help standing astonished at the pride of impotent, degenerate man, who is so prone to consider himself as a being possessed of sovereign freedom, and invested with a power of self-salvation: able he imagines, to counteract the designs of infinite Wisdom, and to defeat the agency of Omnipotence itself. *Ye shall be as gods*, said the tempter to Eve in paradise; and *ye are as gods*, says the same tempter now to her apostate sons."

The Scripture doctrine of pre-determination lays the axe to the very root of this potent delusion."²

² Jerom Zanchius, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 13.

I would recommend that you read that treatise, or that you read A.W. Pink's book, *The Sovereignty of God*.³ This is a doctrine that humbles the pride of man and glorifies God's attributes. If you will submit your heart to God's absolute predestination, it shows that you have His grace and everything else begins to fall into place. That's one of the reasons why Charles Spurgeon loved this doctrine and used this doctrine in evangelism so frequently. He said that it was *the one doctrine* which separates the sheep from the goats. On one occasion he said,

“I believe the man who is not willing to submit to the electing love and sovereign grace of God has great reason to question whether he is a Christian at all, for the spirit that kicks against that is the spirit of the unhumiliated, unrenewed heart.”⁴

Now I do want to say that there are Arminians who are Arminians because they don't know better. In fact, that is where our flesh is always predisposed to be. But as J. I. Packer once said, “all true believers are Calvinists when they are on their knees.” And that is a remarkable thing that I have found – watching Arminians praying as Calvinists. But we really need to seek to move Arminians to Calvinism, which is the pure Gospel.

Let me make one more comment on Romans 9 before we go back to Acts 13. In verse 29 Paul says that we should be focusing on the fact that apart from predestination everyone would be in hell, and justly so. He says, “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.’” The remarkable thing is not that Esau was rejected and hated, but that Jacob was chosen and loved. And the more we know of our own hearts, the more we will stand in love and awe and amazement that God appointed us to eternal life. So the word “appointed” shows us the *fact* of predestination.

³ A.W. Pink, *Sovereignty of God*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1930).

⁴ Charles Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit*. (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1859), p. 424.

This choice is not simply to service, but to eternal life.

But the next words in Acts 13:48 show us the *nature* of predestination. It says that these were “appointed to eternal life.” Some Arminians have argued that our predestination is simply predestination to service, not to life. These particular Arminians claim that Jesus is the only elect one, and we can be treated as being elect once we believe in Jesus. But technically, we are not predestined to life, but to service. Individual election is supposedly not to salvation. But that is contradicted by this verse. Here are a specific number of people who were appointed to everlasting life. But clearly, this predestination is in terms of the doctrine of salvation. There is no escaping that.

Belief flows out of God’s decree, not vice versa.

The next word indicates that belief flows out of God’s decree, not vice versa. “And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” It doesn’t say as many as believed were then appointed to eternal life. It doesn’t even say as many as God foresaw would believe in the Gospel He appointed to eternal life. It’s not the belief that moves God to appoint, but the appointment which results in belief. Arminians believe the opposite. They believe that our faith is the cause of the ordination. They say that our faith moved God to appoint us. But verse 48 makes it quite clear that “as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

I am spending a lot of time on this first point (The Unqualified Doctrine of Predestination) because this is a doctrine that the flesh fights against with all its might, and it is critical that you understand it so that you can enter into the joy that these people had in the second point (The Full-Hearted Embrace of God’s Sovereignty by the Elect).

The certain number of the elect (“as many as were ordained”) See Rom. 11:7; John 6:37,39; 17:2,6,9-10,20-21).

But let’s go back to the words “as many.” Verse 48 says, “And *as many as* had been appointed to eternal life believed.” Two things to notice here. All the elect who were alive in that city came to Christ during the short time that Paul ministered there. This was extremely unusual. Look for example at Acts 18. Paul was preaching at Corinth. In verse 8 it says that many Corinthians believed and were baptized. But Paul’s work was not yet done. Look at verses 9-10.

“Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.” [These are His predestined ones – His elect.] And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

Pagans could not do a thing to Paul in that city until every elect person who was to be converted under Paul came to Christ. And this happened over a period of a year and a half. And there were still many more who came to Christ after Paul left. But it was different in Acts 13. Every elect person alive in that city came to Christ suddenly. The time, place, manner and speed with which people come to Christ is all planned out by God. Nothing is left to chance.

The second thing to notice is that God has a certain number of elect and not one person more or one person less than that can be saved. It says, “as many as had been appointed.” All those appointed believed and only those appointed could believe. The elect is always a specific number. Romans 11:7 says, “the elect have obtained it, but the rest were blinded.” John 6:37 says, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me...” Verse 39 says, “This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.” In Revelation 7 it speaks of God saving exactly 12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel before Israel was cast out into

the nations. Why exactly that number if people had free wills? That would be statistically impossible. But if people come to Christ simply because God elected them and called them, then God can make the numbers exact. This is why the Westminster Confession of Faith says,

“By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestined, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.” (3:3-4).

This is why Jesus said in John 17, “You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him” Do you see that? Jesus could not give life to one person more or one person less than what the Father had given Him. This is why we believe in limited atonement. The purpose of Christ’s life and death was to “give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.” He continues,

“... I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours. You gave them to Me...I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them” (John 17:2,6,9-10,20-21).

Not a single one can be lost. Not a single additional person can be added to the number of the elect. Jesus had in mind a certain number which could not be increased or be diminished. This means that He didn’t just die for a non-descript mass of people who might believe in Jesus in the future. The Openness of God Theology says that God doesn’t even know who all will believe in Him in the future. He just died for an indiscriminate mass of future people. And we say, “No. No. No. Each individual is precious in His sight. You cannot be accidentally overlooked. He elected you specifically, and Jesus died with you specifically in mind. This makes you special.” You are not just a statistic.

The certainty of salvation

Determined from eternity past (“appointed”) Eph. 1:4

And so this verse speaks of a certainty; an absolute certainty in salvation. The word “appointed” or “ordained” shows that our salvation was determined from eternity past. That is the perfect tense – “had appointed.” It was done and settled before the foundation of the world. And far from making Paul nervous or upset, instead you find in every epistle that Paul glories in this predestination. In Ephesians 1:3-4 Paul absolutely glories in this predestination and blesses God for it (“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...”). He sees predestination as a gift of God’s love – “in love having predestined us”. In Romans 11 it makes Paul cry out in amazement,

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?” Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to Him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever.”

It is a plan that should make us rejoice. So the first certainty that we see concerning our salvation is that it was determined from eternity past.

Determined to eternity future (“ordained to eternal life”)

The second certainty we see is that it is determined to eternity future. They were “appointed to eternal life”. Not to temporary life, but eternal life. Not to a salvation that you can lose, but to a life that never ends. God doesn’t have a plan, then change it. We don’t have to pick daisy petals and say, “He loves me, He loves me not, He loves me, He loves me not.” No, what starts in eternity past continues into eternity future. Is this not a beautiful doctrine?

Predestination is not based on our frail will. Instead, our belief is enabled by God’s omnipotent will. (“believed” - Eph. 1:5,11; Rom. 9:16,18; John 1:13)

The third thing that makes this salvation absolutely certain is that the predestination was not based on our frail will as it was in Arminius’ plan. I know I am repeating myself, but I want this to be crystal clear. Arminius said that God looked down the corridors of time to see who would believe and persevere, and the ones who He could foresee would persevere were chosen. On that theology, everything rests on our faith and our perseverance, not on His ordination. You can see that his doctrine robbed people of confidence. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that our predestination was based upon our will. Romans 8:28-30 says the opposite of the Arminian teaching. They have to insert man’s will into verse 29. But it doesn’t appear there. You won’t find it in the golden chain of salvation. Paul emphasizes God’s work, not our response. As Jonah said, “salvation is of the Lord.” There is not a speck of man in it or man could take some credit and some glory. But Jonah said that it is of the Lord.

Spurgeon said, “I do not believe that there ever would have been a man delivered from this present evil world if it had not been according to the will, the purpose, the predestination of God. It needs a mighty tug to get a man away from the world. It is a miracle for a man to live in the world, and yet not to be of it. I am sure it would never have been wrought if it had not been according to the will of God our Father.”

God’s election is the foundation of our salvation. Without it we have nothing. It is God’s will that is highlighted by Scripture, not our will. John 1:13 says, “who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Ephesians 1:5 tells us that we were predestined “according to the good pleasure of His will.” Verse 11 says, “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.” To make anything dependent upon our free will instead of God’s free will is to destroy salvation. You see, if God built the bridge of salvation 98% of the way across the grand

canyon and then required that we build 2% of that bridge with the rotten timbers of our free will, the whole bridge would collapse. Now I am not denying that we exercise our will. We do exercise our will and walk across that bridge the moment God regenerates us and calls us. But for now, be it resolved that salvation is 100% of the Lord.

The Elect's Full-Hearted Embracing of God's Sovereignty (v. 48)

Having the first point well established, this second point is no less critical. If people aren't embracing God then there is no salvation because wherever God is predestinating, peoples' response will follow.

They believed (v. 48b)

I want you to notice that the text doesn't say the elect were dragged into the kingdom against their wills, kicking and screaming. That is such a misrepresentation of sovereignty. It doesn't say that they were robots. No. It says of every one of them that they "believed". It doesn't say that God believed for them. *They* believed. How does God accomplish that? In Acts 16 Luke says of Lydia, "...the Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul" (v. 14). That's the only way it can happen.

Take a moment to explore the Appendices at the end of this book. Appendix 2 (page 25) shows how we are not born again when we believe, but we believe when we are born again. The order of salvation is that God regenerates our hearts, He then calls us, we then respond in faith. And there are many other Scriptures that I have not included. John 3:3 says, "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He can't spiritually see until he is born. Jeremiah 24:7, "Then I will give them a heart to know me."

Appendix 3 (page 27) shows the primacy of God's sovereign grace. God's free offer of salvation cannot be responded to apart from God's sovereign grace. Notice that God freely offers salvation to all will come in John 6:35. The problem is that Jesus had already said, "No one can come to Me..." That is the doctrine of total inability or total depravity. The solution is given by Christ. "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44). God enables us to respond even

though we could not on our own. Life is offered to those who believe, but John 12 says, “they could not believe, because Isaiah said again; “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and turn again, and I should heal them.” Notice the words, “They could not believe.” The solution is that God gives faith. And if you look through the chart you will see that though salvation is freely offered, men don’t want it and cannot receive it until God does a work in their lives. This is why Romans 3:11 says, “There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God.” This is why Romans 8:7 says, “the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.”

That means that even this choice of men and women to believe the Gospel is also a product of God’s grace. But that doesn’t make it any less the real act of men’s minds and wills. They believed.

They were glad (v. 48a) contrasted with anger (vv. 45-46)

Secondly, I want you to notice that Luke sees this sovereignty of God in salvation as being totally consistent with the freedom, joy and liberty that Arminians wish we could have. When you once submit to God’s total sovereignty, you will ironically find yourself ushered into joys indescribable. The first part of verse 48 says, “Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord.” First, they were glad. What a contrast this shows to the miserable feelings of the Jews in verse 45. Verse 45 says, “But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy” [That’s a kind of bondage isn’t it? Have you ever seen people who were so enslaved to envy, bitterness or other negative emotions that they can’t have joy. It’s a kind of slavery. So it says, “they were filled with envy”]; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.” What a contrast –

1) negative emotions of those who claim to have free will, liberty and independence from God

versus

2) positive emotions for those who deny their free will and submit themselves to their sovereign Lord.

That's the way it always is in life. D James Kennedy said,

“The reason people today are opposed to it [election] is because they will have God to be anything but God. He can be a cosmic psychiatrist, a helpful shepherd, a leader, a teacher, anything at all. . . only not God. For a very simple reason—they want to be God themselves.”⁵

But we make lousy gods, don't we? We mess up all the time when we try to take control. And so the irony is that those who followed the devil's advice to Eve that we think, act and emote independently of God find ourselves in fear, bondage and futile thinking. The idol of free will must fall down before the Ark of the Covenant and acknowledge itself to be a weak and helpless god. But those who acknowledge themselves to be slaves of Jesus, find themselves elevated to a status of sons and daughters. They find themselves having liberty and joy. And I would venture to say that you can't ever enjoy sonship fully until you make yourself God's slave. It is interesting that the apostles call themselves slaves of Jesus (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:1; James 1:1; 2Pet 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev. 1:1), yet give much evidence of enjoying their sonship.

They glorified the word of God (v. 48a)

And so verses 48 says, that they “glorified the word of the Lord.” Our tendency is to want to glorify ourselves. It takes a powerful work of God to get men and women to glorify God's Word. Acts 13:42-52 shows that we glorify God's word when we 1) believe it, 2) obey it, 3) when we acknowledge its power, and 4) when we submit to the Word as the standard and measure of all truth. That's humbling. Initially, Satan's temptation to Eve

⁵ D. James Kennedy, *Truths That Transform* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1974), as cited by Michael Horton, *Putting Amazing Back Into Grace* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), p. 43.

to think independently feels good. But one of the great purposes of the doctrine of predestination is to humble the pride of man and exalt the glory and kingship of God. Ultimately the difference between the Reformed faith and the Arminian faith is that the first is God-centered and the second is man-centered.

Let me close by reading from the introduction to A.W. Pink's book, *The Sovereignty of God*. He said,

“[The Scriptures] affirm that God is the “Almighty”, that His will is irreversible, that He is absolute sovereign in every realm of all His vast dominions. And surely it *must* be so. Only two alternatives are possible: God must either rule, or be ruled; sway, or be swayed; accomplish His own will, or be thwarted by His creatures. Accepting the fact that He is the “Most High”, the only Potentate and King of kings, vested with perfect wisdom and illimitable power, and the conclusion is irresistible that He must be God *in fact*, as well as in name.”

Conclusion

I urge you not to resist this doctrine – not to resist His will, but instead to be able to say with the hymn writer:

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Saviour true,
No, I was found of thee.

Thou didst reach forth thy hand and mine enfold;
I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea,
'Twas not so much that I on thee took hold,
As thou, dear Lord on me.

I find, I walk, I love, but, O the whole
Of love is but my answer, Lord to thee;
For thou wert long before-hand with my soul,
Always thou lovedst me.

Anonymous

Let us glory in the sovereignty of God's predestination, and in the words of 1Corinthians 1:31 – "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." Amen.

Appendix 1 - Scriptures Showing Faith Is A Gift Of God

- I. Those who deny that faith is a gift of God fall into the Roman Catholic error of salvation mediated by our good works since faith is clearly one of the good “works” we are called to.
 - a. *It is called a ‘work’*: “Then they said to Him, ‘What shall we do , that we may work the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (John 6:28-29).
 - b. *It is obedience to a command (law)*: “...because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment” (1 John 3:22-23).
 - c. Since faith in some sense saves us, we would have a hand in salvation if faith came apart from grace: “your faith has saved you” (Luke 18:42).
 - d. “the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; etc.) “they have not all obeyed the gospel” (Rom. 10:16).
 - e. There is a “law of faith” (Rom. 3:27).
- II. Faith is clearly a gift attributed to God’s grace alone:
 - a. “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (John 6:29).
 - b. “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” (John 6:37) “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 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 6:44-45).

- c. "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father" (John 6:64-65).
 - d. "And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all" (Acts 3:16).
 - e. "And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace" (Acts 18:27).
 - f. "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3).
 - g. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith..." (Gal. 5:22).
 - h. and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us, who believe according to the working of His mighty power" (Eph. 1:19).
 - i. "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29).
 - j. "and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil. 3:9).
 - k. "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Pet. 1:1).
- III. "as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (2Pet. 1:3).

Appendix 2 - Scriptures Showing Regeneration Precedes Faith

Being Born Again must come before belief... or no one could believe.

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Text	Regeneration/New Life	Resultant faith/obedience
Acts 16:14	"...whose heart the Lord opened, so that	she heeded the things which were spoken by Paul"
Jer. 24:7	"Then I will give them a heart	to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God..."
1John 5:1	has been born ⁶ of God."	"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ
Deut. 30:6	"And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your descendants,	to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."
John 6:45	"Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father	comes to me."
1John 5:20	"...the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding	that we may know him who is true, and we are in him who is true..."
Ezekiel 11:19,20	"Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take 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."

⁶ "is born" or "has been born" (depending on translation) is the Greek perfect tense. The perfect tense indicates a past action with an abiding result. The use of the perfect tense clearly indicates that the act of regeneration happened in the past. In other words, anyone who believes already has been born of God. Compare the perfect tense in 1John 4:7, which indicates that those who love have already been born of God. Likewise the perfect tense in 1John 3:9 indicates that those who keep themselves from sin already have been born of God. Likewise the perfect tense in 1John 2:29 indicates that those who practice righteousness have already been born of God. These four passages use the perfect tense of "to be born" to show that belief, love, and obedience flow from regeneration.

Text	Regeneration/New Life	Resultant faith/obedience
Ezekiel 36:26-27	“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 judgments and do them.”
Jeremiah 32:39	“then I will give them one heart and one way	that they may fear Me forever”
Matt 12:33	“make the tree good	and his fruit good”
Acts 26:18	“to open their eyes and to turn them from dark-ness to light, and from the power of Satan to God	that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”
Romans 8:15	“but you received the Spirit of adoption,	by whom we cry out ‘Abba, Father.’”
2 Cor. 4:6	“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone is our hearts	to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”
Ephesians 2:10	“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus	for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”
1Cor. 2:12	“Now we have received... the Spirit ...	that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.”
John 6:44	the Father who sent Me draws him.”	“No one can come to Me unless
John 8:47	“he who is of God	hears God’s words”
John 10:27	“My sheep	hear My voice”

Appendix 3 - Scriptures Showing the Primacy of Sovereign Grace

God's Free Offer (column 1) Cannot be Responded to (column 2) Apart from God's Sovereign Grace (column 3).

Free Offer of the Gospel	Total inability of unregenerate men to respond rightly	God's remedy to this inability
Life offered to those who ☞	... but ☞	...the remedy is ☞
will come (John 6:35)	"No <u>one can come</u> to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." (Jn. 6:44)	"... unless the Father who sent Me <u>draws</u> him." (John 6:44) "... everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me." (John 6:45)
will believe (John 3:16)	"But <u>you do not believe</u> because you are not of My sheep" (John 10:26) "... <u>they could not believe</u> , because Isaiah said again: 'He has <u>blinded</u> their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and turn again, and I should heal them.'" (Jn. 12:39-40)	"... those who had believed <u>through grace</u> ." (Acts 18:27) "the faith which comes <u>through Him</u> . . ." (Acts 3:16) "... as <u>God has dealt to each</u> a measure of faith." (Rom. 12:3 cf. Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8)
will seek (Isa. 55:6)	"There is <u>none who seeks</u> after God." (Rom. 3:11)	"I was sought by those who did not ask for Me I was found by those who did not seek Me." (Isa. 65:1)
will look (Isa. 45:22)	"... whose minds the god of this world has <u>blinded</u> , who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2Cor. 4:4)	"For it is the <u>God</u> who commanded light to shine out of darkness who <u>has shone in our hearts to give the light</u> of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2Cor. 4:6)

Free Offer of the Gospel	Total inability of unregenerate men to respond rightly	God's remedy to this inability
<p>Life offered to those who ☞</p>	<p>... but ☞</p>	<p>...the remedy is ☞</p>
<p>will hear (Isa. 55:3)</p>	<p>“Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are <u>not able to hear</u> my word. . .He who is of God hears God's word's; <u>therefore you do not hear, because</u> you are not of God.” (Jn. 8:43) “hearing <u>they do not hear.</u>” (Mt. 13:13)</p>	<p>“He who is <u>of God</u> hears God's words” (John 8:47) “<u>My</u> sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow Me.” (John 10:27)</p>
<p>will circumcise their hearts (Jer. 4:4; Deut. 10:16)</p>	<p>“heart of stone” Ez. 11:19; 36:26) “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?” Jer. 17:9)</p>	<p>“And the LORD your <u>God will circumcise</u> your heart and the heart of your descendants” (Dt. 30:6) “The <u>Lord opened her heart</u> so that she heeded the things which were spoken by Paul.” Acts 16:14)</p>
<p>will receive the Word (James 1:21)</p>	<p>“...the natural man <u>does not receive</u> the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1Cor. 2:14)</p>	<p>“...because they are <u>spiritually discerned.</u>” (1Cor. 2:14) “receive with meekness the <u>implanted</u> word, which is able to save your souls.” (James 1:21)</p>
<p>will know God (John 17:3)</p>	<p>“There is none who understands.” (Rom. 3:11) “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are <u>foolishness</u> to him; <u>nor can he know</u> them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1Cor. 2:14) “Because the carnal mind is <u>enmity</u> against God; for it is <u>not subject</u> to the law of God, <u>nor indeed can be.</u>” (Rom. 8:7)</p>	<p>“Then <u>I will give</u> them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. . .” Jer. 24:7)</p>

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Predestined to Believe

An Exposition of Acts 13:48

Phillip G. Kayser



Many people say there are paradoxes in Scripture. One example is predestination and human responsibility. Opponents of predestination say that if God predestines all things then man cannot be responsible for his actions. They say, “It’s got to be either responsibility or sovereignty, but it can’t be both.” Well, the Bible rejects that false dilemma. Another false dilemma is to say, “either man has a free will or man is a robot.” The Bible also rejects that false dilemma. Acts 13:48 describes a joyful and free embrace of the Gospel and the reason why they could joyfully submit themselves to God’s Word – God had predestined them to life.

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