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**C0424 -- June 23 -- Ephesians 1:11-12 – The Sovereignty of God**

Again, we have to recall that we are discussing the second person of the Trinity and His role in the plan of redemption (vv. 3-14). These truths are a part of our spiritual blessings. If you were to unpack v. 3 you would find vv. 4-14. So, verse 3 is a summary statement of vv. 4-14. In other words, nothing more is said in vv. 4-14 than what is said in v. 3. In fact, there is more included in v. 3 than there is in vv. 4-14. Louis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary (originally Evangelical Theological College) in 1925, said there were actually 33 riches of divine grace. So, here in vv. 4-14 we just have a sampling of all the riches of divine grace...all the spiritual blessings God has given us. Paul breaks the spiritual blessings down into the three categories. First, the Father. Some think this long sentence was a hymn that had 3 stanzas and a chorus. Stanza 1 had to do with the Father, stanza 2, the Son, and stanza 3, the Spirit. After each stanza a chorus would be sung. The content of stanza 1 (vv. 4-6) is that the Father predestined us which resulted in Him electing us. This was to the praise of the Father's glory. Stanza 2, vv. 7-12, says the Son redeemed us by forgiving us our sins, lavished wisdom and insight upon us, and revealed to us a mystery regarding the Messianic Kingdom, namely that all things animate and inanimate would be under Christ's authority during that Messianic Kingdom. Tonight, we will see that we were chosen to be a possession of God, we are His inheritance. This all took place according to God's design, the God who works all things according to the deliberate purpose of His will. All this was to the praise of the Son's glory. Next week, stanza 3, vv. 13-14, explains the Spirit's role in redemption, namely, sealing us and being deposited as a down payment, guaranteeing the future redemption of God's possession, that is, our future redemption as finished product of the grace of God. The Spirit's work is also done to the praise of the Spirit's glory, a glory the Trinity shares.

Two weeks ago, we worked on vv. 9-10 "The Mystery of God's Will". First, we looked at what is a "mystery" in the NT? There are basically three views of what this word means and it is critical to one's theology. Covenant Amillennialists and Covenant Postmillennialists say it means "revealed in kernel form". Covenant Premillennialists and Progressive Dispensationalists say it means "revealed but unrecognized". Classic and

Ultra-Dispensationalists say it means “unknown but now revealed”. Seminaries that were once solid places for teaching normal interpretation of the Bible are falling by the wayside. Dallas Seminary is the most prolific of these and they have clearly departed from literal hermeneutics. I could speculate on why they don’t want to take the Bible at face value but I think the Biblical answer is much better, “they wish to have teachers in accordance with their own desires.” They don’t want to believe what is said, they want to be unique, they want to force the Scripture to fit what their new scheme. By their own words they are on a quest to find a middle ground between Covenant Theology and Dispensational Theology. The way they do this is by dialogue with Covenant Theologians. Notice, they don’t do this by Bible study but by dialogue. This is dangerous and compromising. These are three very different ways of looking at Scripture and I’m responsible as the local under shepherd to keep you aware of what is going on in the world. Paul says in v. 9 that God ***made known to us the mystery***. The ***mystery*** has to do with God’s will. Something about God’s will was unknown in the OT and is now being made known to us through Paul. His will is God’s resolve or plan of history and here Paul wants to give us some new revelation about the future of God’s plan, something that had been kept secret until revealed by Paul. Paul says that God made known this mystery according to His good pleasure. This means that the standard by which God revealed this mystery was His own pleasure. It brought God great pleasure to make known the mystery of His will to believers. Paul says that this mystery to be revealed was ***purposed in Him***. What this means is that God the Father purposed in Himself and for Himself to reveal the mystery, but the purpose of God was in connection with Christ because it is God’s plan that comes to pass in Christ’s work of redemption. The reason this is for Himself is probably because it brings God glory to reveal His plan to His children (1:12).

Verse 10 begins with the phrase ***in the arrangement of the fullness of the times*** which is a reference to the Messianic Kingdom. God is revealing something new to us about the Messianic Kingdom. The word *oikonomia* has the idea of managing or administering the affairs of a household. The world is a household run by God. In His household-world, God is dispensing or administering the affairs of the world according to His own will and in various stages of revelation in the passage of time. But what exactly is the mystery? The earthly messianic kingdom had been promised in the OT (2 Sam. 7:14-17; Isa. 11:1-5), it was offered to Israel in the Gospels (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 11:20), it was the main topic of Jesus’ teaching during His 40 days on earth after His resurrection (Acts 1:3), it was clearly not fulfilled at the ascension or on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:6-8<sup>1</sup>), and its presence is conditioned upon Israel’s national repentance (Acts 3:19-21) which has not happened yet. However, one thing was not revealed and that is what Paul now reveals to us in the phrase ***“the summing up of all things in Christ,”***. The Greek word is *anakephalaiosasthai* and it

means “to unite under one head again or a second time”. See, all things were at one time under one head, even God, when this universe was originally created, but then the Fall happened and things became disunited and a mess. That is what this world presently is, a mess, very disunited. The world wants to get together under a humanistic system. Everyone wants peace on humanistic terms. Apparently, from this verse we gather that “God will bring together all things and restore the whole creation under one head”.<sup>ii</sup> In whom will all things be united under? Paul tells us *en* Christ. God’s purpose of uniting all things under Christ took place in connection with Christ. How is Christ in connection with the Father’s purpose? The way this works is that the Father is the *planner* (in eternity past) and the Son is the *executer* (in history) of the Father’s *plan*. The Holy Spirit’s role is *sealing/securing* (in history and into eternity future) the *executed plan*. So, God the Father *planned* our destiny (predestination) and our election. The Son *executed* this plan through redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. It is this redemption that connects the Son to the Father’s purpose and brings it to pass in history. But what is included in the *all things*? Paul says that the *all things* are *the things in the heavens and the things in the earth in Him*. It seems best to say this refers to all of God’s creation, animate and inanimate beings united under Christ in the messianic kingdom on earth. This means that all of creation, whether good or evil, will be gathered under Christ’s authority (for example, Satan will be bound for 1,000 years; Rev. 20:1-6). When will Christ be head over all things? This seems to have taken place in two stages. Stage 1 took place on the cross where Satan was judged and Christ was resurrected, conquering death and by the ascension Christ took the high ground at the right hand of the Father. Eph. 1:10 is not talking about this stage but it is talking about Stage 2. Stage 2 is the believer’s ultimate redemption when we are free from the presence of sin. So, even though in one sense everything is under Christ’s authority now, Jesus Christ will be the head of all things in a more direct way in the messianic kingdom. Everyone and everything will acknowledge and respond to His authority then (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 11:1-10).<sup>iii</sup>

**Greek Text: 1:11** VEn w-| kai. evklhrw,qhmen proorisqe,ntej kata. pro,qesin tou/ ta. pa,nta evnergou/ntoj kata. th.n boulh.n tou/ qelh,matoj auvtou/

**Translation: 1:11** “in whom also we were made a heritage having been predestined according to the purpose of the one who is working all things according to the counsel of His will.”

Tonight, we are looking at one of the strongest verses on Divine Sovereignty in the entire Bible. Let’s read it. **Ephesians 1:11** “*also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,*”.

There is a little problem with the translation here in this first phrase which is corrected in your margin. The correct translation is in your margin reads...

**VEN w-| kai. evklhrw,qhmen, “in whom also we were made a heritage”.** The NASB translates it, “we have obtained an inheritance”. But, for this phrase to refer to the believer’s possession of redemption, the forgiveness of sins, and the sealing of the Spirit is unneeded repetition. Instead, it is because of these benefits that the believers are God’s possession. This would take the truth one step further. “Not only do believers possess these benefits, but moreover, God possesses the believers because of all he has done for them.”<sup>iv</sup> Further the verb *kleroo* is in the passive voice which would indicate that this verse is not talking about believers obtaining an inheritance but that believers have been assigned to God as His inheritance or heritage. We do have an inheritance but this phrase is not talking about that. The phrase is teaching that we are His inheritance. Because of all the spiritual blessings He has given us we have become His heritage. We belong to Him. I like to translate this as “we were chosen as a possession” which is a very literal translation since the verb *kleroo* means “to choose or appoint by lot” and carries the idea of acquiring that possession. This translation has strength because of OT precedent. Israel was called a possession of God (Deut. 4:20; 7:6; 14:2) or heritage of God (Deut. 9:26, 29; 32:9).

It has been suggested here that Paul is making a contrast between “we”, Jewish Christians, and “you”, Gentile Christians, in the following verses as indicated by vv. 12-13. However, this is difficult to determine. The Jew/Gentile Christian distinction is clear in Eph. 2:11, but here Paul may be making the distinction between “we”, himself and other apostles, and “you”, his Ephesian audience, or this may just be an epistolary style. It is difficult to determine and so I will refrain from judging on this point.

**proorisqe,ntej kata. pro,qesin tou/ ta. pa,nta evnergou/ntoj “having been predestined according to the purpose of the one who is working all things”.** Here again we run into the word *predestination* as in v. 5. The Greek word *proorizo* means the same thing here, “to mark out beforehand, to determine beforehand” (cf. Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29f; 1 Co. 2:7; Eph. 1:5). We said the street definition of the term was “to pre-plan”. The example we used was pre-planning a party. Planning a party beforehand corresponds to God’s pre-planning a destiny for certain individuals beforehand. *Predestination* has more to do with the destiny than the persons enjoying the destiny. Election has to do with the persons who will enjoy that pre-planned destiny. As in v. 5 it is *causal* because it follows the verb. Therefore, it means that the *reason* or *cause* why we become God’s heritage or inheritance is because our destiny to be His heritage was pre-planned. God pre-planned our destiny to be one of being His inheritance. It had nothing to do with God foreseeing faith or any of that. Do you

see any of that in this verse? I don't, so, we can't bring that in as an explanation. We want to know the reason why. Many people make the mistake of thinking that because the Bible says it was because of God's will that the reason is God's will. The Bible does not equate the will of God with the reason. We are not privy to the reasons involved in God's deciding. Nevertheless, this pre-planned destiny finds its standard in the ***"purpose of the one who is working all things"***. This is demonstrated by *kata* with the accusative *prothesin*. *Kata* with the accusative always denotes the standard. So, the standard by which God predestined us to be His heritage was His purpose (Gk. *prothesis*; cf. Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11; 3:11). It was God's purpose, nothing outside of God's own eternal purpose was considered in pre-planning our destiny to be God's heritage. This means God did not consider what He knew I would or would not do in history as a basis for pre-planning His heritage. He pre-planned His heritage independent of anything outside of Himself. This purpose is followed by the phrase ***of the one*** which is a genitive of possession. This means that purpose is possessed by ***"the one who is working all things"***. It was His purpose. The word ***working*** is a participle of the Greek word *energeo*. From this word we get the English word "energy". We might say that God is "the one who energizes all things". It refers to God's power or energy working in the universe to carry out God's will. In 2:2 the same word "energy" is used of Satan's power working in unbelievers. It is foolish to think that in either regenerate or unregenerate state we are not influenced by supernatural powers. The Bible without reservation makes clear that there are greater, undetectable powers that impress themselves on the human will. We can even impress our powers on the will of others through the art of persuasion. The participle ***working*** is in the present tense and is active in voice. This means that God's ultimate purpose for the end of history is being worked out presently, the present working of God in the universe either directly or indirectly is the means by which God brings about His purpose. Since it is active in voice it means that God is taking an active part in ***all things***. The ***all things*** cannot be limited to things related to redemption but, just as the ***all things*** in v. 10 refers to all things in heaven and earth. How does God accomplish this? We'll look at how God accomplishes all things, including good and even evil and avoids being responsible for evil later tonight. Although I'm sure we won't answer every question you may have.

**kata. th.n boulh.n tou/ qelh,matoj auvtou "according to the counsel of His will."** Once again this is *kata* with the accusative. *Kata* with the accusative always denotes the standard by which something is done or accomplished. In other words, God works all things ***according to the counsel of His will***. There is a long debate over the relationship and definition of the two words ***counsel*** and ***will***. The Greek word for ***will*** is *thelema* and has already been used in 1:1, 5, and 9. The word basically means "resolve or desire". The Greek word for ***counsel*** is *boule* (Lk. 7:30; 23:51; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 5:38; 13:36; 20:27; 27:12, 42;

1 Co. 4:5; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17). *Boule* is a noun referring to an inward process that results in a decision. It therefore carries the idea of *deliberation* whether it involves a group of people who discuss an idea or whether it refers to an individual making a decision. God's will is not arbitrary. We do not worship a God of caprice who acts without and apart from reasons. But we have an all-wise God who acts in accordance with infinite wisdom and divine benevolence in ***all things***. According to Heb. 6:17 God's *boule* is unchangeable, fixed. Once God's careful deliberation results in a decision that decision is final and unchangeable. Man cannot thwart God's decisions in eternity past. Now for the doctrine tonight. Again, we are going to have to face Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility. First Divine Sovereignty and the Will of God...

## DIVINE WILL<sup>v</sup>

First, we have to look at the will of God. The will of God is that in God which puts into effect all that He has purposed to bring about (John 1:13; Rom. 8:27; 12:2; 1 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:5). God's will first of all is free.

## FREEDOM OF GOD'S WILL

What this means is that God's will is free in the sense that it is independent of all His creatures as well as all of their actions. Nothing outside of God conditions His will to act a certain way. Under the freedom of God's will there are three aspects to distinguish: The *Ultimate or Decreed Will* of God, the *Efficacious Will of God*, and the *Permissive Will* of God. The Ultimate Will of God means that God....

Another distinction in the freedom of God's will is that some of His purposes are *secret* and some are *revealed* (**Deuteronomy 29:29** “***The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.***”) Remember v. 9-10 and the mystery? Something unknown but now revealed. Even so there are still mysteries God has not revealed. These are a part of the secret will of God. That which is revealed, however, is for all believers!

## ULTIMATE OR DECREED WILL OF GOD (\*see chart on **3 Aspects of God's Will** as you study)

The *Ultimate Will* of God are things God brings to pass *directly*. All things under God's ultimate will are certain to take place. God's *direct* dealings involve the decrees of God and include the following: the purpose of God, the determinate counsel of God, the

foreknowledge, predestination, and election of God. God directly does these things apart from any mediating responsible agents such as angels or humans.

Nothing can stop these things from coming to pass. Whatever He has decreed to come to pass will definitely come to pass. (cf. **Isaiah 46:9-10a** “*For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done,*”)

#### EFFICACIOUS WILL OF GOD

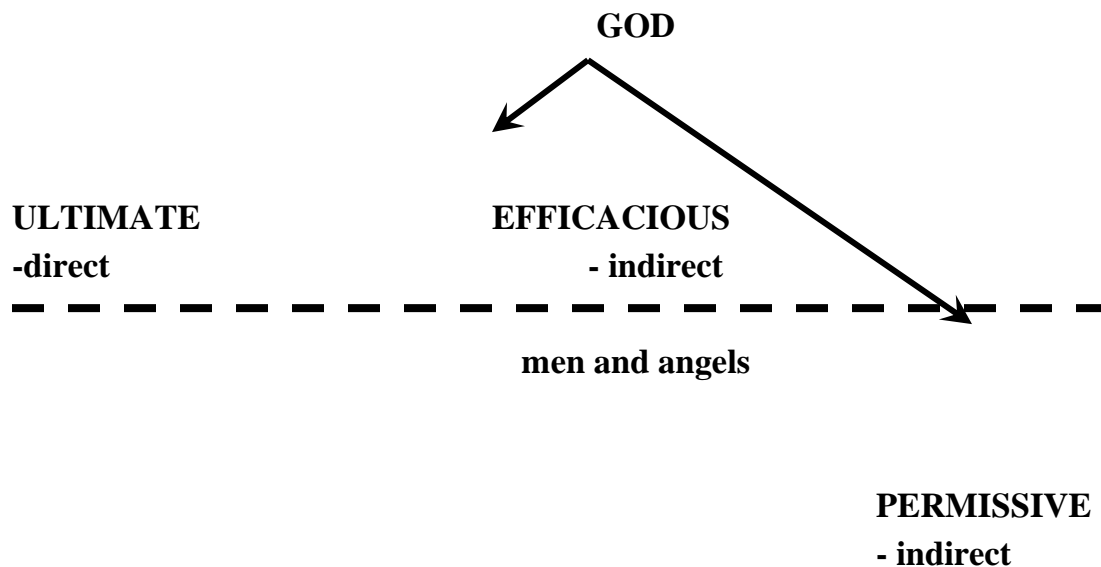
The second aspect of God’s will has to do with God bringing things to pass *indirectly*. These things are just as certain as things that God does *directly* but they come to pass *indirectly* through responsible agents, either angels or men. Theologians call this the *Efficacious Will* of God, meaning that God provides the capacity to produce a desired effect, through angels or humans. The efficacious will of God involves such things as the witnessing and the inspiration of Scripture. These are absolutely certain, guaranteed to take place but through the agency of angels and men. In both the *Ultimate* and *Efficacious* aspects of God’s will, God is responsible for causing His will to come to pass. (cf. **Isaiah 46:10b-11** “*Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; <sup>11</sup> Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.*”)

#### PERMISSIVE WILL OF GOD

The third aspect of God’s will is what some call the *Permissive Will* of God. As to God’s *permissive* will, this is something God allows to come to pass, even though it may be contrary to His moral will. God’s permissive will involves all the commands God gives us to follow. These are permissive in that God never forces us to follow His commands. The commands declare God’s will for our lives but He never forces us to follow His will. The permissive will of God may be resisted. Every time we reject one of His commands, although He knew we would reject it, we are out of the will of God. The *Permissive Will* of God therefore, offers a command which men may follow or reject. The entrance of sin into both the angelic and human realms falls under God’s permissive will. The fall of man would therefore be something He permitted to happen but did not cause to happen; therefore, He is not directly responsible.

Some people go to the extreme of saying that when we sin, we are doing God's will since everything that happens is God's will. This is confusing God's *ultimate will* and/or God's *efficacious will* with God's *permissive will*. What God *ultimately wills* and *efficaciously wills* is right because it always expresses His holy character. However, when we sin, this fits under God's *permissive will*. He detests all sin and must judge all sin. He is certainly not the cause of or responsible for sin. However, concerning some good and some evil things Christ prayed in Matt. 11:26, ***"Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."*** How can this be that even some evil things *seemed good in God's sight*? God uses evil to bring about the good. Remember that ***"God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose Romans 8:28).*** How God can do this is perhaps beyond Scriptural revelation (e.g., Stained Glass) and therefore this brings us to another and humbling aspect of God's will.

### 3 ASPECTS OF GOD'S WILL



**\*everything above the line God is responsible for. Everything below the line men and/or angels are responsible for.**

### SECRET VS. REVEALED WILL OF GOD

Granted that there are always difficulties insurmountable by the frail and limited human mind in respect to the relationship between divine sovereignty and the human will. Even the best human mind must admit that there are insuperable difficulties that no human can ever solve. Always remember that even within the three aspects of God's will that we have



presented tonight there is another aspect applying to all three; some of His purposes, whether flowing from God's ultimate, efficacious, or permissive will are *secret* and some are *revealed* (**Deuteronomy 29:29** "***The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.***") We should never suppose that all that is revealed is all that is known. There are certainly vast areas of the will of God that have gone unrevealed and are therefore unknown by men but perfectly known by God. So, the professional or amateur theologian is not to be discredited, but rather commended when he confronts the secret things of God and is able to say in all humility, "I do not know." Paul warns us not to go beyond Scripture (1 Cor. 4:6) because it results in arrogance. When we go beyond Scripture we inevitably engage in the rationalizations of human philosophy and speculations of which Paul again rebukes (cf. Col. 2:8). We are to be content with what God has revealed. Honest and full of integrity is the man who refuses to go beyond Scripture. Doubtful we all do at times, but we ought to strive to be content with what is revealed and leave the secret things to God.

On the other hand, however, we should not be content with only a partial knowledge of what is revealed in Scripture. This seems to be the greater problem in our time. People aren't interested in knowing what God has revealed or they just jump out on speculation leaving their Bible's on the shelf. Why? Because it takes too much time to study the Bible and to come to know it. Nevertheless, we ought to try to exhaust all that is revealed in Scripture regarding God's nature and not say that what is revealed is unknowable. If we say that what God has revealed is unknowable then we are basically saying that God is a bad communicator; He doesn't know how to communicate clearly to His creatures. That we certainly don't want to say! I had a dear Christian lady once ask me what course I was taking in seminary, I told her I was taking the Book of Revelation and she said, "Oh, I can't understand that book". I told her that since she was a believer, she certainly could understand that book of the Bible. God meant it to be understood and we are responsible to know it! It takes study to understand it but that doesn't remove the command to hide His word in our hearts or our responsibility to study it and know it, for in doing so we come to know Him.

Now that we have talked about the Divine Will what about the human will? What can we say about man's will?

CONCLUSION

Now that we have exegeted the verse let's back up and see what this leaves us with because this is an important verse in the Bible for understanding the sovereignty of God. Three words were important in this verse; *prothesin*, *boule*, and *thelema* (purpose, counsel, and will). These words are close in meaning but distinct. Commentators agree that if these words all have the same meaning then Paul is being very redundant. The word *prothesin* means the purpose or goal that God intends to accomplish. This purpose includes pre-planning our destiny to be God's heritage but it is not limited to that. God's purpose extends to "***all things***". Substantial agreement exists in that the difference between *boule* ("counsel") and *thelema* ("will") is that *boule* involves purpose and deliberation while *thelema* simply means "willingness". God's willing to do something requires His omnipotence. As L.S. Chafer said, "when God said, 'Let there be light: and there was light.' This is omnipotence operating through volition...The divine ability to bring a universe into existence out of nothing by volition is the grand manifestation of power. Such power belongs alone to God."<sup>vi</sup> Humans can cause nothing to exist by the force of his will. The basic thrust of the phrase is that God chooses after deliberating on the wisest course of action to accomplish his purpose. Thus, in this verse *boule* refers to a plan resulting from deliberation."<sup>vii</sup>

God has free will that operates under one of three aspects, ultimate will, efficacious will, or permissive will. God brings directly to pass everything under His ultimate will and these things are certain to occur. God brings indirectly to pass everything under His efficacious will and these things are certain to occur. Under God's permissive will He permits certain things to take place that are not His desires, for example, everything evil God permits, and He is therefore not directly responsible. However, even God turns His permissive will into good for those who love God. Man has a will; it is *created*, *finite*, *mutable*, and *fallen*. It is certainly under great impediments and needs to function properly. True freedom is only found where the Spirit of God is found and so, what was lost in the fall is partially restored only when we believe the gospel. Until that point the human will is free only to sin, and not free to righteousness. How one can therefore believe is the topic of this coming Sunday morning.

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<sup>i</sup> An important passage for premillennialism. Here the coming of the Holy Spirit and the coming of the Messianic Kingdom are clearly distinguished. They are presented by Jesus as two distinct times, the time of the Messianic Kingdom is fixed by the Father but this time was not to be known by the apostles (Acts 1:7); the time of the Holy Spirit's coming was revealed as ***not many days from now*** (Acts 1:5). This is a very important passage for establishing premillennialism and refuting Covenant Amillennialism and Covenant Postmillennialism, both which teach that the kingdom is being fulfilled now in the Church.

<sup>ii</sup> Hoehner, Harold. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 219

<sup>iii</sup> Constable, Tom, *Dr. Constable's Notes on Ephesians*

(<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ephesians.pdf>), 13. Constable cites Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* pp. 22-47.

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<sup>iv</sup> Hoehner, Harold W., *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 227.

<sup>v</sup> For an excellent resource on Divine Sovereignty and Free Will see Basinger & Basinger, *Predestination and Free Will* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1986). This work gives four views of how predestination and free will relate. The four views are 1) God ordains all things, 2) God knows all things, 3) God limits His power, and 4) God limits his knowledge. In my humble opinion, the only satisfactory view in light of Scripture is view 1) God ordains all things, in which John Feinberg, professor at Dallas Theological Seminary purports what is called *Compatibilism* or *Soft Determinism* in which there is genuine human freedom and yet God's plan is certain and cannot be thwarted at all. Man always acts in accordance with his desires, will, and wishes and is never forced to act contrary to his desires, will, or wishes in this view. The other views fail to line up with Scripture.

<sup>vi</sup> Chafer, L.S., *Systematic Theology: Vol 1* (), 209-210.

<sup>vii</sup> Basinger & Basinger, *Predestination and Free Will* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1986), 30.

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