

# TWO CLEAR STREAMS OF TRUTH IN SCRIPTURE

## HUMAN VOLITION \*\* Man's Personal Responsibility

John 3:16-18; 36

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life... Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*

Romans 4:5

*To the one who does not work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.*

Luke 7:50

*Jesus said to the woman, your faith has saved you.*

John 5:24

*Truly, truly I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.*

Ezekiel 18:23, 32

*Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?*

*For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.*

Acts 16:30-31

*Then he brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.*

John 1:11-12

*He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.*

John 20:30-31

*These [signs] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.*

Romans 10:11, 13

*For the Scriptures says, everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

## **DIVINE ELECTION \*\* God's Sovereign Action**

Ephesians 1:4-6

*He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved*

Jeremiah 1:5

*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations*

2 Thessalonians 2:13

*But we should always give thanks to God for you...because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation...*

Galatians 1:15

*But when He who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me....*

Acts 13:48

*As many as were appointed to eternal life believed*

2 Timothy 1:9

*God saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.*

John 6:65

*This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father*

John 6:44

*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him*

Ephesians 2:4-9

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

What is God's design for us related to each of these two streams of Truth?  
How should they affect us??

## **DIVINE ELECTION \*\* God's Sovereign Action**

- \* It is designed to **elicit** in us a deep heart of humility
  - Salvation is truly an undeserved gift from God
  - There is no way any of us could ever claim credit for our salvation. When we fully understand that truth, we are quick to shout: "to the praise of His Glory!"
- \* It is designed to **liberate** us to share the gospel more confidently
  - Salvation is truly God's work, yet amazingly He has ordained that we participate in the process
  - We should share the gospel message more fearlessly and frequently remembering God is the author of salvation: the one who chooses, calls, draws, and transforms hearts.

## **HUMAN VOLITION \*\* Man's Personal Responsibility**

- \* It is designed to **clarify** the necessary core human response to the Gospel
  - Every man and woman is called to believe in, to trust in, to rest in Jesus' sacrificial work on the cross for them
  - One's failure to embrace Christ's work by faith results in dying in one's sins and then facing divine judgment (John 8:24; Hebrews 9:27)
- \* It is designed to **catalyze** believers to spread the good news of Jesus everywhere
  - Apart from Jesus people are lost, helpless and hopeless without God in the world (Ephesians 2:2; Romans 5:6)
  - We are the key conduits of hope since we serve as ambassadors of reconciliation wherever we reside (2 Corinthians 5:20; Matthew 28:19-20)

## A KEY ISSUE:

How can **both** of these truths be **fully true** at the same time? They appear contradictory.

If God is totally sovereign in salvation (i.e., He chooses some for salvation from before the foundation of the world) how can men and women then be held accountable for failing to respond to Christ in faith?

On the other hand, if men and women determine their eternal destiny based on their choice to believe or not believe in Jesus' work on the cross, how can it be said that God sovereignly predestinates people for salvation before they are born? It seems best here to embrace the principle of Isaiah 55:9: *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Everyone will readily acknowledge that the gap of understanding between an amoeba and us as humans is immense. As immense as that gap is, the gap of understanding between us and God is FAR, FAR greater.

For example, the Bible teaches that Jesus is the God-Man, both 100% God and 100% man. How can both be fully true?? He needed to be a man to die. He needed to be God to die for the sins of the world. But our minds simply cannot completely grasp how He can be both at the same time. Yet that doesn't make it untrue. Isaiah 55:9 clearly tells us our understanding of His ways is often outside of our reach [the biblical doctrine of the Trinity is another example].

The same is true with the salvation issues of Divine Election and Personal Responsibility. Scripture teaches both. It appears to our feeble human minds that both **cannot** be true at the same time. Yet Scripture CLEARLY teaches that both are true.

Historically, the way many in the church have sought to "resolve" this dilemma (this antinomy) is to **focus on or emphasize** one Truth Stream or the other. Often, they also make logical deductions or offer explanations that downplay, limit—or some might even practically dismiss—the other Truth Stream altogether.

The truth is, some things that the Scriptures teach about God are truly beyond our reach, they are bound up in the inscrutable nature of God (Romans 11:33b). Some attempt to "unscrew the inscrutable" and try to convince themselves they can logically explain all of God's ways.

Even though these two Streams of Truth greatly strain our minds as to just how they can fit together logically, it seems best to acknowledge that **both** Streams of Truth exist. God wants us to learn from each stream. The truth of Romans 11:33 stands resolutely: *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable His ways!*

Bruce A. Hess