



**F**OR whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.<sup>30</sup> Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)

The above passage flies in the face of those who advocate an Arminian<sup>1</sup> interpretation of Holy Scripture. But the meaning is precise and immutable. God knew His own elect before they were ever conceived in their mother's womb, and He draws them by the agency of the Holy Ghost to His bosom. Undeserved, unmerited GRACE is the means by which God draws His children.

The unsaved soul exists in a state of spiritual death until awakened by the Holy Ghost and called to Christ. Lazarus knew nothing at all while he lay in the mountain tomb at Bethany. He could neither think nor move. He was DEAD! There was no decision he could make to save his soul just as the spiritually dead can make no such decision in their own behalf. The sinful heart is without any merit at all to think or do good. Just as

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<sup>1</sup> Arminian - relating to the doctrines of Jacobus Arminius (Latinized name of Jakob Hermandszoon, 1560–1609), a Dutch Protestant theologian who rejected the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. His teachings had a considerable influence on Methodism.

Lazarus was made alive instantly by the Word of our Lord, so are sinners quickened (made alive) by the Voice of the Holy Ghost. Until that point, they remain in a state of total depravity. I refer the reader to the clear and unmistakable words of Paul:

**A**ND you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; <sup>2</sup> Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: <sup>3</sup> Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. <sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, <sup>5</sup> Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) <sup>6</sup> And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: <sup>7</sup> That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: <sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:1-9)

The heart of man can work no righteousness apart from the prevailing Spirit of god working in and through him. Even the plowing of the wicked is sin in the eyes of God. (Proverbs 21:4) <sup>5</sup> And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5)

The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion are the authoritative expression of the Doctrines set forth by the Reformation Church of England. Though some modern Anglicans disregard the Articles in favor of a more permissive gospel, Reformed Anglican churches, true to their faith, adhere to the Articles explicitly. There is one Article, the XVII, that is a hard pill to swallow for some, but it is based upon the precise language of Biblical Truth and has been a great comfort to all those who have believed in precise, plenary interpretation of Scripture. Every minister ordained in Holy Orders in our Church must not only assent to these Articles, but also accept them as a matter of faith and doctrine. Below is the Article on Grace and election:

#### ARTICLE XVII. Of Predestination and Election

*Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to ever-lasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through Grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity. As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation. Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture: and, in our doings, that Will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God.*

We in the Anglican Orthodox Communion will not compromise on the Articles of Religion or the biblical authority which underlies them.

Both our Lectionary, Daily Readings, and Collects reinforce Grace as the underlying means of our Salvation and not any works, or even thoughts, of man. This upcoming Sunday is the 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity. Please examine the Prayer of Collect and its meaning for that day:

### The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

#### *The Collect.*

**L**ORD, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent<sup>2</sup> and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

This Collect reminds me of a fundamental principle of learning – there are others, but this one is applicable to today’s Collect. That principle is *repetition aids retention*. It was one of those laws with which I became intimately familiar and one which I employed to great effect in my career in the training and education of military aviators. A maneuver often repeated will be remembered easily. A certain rule of meteorology, or of aerodynamics, often repeated and tested, will be retained over the lifetime of the military pilot. The Bible itself is a monument to this principle. We see the same principles of salvation, redemption, sanctification, etc., featured in multi-faceted accounts throughout the Holy Bible, and much to our profit. The same is true of the Collects which are, themselves, based on scriptural truths.

I once read of an event in the ministry of the great Charles Spurgeon in England. Mr. Spurgeon had given the exact SAME sermon four Sundays in a row. Frustrated and a bit indignant, one of the congregants asked him if he was aware that he had given the same sermon four Sundays running. Yes, I am aware of it, responded Spurgeon. But why the same sermon four times? asked the congregant. That is simple to explain, replied Spurgeon. When you begin to heed the sermon, I will go on to the next.

LORD, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent and follow us It is a mighty comfort to know that God’s grace not only follows in the wake of our service as the people of God, but even **PRECEDES** (another meaning of prevent) the Elect in his/her daily walk. We do not worry about walking down a darkened path upon which the Lord has set our foot, because we KNOW that He is ever both BEHIND and BEFORE us. He is as the **Pillar of Cloud by Day**, and **Pillar of Fire by Night**, to both lead and follow His people in the Wilderness journey of this world. If God places our feet on a path, we must go the distance in faith no matter the utter desolation along the way. I am reminded of a quote by the scientist, Robert Jastrow (an agnostic at best) who ironically wrote in his book, **God and the Astronomers**: *For the scientist who has lived by faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.*

.....and make us continually to be given to all good works. How can we be *given to good works*? It must have become a feature of our changed nature at the moment of conversion, and the sanctification that is to follow that conversion. It is the empowering genius of the Holy Spirit. Certainly, our salvation is none of our own doing, but the pure and whole work of grace; yet, the evidence of our salvation is the good works and purity of life that follows the soul’s salvation.

Our revered and martyred Archbishop Cranmer translated this Collect from the Sacramentary of Gregory. The Latin word from which he translated the word

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<sup>2</sup> Prevent is a word that has many uses, and at least one has fallen out of general usage as time has gone on. This is one of them. In this case the word prevent means *to go before*. Before you object to archaic words, consider this is a current word, it just has a use you may not have been aware of and now you are! What a bonus for this week!

'continually' is *uigiter*. This Latin word means *like an overflowing stream*. The grace granted to us to be called the sons and daughters of God is that same ceaseless grace that enables and directs our paths in righteous living. It is a sanctifying grace that continually refines our souls as the Refiners Fire. It never ceases, never becomes inadequate – but is ALWAYS profuse and wonderful in abundance. Lord, gives us that grace that inspired the early church to stand against a world of ignorance and superstition. Is the world so different today from that of the first century Romans?

An army in the field needs certain provision. It needs, first of all, a logistical train that follows in its path. But even more important: it needs a leader to go before. The Captain of the Corps sets the standard in courage, resourcefulness, perseverance, and conduct. We have the resources of heaven upon which to call for our supply and logistical base, and we have the Lord Jesus Christ as the Captain of our souls who has already scouted out, mapped, and led the way to the field of battle. He stands as the Ensign at the extreme edge of the Battlefield urging us, not to **go**, but to **FOLLOW** Him! What a wonderful God, and magnificent Lord who both leads and follows! Have you called upon that abundant provision of God? Have you looked to the Field Commander as your inspiration and courage to advance against the enemy (Satan and his legions)?