

# IS SHEPHERD AN HONORARY ROLE?

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There are two roles in the church which have at least a general job description, that of an Overseer and a Deacon. The reason for pointing that out here is to clarify that a Deacon is not an Overseer (Philippians 1:1), but rather, reports to the Overseers. Preacher, member, and similar roles would have obvious qualifications, but they are not listed out in the New Testament as the Overseers and Deacons are.

The qualifications of Overseers / Elders / Shepherds are listed in the following verses:

1 Timothy 3:1-7 | NASB "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of **overseer**, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer,

then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious), but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."



Continued on page 3

## GET STARTED NOW

You were busy on the first. Too much company on the third. In a hurry on the fourth. And here it is - the middle of the month and you haven't started your Bible reading yet. Maybe a "Quick Start," guide will get you back in the book.

You rarely miss mealtime, so that's a good consistent time to think of Bible reading. Put your Bible on the table or take it with you. Or just read it on your smart phone! Set your smart phone timer to five minutes and get started. Oh, yes, what are we going to read?

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## HANGING BY A THREAD

Nothing is impossible with God. It is the choice of man to pursue either a path of self-destruction or the path of salvation. God delights in those who seek Him and his covenant of salvation established by His Son, Jesus Christ for all who believe in Him, follow him and serve him. His will is that all come to know him as he reveals himself by the outreach of his disciples as they are transformed into his likeness by the Holy Spirit living within them. Christian disciples cannot be a light to the world if they are intimidated to live in the dark.

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## GET STARTED NOW, p. 2

Let's get practical and go for common sense. Read Proverbs or James for five minutes a day. You could read a few verses to your lunch companions. Wow, can you think of a better conversation starter? That would get things going.

We want guidance for real life. It's in there! Skip Genesis and Matthew this time, we've all started there too many times. Pick a theme to look for in your reading. Faith, hope, love, peace – what do you need right now? Highlight the Holy Spirit in yellow and see how often he is mentioned. Look for all the, "One Another," passages. What is Jesus teaching that is different from the old law?

Every page of the Bible is about Jesus. The message began in the Old Testament with, "He's coming." The New Testament tells us, "He came." And praise God, "He's coming again." What does he expect to find when he comes? What do we need to know to be ready for his coming?

Bible reading is about more than gaining knowledge. It is about finding motivation to live a godly life through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Now is the time. Today is the day. Get started now.

Elizabeth Brown

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TEAM TO WIN OR MICRO-  
MANAGING TO DISENGAGE  
THEM AND LOSE?**



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## HANGING BY A THREAD p. 2

Jesus concentrated his message on reconciling the Israelite “religious” to God. He “preached to the choir” of Priests, Pharisees and Sadducees charged with guiding “God’s chosen people” back onto the path charted by Abraham, Moses, and the Prophets who obeyed God. However, the priests and the choir had forgotten and rejected the Word given to them, becoming barren of spirit and unable to convey the joy of truth to the people.

Two thousand years after the Son of God reached out personally to give supernatural witness of God’s love and determination to redeem all humans to himself by his teaching, sacrifice on a Roman cross, resurrection and commissioning of Spirit filled disciples to go into the entire world to declare his message and witness the power of his promise, many of “His people” have also forgotten their charge to remain unified as His Church, praising God for His victory over sin.

Many “churches” of our time no longer sing and glorify God together, but squabble, divide and diverge along many spiritual paths at the beckoning of leaders proclaiming “new truth”, “new ways”, and new guidelines for reconciling all “religions” of the world to the cause of “world peace” available by “unconditional love of God”. (This platform for a progressive future overlooks the “condition” so clearly explained by Jesus: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6)

In view of the chaos and conflict brewing and boiling over in American cities fomented by angry rhetoric among groups who despise one-another, it seems that the American culture of “one Nation under God” that once defined the aspirations and hope of the world has become a dim memory of a sickened and demented population. Even the church suffers from spiritual dementia. The last remaining

thread of hope to stimulate conscious perception of a once grateful and righteous nation “may” be found in the power of that musical genre of patriotic hymns, songs, and praises once sung with joy and enthusiasm by a people unified in victory over the evil that challenged their Godly endowment of rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Who would lead us in song and teach the world to sing along? Let us pray for those courageous souls who may step forward with song to calm the storms and weave the gospel message back into the faded tapestry that was woven to symbolize a Godly Republic.

Our thread of hope: “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14

Larry Grubbs, Harrison, Ohio

**FOOTBALL IS A BETTER METAPHOR FOR THE CHURCH THAN GOLF.**

**IN GOLF ONE PERSON CAN PLAY ALONE AND BE THE TEAM CAPTAIN AND THE PLAYER, AND CAN WIN BY HIMSELF.**

**IN FOOTBALL IF THE COACH WANTS TO BE THE TEAM CAPTAIN AND PLAYER, HE WILL LOSE. THE COACHING LEADERSHIP MUST MENTOR, TRAIN, AND LEAD THE PLAYERS TO GO OUT AND PLAY THE GAME, OR THE TEAM WILL LOSE.**

## IS SHEPHERD AN HONORARY ROLE?, p. 2

1 Timothy 5:17-22 | NASB “The **elders** who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” Do not receive an accusation against an **elder** except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.”



Titus 1:5-11 | NASB “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint **elders** in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the **overseer** must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.”

We discussed two issues ago that Deacon was not an honorary role, but rather that a Deacon would be expected to use his talents

and position to assist in accomplishing in the Great Commission.

It would probably be good here to discuss the difference in the roles of Deacons and Shepherds. They are two different roles and frequently we presume that Deacon is a training role to become a Shepherd. That is certainly reasonable to an extent and there are men who can serve well as a Deacon and then a Shepherd. Some would think that serving well as a Deacon would be prerequisite to becoming a Shepherd. However, we are also going to suggest without giving proof that there are men who would serve well as a Deacon and not as a Shepherd and men who will serve well as a Shepherd and not as a Deacon.

### The role of the Shepherd / Overseer / Elder is to:

1. Oversee the flock,
2. Rule well,
3. Be devoted to prayer and ministry of the word,
4. Take care of the church of God (Not a reference to church buildings, which did not exist in the first century),
5. Hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching,
6. Exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict, and
7. “Silence rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain”, or

in other words **to shepherd the flock.**

Continued on page 5



## IS SHEPHERD AN HONORARY ROLE?, p. 3

### The role of the Deacon is to:

1. Be in subjection to the Shepherds / Overseers / Elders,
  2. Be a servant to the congregation, and
  3. Take care of the Grecian widows (and similar tasks), or
- in other words **to do and manage tasks.**

### SEPARATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

A key to this separation of responsibilities is seen in Acts 6:1-6 where the Apostles (as prototype Shepherds) appointed seven good men (as prototype Deacons) to be in charge of the task of serving food to the Grecian widows. The Shepherds had the oversight and delegated the responsibility of doing a task to the Deacons so that the Shepherds could devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word (verse 4).

This is not to say that some of a Shepherd activities will not be task oriented and that some of a Deacon's activities will not be shepherding oriented, but it does say where the bulk of the focus of each role should be. Additionally, all should be involved in personal evangelism.

### ELDERS DOING DEACON WORK

A common problem seen in Churches of Christ today is that when a Deacon becomes and Elder, he will take his Deacon responsibilities along with him as he goes. After all he has been doing these tasks for a while and is better at them than the younger, less experienced men doing the task. He can do his deacon work even better, now having the authority of being an Elder. Over time, more and more trivial task-oriented decisions become the domain of the Elders, and Deacons are progressively more disenfranchised.

This process is well intentioned, however is a significant component of what is causing the decline of Churches of Christ today.

A first suggestion for this particular problem is that when a Deacon becomes a Shepherd, the Deacons left in charge should have a different Shepherd as the liaison to assist the new Deacons in charge in fully taking charge. The frequent decision to have the Ex-Deacon as a liaison makes good sense, but seems to discourage initiative in the next generation.

A second suggestion is that if a Deacon would rather remain doing and managing tasks rather than Shepherding the flock, let him remain a Deacon. If he becomes a Shepherd

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and continues doing the Deacon work instead of shepherding work, he is taking the role of Shepherd as an honorary role only, and is not honoring it. (I don't see it as not honoring the role of elder, I see it as having trouble letting go of the old role because he is used to it and good at it.)

A third suggestion is written job descriptions to give everyone clarity on what is expected and who is expected to do it. The process of delegating by verbal instructions is replete with opportunities of scope drift and lack of accountability.

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## IS SHEPHERD AN HONORARY ROLE?, p. 4

When most congregations first get Shepherds, they have been in a situation where all business has been conducted in congregational business meetings. This means that everyone was well informed in what is characteristically the fastest growing phase of a congregation's life. Over time and with additional Shepherds added, more and more authority is consolidated in the Elderships and others are more and more disenfranchised. **Ultimately when the majority of the membership feels disenfranchised, the church will stop growing and die.** You may or may not be able to provide a clear cause and effect relationship for this, but the correlation of a high degree of members feeling disenfranchised and church decline can be established. (Right, so this is part of the possible decline in membership.

Be sure and include the congregation in decisions and get input from them as church growth is a team effort.)

Elderships do not strive to disenfranchise members, but the process leading to this is the "path of least resistance" in many situations and functionally happens naturally. Leadership is not letting this happen on an unintended basis, but rather leadership is preventing it from happening. The Shepherd should not do a "deacon" task because in the short term it is easier to do it than put up with less qualified, less motivated Deacons or members. Shepherds should do the harder task in the short term of mentoring Deacons and members to become more active in the work of the church. It is harder in the short term, but ultimately better in the long term.

### DOING WHAT GRANDPA DID

Another way in which some Shepherds do not honor the role of Shepherd is to do what worked 50 years ago and feel that they are justified by doing it. It is fairly easy to observe and read statistics which indicate that the

church in the US was declining 1.71% annually before Covid-19, and is likely declining much faster now. What we are doing now is not working well. Fifty years ago the world was much friendlier to Christianity and many congregations could grow just by existing. It is seldom true anymore.

**It is not true today, and if your congregation is to have any hope of accomplishing your part of the Great Commission, it will be a serious team effort.** What it will take to grow your congregation is unique to your area and your set of members. A church growth consultant may come and give you some needed insights, but ultimately you will have to make a plan which works for you. If you do not make the plan with your Deacons and members, there is little chance of it working.

**IT WILL BE A SERIOUS TEAM EFFORT.**

Oddly enough, the shepherding part of the problem is likely very similar to what it was 50 or 2000 years ago. The "deacon" or methods / tasks part of the problem is what changes most with times. If you have functionally disenfranchised your workers and tried to have the Shepherds do the "deacon" work, you have most likely destined your congregation to a slow death.

**In summary, Shepherd / Elder / Overseer in the Lord's church is an honor but it is not an honorary role. It is the most important role a man can take on this earth,** and it comes with a great responsibility for both yourself and the congregation.

Benton F. Baugh, Ph.D., P.E.

If anyone would like to post and article supporting, correcting, or contradicting this, let us know at [info@occg.institute](mailto:info@occg.institute).

## IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION #114 - LYMPHATIC SYSTEM

We are all familiar with the complex web of blood vessels leading to tiny capillary tubes which in turn lead to a complex web of veins which lead back to the heart.

There is an additional complex web of tubing within our bodies which is less familiar to most of us and is shown in blue on the figure to the right. It is the lymphatic system. The lymphatic system is part of the body's immune system which provides a defense against disease causing organisms.

Lymph is a watery fluid that leaks out of our blood vessels and accumulates in the spaces between the cells in our body tissues. This fluid drains into lymph capillaries and then into larger vessels known as lymphatics. The lymphatics are studded with filters called nodes which contain specialized white blood cells that neutralize or destroy micro-organisms in lymph before it returns to the blood stream.

The lymph is circulated by the action of body muscles, which pushes the fluid through a series of one-way valves as is shown in the lower figure.

The lymphatic system is another intelligently designed system which requires massive DNA programming to implement. It is hard to imagine anyone thinking a massively complex system such as this just happens by chance mutations, but some people do.

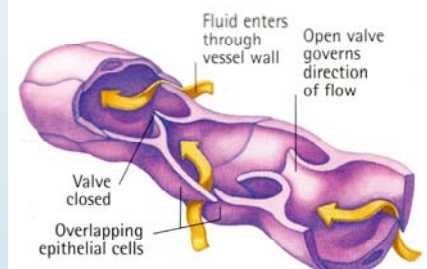
The lymphatic system is to guard the body against dangerous micro-organisms. If you wanted to believe in creation of characteristics by evolution, you would not think it would begin its accidental design process until it was attacked by harmful micro-organisms. When the body is attacked by harmful micro-organisms, it once again doesn't have a million years to respond. It needs protection right now. It doesn't need protection at some starting point in the body, it needs protection all over the body.

The scientific conclusion to seeing a complex design like this which requires substantial DNA programming to accomplish would be that an Intelligent Designer designed and implemented the system. It would not be scientific to say that it is just a series of fortunate accidental mutations. That someone can say that it would be scientific does not make it scientific. Let someone who would say that show the logic to the statement. We cannot find it.

Benton F. Baugh



Images from Human Body by Dorling Kindersley  
(A really good book to have)



**Lymph capillary**  
Fluid (lymph) from body tissues enters lymph capillaries through the vessel walls. Its direction of flow is regulated by a system of valves that prevent backflow.



## CHURCH GROWTH: WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

**CONCLUSION:** If your congregation is not growing, it would be unreasonable to blame the non-growth on the individual members.

On numerous occasions elders and preachers have mumbled about lazy and inactive members and deacons.

It might be interesting to investigate who these lazy and inactive individuals are.

### WHAT THEY ARE NOT:

One thing which will characterize members is what they are not. They are not:

1. Smarter or less smart on average than the rest of the world.
2. Wealthier or less wealthy on average than the rest of the world.
3. Healthier or less healthy on average than the rest of the world.

It is probably reasonable to say that they are simply a collection of people from the world.

### WHAT THEY ARE:

1. People who will give of their monies for no physical return on the investment and would be characterized as feeling guilty if they do not do so.
2. People who will give of their time to the work of the church, and would be characterized as feeling guilty if they do not do so.
3. Highly moral individuals – well above the rest of the world.
4. People who understand that it is a sin to unreasonably complain and want to give the system the best chance possible to work. This does not mean that they will not complain or criticize when they understand it to be appropriate.
5. People who want to sing in public.
6. Some of the individuals are committed to the cause such that they would die rather than deny the cause.
7. You can see Presidents of major corporations and highly affluent individuals serving communion or meals to those much less well off. Where else will you see this?

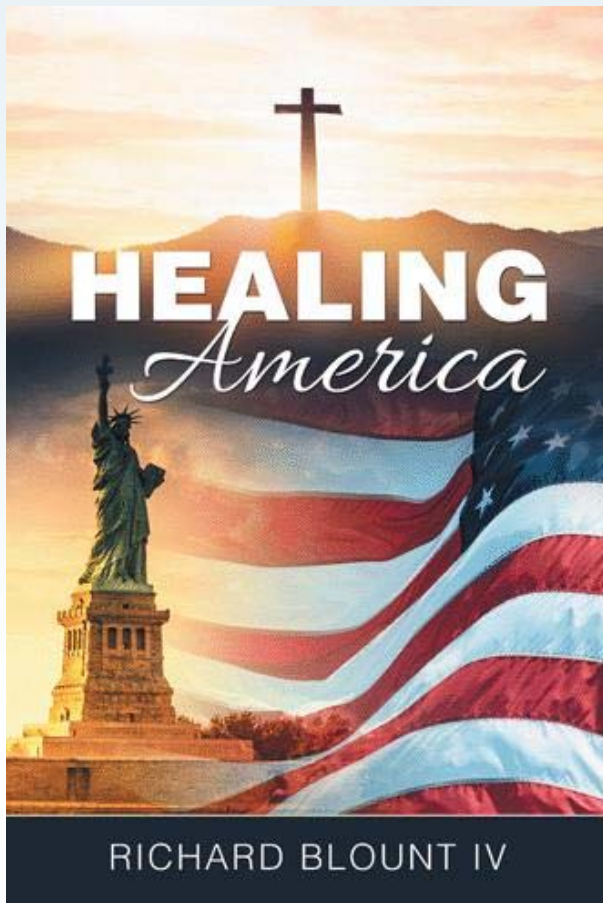
### WHAT DID JESUS CALL THEM:

Jesus called them sheep. Sheep tend to just mill about unless the shepherd leads them someplace.

If you are the leader of a congregation and seek to blame non-growth on the individual members, we would suggest that you seek another reason. Although there are a variety of reasons for a congregation not growing, a likely reason would be that the freewill efforts of the congregation are not being well coordinated.







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Healing America explores the problems, causes, solutions, and benefits of being an American. Blount investigates this history, culture, perceptions, responsibilities, and challenges that come with those topics and shares alternatives to vindication, such as listening, humility, and empathy. With an intentional and purposeful approach to the country's healing process, he aims for healthy relationships as the ultimate goal. Finally, he presents the benefits of being part of America and the joy that comes with the opportunities we share in the United States. This study examines stressors in the United States stemming from perception and fear, offering ways to diagnose those pains and respond to them in a more spiritually mature and effective way.

### About the author:

Richard Blount IV is a Houston native that holds an assortment of titles. Husband of Gwendolyn Blount and father of three wonderful kids. Over 21 years Client Solution Executive at AT&T. Cyber Security Certification, Minister Certification, Real Estate Broker, Criminal Justice Degree. Now Author.

This book can be purchased for \$19.95 at:  
Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, and Westbow Publishing

**SUMMARY:** A doctrine cannot be true if it violates the free moral agency of man, his free will to believe or not to believe in God and Jesus and be judged for his actions. Contemporary understanding of the word predestination is that people are irrevocably called to salvation before birth and will go to Heaven irrespective of the "quality" of their earthly life. This understanding conflicts with other scriptures.

## **CONTEMPORARY DEFINITIONS**

**PREDESTINATION:** That a person's eternal destiny is determined by God before the person is born and is irrevocable irrespective of the goodness or badness of the earthly life he lives.

**FREE MORAL AGENCY:** The concept that a person is free to make moral choices in this life and that the person's eternal fate is conditional upon the choices which the person makes. The term "free moral agency" is not found in the Bible.

## **DISCUSSION:**

Before reading this lesson, the reader should review the verses included on the third page.

The Bible clearly teaches the concept of free moral agency and predestination as the verses in this lesson indicate. Our understanding of the scriptures cannot be that we choose which verses to believe, our understanding must take all scriptures into account. God is not the author of the confusion which would (and does) result by different groups choosing which verses to accept in their teachings. (I Cor. 14:33)

## **FACTS:**

The following are facts which are easy to document in the New Testament, and are documented in the attached verses:

1. Predestination is a scriptural concept
2. All are called to repentance.
3. Jesus died for us all, not just a select few.
4. God's calling is irrevocable.
5. We are able to fall from grace, so our calling is not irrevocable in some sense.

## **WHAT DOES THE WORD PREDESTINATION MEAN?**

As we stated before the contemporary understanding of the word predestination is that a person's eternal destiny is determined by God before the person is born and is irrevocable irrespective of the goodness or badness of the earthly life he lives. Contemporary usage of the word "baptism" means a variety of acts from immersion to sprinkling of babies with a few

drops of water. Scholars universally accept that the word "baptism" in the first century meant immersion, so scriptural baptism would be by the example of immersion. Has the word "predestination" undergone a similar change?

Let us suggest alternate meanings of the word predestination:

1. That a person's eternal destiny is determined by God before the person is born and is irrevocable irrespective of the goodness or badness of the earthly life he lives.
2. All are predestined to be called (invited), there is room for all in Heaven, but you must accept the invitation to be saved.

Clearly the first definition of predestination conflicts with the need for a universal call to repentance, the need for Jesus to die for all, and the ability of Christians to fall from grace. The definition must be modified in some way to make it compatible with the remainder of the scriptures.

The second definition basically teaches that the calling is predestined and that Jesus would die for our sins was predestined from the beginning of time. That definition would be in harmony with the other scriptures, although a new discussion arises as to how all are called. It is a whole different discussion, however, Romans 1:18-20 and Romans 2:14 indicate that God's creation teaches about God and all have a chance to believe in God. Each will be judged based upon his response to whatever opportunity he or she has.

Where did the contemporary definition of predestination come from? It appears to be basically originated and/or promoted by John Calvin in the 16th century during the Protestant Reformation. John Calvin and others did wonders in breaking away from the Catholicism which had gripped the world for several centuries. In some cases in situation such as he faced, some new doctrines become reactions to Catholicism, rather than a return to pure New Testament Christianity. Predestination to salvation rather than predestination to the call to salvation appears to be one of these situations.

#### VERSES WHICH SUPPORT PREDESTINATION

1. Romans 8:28-30 "whom He predestined, these He also called;..justified..glorified" (past tense?)
2. Romans 11:29 "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."
3. Ephesians 1:4-5 "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world....He predestined us to adoption...."
4. Ephesians 1:11 "having been predestined according to His purpose...."



**VERSES INDICATING THAT ONLY A PORTION ARE CALLED**

1. John 6:37: "All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me; and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."
2. Matt 22:14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

**VERSES INDICATING THAT JESUS DIED FOR ALL**

1. Romans 8:32 "but delivered Him up for us all, ...."
2. Hebrews 2:9 "...that He might taste of death for every one."

**VERSES INDICATING THAT ALL ARE CALLED**

1. Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,"
2. Mark 16:15-16 "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."
3. Acts 2:38 "let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins...." (to a large audience)
4. Romans 10:9 "if you confess with your mouth....you shall be saved"
5. Romans 10:21 "All the day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." God offered, people refused (could not be predestined according to current definition of the word or the people wouldn't have the option to refuse.)

**VERSES INDICATING THAT SALVATION IS CONDITIONAL ON YOUR ACTIONS**

1. Mark 16:15-16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved;"
2. Acts 2:38 "let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins...."

**VERSES INDICATING THAT YOU CAN FALL FROM GRACE (A SAVED STATE)**

1. Matthew 13:41 "and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks...."
2. I Cor. 9:27 "I buffet my body....lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified." (Paul himself was concerned about going to Hell.)
3. I Cor. 10:12 "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (You cannot fall from salvation if you are not there.)
4. Gal. 5:4 "you have fallen from grace."
5. I Tim. 4:1 "some will fall away from the faith,"
6. Hebrews 4:12 "in falling away from the living God."

# ***TOPICAL STUDIES***

## **PREDESTINATION VS FREE MORAL AGENCY**

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7. James 5:19-20 "in any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins."
8. II Peter 2:20-22 "escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled...."

Surely the word predestination in the Bible means something other than the conventional understanding of irrevocable calling.



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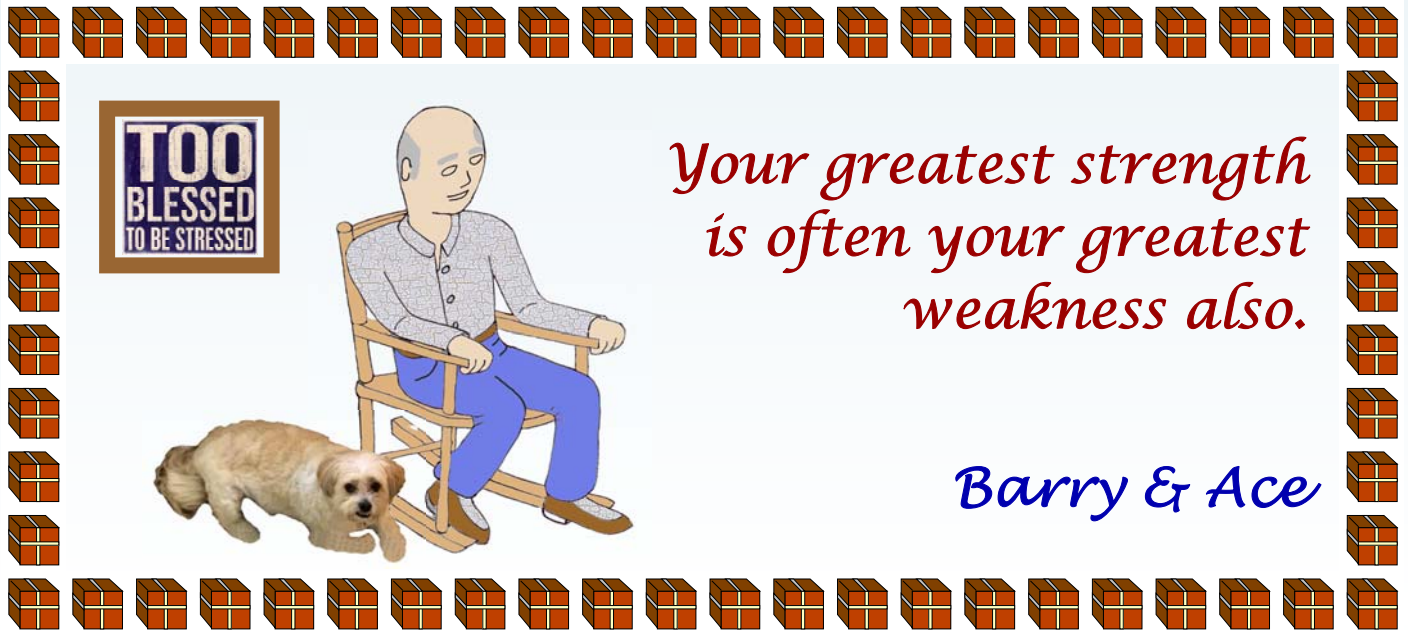


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