

8. HOW THEN WILL THEY

Now, to close out this volume, there are two matters that need to be discussed.

First, when some hear the good news of the reconciliation and restoration of all, and that God has predestined some to precede the many into the kingdom of God, they ask: Does this mean we do not need to preach the gospel? After all, if God is going to save everyone eventually, and He knows who are predestined in this day to be saved, then why preach? He doesn't need us.

Actually just the opposite is true.

George Whitefield, acknowledged to be one of the greatest preachers and orators of the eighteenth century, was a proponent of the doctrine of election; however, he was not a proponent of the restoration of all. His idea of the doctrine of election was more in line with the thinking of Augustine and Calvin. Nevertheless, for Whitefield, predestination of the elect was all the more reason to boldly preach the gospel.

“It is the doctrine of election that mostly presses me to abound in good works. I am made willing to suffer all things for the elect’s sake. This makes me preach with comfort, because I know salvation doth not depend on man’s free-will, but the Lord makes them willing in the day of his power, and can make use of me to bring some of his elect, home, when and where he pleases.”

“Hath not God, who appointed salvation for a certain number, appointed also the preaching of the Word as a means to bring them to it?”

However, the basis for preaching is clearly laid out by Paul, the beloved apostle of the nations; the one who died daily for the ecclesia. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul was exercised over his kinsmen according to the flesh. His heart was grieved and in sorrow for the ones who were given the promises of God but that had rejected Jesus as Messiah (see Romans 9.1-5). His heart and desire for them was salvation; but for them to be saved, they first needed to hear the evangel.

But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart—that is, **the word of the faith which we are preaching**, [Deut 30:14] that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from [the] dead, you will be saved! For with the heart it is believed to righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed to salvation. For the Scripture says, “Every one believing on [or, trusting in] Him will not put to shame.” [Isaiah 28:16] For there is no difference [or, distinction] [be-

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

tween] both Jew and Greek, for the same [Lord is] Lord of all, being rich [fig., giving generously] to all the ones calling on Him. For every [one], “who himself shall call on the name of [the] LORD will be saved!” [Joel 2:32] (Romans 10.8-13)

Now, many seem to see these verses as the way for “the lost to get saved.” In other words, this is what the lost must do to be saved. They are to confess with their mouths and believe in their hearts; and then, they will be saved, based on this act of confession and belief. Stated another way, many seem to see these verses as a formula to follow in getting the lost saved. If you can get them to confess openly with their mouths and believe in their hearts, then you have done your job to save them. Yet, stated another way, many seem to see these verses as the process by which one is saved. I do not see it this way.

Paul was not giving a formula or a process by which to get people saved. Based on his own experience, Paul declared that it was not his faith that saved him. He was in ignorance and unbelief as he traveled down the road to Damascus. As Paul wrote to his beloved Timothy: **But I was shown mercy, seeing that I do it being ignorant, in unbelief. Yet the grace of our Lord Jesus overwhelms, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all welcome, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, foremost of whom I am** (1 Timothy 1.13-15 cv).

Salvation clearly rests with the Lord Jesus Himself and not with man that is incapable of saving himself; no matter how much he might try or how much so-called “free will” he exercises. Christ Jesus alone saves the sinner by grace through **His** faith, not the faith of the lost (see Galatians 2.20; Ephesians 2.8).

So, what was Paul stating in these verses? He was stating what transpires in a person once he (or, she) hears the evangel and is given the faith (by grace) to believe it. But even more than this, Paul was providing proof that his kinsmen according to the flesh must hear the good news as the first step toward being saved. If they don’t hear it, then how will they know it? However, the good news is not just for the Jews but for the Greeks as well; there is no longer a distinction based on the flesh. All must hear the evangel if Christ is to give them the faith to believe.

As an aside, notice how Paul draws upon Hebrew Scripture (Old Testament), as if to prove that what he was stating was not new; but rather, it was God’s principle first given to his kinsmen.

Now, Paul continues his thought, reinforcing the need for preaching. Again, notice how he draws from the Old Testament.

How then will they call on [Him] in whom they did not believe? But how will they believe [on Him] of whom they did not hear? **But how will they hear apart from one preaching?** But how will they preach unless

HOW THEN WILL THEY

they be sent? Just as it has been written, “How beautiful [are] the feet of the ones proclaiming the Gospel of peace, of the ones proclaiming the Gospel of the good [things]!” [Isaiah 52:7; Nahum 1:15] But they were not all obedient to the Gospel, for Isaiah says, “Lord, who believed our report?” [Isaiah 53:1] So, consequently, faith [is] by hearing, but hearing through [the] word of God. (Romans 10.8-17 ALT)

People need to hear the word of God; and through this hearing, Christ, through the spirit of God, gives the faith to believe what is heard. Hearing always comes first. To the Galatians, Paul demanded to know: **Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?** (Galatians 3.2 NASB). Hearing is required before faith comes. But in order to hear, there must be one who is sent forth to preach.

It is easy to see that George Whitefield was simply following the example of Paul. After all, Paul wrote: **Brethren, join in following my example** (Philippians 3.17).

May I remind you that much of the teaching on the restoration and reconciliation of all has come to us through Paul’s writings. It was on this basis that Paul made himself a slave to all, so that he may win more (see 1 Corinthians 9.19).

So, let us not shrink from sharing the evangel of Christ and His kingdom, for only the Holy Spirit knows who is predestined in this eon to become part of the ecclesia of God.

Second, when some hear the good news of the reconciliation and restoration of all, and that God has predestined some to precede the many into the kingdom of God, they argue against such a thing, because it will lead to slothfulness and licentiousness. After all, if one knows that he or she is of the elect company, then what motivation will this one have to walk righteously before God and man. Again, let us turn to Brother Whitefield, who answered the objection that election destroys holiness.

“Whoever preached any other election than what the apostle preached, when he said, ‘Chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit’? Nay, is not holiness made a mark of our election by all that preach it? and how then can the doctrine of election destroy holiness?”

The New Testament epistles are filled with encouragements and exhortations in this regard. For example, Peter encouraged the elect to be diligent in seeking the abundant entrance into the eonian kingdom of Christ. Paul was not content to see people saved; they had to grow up in Christ, to be complete in Christ. You are encouraged to read all the New Testament epistles, for in them you will discover many exhortations to live a holy, sanctified life. Consider these few examples.

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence**, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. **For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.** Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; **for in this way the entrance into the eternal [eonian] kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.** (2 Peter 1.5-11 NASB [CV])

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, **for you are still fleshly.** (1 Corinthians 3.1-3a NASB)

My children, **with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you**—but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you. (Galatians 4.19-20 NASB)

For **this is the will of God, your sanctification**; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.... **For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.** (1 Thessalonians 4.3-7 NASB)

We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. (Colossians 1.28-29 NASB)

I must confess that to present every man complete in Christ is my sole motive in writing these books. It is not about merely being saved, as wonderful as salvation is; it is about growing up in Christ, to be mature in Christ, and attaining to the **out-resurrection from among the dead**. To do this, you and I must be conquerors or overcomers through Christ. We must not be content with being raised up at the second or latter resurrection. Our goal is to rise from among the dead in the *first* resurrection, the *better* resurrection, the *out*-resurrection.

So, let us press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.