



THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

PART 2

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In the second part of this article we will continue in our examination of Romans chapter 9. In verses 24-26, the Greek verb "καλέω" appears three times. Although this word appears in different grammatical conditions in each of these verses, the general idea relates to G-d calling. As it has already been pointed out, this verb can have a meaning of calling in the sense of inviting, or calling in the sense of naming. In other words, in the first usage there is an intrinsic aspect of a desired response from the one who is called or invited; however, in the second usage there is a proclamation which is not dependent upon a response from the one who is named.

In verse 24 the subject is established in the previous verse. There, the context is those to whom HaShem will make known the riches of His Glory. As the verse states, these are the vessels of mercy. There is a very important grammatical difference between verse 22 and verse 23. In verse 22 the word "καταρτίζω" appears as a perfect passive participle. As we learned, the perfect aspect relates to something that was established in the past and continues into the present and beyond; whereas the passive voice relates to an exterior action causing this condition. The intent of this construction is to show that the vessels of wrath were demonstrated over time to be appropriate for HaShem's wrath as He endured their disobedience and by their disobedience were made objects of His wrath. Hence, it was their disobedience which caused them to be objects of wrath.

If one interprets the verse to mean that G-d Himself made them to be objects of wrath (the position of Reformed theology), then the idea of HaShem enduring their disobedience loses much of its meaning. HaShem would become a type of sadomasochist Who created certain individuals and then withheld His mercy from them, thereby causing Him to endure much suffering from the very behavior that they were unable to cease doing without His mercy. If HaShem withheld His mercy so that in the end He could judge them, thereby manifesting His glory by means of His wrath, would this then not mean that to a certain degree HaShem is a partner in sin, G-d forbid? Rather than understanding that the proper intent of verse 21 is as the verse states, HaShem utilized some from humanity for honor and others from humanity for dishonor. In other words, it is an incorrect understanding of this verse to assert that HaShem withheld mercy from some, instead of simply realizing that those who did not receive mercy, naturally became the objects of His judgment and the righteous administration of G-d's judgment reveals His righteousness.

Verse 24 states,

"Which also He called us not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles."

Romans 9:24

How one handles this verse is critical in arriving at a proper understanding of the Doctrine of Election. Reformed theology, in order to maintain its major tenets, must understand this verse to imply that HaShem has called both a portion of Jews and Gentiles to salvation in a manner in which they are unable to reject this call. Although numerous Scriptures could be offered to

challenge this interpretation, let us consider such an interpretation in light of Paul's quote of the Prophet Hosea in the next two verses.

Please note how Paul introduces the quotation from Hosea. He writes, "As also in Hosea it says...." This phrase leaves no doubt that in order to understand the intent of Paul's statement in this section one must first understand what HaShem said in the prophecy of Hosea. First of all, Paul is quoting from the LXX and not the Masoretic text. He writes,

"...I will call not My people, My people and the one who was not beloved, beloved;"

Roman 9:25

It is very important for the reader to realize that Hosea is dealing with the divided monarchy. During his days it was the Northern kingdom, called Israel, which had played the spiritual harlot and had embraced idolatry. As a result of this, Hosea was commanded to take a wife of harlotry and even though he loved her faithfully, she returned to her harlotry. It is without question that HaShem was depicting His relationship with Israel through the marriage between Hosea and the harlot, Gomer. Before Gomer returned to harlotry she had three children. The children's names symbolized what was going to take place between HaShem and Israel. In spite of HaShem's judgment of Israel, and that He would not have mercy for them and He disowned them saying they were not His people, Hosea reveals that in the future He will indeed have mercy for them and He will call the very ones whom He said, you are not my people, "My people are you and he (Israel) will say my G-d (Hosea 2:25). Hosea makes it most clear that although Israel will go through a time of separation from HaShem, there will be a future time when Israel will return to HaShem. The same idea that concludes chapter two also began this chapter,

"And the number of the Children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered and not counted; and it shall be that in the place which it was said to them, not My people are you, it shall be said to them, children of the living G-d." Hosea 2:1

What will cause Israel to return to HaShem? The answer to this is found in the next verse.

"The Children of Judah and the Children Israel shall be gathered together and there shall be set upon them One Head and they shall go up from the earth for great is the day of Jezreel." Hosea 2:2

Please note that I capitalized the phrase "One Head" because most commentators understand this to be a reference to the Messiah. Hence it will be during the last days that Israel, both the Northern kingdom (Israel) and the Southern kingdom (Judah) will be united as one people and return to HaShem, the living G-d. Hosea uses the phrase Jezreel to refer to the valley where Messiah will come and deliver His people in the last days. The Jezreel valley is also known by the hill that overlooks it, Har Megiddo or Armageddon. According to not only Hosea, but all the prophets who write on this subject, the Jewish people will return to the Land of Israel in the period known as the last days and this period will end with Messiah's return and He will deliver His Old Testament people. Zechariah describes this event in the twelfth chapter of his prophecy and clearly teaches that at this time, Israel will finally recognize Yeshua as her Messiah. It is vital that HaShem's acknowledgement once again of Israel as His people is dependent upon Israel accepting Yeshua.

Paul's purpose for using Hosea's prophecy is to present a Biblical basis for the Gentiles, who were not HaShem's people, to be brought into G-d's family. In other words, if the Gentiles respond to HaShem's call, i.e. the Gospel, they too can receive the same salvation as Israel, who by her disobedience was called not the people of G-d for a season.

It is important to remember the primary theme of Romans chapters 9-11, Paul's explanation concerning the spiritual condition of the Jewish people. It is in regard to this primary theme that Paul continues and quotes from Isaiah,

"But Isaiah cried out concerning Israel, 'Though the number of the Children of Israel are as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved.'" Romans 9:27

It is very significant that in this text the definite article appears before the word remnant "τὸ ὑπόλειμμα". Paul wanted to emphasize that not a remnant will be saved, but the remnant will be saved. The use of the definite article informs the reader that it was not some haphazard random occurrence that resulted in a portion of Jewish people being saved, but rather a specific and well defined act that resulted in a specific and well defined portion of the Jewish people being saved. This concept is further defined in the next verse. Concerning the next verse there are two primary manuscripts. The first is from Nestle-Aland which has,

"For a word He completes and cuts short, the L-rd executes upon the earth." Romans 9:28

Obviously this translation is so literal it is difficult to understand. The idea here is that the L-rd makes His word complete and decisive upon the earth. The Greek verb which was first translated "to cut short" contains the idea of doing something in a very decisive manner.

The second is from the Textus Receptus.

"For a word He completes and cuts short in righteousness, because he has made short a word, the L-rd executes upon the earth." Romans 9:28

In examining these two texts and comparing them with the Hebrew, the best rendering of the verse is,

"The L-rd makes His word complete and (it is) determined in righteousness, for the word has been decreed upon the earth." Romans 9:28

Paul uses this verse to support his position that HaShem, according to His word, is faithful to finish or complete what He has determined based on His righteousness. What is this word which is decreed upon the earth? The latter verses of chapter nine and most of chapter ten focus upon the Gospel; therefore, the vast majority of scholars understand the reference in verse 28 to the "word" "λόγον" as referring to the Gospel. It is by means of the Gospel that disobedient Israel can be saved and how the Gentiles, who were once far off, can likewise find salvation.

Next Paul points out that Israel, based upon her deeds, deserves the same punishment as Sodom and Gomorrah; yet because HaShem provided a "Seed" (Messiah), Israel, i.e. the remnant, will experience a very different eternity. Paul once again quotes Isaiah and states,

"...Unless the L-rd of Hosts left us a seed, as Sodom we would have been and as Gomorrah we would have been like." Romans 9:29

There is no doubt that Paul understands the word "seed" as a reference to the Messiah in a like manner to what he taught the Galatians,

"...And to your Seed which is Messiah." Galatians 3:16

Such an understanding fits perfectly with how Paul concludes this chapter. Remembering once again that the primary theme of this section is the spiritual condition of the Jewish people, Paul explains how the Gentiles have obtained righteousness while the vast majority of Jewish individuals have not. The reason for this is because the Gentiles (an ever increasing number of them) had responded to the word, i.e. the Gospel, by means of faith, while Israel to a great degree, has stumbled over the Gospel. Why was this? Paul explains because of Israel's wrong understanding of the Torah.

Israel incorrectly believed that the Torah, i.e. works of the Law, brings about righteousness; rather than understanding that although the Torah defines what is righteous and what is unrighteous, it is not the instrument that can be utilized for making one righteous. In other words, the Jewish people, to a large degree, missed out on the prophetic truth that HaShem would send the Messiah to do the work of redemption and suffer for sin. The idea of a suffering Messiah was offensive to most of Judaism 2,000 years ago, as it is for much of Judaism today. Yet it is this offence that Israel has stumbled over that is the reason for Israel's spiritual condition. As Paul states in concluding this chapter,

"Just as it has been written, 'Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone a rock of offence but the one who believes in Him will not be ashamed'". Romans 9:33

This verse makes it most clear that there is an inherent relationship between the call of election and the Gospel. To this point there is no disagreement; the conflict is whether G-d determines the grace of the Gospel to be irresistible only for a certain group of people and He equally determines that His grace must be resisted by the rest. Or, do all people maintain a free will which in theory can submit to the Gospel?

This issue is not only foundational for understanding election, but is paramount in understanding the primary tenets of Reformed theology. Although in another article the issue of Irresistible Grace will be addressed in greater detail, let us now touch on this issue as it relates to this section of Romans.

In moving into chapter ten Paul emphasizes once again the heaviness of his heart for the spiritual condition of the Jewish people and his great desire for Israel's salvation. If Israel is the Church as Replacement theology wrongly asserts, then this statement is meaningless. Paul clearly understands the use of Israel by the Textus Receptus as referring to those Jewish individuals who have not believed in the Gospel of Messiah Yeshua. Paul writes that not only has Israel failed in a proper understanding of righteousness and thereby has established her own terms of righteousness; she has also missed out on the purpose of the Torah / Law. Paul asserts,

"For a goal of Torah is Messiah, for righteousness to all who believe."

Romans 10:4

Many translations incorrectly render the Greek word "τέλος" which should rightly be understood as "goal" as in the primary objective. There is no definite article which would mean that one would have to render the verse as "For an end of Torah is Messiah...." The problem is what is "an end"? The confusion is alleviated when the word "the" is inserted. The forced translation is based upon the predominant Christian doctrine that the Torah is outdated for a believer in the Gospel. Rather, the proper understanding of the Torah, leads one to understand his need for a redeeming and suffering Messiah. Paul discusses the righteousness of the Torah in verse five. He states that the Torah teaches how a righteous one lives, but not that by doing these things one is made righteous or justified. This same point was made in Romans 8:4 as well where he states that it is believers who walk according to the spirit and not according to the flesh that fulfill the righteousness of the Law. Paul reveals that it is faith which leads to righteousness! This is why Paul states it is the word of faith that he and the other apostles preach (See Romans 10:8).

In verses 9-17 of this tenth chapter of Romans, Paul unites three foundational concepts to a proper understanding of Biblical Election— "faith", "Gospel", and "call". In this section, when Paul speaks about man exercising faith, i.e. believing the Gospel, he places the verbs in the subjunctive mood. The subjunctive mood, as we have already learned, is the mood of possibility or contingency. The subjunctive mood is used to reveal to the reader that it is uncertain what each individual will do with the Gospel. This uncertainty is of course not from G-d's perspective, for HaShem knows all things from eternity past. Rather, the subjunctive mood is utilized to emphasize to the reader that each person has a real decision to make.

The Reformed theological doctrine of Irresistible Grace says that although people may and do resist G-d's grace, it is only until the time that HaShem decides to end this resisting. John Piper, an Evangelical Neo-Calvinist, puts it this way,

"Whenever G-d pleases He overcomes your resistance... Whenever He decides no longer, He triumphs." (From the sermon "The Free Will of the Wind" preached by John Piper on April 26, 2009.)

This statement supports the position of Reformed theology that G-d alone chooses, i.e. mandates, those who will believe and when they will believe. Hence, the world can be divided into two groups, the elect and the reprobate. Each group therefore, is determined by HaShem solely, apart from nothing but G-d's sovereign will. If Reformed theology is right, then what can be done with Peter's statement?

"The Lord does not delay a promise as some regard delaying, but suffers long for you not wanting some to perish, but all to repentance to move." 2 Peter 3:9

This is one of the most common verses used to undermine the understanding of Reformed theology concerning the Doctrine of Election. In the spirit of fairness and honesty one must understand how Reformed theology interprets this verse and only thereafter is it appropriate for me to present my view concerning it.

Please notice that I used a text which uses the phrase "εἰς ὑμᾶς" which is properly understood as "for you" while other manuscripts have the phrase "ς" which is properly understood as "for us". The issue here is to whom does the pronoun refer? Undoubtedly Peter is addressing believers, and he is teaching them why the Return of Messiah has not yet happened, namely for more people to be saved. John Samson, a Reformed pastor, understands this passage in the following manner,

"The reason Jesus did not return to earth yesterday is because there were more of His elect to come in to the fold today. He is not slack concerning His promise though – He will return, but in the meantime, He is not willing that any of His elect perish but that all of them come to repentance. Far from being an unnecessary statement, it is a source of great comfort to know that God has not forgotten His promise, and that He will accomplish all He desires in the saving of His elect people."

(November 23, 2010 blog entry on the blog Effectual Grace.com by John Samson)

In other words, Mr. Samson is stating that Messiah's return has not yet happened, only for the sake of the elect. More individuals who G-d has chosen for salvation need to be born or need more time to respond to HaShem's "irresistible grace"; then G-d the Father will give the command for G-d the Son to return. There is a major problem with such an interpretation. Why does not the Sovereign G-d move in such a way to have all the elect born in a few generations and place His "irresistible grace" upon them at an early age and hasten the Kingdom and minimize sin and suffering? The percentage of believers in a given generation is relatively small. Why did not HaShem make the percentage of believers to be the vast majority of the population? According to Reformed theology's view of the sovereignty of G-d, He is solely responsible for creating the large number of the reprobate, the very ones who carry out the wicked deeds that HaShem must endure (suffers long) prior to Yeshua's return. Hence, it was G-d Who is responsible for prolonging the time and thereby increasing the amount of sinful acts that take place. Why? Because this is part of His sovereign will. Therefore, Reformed theology implies that G-d is a kind of "partner" in sin and suffering. This sounds at first like an unfair statement to make until one considers the words of some Reformed theologians.

John Piper, in dealing with his understanding of 2 Peter 3:9, states that at times G-d wills sin to come to pass. Mr. Piper offers what he calls the most compelling example of this is G-d willing the death of His perfect, divine Son. Allow me to quote Mr. Piper,

"The most compelling example of God's willing sin to come to pass while at the same time disapproving the sin is his willing the death of his perfect, divine Son. The betrayal of Jesus by Judas was a morally evil act inspired immediately by Satan (Luke 22:3). Yet in Acts 2:23 Luke says, 'This Jesus [was] delivered up according to the definite plan (boule) and foreknowledge of God.' The betrayal was sin, and it involved the instrumentality of Satan; but it was part of God's ordained plan. That is, there is a sense in which God willed the delivering up of his Son, even though the act was sin."

This quotation and those which follow from John Piper are from his article entitled "Are There Two Wills in God? –Divine Election and God's Desire for All to Be Saved" January 1, 1995 available on www.desiringgod.org

Mr. Piper's language is simply insulting towards HaShem. He fails to make a distinction from what G-d knows will happen and Him using it within His will and what G-d mandates or ordains to happen. It is most significant that in the Acts passage from which Mr. Piper cites, the phrase "and foreknowledge of G-d" is mentioned. Let us examine this verse a bit closer. Luke states,

"This One according to the ordained will and foreknowledge of G-d was delivered by means of a hand of lawless (deeds) was affixed and you lifted up."

Please note that Mr. Piper did not provide all the words contained in the verse, nor make reference to this fact. Why was this? I cannot answer for him, but his failure to do so or understand this verse in light of the context is most telling. From his citation the reader of his article would be led to conclude that it was the outcome of G-d's will to preordain Judas to commit this sinful act of delivering Yeshua. However, when one examines the context of Acts 2:23, the reader finds that Peter is addressing a large crowd of Jewish individuals who had gone up to Jerusalem for the Festival of Weeks (Pentecost). This is most clear from verse 22 when he states, "Men of Israel". The point is that Peter is informing his fellow Jews that Yeshua's death was not a surprise to G-d the Father, for He knew beforehand that His Only Begotten Son Whom He sent into this world to redeem the lost would be rejected by the world. This fact did not cause the Father to withhold His Son from this world, but rather He used the sin, according to His perfect foreknowledge, and commanded Yeshua to submit to the sinful acts of Herod, Pilate, the chief priests and all others involved in the crucifixion. It is important that one realizes that G-d did not ordain sin, but used the sinful behavior to accomplish His will.

Many have seen the similarities between the account of the binding of Isaac and the death, burial, and resurrection of Yeshua. Avraham submitted to HaShem's will to sacrifice his son, having brought him to the place that HaShem commanded, and bound him to the wood and finally raised the knife to slay him; when at the very last moment the angel stopped him. It is clear from the text that Avraham intended to carry out this service and HaShem acknowledged Avraham's willingness as full obedience. Hence, what if Israel received Yeshua and recognized Him as the Messiah. Could not the very ones who conspired to crucify Him, instead have offered Yeshua up as a sacrifice in obedience to G-d, as Avraham was willing to do? The point is that yes, Messiah had to die for sin, in order to do the work of redemption; and the fact that He would die upon the cross HaShem foreknew, but did not necessarily cause. In other words, G-d's will commanded His Son to enter into this world to die for sin. The crucifixion was used to accomplish this, but is not what HaShem desired or mandated. HaShem simply foreknew this would be the outcome of sinful man's response to His sending of His sinless Son into the world as an atonement sacrifice.

It is most interesting that the word which I translated as "ordained" and in Mr. Piper's citation is rendered "definite" is the Greek word "ὁρισμένη" which is from the Greek root "ὀρίζω". This word is related to the Greek word "ὁράω", which means "to see". Therefore it is vital that the Bible student understand the Scriptural concept of "to ordain" in light of the Scriptural meaning and not as the English word implies.

Luke 22:22 speaks to the same issue and the same word appears. In this verse one reads,

"And the Son of man, according to that which has been determined goes; great woe to that man through which He was delivered."

A proper understanding of the participle "ὤρισμένον" is necessary to arrive at the Scriptural perspective for the concept of G-d ordaining. Once again the root is derived from the Greek word meaning "to see". Hence one could properly render the verse as follows:

"And the Son of man, according to that which has been seen goes; great woe to that man through which He was delivered."

The implication of the verse is that Yeshua will obey His Father's will and submit to death, even death on the cross; in light of the fact that G-d, having seen from His eternal perspective, the sin of Judas. The meaning of G-d ordaining something is rooted in the fact that HaShem transcends time and sees all things and knows all things at all times, even from before He laid the foundations of the earth. In other words, there was never a time that the Living G-d did not see all and know all.

There is a very important question that must be asked. This question is, "Is the sovereign G-d able to use His omniscience and foreknowledge when establishing His will?" Certainly one must answer in the affirmative. Hence, HaShem willed for His Son to die and the events of the cross accomplished His will, yet He did not cause these sinful events; rather He only utilized them for His glory. The Holy and Righteous L-rd is free to turn the sins of man into good, but He is neither the cause of sin nor does He will one or influence one to commit a sin!

Mr. Piper, in contrast to this, does not see G-d's foreknowledge at work in the issue of G-d ordaining. Piper offers an example from Revelation chapter 17 to support his point. In this passage there are ten kings mentioned who desire to serve the beast and make war with the Lamb. Piper writes,

"Waging war against the Lamb is sin and sin is contrary to the will of God."

Well said Mr. Piper. I agree fully. It is sin for the ten kings to wage war against the Lamb. So if verse 17 of this chapter says, as Piper states, "God gave into their [the ten kings'] hearts to do his will, and to perform one will, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled (v.17)" it would indeed support Mr. Piper's argument. The problem for Piper is that verse 17 is not in reference to these ten kings waging war against the Lamb, but rather what they did in verse 16. This verse states that these ten kings will hate the harlot and make her desolate and naked and she eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. Hence, the verse that Mr. Piper states as relating to the kings waging war against the Lamb is not the subject for verse 17 at all.

This is a prime example of one simply choosing a verse and ripping it out of its context in order to support one's doctrine. It is odd that Mr. Piper quotes verses 16 and 17, but instead of applying verse 17 to what is said in the previous verse, he violates careful exegesis and rips it out of its immediate context and applies it to what is said in verse 14. How could a trained theologian make such an elementary mistake? May I offer that Mr. Piper, in rushing to find a text that supports his views, failed to do the necessary work in examining the entire passage sufficiently. It was this error that allow him to proclaim,

"Therefore God willed (in one sense) to influence the hearts of the ten kings so that they would do what is against his will (in another sense).

In other words, for Piper, the sovereignty of G-d allows a Holy and Righteous G-d to influence peoples' hearts to sin. This is a blasphemous statement. Equally as blasphemous is his statement,

"It implies that (at least in John's view) God's prophecies are not mere predictions which God knows will happen, but rather are divine intentions which he makes sure will happen."

For Piper, when G-d prophesies that a sinful act will take place, it is not rooted in the fact that HaShem knows it will take place, but rather G-d makes sure it will happen even if He must influence an individual to carry out sin.

Again Piper states,

"This means that God intends to bring about events that involve things he forbids."

In speaking about the sinful acts of the antichrist and the beast and those who follow them, Piper writes that John the author of the book of Revelation has the following intention,

"John is exulting not in the marvelous foreknowledge of God to predict a bad event. Rather he is exulting in the marvelous sovereignty of God to make sure that the bad event comes about."

Did you hear that? G-d's sovereignty allows G-d to make sure that bad events, i.e. sinful acts happen! Be it known this is heresy! The proper understanding is that HaShem is so sovereign that even the bad events do not hinder His Holy will; in fact, He can use even sin to accomplish His Holy will. Why do Mr. Piper and some other Reformed theologians believe such things about the character of G-d? Often the reason is they rely on faulty translations that were influenced by other Reformed theologians. For example, in this same article by Mr. Piper, he cites Proverbs 21:1 stating,

"The King's heart is like channels of water in the hands of the Lord; he turns it wherever he wishes."

If one pays close attention to the Hebrew, he would see this translation is faulty. The Hebrew text has the following:

פְּלִגֵּי-מַיִם לִב-מֶלֶךְ בְּיַד-יְהוָה עַל-כֹּל-אֲשֶׁר יַחְפֹּץ יִטְנֶה׃

"Channels of water are a king's heart in the hand of the L-rd, concerning all which He will delight He will turn it." Proverbs 21:1

Please note that Piper's translation, or the one he chose, adds the word "like", which is not found in the Hebrew and he pluralizes the word "hand" which is singular in the Hebrew. Finally, Piper's translation renders the two verbs that conclude the verse in the present when, in fact, they are in the future.

The point the Hebrew text makes is that "channels of water", which is a phrase that is also found in Psalm 1, should be understood as an idiom referring to an abundant resource which is foundational for a good and timely outcome. For clearly this is its use in Psalm 1,

"For if in the Torah of the L-rd is his delight and in His Torah he meditates day and night; he will be as a young tree that is planted by channels of waters which its fruit it gives in its season and its leaves will not wither " Psalm 1:2-3

It is also vital that one understands that the phrase "with the hand" to mean "under the authority of". Often in Hebrew the word "hand" has to do with "power" and / or "authority". The Hebrew phrase יָדָא appears 288 times according to "A New Concordance of Old Testament" by Even-Shoshan. In this construction the definition provided by Even-Shoshan is "with authority" or "by means of". Therefore the idea of Proverbs 21:1 is that when a king's heart (thoughts) is under the authority of the L-rd, then all which is pleasing to HaShem, He will turn. Please note that it is what is pleasing to HaShem, He does through the king who has brought his thoughts under the L-rd's authority. The frequent understanding of this verse by Reformed theologians is to assert that whatever a king does is G-d's will. Nothing could be further from the truth. Once again, the point here is simply that when a king places his thoughts under the authority of G-d, G-d will use that king to do the very things that are pleasing to HaShem.

Mr. Piper understands the sovereignty of G-d as allowing G-d to desire sin not to be restrained. Mr. Piper states and I quote the same article,

"Which is to say that sometimes God wills that their sins be restrained and sometimes he wills that they increase more than if he restrained them."

In supporting this point, Piper refers to the wicked sons of Eli concerning whom he wrote,

"For example, God meant to put the sons of Eli to death. Therefore he willed that they not listen to their father's counsel:..."

It is hard for me to imagine that one would assert that HaShem wills people not to listen to sound Biblically based counsel so that they will sin and He can slay them. Piper, knowing how wrong such a statement sounds, offers 1 Samuel 2:22-25 as support for his position. He writes concerning this passage,

"But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the Lord desired to put them to death."

Piper assumes that the sovereign G-d would not allow the sons of Eli to respond to their father's counsel, because He desired to put them to death. First of all, the sons of Eli had already committed much sin before this account and HaShem would have been justified in slaying them. In other words, He did not need them to disobey their father Eli this time so G-d would be justified in punishing them with death. The intent of this verse is to show that even under the counsel of Eli the leading Priest, they still would not repent, for this was why HaShem was moved, i.e. desired to slay them.

In order to bring home his point, Mr. Piper adds Deuteronomy 28:63 to the discussion. He quotes,

"And as the Lord took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the Lord will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you."

Obviously for Piper, he understands this to mean that the sovereignty of G-d allows G-d to rejoice over the death of the wicked or in their repentance as Ezekiel 18:23 states, whichever HaShem desires the most, He brings about. I suggest that once again such an understanding of this text and its utilization in Piper's article represents a gross error on his part.

The proper interpretation is that the Holy and Righteous G-d is free to influence people to repent and when they do, He rejoices in this as do the angels of heaven. HaShem absolutely never moves to influence one to sin. HaShem may allow Satan to influence one to sin, but our L-rd is never a partner in sin. Does not James state clearly,

"Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by G-d: for G-d cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt any man. Rather, every man is tempted when he is led away by means of his own lusts and is tempted." James 1:13-14

What the Deuteronomy passage is upholding is that G-d delights when righteousness is administered. Sometimes righteousness is maintained by G-d when His mercy and grace are received and forgiveness placed upon the guilty and other times His righteousness is maintained when He judges sin. I rest fully in HaShem's perfect wisdom and knowledge to administer His standard of righteousness. I feel no need nor do I see any basis in the Scripture to state that the sovereignty of G-d demands that HaShem is the cause or influence of all things, both good and evil.

More will be said concerning this issue at the conclusion of this article. For now let us return to the end of Romans chapter 10. Once again, Paul is consistent to stay on message and speak about Israel's spiritual condition. In speaking about the fact that Israel, to a large degree, has seemed to miss out on salvation, Paul reveals that this is not what G-d caused to happen, but what G-d used to fulfill His call upon Israel. The first point that Paul makes as he concludes the tenth chapter is that Israel is without excuse for he writes,

"But I say, 'Have they not heard? Rather to all the land went forth their sound and into the ends of the world (inhabitable) their words.'" Romans 10:18

Paul makes it most clear in this verse that HaShem informed Israel properly, the problem was that Israel to a large degree simply did not respond. In the next two verses Paul provides two quotations from the Hebrew Bible to assist the reader in understanding how to perceive Israel's failure. Paul asks once more, "Did Israel not know?" To this Paul provides the reader first with a verse from the book of Deuteronomy,

"I will make you jealous with a non-people; by an unintelligent people I will anger you." Romans 10:19 (Deuteronomy 32:21)

It is imperative that one understands the context of the Deuteronomy passage. It is an error to simply read the citation and attempt to comprehend Paul's intent without a thorough understanding of the text in its original context. In Deuteronomy Moses is speaking about how Israel has fallen into idolatry, desiring to be like the Gentiles. These Gentiles were not a unified people that were achieving great things; rather Israel was enticed by sinful abominations and empty promises. In pursuing the behavior of the Gentiles, Israel ignored HaShem, the Rock, Who had brought them out of exile. Therefore Moses emphatically states that HaShem will hide His face from Israel. In other words, Israel will receive punishment as HaShem turns away from

her, but at the end of the chapter from Deuteronomy, the reader learns this is not forever. HaShem hiding His face from Israel is temporary and will serve to cause Israel to ultimately repent. HaShem desired Israel to obey Him, but because Israel did not, does not mean that G-d's purposes will be thwarted.

In the next verse the reader encounters the second quotation. Here Isaiah states boldly,

"(I) was found by those who were not seeking Me, I have become manifest to those (who) were not asking for Me." Romans 10:20 (Isaiah 65:1)

Here Isaiah is always referring to Gentiles, who even though they were not seeking or praying to find the One True G-d, they did; while to Israel Paul states in the next verse (which he also quotes from Isaiah 65:2),

"All day I stretched forth My hands to a people disobedient and denying."

Romans 10:21

This verse makes it absolutely clear that it was not because HaShem did not try to present His message to Israel that they missed out; rather it was due to their disobedience and denying nature. The word which I translated "denying" is ἀντιλέγω. Other possible renderings are, "to speak against", "to oppose one's self to another", "to decline to obey", "to declare one's self against another", and finally "to refuse to have anything to do with another". These meanings make it very clear that it was not based on some failure upon G-d's part that Israel to a large degree did not respond obediently to the calling which HaShem placed upon her.

In the next chapter, Romans 11, Paul reiterates once more a common explanation of why Israel did not respond, when he asks, "Did G-d cast away His people...?" To this question Paul answers in the strongest language, "by no means". Paul points out that he is Jewish and from the tribe of Benjamin and is responding to the call HaShem gave to Israel. Paul continues and states,

"G-d has not cast aside His people whom He foreknew..." Romans 11:2

It is very important that one pays attention to the fact that Paul used the phrase, "whom He foreknew". As was also said in part one of the article, the foreknowledge of G-d is a very important aspect of understanding the Doctrine of Election. In this section Paul brings up Elijah the prophet who cried out to HaShem that he alone was left (of the prophets) and they (Israel) sought to kill him as well. Even though Elijah felt he was the only one who walked in faithfulness to G-d, Paul quotes from I Kings 19,

"I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men which have not bowed the knee to Baal."

I Kings 19:18

This verse is pivotal in understanding the primary issue of our discussion, election. The matter that must be understood is the proper meaning of the verb which states that G-d "has reserved". Reformed theology asserts that HaShem, in His sovereignty, caused seven thousand men to remain faithful. It is important to note that no one is saying that HaShem did not move and act in

the lives of these seven thousand men. The question is whether these men had any chance of being like their fellow Jews and turning to Baal or did G-d mandate these seven thousand men and there was absolutely no possibility for any of these seven thousand to turn to idolatry?

It is not a coincidence that in the next verse Paul speaks about election.

"Therefore, thus also in the present time, a remnant, according to election of grace exists."
Romans 11:5

The word translated "election" is the Greek word *eklogē*. The literal meaning of this word is "to speak out". The word has a prefix *ek-* meaning "out" and the Greek root is *legō* having to do with speaking. Hence the word translated "election" here is not some mystical term, but simply relates to "speaking forth". The same prefix *ek-* is used in the word *ekklesia* which literally means "the one who was called out" which is normally translated with the word "Church". In the Septuagint the same word is used to describe those who came out of Egypt by keeping the Passover. This group was composed of both Jews and Gentiles who all had one thing in common— they utilized the blood of the lamb as HaShem spoke and therefore were redeemed. It was no accident that Yeshua died on the 14th day of Nisan (Passover day) and was called the Lamb of G-d, as what occurred in Egypt helps one to understand the redeeming work of Yeshua on the cross.

It would be accurate to translate Romans 11:5 in the following manner,

"Therefore, thus also in the present time, a remnant, according to speaking forth of grace, exists."

Hence, this mystical doctrine of "election", which is rooted in the selection of certain individuals by G-d to be the absolutely compelled recipients of His grace, while others are predetermined to hell without any means to utilize G-d's grace and be saved, is difficult to arrive at from the term "to speak forth". To most the idea of speaking forth grace seems to be more closely united with the presentation of the Gospel, rather than a predetermined and mandated selection by G-d.

In the next verse Paul places the concept of grace in contrast to the performing of works as the basis of salvation. If the grace which is being referred to in Romans 11:5-6 is irresistible, and only limited to the "elect", why is there any need for Paul to devote three chapters to the issue of Israel's spiritual condition? He simply could say, most of the Jews were not chosen by G-d; yet this is not what Paul states at all. Rather, he never alludes to some sovereign plan of G-d to exclude a large majority of Jewish people, rather he states they were ignorant of G-d's righteousness and sought to establish their own righteousness based in works (See Romans 10:3). This is what Paul continues to state now in Romans 11 which he strongly states is contrary to the message of the Gospel which is rooted in grace. It is vital that one pays careful attention to verse 7.

"Therefore, that which Israel seeks after, this he (Israel) did not obtain, but the speaker out (the elect) obtained; but the remaining ones were blinded." Romans 11:7

Context demands that the reader conclude that Israel, for the most part, did not obtain the status of righteousness, i.e. redeemed, not because Israel was uninterested in it, but because Israel sought it incorrectly; that is, they did not utilize grace. Would it not be against the character of G-d to state that Israel sought righteousness, but did not obtain it simply because

only "the elect" could obtain it? Is the proper interpretation of verse 7 that HaShem did not choose the vast majority of Jewish people and the rest He blinded? Obviously, no.

I translated the word which most Bibles render as "the elect" in the literal fashion by rendering it "the speaker out". I have no problem with the term "the elect" as long as the reader realizes it has to do with those who have responded in faith to the grace that was spoken out by G-d and established by Messiah Yeshua. This is similar to the fact that I have no problem with the term "the Church" as long as people understand it has to do with those who were "called out" by G-d by means of the blood of the true Passover Lamb (Yeshua).

I strongly object to the notion that G-d elected a unique group of individuals based solely on His sovereignty and the rest He blinded. In fact, it is exegetically incorrect to assert that it was the ordained decision of G-d simply based on His sovereign will to blind most of Israel. The reason that it is exegetically invalid to assert that G-d alone blinded the majority of Israel is found in the examples that Paul offers the reader in verses 8-10. Paul uses Deuteronomy 29:3 in teaching about the blindness that has been brought upon Israel.

"Just as it has been written, G-d gave to them a spirit of dullness, eyes which were not to see and ears which were not to hear."

The fact that Paul placed the verb "ἐπώρωθησαν" from verse 7 in the aorist passive clearly informs the reader that someone or something caused Israel to be made blind. The question that has to be answered is what or who caused this? Reformed theologians are quick to assert that it was the Sovereign G-d. However, when one pays close attention to the context in the two following verses, a different cause for the blindness is revealed. In the Deuteronomy passage Moses is not espousing that Israel did not know how G-d had moved in her history due to HaShem keeping her from knowing this by blinding her. The Hebrew word "to know" is an experiential word; what Moses is simply stating is that HaShem would not allow the Israelites to experience Him. Why was this? The answer is found in the content of Deuteronomy 28:15-69. These verses contain the curses Israel would receive if she did not listen / obey the voice of HaShem. In other words, G-d would not permit Israel to experience, i.e. to know Him because of her disobedience. Hence, it was not some mandated blindness that HaShem chose to sovereignly place upon Israel, but rather the outcome that He withheld because He does not bless with His presence disobedient people. This interpretation is supported by the next two verses where Paul quotes from King David.

"And David says, 'Let their table be made into a snare and into a trap and into a stumbling block and into punishment unto them. Let their eyes be made dark (blind) that they cannot see; and the backs by means of all their bowing down.'"

Romans 11:9-10

These two verses are from Psalm 69. In this Psalm David is speaking about his enemies who were persecuting him. Who were these enemies? David states later on in this same Psalm,

"They shall be erased from the book of life, and with the righteous ones they shall not be inscribed." Psalm 69:29

These words have led some to rightly conclude that David is referring to some of his fellow Jews who were persecuting him. David was praying that HaShem move against them by making them unable to see. Why would G-d do this? The answer is not simply because they were persecuting David, rather as the verses clearly allude to, because they were worshipping contrary to the word of G-d. Most scholars understand the reference to "table" as pagan (the partaking of meat sacrificed to idols). Hence, Paul is revealing in this section that the reason that Israel has had her eyes blinded from responding to the Gospel is because of her own sin. A person's sin does indeed cause him to fail in perceiving spiritual truth.

Therefore, the idea that G-d simply chose to blind Israel based upon the fact that He is the Sovereign G-d, is an improper conclusion based upon Paul's choice of providing both Deuteronomy 29 and Psalm 69 as aids to assist the reader in understanding the meaning of his statement in verse seven. In light of this, a concept of Divine Election, which is grounded in an "unconditional election", i.e. without any factor other than G-d choosing some and rejecting others apart from any other aspect, is without Scriptural foundation.

In the next section of chapter 11 Paul states firmly that although Israel has stumbled in regard to the Gospel, the Sovereign G-d has used this to accomplish what Israel's call and existence was about— to bless the Gentiles. So, the will of G-d was not thwarted by Israel's disobedience, but rather HaShem used Israel's disobedience to accomplish His purpose of bringing salvation to the Gentiles (Nations). There are two important truths that must be stated at this time.

G-d did not desire, call, or influence Israel at all to disobey His word. It was Israel's disobedience that resulted in her blindness.

Although G-d used Israel's disobedience, i.e. sin for good, it would have been better had Israel not disobeyed. This is clearly seen in Paul's statement that since Israel's being temporarily cast away means the reconciling of much of the world, how much more will Israel being received back mean. Paul states that Israel getting right with G-d, which will take place at the end of the age, will result in "life from the dead" (See Romans 11:11-15). This phrase "life from the dead" is a clear reference to the resurrection which will precede the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom.

Paul is simply pointing out that G-d's will to bring blessing, i.e. salvation upon the Gentiles was not blocked by Israel's sin, but one should not ignore the fact that many Jews and Gentiles were lost because of this sin. It is vital that one understand an important distinction related to the will of G-d. G-d's will mandates, that is demands, that a Kingdom be established; and although HaShem always knew who would be in this Kingdom and who would not, does not mean that G-d mandates every individual to either be the "elect" or the "reprobate". Simply stated, a sovereign G-d does not need to eradicate free will from man. This point is nicely taught by Yeshua's parable of the "Great Supper" (See Luke 14:16-24). In short, Yeshua taught that there was going to be a great supper, that is, this supper was going to take place. It was also mandated that the banquet hall was going to be full, but what was not mandated was who was going to be present. It is most significant that the stated purpose of this parable was to provide greater understanding of the Kingdom (See the end of verse 15 for the fact that the context for this parable was indeed the Kingdom of G-d). In other words, we learn from the parable that the Kingdom will be established, it will be full of humanity, but although G-d knows who from humanity will be in this Kingdom, each individual had to respond to the invitation.

In the closing section of Romans chapter 11 Paul makes his strongest claim for the future salvation of Israel. In verse 25 he speaks of a partial hardening and blindness that has happened to Israel (Partial because there were Jews who had responded to the Gospel in obedience throughout the Church age) and the Gentiles coming to faith as a result of this as a "mystery". What the reader can be assured of is this: G-d is holy and righteous and is full of mercy. He does not sin nor does He influence others to commit sin. This is the G-d that Scripture reveals. This G-d has a plan to create a people, i.e. Israel to bring blessing into the world (Salvation). For this is the crux of the Abrahamic Covenant. It is ultimately Messiah Yeshua Who entered into this world through Israel Who is the only One who can mediate salvation to both the Jew and the Gentile. Although HaShem called Israel to be the ones who proclaim this message of salvation, i.e. the Gospel, Israel to a large part failed in this assignment. Why did Israel fail? The answer is sin and disobedience. This sin and disobedience caused Israel to grow hard and blind in regard to the Gospel. Yet the Sovereign G-d used this failure of Israel to nevertheless move among the Gentiles.

Paul states that when the fullness of the Gentiles has entered then HaShem will move once again to turn away the sin from Israel and "all of Israel shall be saved" (See Romans 11:25-27). Does this phrase, "all of Israel", mean that every Jewish individual will be saved? Absolutely not; any more than the phrase "the fullness of the Gentiles" means every Gentile will be saved. The idea that is being expressed is that the Kingdom will be populated by a great number (which no man could count) of people from all nations, tribes, and languages. In other words, no one will be able to say that G-d loved one nation more than another nation; simply HaShem is not a respecter of persons. It will be most evident that the love of G-d and His desire that all men come to repentance and accept the Gospel by faith was intended for all people, regardless nationality, race, language or any other distinction. It will be furthermore evident that Israel was indeed the instrument that HaShem used in her obedience and even in her disobedience to bring this about. This point is strongly attested to by Romans 11:29.

"For unchangeable are the gifts and the calling of G-d."

ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλήσις τοῦ θεοῦ.

This verse makes it quite clear that HaShem in a sovereign manner equipped Israel (gifts) and called Israel to be used in a major way in the establishing of His Kingdom. The word "ἀμεταμέλητα" attests that nothing is going to change this. Perhaps Replacement theologians would be well advised to pay close attention to this verse and the meaning of this word "ἀμεταμέλητα". This word also appears in Hebrews 6:17-18 speaking of that which is immutable. The context for this statement is the fact that G-d cannot lie. It is also very important to see the context for Paul's use of this verse. For in the previous verse which until now I have ignored, Paul writes,

"According to the Gospel, enemies for your sake; but according to the election, beloved ones for the sake of the Patriarchs." Romans 11:28

All scholars understand that the context demands this verse to be referring to Israel, i.e. the Jewish people, who by and large have not responded in faith to HaShem's plan of salvation. Hence the Jewish people, in regard to the Gospel, are enemies. It is most disturbing that the English Standard Version renders the verse,

"As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers."

The phrase "of God" does not appear in the Greek and it is for this reason that it should not be included in any translation. If the source language does not have the phrase "of G-d", then why would anyone render it into a translation? The answer is obvious; it serves the anti-Israel and largely anti-Semitic tendencies of some of those within the Church. Although John Piper speaks of (in his article entitled "Are There Two Wills in God" that I have responded frequently to in this paper) the importance of using "careful exegesis" in order to arrive at the proper message of a Biblical text (See page one of Piper's article), Mr. Piper, when writing about Romans 11:28 uses the ESV and states,

"Because verse 28 says, for now "they are enemies." Verse 28a: "As regards the gospel, they [Israel] are enemies of God for your sake." In other words, they are rejecting their Messiah and thus putting themselves against God. This is what Jesus said to Israel in John 8:42...."

(From the sermon and article entitled Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East March 7 2004 which can be found on the website www.desiringgod.org)

Please notice how Mr. Piper takes a biased and errant translation, failing to do any exegetical examination of the text, and runs to the conclusion that Jewish individuals are the enemies of G-d. The passage from Romans 11:28 only asserts that Israel is an enemy of the Gospel. Furthermore, in regard to Piper's use of John 8, he errs when he fails to point out that there were many Jews who believed upon Yeshua, (See John 8:30-31). The Jewish individuals who rejected Him in John 8 were a small group of religious leaders; hence, it is most improper to label the Jewish people as enemies of G-d, when the passage that you are using speaks of many Jewish individuals who believed upon Yeshua.

The fact that the phrase "of God" does not appear in the text is because this verse is not asserting that the Jewish people are somehow uniquely "enemies of G-d", different from any other people who have not accepted Messiah. Rather, this verse simple means that Israel, i.e. the majority of Jewish individuals and Judaism stand in opposition to the message of the Gospel. Furthermore the verse reminds one that in spite of this fact, still G-d's election of Israel stands. What does this phrase mean? Namely, that HaShem has in the past and will continue to use the Jewish people uniquely, based upon His sovereign choice of them. His election to use a specific people did not come in a vacuum. In returning to Romans chapter 9, the example that Paul gives is HaShem's choice, based in His foreknowledge, that Jacob would desire and be moved to respond to the covenant to which Abraham and Isaac had also responded.

Once again, for Reformed theologians G-d's foreknowledge is left out of the equation. The fact that one would choose to respond to divine revelation and the bidding of the Holy Spirit is a violation of Reformed theology's view of grace and the depravity of man. In the next article we will look at the doctrines of Irresistible Grace and the Total Depravity of Man.