

**The Bible (Unmuted) Transcript**  
**Episode 33**  
**Romans, Part 14 (Rom 8:29-30 )**  
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**Episode Summary:**

In this episode, Matt revisits Romans 8, specifically drawing attention to verses 29-30. These verses have for years been the subject of much attention, debate, and controversy. Do these verses teach that God has predestined some for eternal life? If so, does this mean that God also predestined some to eternal reprobation? If so, what does this say about the nature and character of God and human free will?

To answer these questions, Matt gives a brief overview of the various conceptions of free will, as well as offers thoughts on how God's love factors into the equation. In the end, Matt offers a Christological conception of election as an alternative to theories which conceive of election as individualistic in nature.

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**Transcript:**

0:00 Hey friends. Welcome back to another episode of the Bible unmuted. I'm excited to be with you once again this week. As we come together to continue our series through the Book of Romans. As you know, we've been in the book of Romans for quite some time now. We've been going rather slowly through it, I think. It's been a lot of fun. Last week we finished up Romans 8. And of course now we're off to Romans 9. Romans 10 and Romans 11. But before we get into Romans 9 through 11 specifically, I thought it would be helpful to do a standalone episode on election, free will, and all the things in between. Part of the reason is because, one, I want to provide a good theological introduction to those chapters; to chapters 9 through 11. And secondly, it will summarize most of what I think about this subject in one episode for easy, future reference. I mean, I thought about taking all the material in this episode and dispersing it through out chapters 8 through 11 and talk about it when we get there. But I think that would make a future reference back to this material kind of a headache. So I thought maybe if we just had it all on one episode, the best we could, maybe that would be better. And I think the other benefit of doing this episode in this way is that when we do come to chapters 9 through 11, we'll get to revisit and explore deeper those things that talk about here today. So today's not really like the final take on it. This is just the initial take. And then once we get into chapters 9 through 11 we'll revisit some of these same topics. And in many ways this is going to be a bit of a preview of all that - of what's to come.

The added benefit here is that we get to circle back around those same topics for further and for deeper reflection. And I want to say from the outset that what I discuss today is just an overview. It's food for thought. I think this will give us something to think about, for sure. And I just want to say to here that no doubt everything I say today deserves footnotes and will raise *more* questions.

But that's why we will go through chapters 9-11 with a fine-toothed comb. We will revisit some of the things I talk about here.

Also, remember that every time we talk about this type of subject we want to be charitable. It's a charged topic. But in this episode you will notice I get straight to the point of the matter. It's an important topic. So, in this conversation today, I get straight to the point, and that is not intended to be taken harshly or anything like that. I've only have so much time to do this episode and I just want to get straight to the point. I don't know how else to say that. And obviously, I am totally fine with all different views. My word is not the final word on this topic. There are a lot of people who disagree with me and that is totally fine. Here's the thing, if you disagree with me, that's totally fine. Disagreement doesn't mean "I hate you." It means "I disagree with you." It's interesting how in today's culture, the phrase "I disagree with you" is taken to mean "I hate you." No, no, no. it just means I disagree with you. I totally welcome the various views as part of the larger conversation.

These are just my views, right? I mean, this is just me processing and wrestling with the text with you. And in fact, I'm just processing. I think that's the best way to put it. This is just me thinking about. Thinking out loud. So, yeah, welcome to my house. Hopefully it'll be a lot of fun. Hopefully you get some something good out of it.

So in my book, *Paul, and the Meaning of Scripture*, I touch on some of these topics, but I don't go in depth. And the main reason is because the focus of my book was Paul's use of the Old Testament in the Hermeneutic structure of those texts that Paul quotes and sites. So I obviously had to chime in on some key things. Like, for example, I have a whole chapter on election, but I didn't offer thoughts on, you know, say, free will. I didn't offer a ton of thought on Paul's idea of reprobation and divine hardening, though I did say a thing or two about those in in a few places. At any rate, in this episode, I'm going to go into a little bit more depth on those topics. Again, I'm not going to answer all the questions. In fact, much of what I'll say today might raise more questions. And I'm going to break this episode into two sections. The first section is *Free Will* and the second section is *election*.. Let's start with Free Will...

#### 5:00 **FREE WILL**

So when it comes to free will, there are different definitions that different people give it. What is free will? What does it mean to have free will? And, what is, what does it mean for a human agent to act? And what causes a human agent to make the decisions that they do? Do they have legitimate free will or not? Is there something else going on?

There are different viewpoints on this question among philosophers. So on the one hand, you have the libertarians. Libertarians believe that we have significant free will. And again, it depends on what sort of libertarianism we're talking about here and which philosopher we're talking about. But, libertarianism often has different viewpoints on how to process what libertarianism actually is. So sometimes in the literature you'll see a lot of talk about the ability to do otherwise or in other words, for a person to be free with respect to some decision or some action, they're going to take.

Let's say that action is to pick green socks. Well, you are free to pick those green socks if you are, or if you were free to have *not* picked those green socks. If you had the ability to do otherwise, then that makes your picking of the green socks, (or you're going to the store, or if you're rejecting God or accepting God), then that makes it free. So free will entails maybe the ability to do otherwise.

A lot of philosophers have talked a lot about that. And there's been some modifications to that theory. Maybe free will *isn't* the ability to do otherwise. Maybe it's just something like, you know, your decision is free if you, your will, if you are ultimately responsible or ultimately the cause for making that decision. And so they're different various viewpoints on that. And I'll just be honest

with you, I haven't read the latest literature on the topic. So maybe there are other views out there that are being processed now, and published, and that's cool. I'd love to read them. But this is sort of just that broad perspective here that I'm offering. So libertarianism is on that hand on that one hand.

Now, there's also another view that is called determinism. Determinism is basically the idea that all of your decisions are determined. There are different forms of determinism. There is what we call *naturalistic determinism*, which many atheistic naturalistic philosophers might hold to and believe in. That idea is basically that your mind is just chemicals. Your body is a chemical that must obey the laws of physics. Maybe that's why you make the decisions you make. You are casually determined.

There's *theological determinism*, which basically is what it sounds like. That God causes every little thing that you do to obtain. God causes it. I mean, he's in control of everything. So the green socks that you picked out to wear today, God caused you to do that, right? So there's some, you know, there's a deterministic aspect of some believers in God will describe to God.

And then there's maybe something in the middle that is sometimes called *compatibilism*. Compatibilism is just the notion, simply put, that a person can be free and God still be sovereign, and there is some level of determinism still there. And it basically that goes like this; that freedom, true freedom is just acting on your desires. If you have the ability to act up according to your nature, according to your desires, then you are free in that sense. And this idea of compatibilism is essentially what many Calvinists will hold to today. And so basically they can say, (and we'll get into more in this a little bit later), they'll say things like, 'you can't choose God without God's grace intervening and drawing you to God.' So if a person goes to hell, it means that God hasn't given the grace to go to heaven or to choose him. But God hasn't done anything wrong because that person is just left to do what they want. They're left to act out on their sinful desires and God can justly punish them because they are still free. Because freedom entails just acting out on your sinful desires, and it turns out that your sinful desires will always lead you to reject God. So, God is still completely sovereign over you, but you're responsible for all your sins because you're just acting out on your desires.

So for me that's just a very brief overview of all those things. For me, I reject determinism. I'm not comfortable with compatibilism, and I'm some sort of libertarian. I think there's something appealing about libertarianism from a moral standpoint and moral culpability standpoint. And maybe we can get into that a little bit later. But here's what I will say, though. The question of free will is very, very complicated. I mean, it's very complicated. It's not easy to figure out.

10:35 I believe in what we could call significant free will, whatever that might be. Significant free will. I think humans have significant freedom. A philosopher friend of mine, a professional philosopher, I asked him, 'do you think we have free will? Do you think we have some sort of free will? And if so, what kind?' And he just made this comment. He said, 'yes, I think we have free will, but I don't think we always use it.' And I thought that was a pretty fun way to put it. I think it like that - I think I do. For many reasons. I think there are some limits to our supposed free will simply because we are finite people. We don't always get to choose things, for example. We don't, if you just stop and think about it from a generalist perspective here. I guess it kind of relates in some respects to this question of Calvinism stuff. But this is slightly different issue here.

We don't always get to choose things. We don't, we didn't, get to choose when we were born. We didn't get to choose where we were born. And those are two very important things that happened in our life. Some of the most important things that happened in our life are not products of our own choice, which is kind of interesting. And so you might look at that and say, 'see, we're not as free as we think we are.' And I would agree with that to some extent. But here's the thing, when

it comes to those things like being born and when we are being born, we don't have freedom with respect to those things. But here's the deal; we aren't morally responsible for having been born when we were born, right? And so when people's choices are limited like that, we know intuitively that a person shouldn't be held responsible for the situation that they find themselves in; for being in a situation that was beyond their control.

So anyway, when it comes to what is required for a person's moral culpability, I think we do need some sort of significant freedom, some sort of significant free will. I think that has to be positive from the get go. Otherwise the whole idea of moral culpability and justice just begins to breakdown, in my opinion. So, with respect to that, what is required for moral culpability? I think it's either, a) the option to do otherwise. You must have the option to do something, or not to do that something. Or, b) if we don't have the option to do otherwise, we're still held responsible if we've chosen to put ourselves in a position such that we don't have the option to do otherwise.

So, think of the drunk driver. The drunk driver is driving drunk and is literally out of their mind. And they crashed into someone. Or something really happens and they injure someone or worse, kill somebody. The drunk driver cannot stand before a judge and say, 'I didn't have free will in that moment.' And yes, in that moment, that's true. The driver was out of their mind. The driver didn't have free will and in some respects, they could not have done otherwise. Their mind was intoxicated. But here's the thing, the driver willingly put themselves in a position such that they could not do otherwise, right? And so the ultimate decision, the ultimate cause for that situation in which they found themselves in, which they could not do otherwise; the ultimate cause for that was the drunk driver. And that's why we can rightly hold accountable drunk drivers, right? Even though, you know, they may be able to argue that in the moment they cannot do otherwise. That's not the point. The point is they put themselves in a moment in which they could not do otherwise.

And so I think for me, at the very least, we've got, even though I admit the free will question is super sticky, I'm not sure I know the answer to that. And in fact, I was listening to a well-known philosopher. I think it was Peter van Inwagen years ago. If I remember correctly, he was saying that the question of free will is so, so difficult. Peter van Inwagen is a great philosopher and he and I think he made the comment, 'I don't think we're going to solve this question in my lifetime'. So I won't go into that, but if you read all the literature, right, you read some of that and you invest in time of that, you'll see why it can be complicated. But I think for me, at the very least, I think what constitutes freedom is either, a) our ability to do otherwise, or b) our being the ultimate cause, or *will* being the ultimate cause and responsible thing for the decisions that we make and for the consequences of those decisions that we make. So we need to be some sort of ultimate cause there in that respect. Because here's the deal, if you don't have that, then you really will struggle to account for moral culpability, moral unpunishing, and moral punishment. Even the whole justice system breaks down at that point if you don't have those things. You have to you have to really nail down some of those questions.

So for me the question of free will is fascinating precisely because it's so darn complicated. Again, it's not it's not easy it's not easy to settle on a certain definition, or to know how it works with respect to our finitude. I totally get that. I totally admit that. I just wanted to share some of that because it kind of introduces you to the topic if you're not familiar with it. For me though, when it comes to the question before us today, the question of divine election, divine reprobation, etc.; all of that, when it comes to that those questions, I don't think those questions boil down to just the issue or the question of human free will. I do think human free will comes into play on those things, but I don't think the question of election, biblical election, biblical reprobation, I just don't think you can reduce it down to the question of human free will. It's a lot bigger than that. The bigger issue I think is to figure out what sorts of things God would do if he could do them. The issue concerns not so much human will, but God's will. So, you're gonna see what I mean in just a minute.

17:25 This brings me to traditional Calvinism. Now, let me say from the outset that I'm comfortable with in the Reformed tradition (broadly speaking), though I'm not a five-point Calvinist. I like reading Calvin; I learn a lot from reading Calvin. I think, in his mind, he's a sincere and honest reader of Scripture—though, in my mind, he's clearly wrong on important things. (I just want to make that disclaimer here for whatever it's worth.). I feel like, at the end of the day, there are some defeaters in Scripture against the sort of compatibilism, or Calvinism, that people sometimes espouse. So in what follows here, I'm going to throw out some things, some thoughts. They're gonna raise more questions than they provide answers. But it's just food for thought. Just keep in mind this is just food for thought.

What sort of defeaters are there in scripture? What sort of passages in scripture that arguably pose possible defeaters for compatibilism of the of a Calvinist sort, or the sort of Calvinism that that wants to have a compatibilist view of free will? Let's take the question of a factual grace. This is grace that's intended to save. According to the Calvinist, God has different types of grace. So there's salvific grace, an effectual grace that is given to a person. And that Grace specifically is intended to convert them. And whatever God intends to do, he will do. So that's different from common grace. The idea of common grace for a Calvinist is just those graces that everybody experiences, no matter who they are. It's a grace that's indiscriminate. It's the rain falling on the just and the unjust. It's the sun shining on the just and the unjust. These are all everything good is a grace, right? So they would say, those are very important graces, but they're not intended to save, they're just intended to do whatever...shine forth God's glory, or whatever. So you see the difference there's salvific or effectual grace. That's the grace that's effective to save. It's intended to save. And then you have common grace on the other hand.

This brings us to a question. But, before I get into a couple of passages that I think are relevant to this discussion, let me give you an example of how a defeater works. What do I mean by defeater? If there's a claim that says there are no black swans...if somebody's going around making that claim, all you have to do to prove them wrong is to do what? Well, just go find a black swan, right? Now, how many black swans do you need to find to disprove that? Well, because they are saying there are no black swans. All you need to do is find one black swan in order to disapprove them. Now, when it comes to this question of effectual grace, it's interesting that when you go to some scripture and some texts, (I don't know if these are like, necessarily defeaters in the philosophical sense), definitely raise questions that pose problems. At least to the effectual grace idea. So let me read just as an example, Romans 2:3-4. This is a text that we read before on the show. It's saying, *"Do you imagine whoever you are that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God. Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"*

21:33 This is the idea that God is showing great compassion, not compassion, but patience, upon people who are not repenting, showing kindness to them. And the idea here is they're just rebuffing that kindness. You know, they're not heeding it. They're not following through with it because God's kindness there is intended to lead them to repentance. Now, I think that's an interesting sort of thing, because here you have a grace of some sort that's intended to do something, that doesn't seem to necessarily be doing it. In the text here, there's no indication that this is going to accomplish what it's intended to accomplish. Now, that doesn't seem to square with some of these traditional understandings of *special grace* according to Calvinism. I think at the very least, the idea that Grace that intends to save will always save. You know that idea, grace, that intends to save will always save. That language just doesn't seem to square with the way the biblical text *uses* that sort of language. I mean, I've just shown an example of a text that describes a grace that intends to save, but that doesn't *seem* to guarantee it. It doesn't seem to guarantee salvation. Perhaps then, there's something about the movement of God's spirit such that it can be frustrated and quenched. Again, food for thought. Let me just ask you a question. Does this text actually do

that? Does it cause a little bit, in terms of the language here, does it fit the Calvinist idea of effectual grace in the way that they want to say it? Because I read this and I'm thinking, I've read a lot of Calvinist books, and I've heard a lot of Calvinist preachers, (and, I mean, some of the best preaching actually comes from Calvinist preachers), but when I hear them talk like this, they don't use this sort of language, because this sort of language just simply doesn't fit their sort of a worldview with respect to this question. I just find that odd. I find that really, really odd that the language doesn't always seem to match up. And for me, you know, I'm going with the biblical language, even if it's weird, right? I'm a Bible guy. So I'm going with the Bible language.

So think also of Isaiah, chapter 5. So let me read verses 1-4, and then I'll also read verse 7 to get the context here. It says this,

Isaiah 5:1–4, 7 (NRSV)

*1 Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. 2 He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. 3 And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. 4 What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? ... 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!*

24:40 So this is interesting, because here you have this metaphor of Israel as a vineyard. And God is lamenting, like he's saying, 'goodness, this vineyard has produced the opposite of what I wanted it to produce'. And so that's interesting here. But what's really interesting to me is verse 4. *What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?* So here's the picture. God is lamenting that Israel has gone wayward, that they're producing wild grapes and bad fruits. Really bad things in their life. They're producing all these bad things. And he's lamenting it. And he's asking, 'what more could I have done? What more could I have done for you that I have not done it?' Notice that. This text is not the kind of text that a good compatibilist could or would use. After all, God could have done something more under the compatibilist view.

It seems like under the typical Calvinist idea is that, 'God, there could have been something else you could do, you could have zapped them with effectual grace. You could have done that, right? God, you could have done it.' But that's not the language, it's not the vision that we're seeing here. And to me, I think that's important. I mean, again, I want our theological jargon, our theological language, to line up with a biblical text. We need to use the stuff of the biblical text. I don't know, maybe it's the sort of Calvinism that I'm familiar with, but I just don't see Calvinist or compatibilist talking about God in this sort of language. I've just not seen that.

In fact, if you talk in that sort of language, (this is anecdotally), it's been my experience that you would be corrected by a Calvinist if you spoke like that about God. You know, if you said, 'well, God can you know what more could God have done for that person? Nothing.' The Calvinist would say, 'Well, no, God is sovereign', right? They would correct you. And I know that because I used to be a Calvinist. I was on watch all the time for making sure you stayed true to your Theological jargon, that you're that your language matched your theology, like I was definitely one to make sure that we kept our words about God precisely in the category of the compatibilist conception, the compatibilist category.

Now, I don't know does that work guys? I mean, do you, do you see what I'm at least coming from? Is it something that resonates with you? Maybe not. I don't know. Again, I'm just tossing some stuff out for food, for thought.

Now, I suppose that a Calvinist could say, 'okay, but, you know, God doesn't have to save anyone. You know, we should just be thankful that he's chosen to save somebody.' This is a typical response that I have heard a lot in Calvinist circles. God doesn't have to save anyone. We should just be thankful that he's chosen to save anybody at all. Now a response could be this, and this sort of objection doesn't get to the heart of a matter, in my opinion, because I'm not so much arguing against how God doesn't have to save anyone as much as I'm arguing for the idea that God would *want* to save everyone.

If under the Calvinist construal, God made it a practice to zap people with effectual grace and hence save them all without any cooperation with their will, I think you would do it all the time. Why so? Well, because God is love, and that's something love would do; save as many people as possible from an eternity without him. Because for God, love isn't something that he can simply turn off. Why? Well, because Love is who he is. I think that's a very important point to make. But since God doesn't zap everyone with effectual grace, this means that the Calvinist is going to have to say, logically speaking at least, that at base, God simply doesn't love everyone with saving love, with effectual love.

I've heard some Calvinists say things like, you know, God doesn't love everyone in the same way. He loves everyone by letting it rain on everyone's crops, causing the sun to shine so they could be happy, etc., etc. This is common grace or common love, but it's not saving love. And when it comes to saving love, they would say, God doesn't give that to just anyone. He only gives it to his elect. Now, the problem with this idea, to me at least, (Matt's opinion. Feel free to think differently, you may have better reasons), but to me the problem with this idea is that, first, it doesn't seem to understand the sort of love we're actually talking about. And second, it doesn't seem to understand what love actually is.

29:35 Now, on the first, I agree that God doesn't love everyone in the same way. That makes sense to me. For example, I love my wife in a way that I do not, and will never love, another woman. I have covenant love for my wife that I do not have for others. But how is that analogous to the Calvinist question? I mean, just because God doesn't love everyone in the same way doesn't mean he wants those who are not in covenant love with him to die and go to hell. Just because I don't love other women with covenant love doesn't mean I want all other women to go to hell. I mean, think, about that.

Now, on the second thing, you, you don't love somebody if you spend their whole life - 50, 70 years or whatever - if you spend their whole life just giving them rain and sunshine and food and jobs, only at the end to deny them grace. That is, the most important grace that they'll ever have for their life, right? You know, common grace. So, if you're willing to, or if you want to, give common grace, but the effectual grace God is holding back; that just doesn't make sense to me.

Here's a thought experiment. Suppose...let me say something first. When it comes to theology, especially these sorts of things, I don't like to keep it abstract, because theology is not an abstract discipline. I mean, it can be, but it's not reduced down to that. Theology deals with God, but it also deals with people, real people, people you know, right? So when it comes to deep questions about theology, I like to use examples a lot. Because it teases out what we actually think, it puts faces on our theology. And I think that's important.

So with that said, here's a thought experiment. Suppose all of your children had terminal cancer since birth. In other words, you know that they are living on borrowed time and, at some point real soon, they are going to die. Let's further suppose that you have the serum that would cure the cancer. But you don't give that to them (for whatever reason you've elected not to give it to them). Instead, what you do is make them comfortable and bless them with food, shelter, and clothing

until the day comes when they die. When others discover that, all along, you had the serum, the medication to save them from cancer, it would make no sense for *you* to say that you genuinely loved them by pointing to how you gave them a house to live, food to eat, and clothes to wear while they were alive. The fact that you let them die without giving them the serum you had to give tells on the fact that, at the end of the day, you didn't love them at all. In fact, what it does do is reveal how your so-called "love" that you showed them while they were alive, deserves reconsideration altogether. I don't think that would have been love. In that case, it is not unreasonable for someone to question your love for them.

Now, I tell that story because it's something entirely absurd. Neither you nor I would ever do anything remotely like that to someone we love. Why? Because it's unjust and unloving. We would never do that to any of our children or anybody in our lives like that. It's irrational and wicked and it would make no sense. And here's the thing, I simply don't want to ascribe such notions to God. Why? Because it's irrational, it doesn't make any sense. It's unjust. It's unloving. And that just doesn't seem to fit God's character at all.

Some might respond: "But God doesn't have to show mercy on anyone. He can elect who he wills to salvation – it's his right and his power, we are all sinners, after all." Okay, but here's the thing: It might be within someone's *power* to be gracious to someone while they are alive and then, when they pass away, deny them the most important grace they could ever receive. But when it comes to God, how does this apply? I'm not talking about *power*, I'm talking about love. And love, by definition, always looks out of the other's best interests. It *always* does this, not temporarily does this. God is love. As scholars often say, love is not something God does from time to time—it's not something he can shut off. Love is God's essential nature. He can no more quit loving someone than he can quit being God. To quit loving is for him to deny himself, which is logically impossible for a necessary being such as God to do. God always loves because God is love.

Some might respond: "Yes, well, the grace that God shows the non-elect during their life is to ensure that they have no excuse at the judgment and it is to be testimony of God's goodness to the elect—to make them thankful that God has chosen them."

Okay, what does that actually mean? The non-elect is without excuse for what? Rebelling against God? Okay, yeah... God's good graces are shown to everyone and *that* does become a testimony against them at the final judgement. I get that. But that's not the issue either, really. After all, even if you think that God's common graces render evil people without excuse for their evil deeds, does this also mean the non-elect are without excuse for being the non-elect (even though they *have been non-elected* since before time began)? That doesn't make a lot of sense to me, either.

35:40 I can't help but think how the traditional Calvinist position (the position I am familiar with anyway), leads to some rather weird conundrums. Let me go down this trail for just a bit. Why would God choose not to elect some to eternal life? That's a good question. And I would say that most Calvinists say, "Well, we don't know. That's only for God to know." And I can respect the phunting to mystery in a general sense. There's lots of things I don't understand and I chalk it up to "mystery." So I get that. But what many Calvinists will say is that God elects some and not others *for his glory*. So, God gets glory out of this in some way – his mercy and his judgment is extolled and praised, for example. And so, one might presume, that God's justice in having a class of individuals called "the elect" would extol God's mercy. And having a class of individuals who are *not* elected for salvation but who are the reprobate instead, who are passed over and thus destined for hell, either passively or actively (called "the reprobate" or "non-elect")---they are destined for hell so *that* they will extol God's justice.

But this raises a question - does God need a reprobate to extol his justice? I don't think so. But for some reason, for some Calvinists, God has chosen to have a reprobate class of individuals



for that purpose of extolling his justice that would rebound to his glory. Assuming that God actualizes only the best possible scenarios, could God not have thought of a better way to extol his grace, and his justice for that matter?

If not, this raises interesting questions. This raises some conundrums and won't apply to all Calvinists, perhaps. And it's something that David Bentley Hart brings up in one of his books: (And I don't agree with everything he says, but sometimes he has some good nuggets of truth). So he raises the question here of how the reprobate under some Calvinist views, becomes a substitutionary sacrifice for the elect (per DB Hart). I mean, For the elect. I mean, if it's true that somebody's got to go to hell; God has determined, this is the best of all possible worlds. That there's going to be an elect to extol his mercy. And there's got to be a reprobate that God doesn't elect who will, you know, be in hell to extol his justice. And God will get glory from that. If somebody has got to go to hell in that case. Then one supposes at this point that one day in the future, the elect will thank God that someone else was unconditionally chosen to take their place in hell. Now this creates the odd situation that the non-elect becomes some sort of substitutionary sacrifice for the elect so that the elect can enjoy the bliss of heaven for all eternity. That's really weird. I'll just be honest with you. It's a very weird situation to be in.

Now, don't get me wrong: I'm not suggesting that Calvinists actually think this way. I don't know any Calvinist who actually does (in fact, I had one Calvinist friend tell me that he definitely would not want to say that). What I am wondering, though, is whether this concept is entailed in some versions of Calvinism. Whether it's even brought up or thought about. And if so, how they might respond. Again, this is a thought experiment, not an accusation. I do think David Bentley Hart's objection is worth teasing out, I think, to see where it might lead.

39:45 The sticking point for me is reprobation or, double predestination. I don't see, personally, how you can have predestination without double predestination – the predestination of the elect to salvation and the non-elect to re-probation/hell. If you have the sort of election that many Calvinists want to espouse, then the other side of the coin is rather dark: God chooses (whether actively or passively) some to go to hell.

Now, here's one reason why this is troubling. We can't divorce our theology from people. When we talk about "the reprobate," we aren't talking in the abstract. We are talking, potentially, about our own friends and family. Our children, grandchildren. We're talking about human beings. I mean think about this, a Calvinist could not *know* that their newborn baby is part of the elect. They don't know whether God has chosen, from all eternity past, to give this new child his saving, deep love.

Now, I know that some Calvinists would object here, saying that not even the non-Calvinist (such as an Arminian) could have 100% certainty that their own newborn will be saved in the end. And I agree, that's totally true. Nobody knows who will be saved in the end. We are finite. Nobody knows the future of what other people will choose. BUT that's not my point at all. My point is not whether an Arminian or Calvinist can know a person will choose to be saved by God, but whether we can know a person is loved by God. One thing the non-Calvinist *can* say to all people is that God loves them *to the max*. Can a Calvinist say that unequivocally? (I'm open to ideas here – give me your ideas!)

And since our theology is about real people, it's really important that we be able to assure all of them—our sons, our daughters, our friends, our grandparents, our newborns— all of them. We need to be able to assure them unequivocally and without a doubt that they are deeply and fully loved by God. If we don't have assurance of that, we don't have assurance of anything else. So we want a theology that can give us that.

42:25 Become a Patreon member! <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted>

43:40 When it comes to free will once again, it's a sticky subject. It's hard to nail down exactly what is all entailed in free will. But I think there's one thing that we can say nonetheless, is that love seems to require some sort of significant free will. Free will is something that is easily, I think, recognized when we see it. And when we don't see it, we can recognize that too. One thing that we can say is this: to the extent that God wants us to love, is the extent that he will give us freedom and free will. And I think this is true.

Even with neighborly love, you can't make someone love you. The minute you figure out how to implant a computer chip within someone's brain that they will love you, is the minute that they are *not* loving you. You're loving yourself because you've now manipulated them to, you know, to love you, to do good things for you, and to always do that which pleases you, or whatever. And now here's the thing. What if you come up with a computer chip though that you can insert in their brain that doesn't *make* them love you, but it gives them a *will* to love you. So in other words, everything they do at that point, say they do everything that pleases you, that makes you happy, or whatever... Are they free? Well, if they're acting on their desires, which this computer chip gives them new desires to act upon, (that's the genius of it) then are they free? Well, it seems as if not, right? It seems that they're not free, even though they're just acting out on their desires. In fact, there is no 'they'. They do not exist. At that point you've you know robbed them of their autonomy. There is no real ability for them to do otherwise, necessarily. There is no self-determination. There's no ultimate self-determination. They are no longer the ultimate determiner of the choices that they make. And the consequences that ensue from those choices, they did not ultimately determine them. Maybe they are determining it, but they are only determining it because what is *ultimately* determining them, is that computer chip. See what I mean?

So I think what we need to say is that for love to operate, you need to give people some sort of significant say over their situation. And in the example I've just given with a computer chip, you know that person has zero say about it. Well they have say, but they don't have an ultimate say with this situation, and as a result they're not truly loving you in a way that an autonomous, free willed person would love you. Because, you know, again, they don't exist. You're just loving yourself by finding this crazy computer ship. Yeah. Anyway, something to think about.

So when it comes to the entire question of free will, (as we will jump into the question of election and biblical election in just a moment, moving on along here), I just want to say a couple other things. I feel like I fit comfortably within a reformed tradition. I'm part of a tradition. I'm part of a domination, a tradition that identifies itself as reformed. And I feel like I'm reformed. I do. I think there's a lot of wisdom in some of the things that the reformation got right. I don't think the reformation got everything right, by the way. (That's a topic for another day.) But I see myself, honestly, as a reformed Catholic. And as someone who's drawing from both traditions; the reform tradition, the reformation... But in the words of Stanley Hauerwas, I understand that Christianity did not start at the Reformation. So, I also feel like I want to draw from the early church Fathers and in early Christianity for fashioning my theology. So I consider myself a reformed Catholic. Someone who is in both of those streams; Catholic and reformed.

And speaking of the Fathers, by the way, it's really interesting. If you go read John Calvin's, *The Institute of the Christian Religion*, in book two somewhere near the beginning, it's really interesting how he describes the Fathers in regards to the question of free will. The early Fathers seem to have a robust view of free will. Now, Calvin notoriously did not in the sense that we think. In fact, he really did not like the term free will. Again, go and read book two of *The Institutes*. He didn't really like the term. I mean, he was okay with it, provided people understood what was meant by it in his mind. But he didn't like the term and he felt like the early Fathers were very confusing and confused on this topic themselves.

Calvin did like Augustine, who was a latter later Father. And an important one too. I'll talk about Augustine in just a little bit. But it was interesting that Calvin really didn't feel like he was... I don't know... This is up for debate... this is up for a big debate. The question is, did Calvin feel like he was retrieving early Christian teaching on free will or was he coming up with it himself? He was drawing from Augustine no less, but he really does criticize the fathers here. It's really, really interesting. So go read that. It's worth the read.

Later he comes back and he finds some good things that he likes about the Fathers with respect to free will, but it's kind of negative what he says. And so for me as a Christian, I love a lot of things that Calvin says, but quite honestly, if I had to choose between Calvin and the early Fathers on this question, I'm going with early Fathers. And for a lot of reasons, but I guess because I'm truly Catholic in that sense. Or I want to be, but I'm but at the same time I also know that tradition can go wrong. And so we're always reforming. And that's something that even Roman Catholics will say. I was just reading some Roman Catholic literature yesterday, and they were talking about how we always need to be reforming. The church always needs to be reforming. I was like, "yeah! that's a reformation I do too." So anyway, I don't know how I got off all that tangent. It might be worth reading Calvin and of course, reading the early Fathers on this topic.

50:20 Now there's one Father that I really do like. He's not the earliest Father, but it's someone I mentioned a moment ago. And that is St Augustine. He has written a lot on this topic, you know, back in the day, obviously. He has written this great little book you should read. It's called *On Free Choice of the Will*, and it really gets good about halfway through. I remember that. It's been a while since I've read it, but he argues for very robust view of free will. Now in his later writings though, he's debating the Pelagians. Now the Pelagians are those who said that essentially we don't need God's grace to come to him. We can just come to him on our own will. Augustine, rightly, had real problems with that and I'm glad he wrote his anti-Pelagian writings to set the record straight; that we need grace to come to Christ. So it's really good.

But what's interesting here is that is that Augustine, it seems, held two contrary views on this issue. So in his earlier writings he's robustly free will, and his latter writings it doesn't sound so much so. He's like the first Calvinist almost. And that's why Calvin liked him so much, for the most part. and so you have this tension when you read Augustine. I've read a lot of Augustine and he is really interesting to read. But you need to read *On Free Choice of the Will* first, and then jump into his works on Grace and his anti Pelagian writings.

Anyway, so what's, what's interesting about this, and the reason I'm bringing it up is because I was reading through a chapter (and I've read through this a few times), by Eleanor Stump. She's a Christian philosopher. And she is one of the editors for the *Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. There are two additions of that, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. She's got a chapter in here called, *Augustine On Free Will*. It's a fascinating read. You should all read it. Essentially, Eleanor, talks about this tension that we see in Augustine. She gives you a tour of his views on this. It's so good. And she basically says he never really resolved that question. You know, how could he have a robust view in the in the sort of free will that I've been talking about today, and yet still have a robust view of the primacy of grace to draw a believer *before* they can even choose to come to Christ? How could he keep those in tension? And she makes this good point. She says, later on in his life, he wrote his retractions. Kind of an assessment of where he's been, and where he had changed his mind on some theology and so forth. And one thing he never retracted were his earlier views on free will. She finds that fascinating because he would have said, (he's a very honest theologian) so he would have said, 'I got that wrong. The Pelagians have showed me that sort of free will doesn't work.' But he never did. He never did. And he just sort of chalks it up as a mystery.

So in this chapter, Eleanor Stump has written called, *Augustine On Free Will*, she offers a solution that she thinks might work for Augustine. You have to understand that he believed that not only did we lack the *will* to come to Christ, that our sin is so thick that we lack the *will* to come to Christ. But he also thought that we lacked the *will* to *will*, to come to Christ. And you know what I mean by that. You know we *want* to do something, but we sometimes we have a second order ability to will. Where we say we will to will, or we want to want to do something. You know, the will is reflexive and it can act upon itself, kind of thing. And so for Augustine, he believed that we were so depraved that we could not. We lacked a will to come to Christ. And we lacked the will to will to come to Christ. So why that's important is because under Augustine's view, it's not the case that if a person knows that he doesn't have the will to come to Christ but he wants that will, so he's going to pray to God, 'God give me grace so that I will want to come to grace.' That's the will to will.

Augustine just throws that out, too. He says that doesn't work. Because the will, even *that* is a gift from God. Even *that* comes from God. And so for Augustine, you're either running to God, and that's all grace, or you're running from God and in rebellion. And that's just the natural state of fallen humanity. And so what do you do in that situation? How do you preserve a sort of free will that would satisfy Augustine's earlier works on free will and this really radical concept of grace? Well, Eleanor comes up with an idea. She comes up with a way to do it. And I kind of like it. Again, this is why I mentioned that I like the reform tradition and I want to, as best I can, operate within that tradition. And so that's kind of why I like Eleanor Stump's view on this. I want to read you some selections from this chapter, *Augustine On Free Will*, by Eleanor Stump. She basically says she identifies a problem with Augustine's view on the will. She says he misunderstood it.

56:00 This is from page 179 of the second edition. She says this,

*"At least some thinkers in the Middle Ages however, suppose that there are more than two positions for the will as regards volitions. So for example, Aquinas holds that the will can assent to something or reject it. But it can also simply do nothing at all. It can just be turned off sometimes. The will is determined to want something by the nature of the will's object, Aquinas says, but the exercise of the will, whether the will is turned off or not, is always in the power of the will itself. Furthermore, in principle, the will can move directly from anyone of these positions to another. That is, it can move from rejecting to quiescence, from quiescence to assenting, from assenting to rejecting and so on.*

So I'll stop reading here. The idea here is that quiescence means to cause your will to go dormant. So this is where Augustine messes up, according to Eleanor Stump. Augustine thinks there's just two options for the will - to either turn to God, or to run away from God. Those the only two things you can do. And Eleanor says no. Aquinas thinks that there's a 3<sup>rd</sup> option. You can shut the will down. You can just turn it off. You can do what the term quiescence involves, which is a dormancy. You can cause it to be dormant.

So, that's that part. I'm going to read a couple of other things here that she writes to kind of give you the idea of how this would work and why this idea of shutting the will off might solve the problem for merging a radical version of free will that Augustine wanted in his early career and a radical view of grace that he obviously advocated for in his latter career. So this comes from pages 180 and 181 of Eleanor's chapter. She says this,

*"So suppose the following theology story to be the case.*

1. *God is constantly offering grace to every human being in such a way that if a person doesn't refuse that grace, she receives it and it produces in her the will of faith.*

2. *Normal adult human beings and a post fall condition who are not converted or in the process of being converted refuse grace continually even if they are not aware of doing so.*
3. *Ceasing to refuse Grace is accompanied by an understanding that Grace will follow and that Grace would not follow if the refusal of Grace were continued.*
4. *It is solely up to a human person whether or not she refuses grace.*

*A person who ceases to refuse grace in these circumstances is thus, in some respects, analogous to a person suffering an allergic reaction who actively refuses an injection of antidote to the allergen, perhaps out of a hysterical fear of needles. Such a person might not be able to bring himself to will that the doctor gives him the injection. If the doctor is asking him whether he will accept the injection, he might not be able to bring himself to say yes, for example. But he might, nonetheless, be able to stop actively refusing the injection knowing that if he ceases to refuse it, the doctor will press it on him. In this case, whether or not he receives the injection is in his control, even if it is also true that he cannot bring himself to answer yes to the doctor's request to give him the injection. We can take these claims, one through four, to be true without having the dilemma Augustine thought he had in the case of Esau and Jacob. If we suppose that there are three, rather than two, positions available to the will as regards volitions. We can postulate that it was in Esau's power to reject grace without thereby being committed to supposing that Jacob had it in his power to accept grace. It can be the case that God alone causes in Jacob the acceptance of grace, but that he causes it in Jacob because Jacob, unlike Esau, ceases to refuse grace. If the will can move directly from rejecting to quiescence without first moving to acceptance, then Jacob has two alternatives for his will as regards grace, even if it is also true that it is not possible for his will on its own to accept grace. On the theology story I have told then, God gives grace to anyone who see who ceases actively refusing it. But these are not people who already assent to grace. They don't accept grace or reject it. Their wills were actively refusing grace, but then cease doing so without moving all the way to accepting grace. Once their wills are quiescent, God acts on their wills in such a way as to move them to the acceptance of grace, which is the will of faith. Consequently, on this theology story, the will of faith is a gift of God, but a human person's will is still ultimately in the control of that person because it is up to her either to refuse grace or to fail to refuse grace, and God's giving up grace depends on what the will of a human person does."*

1:00:50 This is a pretty interesting take on this. She's not entirely in the chapter by saying she's not entirely sure if Augustine will accept this. And, I think that's a really good question as to whether he would, Unfortunately, we just don't quite know. But I think it's interesting. I definitely think it's worth further reflection, because I think it preserves this monergism idea. I think it preserves what the reform tradition wants to preserve, namely, the primacy of grace. But it also preserves what Augustine and early Christian tradition thought was very important, namely, a robust view of freedom, or free will. So I think this really works.

Now, the thing with Augustine is that his main principle is, that we don't have anything that was not given to us. We don't. Well, we don't have anything good that was not given to us by God. So the question could come back and say, 'OK, well, is quiescence a good thing?' If it's a good thing, then even the act of quiescence would have to be a gift from God. But interestingly, Eleanor, actually addresses that in a footnote. She says, "*it is true that a will which ceases to refuse grace is better than one that refuses grace. But comparatives don't presuppose positives. Smith can be taller than Jones without being tall.*"

I like that. I think something like that is true. So quiescence is not technically a good thing, because you are still in a state of rebellion - you are definitely not running to God, (which is the good thing). And so insofar as quiescence is that then maybe it preserves Augustine's main principle, that everything good comes from God. And quiescence is not necessarily something good. Yeah, it's better, but that doesn't mean it's good, any more than saying that Smith is taller than Jones implies that Smith is tall. So I like it. Like I said, this gives the person significant say and significant free will. And it arguably preserves a 'grace alone' approach to understanding salvation, which is what I like. You know, I want to do that. And so if you want to preserve monergism, something like Stump's proposal seems to be the way to go. In other words, monergism does not necessarily entail compatibilism. Monergism doesn't entail determinism. You *can* have some sort of libertarian concept of free will. And you can have monergism as a package deal.

1:03:33 OK, so that wraps up our discussion on free will. Now I'm tempted here to just create another episode for next week, but I think I'm just going to jump in and make this episode continue. Hope that's okay.

### ELECTION

I want to talk about election now. The cool thing is I can probably move through this pretty quickly because we're gonna revisit this down the road when we get into chapters 9, 10, and 11. But I definitely want to get into this because I want to get back to Romans 8:29.

What about predestination? You might think, 'Matt, all that stuff you could say...Matt, all that stuff you talked about free will, even if I'm convinced by that, how does that answer the question of Romans 8:29? And predestination?' Well, I'm glad you asked. Because, that's where we're headed. And so I say we just continue and let's keep going.

Let's talk about election now. And Calvinism, traditional Calvinism is the stuff that I'm familiar with. It's that you have election and reprobation. And these things are eternal, right? You know, you are elect to eternal life, or you are reprobated or not elected, or maybe you are elected to hell. If you believe in some sort of robust double predestination. Either way, I mean, even if you don't believe in double predestination, you still believe that God passed over the non-elect. And that's a passive election. I guess you can say that, yeah.

In philosophical ethics, there's a debate about whether is there a difference between killing somebody and letting them die. Well, in this case, if you don't believe in double predestination, God's just passing over. He's just letting them stay in the state that they are in. And so to me, there is moral equivalence here, that in this case, I just don't think you can't get away from double predestination, even if you think God reprobates the reprobate passively. That's interesting anyway so put that in the back of your mind and maybe you want to investigate that further. Keep that in your mind. As election is eternal, reprobation is eternal too. Or it sort of seems to be one of the main ideas, at least.

Here's some here's some things further about this, I don't think individual election or reprobation squares with the text of Romans, or other text in scripture, too. So for example, there's a great quote talking about some of this. Actually before I get to that though, I just want to say if you're reading Romans 9 and Romans 8 about predestination, please keep going through to Romans 11. Because it's in Romans 11 where you find out that reprobation and hardening is not permanent. That it's not necessarily the case that this is an eternal act of God in that sense. And there's a great little article called, *Election and Predestination in the Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, Second Edition*. It's by Anthony Thornhill. And there's a quote here that I want to read which comes from page 241. Of that he says, "*Paul concludes in Romans 11:1-10, that God has not rejected Israel. And the current state of affairs is not final, since whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, Israel included.*"

So I think, again, Romans 11 is really important. Especially the latter part of Romans 11 which illustrates how reprobation is not permanent, for Paul. So whatever reprobation is, it is not some sort of eternal sort of thing, at least contextually. The other thing about reprobation and divine hardening is that it seems to be redemptive in scope. I mean, you cannot read Romans 11 without walking away with this idea that the purpose of the hardening of Israel in that context is for purposes of redemption. And this is something that N.T. Wright talks a lot about in his commentary on Romans. If you're interested in looking further than that, read a page 676 through 677 and he talks about how reprobation and hardening has this redemptive element to it. There's a lot here. He actually says here on page 676 – there is so much here that is so good....I'm just gonna read this section here. It says, commenting on chapter 11 verse 7. *“Of the rest, they have been hardened. This looks back to and summarizes one strand of Romans 9:14 - 24. Since it is also a vital move in the decisive statement of Romans 11:25, it is important to understand it clearly. Paul is drawing on the Jewish tradition that runs like this; when God delays outstanding judgment, those who do not use this time of delay to repent and turn back to him, will be hardened so that their final judgement when it comes will be seen to be just. The apocalyptic context of hardening is vital. Ignoring it leads interpreters either into abstract discussions of predestination and reprobation, or into the idea of temporary hardening, which is then reversed. As the analogy with Pharaoh in chapter 9:17-18 indicates, this hardening is not something that comes for a while, during which something else happens, and which is then removed. The hardening rather, is what happens during a temporary suspension of the judgment that would otherwise have fallen to allow time for some to escape. In the case of Pharaoh, the result was the exodus from Egypt, seen as a sign of God's glorious power the reputation of the divine name. In the present case, the result is that there is time not only for the Gentiles to come in, but also for more Jews like Paul himself to recognize that the reason Jews is indeed Israel's Messiah, and to serve him in the obedience of faith. For those who do not, Paul does not need to invent comments of his own. The Jewish Scriptures themselves declare God's judgment on those within Israel, who remain stubborn. Deuteronomy 29 following the long list of the curses that will fall upon disobedience and idolatry, has Moses looking sorrowfully at Israel and seeing nothing but rebellion. Isaiah 29:10 closely related to one of the most quoted words of judgment from the prophet, is taken from the devastating warning in which the saying about the Potter and the clay forms part of the indictment. These are both obviously contexts that have been in Paul's mind for such for much of the section so far. The quotations from Deuteronomy 29 and Isaiah 29 simply make more explicit what has already been said.”*

Okay, and this is where we need to really focus our minds here, because this is getting into the core of what you say. He says, quote, *“It is the Jewish scriptures themselves that speak of Yahweh pouring out a spirit of stupor and making eyes not to see and ears not to hear. Tragic though it is, this is part of what God has said all along. Part of what Israel already should have known. The result is that unbelieving Israel is hardened permanently. That is, there are no promises to be made of a reversal of the hardening, except in the context of coming to faith. See Romans 11:23. But this does not mean that any particular individuals are unable to come to faith. And so, like Paul, join the increasing remnant. On the contrary, some have already done so in many more will come.”*

1:11:00 Yeah, there's a lot more here. There's a lot here. I think the point here is read Romans 11. You've got to read through all of Romans 11 if you want to understand Romans 9. Okay, I want to keep going here and make a few more comments about election, generally. It seems like election, the concept at least, does not seem to guarantee final salvation as much as perhaps some Calvinists want to say. So you can you look at Romans 11:2 and Romans 11:28 where the idea of election seems to have a very corporate aspect. I mean, I think Romans 11:28 is really important here in this regard. And I think these are texts that just simply get missed. And, I think they need to be factored into the overall equation more than they are, in some of these conversations. So in

Romans 11:28 says *'in regards to the gospel they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their ancestors.'* So this is talking about unbelieving Israel here. And it doesn't seem that it's guaranteed, or even though Paul calls them the elect, it doesn't seem that their salvation is secure. I think that's a very important piece of data that we have to fit into some of these other passages such as Romans 8:28 or 8:29. And if that's the case, I think that would make sense of something else that Anthony Thornhill writes about in his article *Election and Predestination* in the *Dictionary Paul and His Letters*. He says this in that article, *"In a similar vein in 2 Timothy 2:10, Paul seems to indicate that election does not create the foregone conclusion of salvation stating that he suffers for the sake of the elect an order that they might obtain salvation in Christ. Paul's verb here for obtain is subjunctive, apparently indicating contingency as it relates to the future salvation of the elect."* Again, interesting point.

A couple other things here, too. I have lots of notes. Just for the sake of time, I want to just refer you to a collection of articles that I think you'll find interesting There was a back-and-forth debate, several, several, several years ago, between *Thomas Schreiner and Brian Abasciano's* in the *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society*. JETS. It's called JETS and they go back and forth on some of these things. But anyway, one thing that Brian talks about is that election as a corporate element. So it's not just individualistic, but it's a corporate election. You know, talking about groups of people in that sense. But for Brian, and I think he does a good job. (I don't think Tom Schreiner, if I could just be honest. I don't think Schreiner really addresses some of the main things that Brian is talking about.) But anyway, Tom and Brian, they go back and forth in these debates and these articles. It's a really fascinating read on both sides. But Brian essentially does a great job in talking about how election language is very corporate in the text. And it's corporate because, it's Christological. In my opinion, I don't think Brian brings that point out as much as I do in my book, or as much as I would want to. But I think he's in substantive agreement for sure with how I conceive of this; that election has a corporate dimension to it, very much so. But it's summed up in. Christology.

1:14:40 Without further ado OK, without further adieu, let's jump into Romans 8:29. Through 30. A very important text for Calvinist, just for the sake of refreshing our memory. Let me read this text again. Romans 8:29-30 says, *"for those whom he four knew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the first born. Within a large family and those whom he predestined, he also called and those whom he called. He also justified in those whom he justified. He also glorified."*

This is the so-called *golden chain*. Calvinist love this passage, and I can understand why. Because for them, this is the golden chain of individual election. So, everybody who's foreknown by God, they are predestined. Those who are predestined are called, those who are called are justified, and those who are justified are finally glorified. Nobody gets left out in that process. It's the golden chain. So yeah, I don't think individual election is the best way to see that text. And I'll tell you why in a moment. But just a reminder, if you're going to read Romans 8:29 and 30 or just read Romans 9, you've got to keep it in conversation with the entirety of the message of the whole book. Now, I mean, every part of the book. Romans 8 all of that, Romans 1 through 2, Romans, 10 through 11. It's all very important.

But for our purposes, let's just hone in on Romans 2 and Romans 6 and why that could be important in these texts. Actually, lets just do Romans 6. Romans 6, I think, will help us understand this text very well. It just it'll shed a lot of light on it. Roman 6 as you remember, is all about union with Christ. Jesus's death becomes our death. His resurrection becomes our resurrection. Here's the point. What's true of Jesus is true of all those who are united to him. Everything that's said about Jesus can be said about us. Now I think that same principle needs to apply to this passage. We need to see this concept of foreknowledge. And the concept of *predestination* and *calling* and



*justification and glorification.* We need to see all that against the backdrop of Paul's Christology. So here's how it works, I think Christ is the Foreknown One. So when you when you look at the story scripture and just other texts you really do see this. So let me run through some texts real quick.

Exodus 4:22 says that God calls Israel his firstborn (πρωτότοκος) son: "*But you yourself will say to Pharaoh, 'The Lord says this: "My firstborn son is Israel."*"

In Colossians 1:15, Christ is called the firstborn son: "*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn (πρωτότοκος) of all creation.*"

Jesus is the first born there, but the idea is the same. I think it's definitely drawing on the Exodus 4:22 motif. The point is, though, that Jesus is the preexistent one. The pre-existence of God in continuity with and as typified by Israel's own sonship. Recall from an earlier episode how we talked about how Jesus reenacted the story of Israel. Israel is called the son of God. Jesus is the son of God because he becomes Israel embodied. So Jesus is thus foreknown before the age of the ages began and I think you'll see how we how we get there, how we get to that point when we look at these other texts. But I just wanted to draw that link back to the story of Israel because I think that's super important because it's interesting how the question of election never broaches is typically in these topics never lead us back to the story of Israel, which is very odd. Anyway, I don't want to make that mistake.

1:18:30 In Acts 2:23 we see this text.: "*this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge [πρόγνωσις] of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law.*"

So this event in Christ's life was a part of God's foreknowledge. Here I think it's easy to say that Christ himself is what is foreknown because he has to be if his activity of dying, the crucifixion, was itself an event that was foreknown by God.

Ok. In fact, when you look at 1 Peter 1:20 that that text says explicitly that Christ is *foreknown*. It says, "*He was foreknown [προγινώσκω] before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God*"

So Christ is the one who is foreknown. All those in Christ are by virtue of their union with him are foreknown. So Christ is the pre-existent son. He's the son of God, because he reenacts the story of Israel. And again, that's very important because Romans 8, by the way, is about sonship and I think that's an that's an important motif there. So we have to make those connections. But also he's clearly the one who's foreknown, his event, the events of his life, the crucifixion and whatnot. Those were foreknown events because he was foreknown, Look, I didn't write this. This is the text of Scripture. Now if Christ is the one who is foreknown then all those who are in Christ are by virtue of their union with him, they are foreknown. Because what can be said about Christ can be said about us. Now, I want to demonstrate this with all those other concepts of *predestination, calling, and justification, and glorification* - all those were attributed to Christ before they could be attributed to us. And I would like to say something here that, as most scholars (whether Calvinist or non-Calvinist) admit, the word "foreknown" here is not simply a reference to God's foresight. It's about being loved beforehand. So, the point here seems to be that we are in covenant love with God by virtue of our union and covenant with Christ. I think it just goes in that order.

Christ is foreknown. Well, Christ is also destined, set, or he is predestined. (προορίζω): *proorizó* That's a very that's very important word.

So if you look at Acts 2:23. This comes from the ESV – *“this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite [ὀρίζω] plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”*

So, the definite plan, *horizó, [ὀρίζω]*. This implies the idea of Jesus’s himself was destined. Okay, we see that very clearly here. We also see the word *horizó, [ὀρίζω]* in Luke 22:22 (ESV) - *“For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined [ορίζω], but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!”*

Again, this is the idea of God’s predestination. Well, technically it’s his destiny, but it still carries the same concept of a pre destiny here too, in context.

Let’s see...1 Corinthians 2:7 (ESV) - *“But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before (προορίζω) [προορίζω] the ages for our glory.”*

Now this secret hidden wisdom is obviously a Christological secret hidden wisdom of God. And so this captures the idea of Christ predestination I think quite clearly in the work of Christ for sure. So there are other texts here that are closely related to this concept of pre destination. There are similar concepts and election language that’s applied to Christ.

We might look at Galatians 4:4 (ESV). It doesn’t use the word, but the concept is here. It says, *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law”*

So this fullness of time idea that God sent forth his son, this gives the idea that this part of the plan that Christ was predestined. He’s part of this plan that God always had.

Luke 9:35 (ESV): *“And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen [elect], (eklektos) [ἐκλέγομαι] One; listen to him!”*

The word chosen is *eklégomai (ἐκλέγομαι)*, I choose. This is somebody who is elected. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Election language right there and applied to Christ.

1 Peter 2:4 (ESV) *“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen [ἐκλεκτός] and precious”*

This is, this is a really interesting verse, I think, because you, again, you have election language applied to the people of God here, the Christian people. I’m sorry, no, no, no. Yeah. This is talking about Christ as you come to him, although he was a living stone rejected by man. But in the sight of God, he is *eklektos*. He is precious. He is *eklektos*. He’s chosen. He is elect. So Christ is the elect one. Pretty cool.

There are other texts we could point to. Israel is called “elect” in Isaiah 42:1 and that’s actually applied to Jesus in Matt 12:18. So go and check that out. I won’t read it. I think the important point to say here is that Christ was never “Plan B”. He is “Plan A.” This is super important.

Because Christ is the elected, chosen, called out one, everyone who is united to him are legitimately called the elect or the called. This makes sense, I think, as to how Paul can talk about being elected in Christ and texts like Ephesians 1. So let’s talk a little bit more about Christ’s own calling, his being chosen. I think the word calling as you would ask any new testament scholar, the word calling is a very important word in the New Testament. So I just would like to point to maybe Matthew 2:15. This comes from the ESV. It says, *“...This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I called (kaleo) [καλεω] my son.’”*

Now importantly this text reveals the corporate nature that is subsumed under Christology. Christ here in other words, embodies the people of God because Christ here is embodying the exodus story. Out of Egypt I called my son and originally in Hosea the passage there, the divine son is Israel and the people of God are Israel and the Jews and the Gentiles in Christ are said to be called. And if Romans 9:24-26, we are all called and *kaleo* is used there Romans 9:24-26. And this calling is Christological. Clearly. I mean you're called to faith. And so in other words, it's a calling by means of the gospel announcement because Christ himself is the called or the chosen one, which we've looked at those verses earlier. And so when we are in Christ, when we are in the called one, we can rightly be called *the called*. Just as Christ was called out of Egypt in Matthew 2:15 and all that that entails corporately with respect to Israel. When you factor all this in it's clear to see how there's a corporate aspect here. Moving right along.

1:25:34 Did you know that Christ was also justified? This justified word is a very important word, *dikaiōō*. We talk about how we are justified by faith. But did you know that Jesus was justified by faith? And the text talks about him as of being justified.

1 Tim 3:16 from the ESV. It says, "*Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated (dikaiōō) [δικαιόω] by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.*"

Now the word there vindicated by the spirit it's really justified by the spirit. It's the word *dikaiōō*, and it's the word that shows up a lot and all of its cognate words, root words.. you know the word *dikaiosune* for example, is used a lot in in Romans as well. And here though it's a likely reference to his resurrection so. You know Jesus is justified by his resurrection. He's indicated by his resurrection. And so we too are justified by virtue of his own justification. And if we are in Christ, it follows we are justified because he is the justified one. And interestingly, language related to justification language is also found Matthew 3 when Jesus was baptized. Now you know the story I won't read the whole section here but Jesus is baptized and he says, "*let it be so now for thus is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness, (dikaiosune).*" So to justify, that word the word to justify *dikaiōō* is closely related to the word righteousness, *dikaiosune*. It doesn't come through in English translations but in Greek they're clearly related.

And I think this is an interesting point. So Jesus here in Matthew had to do something for the sake of righteousness. Jesus had to be baptized not to wash away his sins but to reenact the story of Israel and thus show himself to be the true Israelite, the true son of God who is faithful to the covenant. And this reminds us of our own baptism. It reminds us of Roman 6, "*We are thus united to Christ. What is true of him becomes true of us his death becomes our death his resurrection becomes our resurrection and his justification becomes our justification because his covenant faithfulness makes it possible for us to be declared covenantally faithful.*" If he's justified, we're justified. That's how we're justified. Because we're in Christ.

Now lastly you have this idea that Christ is glorified. *Doxazo*. John chapter 7 talks a little bit about this in verses 38-39. "*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'*" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (*Doxazo*) [*δοξάζω*]."

Now this idea of glorification here is referring to his resurrection and ultimately his ascension sitting down at the right hand of the father. So here clearly Jesus is glorified.

John 12:16-17 refers to his glorification as well. I won't read that. You can check it out on your own. There's a lot of language here about glory, very important language I should say is used to

describe Jesus. The other thing about glory language here is in Romans 8:18-25 which we looked at last week, we read through last week. The idea of glory *doxa* that's the noun form of glory *doxazo* is the verbal form. *Doxa* is the noun for glory. In Romans 8:18 it talks about that the sufferings that were going through at the present time they're not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed in us. And this glorification is a reference I think to our redemption, namely our resurrection. So you have these texts that speak of Christ's glorification, Christ being glorified by his resurrection. And our resurrection is likewise had deemed the same.

Now just backing up just real briefly or just summing up what I've what I've said here is that golden chain Romans 8:29-30 does refer to us Christians. But only insofar as we are united to Christ. We are predestined in so far as we are united to the one himself is predestined. You know I think that's such an important piece to make here and same with justification and glorification calling and all of that, being foreknown. We are those things but only in the sense that we are in Christ. Super important point to make. It's a corporate election. It's a Christological election. It's not individual election. One way we know this is true is because Paul refers to the Jesus people as having been glorified (past tense) Well, when Paul wrote that, Christians hadn't been glorified yet. To Christians, the final resurrection hasn't happened yet. So I think that's an important thing to point out. When Paul wrote about in Romans, Jesus himself was already glorified because he had been resurrected. So since he has been resurrected and glorified Paul can legitimately refer to the Jesus people in the same way. Why? Because they are united to him. The fact that they are said to have already been glorified, I think his proof that maybe Paul here is assuming his Christology. If you go back to N.T. Wright's Romans commentary, I'm gonna just read real briefly from page 603. He says something pretty interesting here He says this.

1:31:20 *"The emphasis of Romans 8:29-30, falls clearly on conformity to Christ. This remains so throughout the dramatic closing words focused on the four last heirists pre-shaped, called, justified, glorified. All has been accomplished in Christ. The four shaping of Christ's people to be his younger siblings. They are called through the gospel that announces his lordship. Their justification by faith in the one God who raised him from the dead. Their glorification so that they are now already seated in the heavenly places in him. There may even be a backward glance to the story of Jesus himself is incarnation is baptism is resurrection, his ascension. Though this remains speculative. In any case, the Christological basis explains the final heirists, which is otherwise very puzzling. Coming as it does after so many futures. All these things, including glorification, have happened already too. And in Jesus the Messiah. And what is true of the Messiah is true of his people."*

That captures sort of what I'm saying. The Christological foundation for glorification must be seen as the same foundation for being foreknown, predestined, called/elected, and justified. So, everything in Rom 8:29-30 is true of us. We are foreknown, predestined, called, justified, glorified. How? Because of our union with Christ. Look, it's so odd to me how modern discussions about election and predestination are so individualistic and how they typically lack any reference to Christology. In modern debates about election, election is simply what *God* does to *me*. There's no story of Israel mentioned, there's no Christology that's presupposed, there's no discussion about how Christ is really the elect one, the foreknown one, or anything like that. And quite frankly, I find that suspicious. So here's my thoughts on the matter: Any discussion about election that leaves out these crucial Christological assumptions, I'm not that interested in. The reason is because such discussions are probably more going to go down a road that resembles something more akin to ideas about fatalism than the Jewish concept of election.

Here's my conclusion: For those who are *in Christ*, everything true of Christ is true of them. Whatever can be said of Christ can be said of those who are in Christ. If Christ is called "elect" and "foreknown", the elect one, the predestined one, etc.; if things like that, those words could be applied to him, then they can be applied to us. And guess what? All those words were applied to

Christ. He was foreknown. He was destined. He was called. He was justified. He was glorified. So we should not be surprised to think that if he was all of those things first, that will be those things too, and that we are those things. Think once again of Romans 6: We share in Christ's death and resurrection because we are *united to him*. So, that's how Paul can include Christians in this talk about being foreknown, predestined, etc. He's talking about the Jesus people as *Jesus people*.

1:34:25 I the final say on any of this, I recognize that I have so much more to learn about this topic. And um, I'm, I'm, I definitely admit that I'm, I'm still learning. And today is just an episode where I'm just processing, talking out loud, thinking through things, tossing ideas. Who knows? Maybe in the future I'll change your mind. I always want to ask deep questions, even if there are questions that would lead me to change my view. At this point, I'm not convinced that I need to change my mind about this, but perhaps in the future I will have a change of mind. I'm always open to the other opinion, the other thought. But let me just leave you with a couple of other thoughts and then we'll close shop here.

Even if I'm wrong here about Romans 8:29-30, in that maybe it does refer exclusively to individuals and not Christ (which that would be hard to imagine! Election without Christology?? I just don't see how that would work)... but for the sake of the argument, even if I am wrong, it still doesn't follow that the Calvinist view is entirely correct. For example: "Predestination" language doesn't really make sense anyway for a God who exists outside of time. Think about it. Predestination is a tensed term that assumes a time-frame, or a structure of time. I want to read your quote from Peter Kreeft. He says this. *"Let's look first at the side called destiny. Predestination is a misleading word, I think, for it concedes too much to our temporal way of thinking. God is not pre or post anything. He is present to everything. God does not look down rows of dominoes or into crystal balls. He does not have to wait for anything. Nor does he wonder what will happen. Nothing is uncertain to him, as the future is uncertain to us. There is not predestination but destination, not predestiny but destiny. This follows from divine omniscience and eternity."*

It's interesting here. All of God's acts are, therefore, present acts to him (even Calvin concedes this as I recall in his *Institutes*). If that's the case, and if Eleanor Stump is correct about quiescence (putting the will into dormancy, shutting it down, etc.), then this act of God, of giving grace to those who quiesce or go through quiescence, shut down their will. That act of God in giving them grace, could be viewed from our perspective as a predestination. Even though it just all one present, right? It's an eternal present. From our perspective, that might be predestination, because we live in a tensed structure of reality. So if, yeah, if that all that's the case, and if Stump is correct, then it still preserves free will, right? So my point is this, even if Romans 8:29-30 is all about the individual, it doesn't follow that compatibilism is correct. It doesn't follow that determinism is correct. It could just mean that that we still have, we can have a quiescent choice. We have a choice for quiescence of the will. And if that's the case, then that's fine. That preserves significant free will in and of itself.

So here's a short summary of the of the benefit of the view that I've actually espoused on this episode. Number one, election is Christological. Number two, election is storied. It's got to incorporate the story of Israel in there. It's Christological, it's storied in that sense, it's Jewish. And third, you can be a monergist and still believe in significant free will if you go along with this conception that I've outlined, if you follow Eleanor Stump, for example, right? You can still be a monergist and have belief in significant free will. And lastly, if you do all those things, if you, you know, the benefit, I think of the view I've espoused is that you don't have the scriptural problems or the conceptual problems of a God who, at the end of the day, doesn't care for all people. I feel

like the view that I've espoused satisfies that and it satisfies the text. And it satisfies the conceptual issues that we've talked about.

Yeah, well that's today's show. Thank you for hanging out this whole way through. I think you like deserving award or something. I don't know if you need like a strong drink after this episode. I don't know whatever you need, go do it.

I do want to end this episode in in that maybe a pastoral way, I suppose. I mentioned that I don't like doing theology in in the abstract. Theologies involves people, real people. So allow me to end this episode in a way that I have sometimes done in the past. I think it just seems appropriate for me to do this here once again, given our discussion today. OK, here goes:

No matter who you are, what you've done — no matter your past or present or future: **YOU ARE DEEPLY LOVED BY GOD.**

1:39:29 That's the end of today's episode. And thanks again for listening to The Bible Unmuted. If you like this podcast, consider rating it on your podcast platform, subscribing to it, and sharing with your friends. You can also support the podcast by becoming a patreon member. Go to: <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted> - or simply find the link in the description of this episode. Thanks for listening. Until next time, friends.