

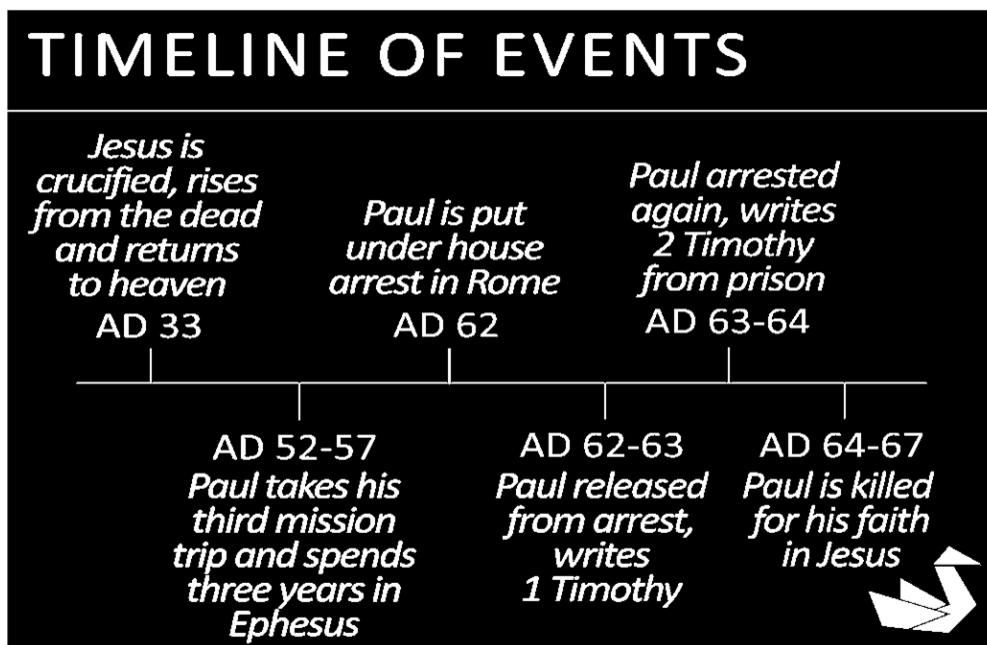
Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday , July 12, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



Why Suffer for the Gospel?
2 Timothy 1:9

“⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purposes and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. ¹⁰ but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ¹¹ to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher ^[c]of the Gentiles. ” -2 Timothy 1:8-11 (NKJV)



Some Key Date in Paul's Challenging Life:

- [c. A.D. 52-57]- Paul takes his third mission trip and spends three years in Ephesus

- [c. A.D. 58]—Paul was apparently arrested in Jerusalem
- [c. A.D. 61]—This is the approximate time that Paul arrived in Rome. He had spent these three years in prison, going from one trial to another before different Roman rulers
- [c. A.D. 61–62]—Paul underwent his first Roman imprisonment. We do not have this recorded in the Book of Acts, which breaks off at the very beginning of Paul’s first Roman imprisonment
- [c. A.D. 62–63]—Paul was released from prison, and during this period he covered a great deal of territory. It was during this time that he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus from Macedonia
- [c. A.D. 63-64]—Paul was arrested again. Before his death he wrote 2 Timothy
- [c. A.D. 64-67]—Paul was beheaded in Rome.

For some 2 Timothy may nothing more than a continuation where 1 Timothy leaves off. But as you can see, it is so much more. The book is the Apostle Paul’s “Swan Song,” his warning shot, his encouragement in the face of great opposition and obstacle. It is so practical and relevant for 21st century Christians and the church... a needed word for what we face in our day.

With that let’s give the very basic background information for 2 Timothy... we’ll lay the background through a few question we ask of the book...

Some Background for 2 Timothy

- (1) **2 Timothy is a letter written by the Apostle Paul** - By the time Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, the young pastor had been ministering to the church at Ephesus for four years, and it had been almost that long since he had received his first letter from Paul. Timothy had been a faithful servant to Paul since he had left home with the apostle more than a decade earlier. Since then, Timothy had ministered alongside Paul for the duration of both the second and third missionary journeys, in places such as Troas, Philippi, and Corinth. Timothy was not unfamiliar to the Ephesians when he settled in Ephesus to minister, having served there alongside Paul for a period of close to three years on Paul’s third missionary journey. Paul wrote again to this young leader in the church at Ephesus to provide him encouragement and fortitude in the face of difficulties and trials.
- (2) **Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a prison cell in Rome** - Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a dark and damp Roman prison cell, just before his death in AD 67. The Roman emperor Nero had been slowly descending into madness since his ascent to the throne in AD 54, a process exacerbated by the great fire of Rome in AD 64 that burned half the city. With the residents of Rome in an uproar, Christians became a convenient target for Nero, who used believers as scapegoats for his city’s own lack of preparedness. Paul was one of those caught up in this persecution and was beheaded by Roman officials soon after writing this letter.

- (3) **2 Timothy was the last letter Paul wrote in our New Testament (Paul's last letter (his last words))** - The second letter to Timothy offers a picture of Paul at the end of his ministry, just before his death. Certain personal details in the letter reveal a man settling his accounts and preparing for the inevitable. At the close of the letter, Paul mentioned a significant number of people—some who had wronged him and others who had served faithfully alongside him (2 Timothy 4:9–21). It is as if Paul were giving Timothy a “state of the church” address, updating Timothy on the current state of their acquaintances and friends so that the young pastor could carry on after Paul’s departure.
- (4) **The main idea of 2 Timothy is to call Timothy (and Christians) to stay faith to the good fight of faith** - Paul understood that the ministry would only become more difficult for Timothy with the apostle’s impending death. (Indeed, at some point after this letter from Paul, Timothy was imprisoned for his faith [Hebrews 13:23]). Paul knew that Timothy’s task of keeping the church within the bounds of sound doctrine while encouraging believers to live their lives well for the sake of Christ would be an often thankless and difficult task. Though hardship would come, Paul wanted Timothy to continue in those things he had learned, drawing on the rich heritage of faith that had been passed down to the young pastor, not just from Paul but also from his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5–6; 3:14–15). The most striking feature of Paul’s encouragement comes when the aging apostle used a phrase that showed up prominently in his letter to Timothy four years prior. In that earlier letter, Paul exhorted Timothy to “fight the good fight” (1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12). But in this letter, Paul turned that phrase on himself, writing that he had “fought the good fight . . . finished the course . . . [and] kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). What a great encouragement it must have been to the young pastor of the church at Ephesus to know that his mentor boldly modeled his perseverance in the faith, even to the point of death.

Some Key Characteristics of 2 Timothy:

- (1) **2 Timothy is Paul’s last will and testimony** – In our study we are referring to it as Paul’s “Swan Song.” The deathbed statement of any individual has an importance which is not attached to other remarks. This is what lends significance to 2 Timothy. It is the final communication of Paul. It has a note of sadness which is not detected in his other epistles. Nevertheless, there is the overtone of triumph... *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,”* written by Paul as his own epitaph (2 Tim. 4:7). Also, because this was his last letter, Paul was very personal. In these four short chapters, there are approximately twenty–five references to individuals.
- (2) **2 Timothy is Paul’s warning of coming times of apostasy** - In this little book of 2 Timothy an ominous dark cloud is seen on the horizon. It is the coming apostasy. Today apostasy has broken like a storm, like a Texas tornado, on the world and in the church. What do we mean by apostasy? Webster defines apostasy as “total desertion of the principles of faith.” So apostasy is not due to ignorance; it is a heresy. Apostasy is deliberate error. It is intentional departure from the faith. An apostate is one who knows the truths of the gospel and the doctrines of the faith, but has repudiated them.

(3) **2 Timothy speaks of the ultimate outcome of gospel preaching** - The final fruition will not be the total conversion of mankind, nor will it usher in the Millennium. On the contrary, some will believe and for some there will come about a great turning away, not unlike what we are seeing today... even a watering down, compromise, and total perversion of the gospel. Don't think that what we see going on today has caught God off guard. God wrote about it and warned us about in 2 Timothy.

We're all prone to choose a life of comfort and ease over a path that will entail difficulties. **So how would you go about convincing someone to persevere in serving Christ when it entails persecution and maybe martyrdom?**

That was Paul's task as he wrote this final letter to his younger disciple, Timothy.

- Remember, Paul was facing execution for the sake of the gospel.
- He had endured numerous hardships already, as Timothy well knew (3:11).
- Now Paul was handing the torch to Timothy, who was a bit hesitant to take it.
- He knew that following in Paul's steps would take him on a path of certain suffering for the sake of the gospel (1:8).
- Why should he go that route? Why suffer for the gospel? Perhaps some of these were the questions plaguing Timothy's mind, and Paul could sense it. ll the ble

Think of this... most evangelistic appeals today pitch the gospel as the way to have an abundant life. "Jesus came to offer you abundant life. Trust in Him and He will give you peace, joy, and a truly happy life." What is potentially the problem with this? See if you can list some of the "potential" problems with this appeal...

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____
- (5) _____

3 Potential Problems with the Soft Gospel Approach:

- (1) **Dishonesty** – It's only half the truth. While all of those claims of "abundant life" and all the blessing of salvation and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ are true *if properly defined*, what the salesman hasn't told the potential customer is that your problems may grow much worse after you have trusted in Christ.
- (2) **Disillusionment** – Because we haven't been completely forthcoming about the cost of following Christ, when the going gets tough a new believer who has only heard half the truth of the cost of following Jesus may indeed "get going"... the other direction away

from Christ. Remember Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, *“²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’”* And in John 15:20 Jesus warned us, *“²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”* Do you get it? When we tell a person coming to Christ that they will experience an a fully, blessed, abundant, life without telling them that they the Christian life is also a battle, a life of spiritual warfare, that there will be suffering and persecution, that it will require self-denial and cross-bearing, we are setting them up not only for disillusionment but in some cases an abandoning of their faith and a turning back.

(3) Dilution – Not only that, preaching a no-cost, soft gospel is preaching a diluted gospel. It is a “watering down” of the whole gospel and the Word of God. There is a lot of “watering down”... dilution of the gospel today in our current “seeker-friendly,” “progressive Christianity,” that refuses to call sin SIN, and Hell a reality. Remember that a diluted gospel is no gospel at all.

Listen, when we pitch Jesus as a better way to self-fulfillment, we’re promoting an Americanized message that is not identical with the biblical gospel.

- What if the potential convert is from a Muslim background? Will his life be one of trouble-free happiness if he trusts in Christ? His family will disown him and possibly kill him because he converted to Christianity.
- What if he is from China? He may lose his job or be sent to a labor camp on account of his Christian faith.
- And don’t think that is exclusive to Afghanistan, Iran, or China... I had a woman come to Christ in a church I pastored in Oklahoma (FBC Allen, Oklahoma). Her name was Dolores. She was raised in another denomination (I will not name the church, but you would know it). When she actually understood what it meant to follow Christ and trust Him as her Lord and Savior, she wanted to follow Him in believers baptism. When she was baptized in our church (FBC Allen, Oklahoma) her family literally abandoned her. They kicked her out of her family and would have nothing to do with her. She was very poor and needed much support just to get by, but she lost all support from her family. It was very hard and sad, but I have to tell you Dolores told me she was the happiest she had ever been in her life.

In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul says, *“¹² Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”* We had better present a gospel that is worth suffering for!

Now look at your Bible there and our text... In the Greek text, verses 8-11 are a single sentence. In verse 8, Paul exhorts Timothy not to *“be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.”* Then in verse 12, Paul states, *“For this reason, I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed.”* So our text is sandwiched between an exhortation to embrace suffering for

the gospel without shame and an example of one who had done so. The motive that Paul uses to urge Timothy to embrace suffering is the glorious gospel of God's sovereign grace. He is saying that...

KEY THOUGHT: *Because God has saved us by His sovereign grace, we should be willing to suffer for the gospel*

Getting a grasp of the glorious truth that God saved us according to His own purpose and grace, which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, will give us the strength to endure suffering for the sake of the gospel. Remember, these words are coming to us from the Holy Spirit through the mouth of a man who is facing imminent execution on account of the gospel. So these truths are powerfully practical, but we must understand and submit to them in order to benefit from them.

Our text is saying that these truths are at the core of the gospel and that understanding them will give you the strength to endure suffering for the sake of the gospel. For sake of time, I must limit myself to verse 9. Next week we'll study verses 10 & 11. Verse 9 of 2 Timothy 1 gives us a couple of important and key reasons why as believers (Christians) we should be willing to suffer for the gospel... let me give these to you.

2 Reasons Believers Should Willingly to Suffer (for the Gospel):

- (1) The gospel is about God's salvation of sinners by His sovereign grace**
- (2) God's salvation calls us with a holy calling**

Let's look at each of these in more depth...

THE GOSPEL IS ABOUT GOD'S SALVATION OF SINNERS BY HIS SOVEREIGN GRACE

Notice our passage again... look at verses 8-11, *"⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purposes and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. ¹⁰ but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ¹¹ to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. "*

The gospel is clearly a dominant theme here (1:8, 10). The gospel is the good news that God saves sinners. *Never get over that!* Paul reveled in it... 1 Timothy 1:15, *"¹⁵ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."* Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10; 5:32).

I want you to note three important things:

3 Important Truths About God's Salvation in Our Lives:

(1) **It is God who saves us** - God the Father took the initiative in eternity past.

Why is
this so
important?

- He sent His Son at the proper time (Gal. 4:4).
- The Holy Spirit applies God's salvation through the new birth (John 3:6-8).
- It is *all* God's doing.
- As Jonah (2:9b) affirms, "Salvation is from the Lord."

As I've often said, salvation is a radical word. You don't need saving if you're in pretty good shape. All you need then is a little help. You need saving when you're perishing and are helpless to save yourself. The Bible uses a number of metaphors to show that we are desperately helpless and unable to save ourselves.

- It says that we were dead in our sins (Eph. 2:1; John 11).
- It pictures us as blind (John 9; 2 Cor. 4:4), lost (Luke 15), leprous (Luke 5:12-14), crippled (Luke 5:18-25), deaf (Mark 7:31-35), and hardened in our hearts (Eph. 4:18).
- Salvation means that God came to us while we were His sinful enemies (Rom. 5:8, 10), rescued us from our helpless condition, and gave us new life as His free gift.

As **William Hendriksen** put it (*New Testament Commentary, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* [Baker], p. 232), "God has delivered us from the greatest of all evils and he has placed us in possession of the greatest of all blessings." But here is where much controversy arises. Many will say, "It's true that God saves us, but the sinner has to exercise his free will in order to accept God's gift." In other words, God has done His part by sending Christ to die for our sins, but now it's up to us to accept Him. Implicit in this teaching is that everyone has the ability to believe in Christ. Without such ability, they say, God's offer of salvation is a sham. What good is it to tell a sinner to trust in Christ if he is not able to trust in Christ? Several things need to be said here.

1. First, sinners must repent and trust in Christ to be saved. Christ commands sinners to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15).
2. But the command does not imply ability. Jesus plainly said (John 6:44, 65), "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.... For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."
3. Clearly, the Father does not draw everyone to Christ, because Jesus promises to raise up on the last day *all* who come to Him through the Father's drawing. But not all will be saved. Jesus said (Luke 10:22), "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."
4. Clearly, Jesus does not will to reveal the Father to everyone. When the disciples asked Jesus why He spoke to the multitudes in parables, He replied (Matt. 13:11), "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted." In John 8:43, 44, Jesus asked the unbelieving

Jews, “Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father . . .” Jesus did *not* say, “It is because you chose by your free will not to hear My word,” but rather, “because you *cannot* hear My word.” Because they were not born again, they were of their father the devil, and they acted in accordance with their nature. If we had time, I could multiply verses that say the same thing (e.g., Rom. 8:7-8; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17-18). So to speak of “free will” is really misleading.

As Martin Luther correctly argued against Erasmus (*The Bondage of the Will*), the fallen human will (before conversion) is in bondage to sin.

Or, as Charles Wesley put it (“And Can it Be?”), “Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature’s night . . .”

God has to send that quickening (life-giving) ray to awaken us from our darkness, death, and bondage. At that instant, we respond in faith and repentance, which also come from God. It is God who saves us.

(2) God saves us apart from our works - This is a frequent theme in Paul. He writes (Eph. 2:8-9), “⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (See also, Titus 3:5.) If we could take any credit for our salvation, we would do it (1 Cor. 1:26-31). But we can’t because the whole thing, including repentance and faith, are God’s gift (Acts 5:31; 11:18; Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 2:25; Heb. 12:2). We are saved *unto* good works (Eph. 2:10), and unto holiness. But these things are the result of salvation. They have no part in causing salvation.

Why is this so important?

(3) God saves us in accordance with His purpose and grace –

- Paul roots our salvation not in anything that we can do, but rather in something that God purposed from all eternity.
- But God not only purposed it from all eternity, He also *granted* it from all eternity!
- This means that in one sense, we were saved before the universe existed!
- Of course, we did not exist then, and God must apply His salvation to us at a point in time. But if you have been saved, God had you personally in mind in His eternal purpose.
- In words similar to our text, Paul writes (Eph. 1:4-6), “⁴ Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” A few verses later (1:11) he

Why is this so important?

adds, *"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."*

The Bible is clear that God has an eternal purpose. If He did not have a purpose, He would not be wise. If we grant that a human builder must have a plan before he starts to build, then why should we not agree that an all-wise God has a predetermined plan for His creation? Predestination is the means by which God accomplishes His predetermined plan.

Also, our text shows that God's eternal plan concerns promoting His glory through our salvation. His purpose is *"to the praise of the glory of His grace."* He also will be glorified in the just condemnation of the wicked, who are responsible for their sin. But, rather than leaving everyone to receive the just penalty of their sins, God determined to save some, whom the Bible calls the elect. Furthermore, God is fully capable of achieving His eternal purpose to save His elect.

Again, there is controversy and confusion over this point...

- Some argue that because God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; Ezek. 18:32), therefore He has done all that He can do to save sinners. But their actual salvation rests on their free choice to believe in Christ. They picture God as anxiously sitting on the edge of heaven, *wishing* that He could save everyone.
- But, the problem with this, it views God as limited by man's stubborn will! In fact, Dave Hunt (*What Love is This?* [Loyal], pp. 111-112, 113-114) argues that if God *could* save everyone, but chose only to save some, then He is immoral and unjust. He compares this to someone who could save a drowning man, but chose not to. That is a blasphemous argument! It portrays God as held captive by man's fallen, sinful will.
- God wishes that He could save everyone, but man's will is sovereign over God's will. God must be relieved that at least some decide to choose Him. It really would have been a bummer for God to put His Son on the cross if nobody actually decided to get saved! What a pitiful view of God!
- In Romans 9, Paul raises the question of God being unjust because He chooses Jacob and rejects Esau before they were born. He did it "so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls" (Rom. 9:11). God made the choice and He was not unjust to do it (9:14).
- Then Paul cites God's self-revelation to Moses. When Moses asked to see God's glory, here is God's reply: *"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion"* (Rom. 9:15, citing Exod. 33:19).
- Paul concludes (9:18), *"So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."* He did *not* say, "He has mercy on whoever chooses Him and He hardens whoever rejects Him."
- If you object, "But that's not fair, because if God determines who will be saved, then no one can resist His will," keep reading.

- Paul raises that objection (9:19) and answers it like this: “On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?”
- He goes on to argue that the potter has the right to do with the clay whatever he chooses. God has the sovereign right and the ability to save whoever He chooses, in accordance with His purpose. I used to fight with those verses, thinking that I was fighting with Paul.
- Then one day, God tapped me rather forcefully on the shoulder and said, “You’re not fighting with Paul. You’re fighting with Me. I gave you a clear answer to your question about fairness, but you don’t like the answer!” I realized that like Job (40:1), I had been contending with the Almighty. With Job (42:2, 6), I confessed, “I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.... Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.” I realized that if I was going to believe God’s Word, I had to submit to what Paul was clearly teaching. I had to be willing to let God be God, the sovereign of the universe, who acts freely to accomplish His purpose according to His grace. If you don’t submit to this teaching, you really don’t understand the gospel very well at all.

The gospel is all about God’s saving sinners according to His purpose and grace.

GOD’S SALVATION CALLS US WITH A HOLY CALLING

One common objection to the view that salvation is totally by God’s grace is that such teaching will lead to licentiousness (immorality, dissipation, depravity, decadence, debauchery).

6 Common Objections to Salvaton by Grace Alone: *(these are from those who believe that some work(s) is required for salvation)* Some call it “cheap grace,” or “easy believism,” emphasizing that it cheapens salvation and give those an opportunity to go out live any way they want to since they are saved by grace and can’t lost it anyway.

- (1) **Grace is easy believism (aka *Decisionism*)** – In other words it is believing with no supposed cost to you. In truth... it may be simple to believe, but it's not easy. Why would God make salvation difficult?
- (2) **Grace rejects Jesus as Lord and you can still be saved (without making Him Lord of your life)** – In other words some want the Savior part, but not the Lordship part. They want the “fire insurance” and to be saved from hell, but they don’t want anyone telling them how to live. Truth is, we may not always teach the Lordship part as part of salvation but we certainly teach it regarding discipleship.
- (3) **Grace does not teach that a sinner must turn from sins (aka *Repent from sin*)** – They say that “grace” emphasis that you can sin all you want to and grace still covers it, therefore sin is of no consequence where grace is present. Truth... we can sin all we want to, it is just that if a person is truly saved and has experienced he marvelous, unmerited, undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in their life, they won’t want to

(sin). The truth is we are saved when we turn from our sin (repent) and accept God's gift of grace through the Lord Jesus Christ and his gift to us through His cross.

- (4) **Grace believes a saved person does not have to show evidence of good works** (*James 2:14 - faith without works is dead*) - Well who says that? Which works and how often, and how do you define good works? Which ones are legitimate? Good works can be evidence, but not proof. Even Jesus, Himself, said *"...by their fruit you will know them."*
- (5) **Grace leads to false assurance of salvation** - John MacArthur publicly admitted he's 99% sure he's saved. Those who object as he does, cannot say they are 100% sure because they are basing it off of subjective assurance, not objective assurance. Our assurance is based on the power and promises of God, not based on works before nor works after salvation.
- (6) **Grace leads to license (aka antinomianism)** - Antinomian means against the law. We are not against the law, but the law doesn't govern. Paul addresses license in Romans 6.

The charge was leveled against Paul (Rom. 3:8; 6:1). But he always made it clear that God calls us to live holy lives. *If someone claims to be saved but continues living in sin, he had better examine whether he was truly saved at all.* Salvation that does not result in a life of progressive holiness is not genuine salvation. It dishonors the name of God when someone claims to be saved, especially someone in public ministry, but he lives in sin. While no one can be totally free from sin in this life, those whom God has saved will sin less as they grow in holiness in thought, word, and deed.

God's call to holiness is effectual, which is to say, it is something that He purposes and promises to accomplish in us. Yet at the same time, we must actively strive for holiness according to the means that God has provided.

As to the effectual nature of this call, note *Romans 8:28-30, "28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."*

God's call predestines us to be conformed to the image of His Son, who is holy. Or, as we saw in Ephesians 1:4, He chose us so "that we would be holy and blameless before Him." While God foreordained that we would be holy, this does not imply that we are passive in the process. We must "work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in [us], both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13). We must strive against sin (Heb. 12:4).

CONCLUSION

Maybe you're still wondering, "What is the practical benefit of any of this?"

2 Concluding Statements Concerning a Gospel Worth Suffering For:

- (1) Knowing that God purposed your salvation from all eternity will give you the strength to endure trials, especially the trials that come in serving Him** - We just read Romans 8:28, which promises that if you are one of the called according to His purpose, then He will work all things together for your ultimate good. As we'll see in verse 10, even death is under His sovereign control.
- (2) Knowing that God purposed your salvation from all eternity will give you assurance that He will finish what He began** - As Paul put it (Phil. 1:6), "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." Third, it will motivate you to grow in holiness. There are many more practical benefits, such as humility (1 Cor. 1:26-31) and confidence in witnessing (Acts 4:27-31; 18:9-11; 2 Tim. 2:10). But, I'm out of time!

Application Questions

- 1. Some say that predestination is simply God's foreknowledge of who will choose Him. Why is that inadequate and incorrect?**
- 2. Why is the doctrine of God's sovereignty in salvation not just an academic debate? Why is it vitally important?**
- 3. Some argue that if God is absolutely sovereign, it robs men of free will. Your response?**
- 4. If God's calling to holiness is effectual, why must we be involved in the process? Why isn't it automatic?**