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## God Sovereignly bestows the revelation of salvation on whomever He wishes

Salvation is a *revelatory process* which comes by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

### New life for some

Sinners are saved when God regenerates them (gives them new life) and they are born again. Consider how Jesus rejoices in the fact that some receive this revelation from God and some do not.

**Matthew 11:25-28:** <sup>25</sup>At that time Jesus answered and said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that **Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes.** <sup>26</sup>**Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight.** <sup>27</sup>All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; **nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."**

Consider also Scripture's plain declaration that God is responsible for the blindness of some.

**Romans 11:7-10:** <sup>7</sup>What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, **but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;** <sup>8</sup>just as it is written, "**God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day.**" <sup>9</sup>And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, And a stumbling block and a retribution to them. <sup>10</sup>**Let their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs forever."**

**Isaiah 6:8-10:** <sup>8</sup>Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" <sup>9</sup>And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.'  
<sup>10</sup>**Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Lest they see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed."**

Human beings *cannot* do anything to save themselves because they are dead in trespasses and sins. They are *naturally unable* to even understand and accept the Gospel. The only way they can be saved is for God to fulfill His electing process through His work of *regeneration*. He does this by freely and sovereignly giving His elect understanding of sin, righteousness and judgment, which ultimately brings them to repentance, faith, and conversion. **Charles Hodge** explains:

*God is no less sovereign in the distribution of his favours. He does what He wills with his own. He gives to some riches, to others, honour; to others, health; while others are poor, unknown, or the victims of disease. To some, the light of the gospel is sent; others are left in darkness. Some are brought through faith unto salvation; others perish in unbelief. To the question, Why is this? the only answer is that given by our Lord. "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight."*<sup>34</sup>

Is it not apparent and amazing that God has had a special love relationship with the elect from all eternity? His foreknowledge and election of them for salvation surely reflects His deep love for them! Although we finite human beings cannot fully understand why God chose some for salvation and left others in their sinful state, we do know that His attributes always operate in

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<sup>34</sup>Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), vol. 1: 441.

perfect harmony with each other. Thus, God's sovereignty is always exercised in perfect harmony with His goodness, love, wisdom, and justice.

**Question #163:** Carefully consider Matthew 11:25-28, Romans 11:7-10, Isaiah 6:8-10, and the above quote from Charles Hodge. Then in your own words, explain the *necessity* of regeneration and revelation in salvation. \_\_\_\_\_  
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### Reprobation for others

Since God elects some people to be saved out of the whole of humanity, He obviously passes over those He does not choose. This is called *reprobation*. Wayne Grudem defines *reprobation* as follows:

When we understand election as God's sovereign choice of some persons to be saved, then there is necessarily another aspect of that choice, namely, God's sovereign decision to pass over others and not to save them. This decision of God in eternity past is called reprobation. *Reprobation is the sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons, in sorrow deciding not to save them, and to punish them for their sins, and thereby to manifest his justice.*<sup>35</sup>

The Scripture speaks of this reality in many places. Here are just a few:

**Psalm 92:5-9:** <sup>5</sup>How great are Thy works, O LORD! Thy thoughts are very deep. <sup>6</sup>A senseless man has no knowledge; Nor does a stupid man understand this: <sup>7</sup>That when the wicked sprouted up like grass, And all who did iniquity flourished, **It was only that they might be destroyed forevermore.** <sup>8</sup>**But Thou, O LORD, art on high forever.** <sup>9</sup>**For, behold, Thine enemies, O LORD, For behold, Thine enemies will perish; All who do iniquity will be scattered.**

**Romans 9:17-21:** <sup>17</sup>For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, **"For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth."** <sup>18</sup>**So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.** <sup>19</sup>You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" <sup>20</sup>On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? <sup>21</sup>**Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?**

**Romans 11:6-8:** <sup>6</sup>But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. <sup>7</sup>What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but **those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;** <sup>8</sup>just as it is written, **"God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day."**

**1 Peter 2:7-8:** <sup>7</sup>This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone," <sup>8</sup>and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, **and to this doom they were also appointed.**

This fact is terrible, but nonetheless true. Although the reality of hell and damnation is difficult to consider, it is an essential part of God's eternal plan. Reprobation and damnation serve His ultimate purpose of manifesting of His glory. Scripture clearly teaches these difficult truths.

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<sup>35</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan), 684.

**Exodus 9:13-17:** <sup>13</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, “Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me. <sup>14</sup>For this time **I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth.** <sup>15</sup>For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would have been cut off from the earth. <sup>16</sup>But, indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, **in order to show you My power, and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.** <sup>17</sup>Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go.””

**Proverbs 16:4:** The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, **Even the wicked for the day of evil.**

Nevertheless, God experiences very real sorrow when anyone perishes.

**Ezekiel 18:32:** “For **I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,**” declares the Lord GOD. “Therefore, repent and live.”

**Wayne Grudem** comments: “*But it might be objected at this point, if God genuinely feels sorrow at the punishment of the wicked, then why does he allow it or even decree that it will come about? The answer must be that God knows that this will ultimately result in greater glory for himself. It will show his power and wrath and justice and mercy in a way that could not otherwise be demonstrated. Certainly in our own human experience it is possible to do something that causes us great sorrow but which we know will result in long-term greater good. And so, after this faint human analogy, we may somewhat understand that God can decree something that causes him sorrow yet ultimately will further his glory.*”<sup>36</sup>

**Question #164:** Describe your initial reaction to the doctrine of reprobation. \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question #165:** How do the Bible passages quoted above and the words from Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* enhance your appreciation of the the doctrine of reprobation (i.e., how do they help you view this doctrine from the right perspective)? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Election comforts and fills us with thanksgiving as it glorifies God**

The doctrine of election comforts those whom God has chosen by assuring us of the certainty of our salvation. If God has chosen to save us, can anyone thwart His intended purpose? **NO!** Our salvation has been securely ordained by God’s eternal decree from before the world began.

**2 Timothy 1:8-10:** <sup>8</sup>Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, <sup>9</sup>**who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,** <sup>10</sup>but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, <sup>11</sup>for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.

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<sup>36</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine.* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan), 686.