

Round Top Church Christian Fellowship

Sermon Series in 1 Peter

1 Peter 1:3

We Are All God's Choice To Save

February 5th, 2017 A.D.

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(All Scripture is from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.)

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Why start this sermon with this verse? This verse, like many others, highlight the *sovereignty* of God. The Bible and theologians, throughout history and today, recognize God as the source, the origin, of all things. What caused us to be born again? Who is the one that makes it possible for all mankind to be saved? God did! God does! God put forth His great mercy, grace and love to accomplish the Believer's salvation. Salvation, cannot, and does not start, with fallen totally depraved man. Man has no compacity to initiate salvation. When man, or his institutions, attempt to initiate salvation they create inquisitions and medieval crusades. They create exclusive clubs where robed leaders create systems for them to be worshiped.

God, as the Creator, created all that is. The result of this is that a God created a creation with His intended "will" to be carried out, and at the same time created us with the ability to freely choose Him. Therefore, man has the ability not to choose God. We will discuss this later. I understand

that people with a hyper-predestination (Calvinistic) point of view take exception to this biblical truth.

I write this (letter) to reach-out to those who are hurting due to illness and have suffering health.

Being a pastor, I see that it is my responsibility to share my story in order to be a witness of the Lord working in our lives. I have observed non-believers mock and sneer at Christians who get sick. No one has said any of the following statements to me. However, before I became ill, I have read and been in conversations previously when the follow statements where said.

Where is your Jesus now?

Why doesn't your Jesus get off His Cross and rescue you?

Why would your God allow you to become ill?

Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?

How can a merciful God allow one of His pastor-servants to become ill?

Unfortunately, these statements are made by people who totally misunderstand the creation in which we live. These statements are made by people who have not experienced God working in their lives. I know many Believers struggle with the same questions. They cannot answer them. I have heard over the years' preachers and Believers refer to the book of Job in an attempt to qualify their pain and the seemingly innocent suffering of man. This often turns to fatalism. I have prayerfully studied, written and preached on Job many times. After having cancer, my understanding of Job has not changed. In fact, my view, belief and understanding of Job have become stronger. Job is not an innocent man that suffered needlessly. Listen carefully; Job's losses of family and health

were due to his choice to sin. One must read the whole book of Job to see this. Job is guilty of assuming God's role as intermediary. Most people do not get past the first few chapters. This is due to the fact that most sermons and teachings focus on the first few chapters and not all forty-two chapters.

In my case, I got cancer because we live in a fallen world where the whole creation moans for salvation (Romans 8:22). I will discuss this after a review of my experience of being a cancer patient.

My Cancer Cliff Note Version

I began to have symptoms diagnoses in August of 2015. In September, the official diagnoses were determined. The treatment to arrest the disease took about sixteen months with continuing tests. Those of us who are cancer patients know that the medical community monitors us for five years. At that point, if the cancer does not reappear, then you are considered to be in a category that the cancer will most likely not come back. Some doctors may use the word "cured" at that point, but hesitantly accompanied by "what we don't know." I now await my next checkup in late March of this year, 2017.

Many of you know that in the past few years I have gone through treatment for a heart condition along with having bladder cancer. I was 56 years old when my doctor placed one stent in my heart to keep me alive. There are many people who have gone through this procedure and are living productive lives. Heart stents are somewhat common today and enable us to live. My father had quadruple by-pass surgery in his mid-fifties. He repeated the same surgery in his mid-seventies. He is 88 years old now. I knew, due to genetics, I would have a heart problem. Fortunately for me, I only had one stent. However, cancer was not in my family genetics.

When I was 57, the doctors diagnosed me with bladder cancer. Many people have had cancer. Today, many survive as compared to a few years ago. The early detection, treatment and a person's overall health determine their survival rate. This all seems easier to talk about now. Like all of us who have been diagnosed with cancer, we received a shock when first advised by our doctor that we had a terminal disease. Here are the facts.

I was first diagnosed in September of 2015. My first doctor removed two cancer growths in my bladder through a surgical procedure in the first week of October 2015. However, he was not convinced that he had removed all the cancer and referred me to M.D. Anderson. Ten days after this initial surgery, the healing-wall of blood in my bladder came loose. This created severe pain and obstruction. I was at my parent's 60th wedding anniversary dinner in Austin, Texas. My son (Chris) rushed me to a local hospital. I spent four days in intensive care. My blood count went down to about one-third what it was supposed to be. I received the first blood transfusion in my life at that time. Renee was in New Hampshire visiting our daughter. Personal attacks do not always wait for your spouse to be around you when your health crashes. I did have Chris and my older brother, Mark, at the emergency room. This was one of the few times in my life I thought that I may not make it. When my son arrived with me at the hospital ambulance emergency entrance, the door was locked. Chris pounded on the door until the nurse came. I entered the hallway and collapsed. I crawled forward in an attempt to stand; I could not. The nurse came with a wheel chair. She rolled me into a treatment room. The first pain shot that they gave me did not touch the pain. I was bleeding internally and could hardly speak through the pain. By this time, blood was visibly present and the situation became more obvious and bluntly acute to the medical staff. The doctor came in and finally gave me morphine. I woke up the next morning. I looked at the nurse standing over me and my first

question was. . . “How many patients do you have?” “You are the only one.” I knew from my life experience from being a Houston Police Officer, I was in trouble. I realized I was in ICU. I was there four days.

A few weeks later, I had my first appointment at M.D Anderson. There, we were given the hard facts. In my case, we were told I had a hole in my bladder wall from the previous surgery or perhaps from the emergency procedures in Austin. The doctors were concerned that the cancer had spread through the hole into the surrounding tissue. Therefore, they gave me about fourteen months to live with a five percent survival rate unless I did exactly what the doctors told me. My initial thought was that if I had a chance to survive I was in the right place. The doctors thought that my age and good overall health gave me a good chance to survive the treatments. We have heard that “if the cancer does not kill you, then most likely the treatment will.” This statement has more truth in it than people realize.

Late October of 2015 to December 22 was my chemo-life. For me, along with the physical demands, I had a hard time psychologically with the chemo treatments. My natural-mind was telling me that the chemo is poison and will kill me, but I am volunteering for the treatment. Even though we are Believers, we still have a natural-mind in which to contend. Our salvation is that God lives in us to assist us to overcome. Volunteering to be poisoned to live! This is the proposition. This is a factual contradiction. The chemo is a life path that I was mentally rejecting. Two seemingly opposing forces (chemo and my natural-mind) at work in me, and one will win. I had to surrender to the chemo treatment in order to live. The cure (chemo) is killing you at the same time the doctors hope that your body is strong enough to survive the terminal attack. Your body fights for survival over the cure for cancer. Sound familiar. There is a spiritual application here.

God's Holy Spirit fights for you to surrender to His conviction of your heart/soul at the same time you are heading for death's door. God desires for you to survive His interjection into your heart/soul and live. To the fallen natural-mind, allowing God into your heart is a contradiction. Fallen man defines life without God in their heart. They do not see freedom through any other lens. How can a person be free to do whatever they want if they allow God in their heart and take command of their soul? Again, freedom is a relative definition. God redefines freedom. Freedom to God is for us to be released from the power of sin and death. God has the only power to set us free (Romans 8:1-3). Tough medicine for many. It is a contradiction for a fallen person's heart/soul to surrender to God and allow His Being (Holy Spirit) inside. Turning your life over to someone else does not seem like a good idea. However, this is the only cure that will save a person from eternal death. (Death) being defined as separation from God for an eternity.

Transformations

It is a cold thing to lose your hair in late fall and early winter. By the way, the barbershop at M.D. Anderson does not charge you for the shave. My hair was falling out in mass, like it does with most people. They also gave me a free pullover head covering. They all had great attitudes. They told me that I had a great looking bald head. (Like I had ever noticed.)

The doctors waited till March 3, 2016 to perform the neo-bladder surgery. We had to wait for my body to recover from the chemo. After each two-day chemo treatment, I received a \$5,000.00 shot to reestablish my blood quality. (Good thing my insurance deductible had been met.) For the neo-bladder surgery, I opted for the robotic approach and found a great surgeon at Methodist Hospital in Houston.

In all, through multiple surgical procedures, a few blood transfusions, the strongest chemo a human being can consume before you die for sure, twenty-one inches of my small intestine removed and modified to form a new bladder . . . I am alive and kicking. The neo-bladder surgery calls for months of healing and personal rehabilitation that really is ongoing. Yes, I am alive and functioning.

A few months after receiving my neo-bladder, I thought I was finished with all the surgical procedures, but the neo-bladder incision came open. This is called an “incisional hernia” and was very large. Okay, one more surgery and a two-month recovery. October 3, 2016 was my last surgery. Now, I have a Gore-Tex stomach-wall lining. It will never rust, rot or get cold in the winter time. I recently went through the metal detector at the airport, and their machine did not detect the titanium rivets holding the eight-inch circumference Gore-Tex patch. In fact, after I am gone, it will remain in the casket along with the titanium heart stent. Proof that I existed. My next cancer scan is in March of 2017.

From August of 2015 to after my last surgery on October 3, 2016, I missed very few Sundays in church. The roughest time was during the chemo months. I missed three Sundays during that period. The only surgery that I took off more than one Sunday was the neobladder surgery on March 3, 2016. I missed three Sundays. I preached Resurrection Day March 27th.

The congregation supported Renee and I, as true saints in Christ would. I see that many in our small Fellowship have had cancer or some kind of life-threatening diseases. I have really just joined their club. We are all in it together now. Until you are on this side of cancer or other life-threatening conditions, you will not possibly know life as we do. This is not to diminish those who have not endured through our path. It is just to say that until you walk in these shoes, there is no way for you to know. Being

on this side, simply gives you a living awareness and understanding that you did not have previously.

Life with cancer

I want to make clear, I am not mad at God or hold Him responsible for my illness. God has always given me the latitude and the longitude to live my life, and I am not programmed to automatically respond to Him. The trade-off for Free Will Choice is to have the existence of powers opposite God; opposite choices that are opposite the rules for life as God intended. These choices oppose good as God defines good. Therefore, opposite the Godly good in this world is the bad, the anti-life forces. These we can call evil. These forces are at constant work to pull you away from God. In fact, these evil forces never want us to turn to God. They seek that we never acknowledge the existence of God and His Word. They never want man to think of the Cross of Jesus . . .to think of the substitutionary grace/love act of atonement. If man does think and turn to the Cross, then selfishness and destruction are confronted. This is an epic battle for this world between God and Satan. The Bible proclaims this battle into which we are born. Free Life is valuable, but the value comes with a choice. We “choose”, because God made “choice” possible (Genesis 2:17). Even if we do not surrender to God, we still have made a choice.

I have met people who are mad at God for allowing them to get cancer or whatever disease they have. Some have lost a son or daughter to disease, a crime or an accident. They feel that God has let them down. Some even walk away and denounce their faith. These are like those in John 6 who Jesus calls to eat His flesh and drink His blood. These that walked away failed to understand Jesus’ real mission. They failed to see why God incarnated Himself to be one of them. They were looking for physical temporal answers to everyday life problems. They were not looking for the spiritual. They failed to see the eternal mission of God in

the flesh. They failed to see that God's intent is for us to live in His eternal reality (Heaven).

I understand this is tough for them. I have heart-felt sympathy. However, we are in an eternal struggle. The value for life is not just in the here-and-the-now. Temporal life is here for a short time. Eternal life is just that, eternal. We are participating in an endeavor that is greater than we are individually and greater than the suffering we are going through in this life. The Cross is representation of the reality of pain that no human being should ever have to endure. But God did. I see that the Cross exhibited all the ugliness of this world for all human history to see from that day forward.

1 Peter 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

2 Corinthians 4:17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

As for me, I have been given all the grace, mercy, and love and then some more. I have no complaints. If my life ended this past year, I was far ahead of what life would have been without God. In addition, I know where I am going. I fully, with all my being, understand, and with a knowing mind and heart see that death is a door we simply pass through (to Heaven). We go to sleep in Christ. If God gave us what we deserved, we would all be deep-fried. I know, there are some *super-saints* among us who may take offense at being deep-fried. I once knew a man who was in his eighties, and he wore a hat embroidered with the words, "I never had it so

good.” I asked him why he embroidered that phrase on his hat. He responded, “Because I woke up this morning.” He says that when he wakes up, he sees another day. He knew that he did not merit another day. He also knew, like all of us, that in his life he had things he wished that he had not done. So, he realized that his life was a grace gift and everyday was a grace gift. He knew with what he lived.

Cancer survivors know with what they live. As a Believer in our risen Lord, I know with whom I live and why I live. I also look to the future as Paul did. Some people may not understand this view. I see that those of us who have thought and lived through what could have been terminal do think like Paul. As a Believer, it is a natural thought.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 ⁶ Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord-- ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight-- ⁸ we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

Philippians 1:23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;

We all have cancer. By this, I mean that we all have a terminal condition. No one is getting younger. Some may think that we, with a fatal disease, live with the fear of dying. Do you as a Christian live with a fear of dying? Again, none of us are getting younger. And, short of the Second Coming, none of us are getting out of here alive. I understand, the perspective on this train of thought becomes in sharper focus the older you get and the more you go through life. For me and many others, we do not live with the fear of dying. We desire an outcome that has a quality of life. As a Believer, we want to be used by the Lord. We do not just want to

live sustainable lives. We want to get back to life as it was. However, life will never be as it was. We never get over cancer. We, and our families, learn to adapt to live with being a cancer patient. Our new lives seek to work at our vocations and occupations for the Lord.

In the pursuit of carrying on with life, we are checked from time to time for the presence of cancer. This can be every month, quarter or six months. At any of these checkups, we could be given the bad news that “it’s back.” All things considered, I do not think about these checkups. I go about life and plan for the future. Unless someone asks me about how I am doing or what have the doctors told me lately, I do not dwell on my next checkup. If I did, I mean, it is kind-of like being on death row. You know your number is coming up; it’s just a matter of time. Every checkup is like getting your appeal from death row heard by the next higher court. One day you hope to get to the highest court in the land that sets you free or stays your execution. One of my doctors told me that she believed I would get over this, and that I would live a long life and die from something else that God intended. Not sure about the theology in the doctor’s statement, but she meant it to be encouraging.

God never desired that Adam physically die until he ate from the forbidden tree. We do die of sin. Sin and death are a disease. I see, that after The Fall, God intends for us to die of sin and not live in this fallen temporal state forever.

[Responsibility to God with Our Witness](#)

With this survival experience in life’s resume, I and others have a responsibility. Our responsibility is to stay-the-course that God has planned for our lives. We witness what has happened to us with God’s power working through our lives during life-threatening times.

Before The Fall, I believe that God never intended for anyone to die. This is evident in Genesis 2:17 when God demonstrated to Adam that there were life and death choices before him. Obviously, God showed His will by guiding Adam away from the **Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil**. This demonstrates God's intended plan for no one to ever die. We also know that the **Tree of Life** was present in the Garden, but God gave no prohibition against eating its fruit. Like Adam in the Garden before the Fall, God never intended for anyone to get cancer, suffer and die. God never intended for man to eat from the Forbidden Tree. However, Adam did, and therefore disease is a product of the Fall. We see the whole creation call out for redemption in Romans 8:19-22. There is a difference between what God intended to happen in our lives and what God allowed to happen due to His Enabling Free Will Choice; which is evident with Adam having a choice to eat from the Forbidden Tree. God's great love for us provides Free Will Choice. Love is a choice not an auto response. I have often said that our grown children choose to come back to us. We love them and set them free. We cannot make them stay in our lives. I guess some people attempt with money, but then they have the love of money in their way.

Adam was on the path to live forever before The Fall (chronicled in Genesis three). God desired from the beginning of creation for people to live forever. There was a **Tree of life** in the Garden with Adam and Eve. After The Fall, God removed Adam and Eve from the Garden, so that they would not eat from the **Tree of Life** lest they live forever (Genesis 3:22-24) and live in a state of sin and death forever. Remember God is the One who has the power to defeat sin and death (Romans 8:1-3). Revelation 2:7 places the **Tree of Life** in the **Paradise of God**. Prior to The Fall, God hadn't made any rule about not eating from the **Tree of Life**.

However, after The Fall and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden, there remained the possibility for Adam and Eve to eat from the

Tree of Life. Our possibility came through Free Will Choice which had always been there; the same Free Will Choice God gave Adam (Genesis 2:17). After The Fall, exercising our choice for God gives us access, but this **access** came with a price. God paid our **access** price at the Cross by spilling His blood and not ours. This is called “General Atonement.” Note) that this “General Atonement” was for all humanity, but it is only applied to those who surrender to God’s indwelling Holy Spirit. “**Access.**”

“**Access**” ~ At the Great White Throne Judgement (Revelations 20:11-15), God judges those who surrendered by faith (Book of Life) and those who desire to be judged by their deeds (Book of Deeds). Those of us who surrender to God’s Holy Spirit conviction (John 16:8) surrendered to His **indwelling** Spirit, fortifying us to overcome sin and death. These have access to heaven, to eternity with God. This takes place because God reaches out to totally depraved man (Romans 10:13) with His Holy Spirit and convicts depraved man of sin. Man, has the choice to respond to God’s conviction. On his own, fallen and depraved, man cannot reach out to God; God has to call fallen man (John 6:44).

Therefore, those who have surrendered, on this final day of judgement, are then granted **access** to the **Tree of Life** in God’s Paradise. We will then be able to eat from the **Tree of Life** (Rev. 2:7). These are the ones God “elects” to salvation. Yes, God does “elect.” God knows the pretenders, those who walk away, as exemplified in John 6:64-71. We may not be able to tell who the pretenders are in this life. God is the qualifying judge in the election of souls. God determines who has saving faith. We are just instruments proclaiming His Gospel. We are the choir singing the Gospel Message to the fallen world. It all starts with God’s love. God calls first, before we do, through His Holy Spirit conviction and loves us first.

1 John 4:19 We love, because He first loved us.

Romans 10:13 for "Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved." (Acts 2:37 God, through Peter's preaching, cut/convicted their hearts - and then they called.)

Ephesians 1:4-5⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, [Note: Through God's omniscience, not ours, He knew who would surrender to Him. Once elected/chosen/qualified we are predestine. Paul declares this in Romans 8:29 foreknowledge comes before predestine.]

Remember all things start with God's sovereignty. God makes the first move toward our salvation by His Holy Spirit convicting all people of sin. This is the first step in causing us to be born again. Conviction of the Holy Spirit is the work of the Holy Spirit (God).

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Additional Notes

Why do I discuss "election?" Back to hyper-Calvinism. Simply said . . . hyper-Calvinists believe that God elects those whom He will and the rest of mankind goes to hell. They claim that God is merciful for electing some people when He could allow all people to go to hell, which is what they deserve. You can find this up on the web. Hard to swallow. These people generally know Scripture very well. However, the premise with which they begin is faulty. They are like the evolutionists. If that first bone was really . .

. whatever millions of years old . . . then . . . well then . . . you can make up the rest. The basis is a big “IF.”

Conversations with hyper-Calvinists can turn harsh on their part. This is due to their founder, John Calvin. On October 27, 1553, John Calvin, the founder of Calvinism, had Michael Servetus, the Spanish physician, burned at the stake just outside of Geneva for his doctrinal beliefs!

<http://www.evangelicaloutreach.org/michael-servetus.htm>

Understand, Servetus was not simply put to death, but tortured, and the executioner purposely used slow burning wood. Witnesses observed that Servetus took thirty minutes to become unconscious. This execution was more than putting a man to death. Calvin, and his followers, made a statement not to disagree with them.

I have had Calvinists tell me that John Calvin’s actions were consistent with how to deal with heretics of his day. I see this explanation makes murder ok in some centuries and not in others. My reading of the Gospel does not change Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mountain (Matthew 5:21,22) in any century.

Therefore, to this day, followers of Calvin’s teaching can become irritable, because their founder’s bent for intolerance is passed down as an example. Their irritation peaks when they are presented with “Free Will Choice.” They believe man does not have a choice, and Jesus was crucified only for God’s elected few, which He chooses. This is called “Limited Atonement.” However, John 3:16 and Romans 3:10 and many other “Free Will” verses are always in the context where God gives people the opportunity to respond to Him. It is true, God takes the first step in Holy Spirit conviction. However, God convicts **ALL** mankind of sin, not just some (that He chooses). Jesus died for the sins of **ALL** people in the whole world from the beginning of man’s creation.

1 John 2:2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

I have never met a Calvinist who stated . . . “I believe that by God’s choice alone He elects some people to go to Heaven, and I have not been elected, so I am going to Hell.” How convenient!

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the [sin of the world!](#)

John 4:42 and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the [Savior of the world.](#)"

1 John 4:14 And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the [Savior of the world.](#)

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, [the just for the unjust](#), in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

This last passage quoted in 1 Peter specifically states that Christ died for all and He died for the just and the unjust. This scripture takes aim at those who may never choose to surrender to the Lord. Therefore, the term “General Atonement” allies.

Calvinists also teach that God’s grace is “irresistible.” This means that for whom God taps on the shoulder has no will of their own to resist His grace offer of salvation. So, why send missionaries? They will respond that missionaries go out in obedience to God. However, the work of the missionary is for not, since God is all-knowing and knows who He will elect. The audience of the missionary has no will of their own to choose or resist.

To be clear and repetitive, there is acknowledgement that God “elects.” However, this “election” is a qualification/confirmation from the pool of **ALL** mankind who have surrendered to “God’s Holy Spirit work of conviction.” This election is to verify who Believers really are. Who has truly surrendered by their choice. There is no doubt the “parable of the seed” and John 6 highlight this truth. This is why I use the exact wording here. The origin of salvation is God’s sovereign work that goes out to all mankind, whoever lived and they are without excuse (Romans 1:18 and following). The hyper-Calvinist teaches that God only goes after some people. I cannot find this anywhere in Scripture. They will point to people like Judas, Pharaoh and Pilate that God created specifically to go to hell. However, a close examination of these men and Scripture reveals that God turned them over to their own hard-hearts, which was their choice. This is exactly what Scripture says God will do. They pursued the creation and their own interest and not God’s, Therefore, God turned them over to their own desires (Romans 1:18-32). I could continue to expose the fallacy of their teaching, but what difference should it make if I believe God reaches out to ALL mankind who does not deserve His grace. Why should this bother them? The very definition of “grace” is unmerited favor. God will do what God will do. These teachings can be found in some Presbyterian Churches as John Calvin heavily influenced their foundational teachings and doctrinal statements. There is also influence of their views throughout the denominations.

We pray for them in the love of Christ.

Clarification: All Scripture concerning God’s “elect” is in the context of Adam’s Free Will Choice (Genesis 2:17) and God’s foreknowledge (Romans 8:29). God elects those that surrender to Him. Surrendering is not a work, it is a capitulation instigated by God’s Holy Spirit. Surrendering, which is prompted by God’s Holy Spirit, is allowing God’s Holy Spirit to

come into our hearts and do the work of God, the heart change of God. Man cannot convict or repair his own heart. Man cries out, "What must we do?" (Acts 2:37) upon this initial act of God. This is the surrender to the Holy Spirit. Now, man is empowered by God to repent, be water-baptized and receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit. In truth, this is all the work of God. God knew who would surrender from the foundation of the world as previously noted in other sermons. God makes the first move; man is not able (John 6:44). In John 6:45, Jesus declares, "*Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.*" There are two parts to Jesus' statement. People hear from the Father by His Holy Spirit conviction, but not all learn from the Father. The demons hear and know the Father (James 2:19), but shudder because they do not surrender to Him. They do not learn from Him. Therefore, they do not come to Jesus. This is the same explanation of the condition of those who walked away in John 6:64-71. Once a person is in God's "elect", they are predestined. God justifies and glorifies them (Romans 8:30). Proudful man attempts to control this process throughout history. This is what institutional churches do. They position themselves as intermediary. This is the sin of Job 33:23,24.

[1 Timothy 2:5](#) For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,

Clarification: While on earth God has called His leaders to exercise judgement over temporal affairs. We see this exemplified throughout the Bible. Moses judges Israel along with many other judges over time. Note that this has nothing to do with judging salvation/election.

God created a redemptive path that made it possible for all of us to live an eternal life with Him. We have the same choice and opportunity Adam did before The Fall, before he ate from the forbidden tree. Again, it is of note to think that the **Tree of Life** was in the Garden at the same time the Forbidden Tree was there. Therefore, it stands to reason that God's

original plan, at some point, intended for Adam to eat from the **Tree of Life**. There was no warning from God prior to the Fall not to eat from the **Tree of Life**. This concern of Adam eating from the **Tree of Life** came after The Fall.

Revelation 2:7 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who **overcomes**, I will grant to eat of the **tree of life** which is in the Paradise of God.'

Revelation. 22:1-2 Then he showed me **a river of the water of life**, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,

John 7:38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow **rivers of living water.**'"

2 in the middle of its street.

On either side of the **river** was the **tree of life**,

John 4:10 -14 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the **gift of God**, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you **living water.**"

¹¹ She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep;

where then do You get that living water?

¹² "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?"

¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, "**Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again;**

¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst;

but the water that I will give him

will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

bearing twelve *kinds of* fruit, yielding its fruit every month;

and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22:14

Blessed are those who wash their robes,
so that they may have the right to **the tree of life**,

and **may enter** by the gates into the **city**.

Revelation 22:19

and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the **tree of life** and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

Forbidden Tree What does the Forbidden Tree represent? Adam simply ate fruit from a tree. What is wrong with that? The focus starts with the fact that God created Adam. God is sovereign as the only Creator. There is no other. For you scientific minded, God is the force that caused the matter present to become all that we see, including us. One thing on which we all can agree is that there is an order and a physics in this universe. We obviously do not understand the order or the physics fully. We do exist, and God chooses for us to have the opportunity to be with Him. How did He make this possible?

Possible with God Genesis 2:17 is a picture of the covenant God made not only with Adam, but with all of us. God created Adam and gave him principles on which to live. These principles are not arbitrary from a whimsical source who is on an ego trip. These principles make life in the creation survive in the form God intended from the beginning. **To Be Continued . . .**