

## THE LOT OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Psalm 125

January 31, 2010

Casting lots has been widely used throughout history when the right course of action is in doubt. The Scriptures confirm that God sanctioned this practice for the nation Israel. Numerous verses state, *"They cast lots before the Lord."* (Leviticus 16:8, Joshua 18:10) There are seventy references to casting lots in the Old Testament and seven in the New Testament.

One reason casting lots to determine God's will in spiritual matters is not as prevalent today as it was in earlier times is because we have the complete canon of scriptures to direct our decision making. Before, limited access to the Scriptures left many in the dark concerning God's will.

Even today, many questions remain unanswered. But rarely do we cast lots to decide God's will. For such we search the scriptures and wait on the Lord. The Word alone is our only authority and we are commanded to look no further than *"thus saith the Lord."* **Isaiah 8:20**, *"To the law and the testimony: if they speak (act) not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."* The Word is our authority.

Though men cast lots, the outcome wrought is the work of God alone. **Read Proverbs 16:33**. *"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."* Whether we roll the dice, draw straws, flip a coin or cast lots the outcome is of the Lord's determination. We do cast lots every two years to elect our representatives in congress but God calls the election. **Romans 13:1** says, *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."* Men cast the vote but that only reveals God's predetermined will.

If you think about it, whatever the outcome of our casting lots, that is the will of God because He disposes of all things. We worship a sovereign God who controls everything, even that sparrow which falls to the ground and nothing happens outside his will. Everything that happens is within the will of God. In fact He wills even that which does not happen. And those who know, believe and worship a Just God and Savior are glad this is so. What if God were not in control of all things? We have only to look within to see the chaos if such was true. If man, in a perfect state, as was Adam could by his one act plunge the world into such chaos, how much more would we as sinful creatures if we were in control. Men cast lots but the outcome only reveals God's foreknowledge and pre-determination.

It is said in Jonah 1: 7, *"they cast lots and the lot fell upon Jonah."*

It is said in Acts 1: 26, *"They gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."*

It is said in Joshua 18:10, *"And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the Lord: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions."*

The lot was cast for Jonah.

The lot was cast for Matthias.

The lot was cast for Israel.

The lot has been cast for the righteous. **Read Psalm 125:3.** That is the focus of our attention today. In this Psalm God gives us revelation in the casting of lots. The title of my message is THE LOT OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

What is a lot? The Hebrew word *lot* is *gor-al* meaning *pebble*, a small smooth stone like that from a riverbed. It also means, *Portion*. A lot then, by definition is a portion determined and assigned by casting stones.

The manner of casting lots is not clear. From what information is available, it seems that a predetermined number of small, flat smooth stones were gathered and marked appropriately, (X & O) depending on the nature of the decision sought. They were mixed together and those casting lots randomly chose one from a closed bag and cast it, unseen into the lap of one who held his skirt to receive them. They were then counted and the majority of like marked stones determined the course of action. Whatever the results stood.

Immediately several questions are raised. Who are the righteous? What is the lot of the righteous? Who casts lots for the righteous? Was the lot of the righteous predicated on the luck of the draw? Since the outcome of casting lots is unknown until the casting is completed, is the lot of the righteous by chance? I think we can answer these questions in this psalm.

The lot (portion) of the righteous is threefold. The righteous have:

1. **An unchangeable position in the family of God. V1-2**
2. **An unconditional promise by the faithful God. V3-4**
3. **An unending peace from the infinite God. V-5**

### **1. An unchangeable position in the family of God. V1-2**

Who are the righteous? Who among the sons of Adam does God declare righteous? **Romans 3:10** declares, *“As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one.”* Who of this state can God declare, as he does in (**Colossians 1:22**), *“holy, unblameable, unreprouvable in his sight.”* The righteous are those who stand unchangeable before a holy God. They are those against whom the law of God has no claim. In fact, they are those whom the law of God pronounces just and righteous. They are:

**V-1. *“They that trust in the Lord.”*** These alone are righteous. Do you trust God? Two questions need answering; Which God do you trust and for what do you trust him? Which God do you trust? To such a question the natural mind immediately responds, *“There’s only one God.”* If this were so, then why is the first commandment given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai in **Exodus 20:3**, *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”*? The truth is that every one by nature worships and serves a god of our imagination. We do so because we do not know the true and living God. (Romans 10: 3) *“They being ignorant”* This was evidenced by the nation Israel. While Moses was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments, the people were at the foot of the mountain building and worshipping a golden calf. (Led by Aaron) We today are more civilized than to

fashion an idol out of wood or gold but we, non-the-less fashion idols of our imagination that rival the true and living God.

If we fail to attribute to God those qualities of character that belong to his redemptive glory in salvation or attribute to him qualities of character that don't belong to his redemptive glory, the god in our mind is an idol. That's why God commands us in 1 John 5:21 to "keep yourselves from idols."

The idols of man's imagination are as numerous as the stars in the heavens but there is only one True God worthy of our trust and he is identified in **Isaiah 45: 20-22** as a "Just God and Savior." Jesus declared this in **John 17:3**, "*and this is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*" Men by nature do not know God and ignorance truly is the mother of idolatry.

This "Just God and Savior," identified in Isaiah 45 is unknown to the natural mind. The attributes of his redemptive character are hidden until the Holy Spirit of God quickens the darkened mind and reveals him to the sinner. Jesus said to the religious leaders of his day in **John 8:19**, "*You neither know me; nor my Father: if you had known me, you should have known my Father also.*" So, make no mistake; this is the God with whom we have to answer. This is the only God worthy of our trust. All others are idols.

This leads to my second question: For what are you trusting God? The answer will determine if your God is a just God and Savior or an idol.

Are you trusting that God will do his part in your justification if you will do your part? Are you trusting God to save you if you will believe and repent of your sins and accept him into your heart? If you are, you are praying to a god that cannot save. **V-20**. Or, do you trust a god who imputes righteousness to you, grants faith and repentance simultaneously and then saves you? If you are, you are praying to a god that cannot save. This god cannot save you unless you do something or he does something in you.

Salvation is not conditioned on something done **by you** or anything God does **in** you. It is totally of Christ's work **for you**. 1 John 1:7 declares that; "*the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.*" Where did it do so? Was it not at Calvary? You and I were not even born then. How could we contribute anything to our salvation? It was his blood that satisfied law and justice, not our faith or repentance. There is nothing in you or me that will recommend us to God. If we're not saved based solely on what Christ did for us without any contribution from us, we have not salvation. If our god needs our efforts coupled with his work to redeem us, this god is powerless to save because his efforts, coupled with the sinner's contributions, no matter how great, cannot make satisfaction to God's holy Law and justice. God cannot save a sinner as long as his law has a claim against that sinner. God does not save sinners **IF** they will repent, believe and accept him as Lord and Savior. Sinners repent, believe and accept Jesus as an evidence of their salvation. If we are trusting God to do his part after we've done our part, we're looking to an idol.

The true and Living God is both a Just God and a Savior. As such he must be just when he justifies the ungodly. He cannot justify any sinner at the expense of his holiness and justice. As sinners, we deserve death. God declares in **Ezekiel 18:20**, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" A holy God cannot overlook sin. The least sin in the most moral of men must be punished with eternal death, either in the sinner or a suitable Substitute. Such a Substitute is Jesus Christ. He is the representative and substitute of all those who

trust in **the** Lord. It is to him the Father looks for all their redemption. It was on him all their sins were laid. It was by him the debt they owed was paid. **Acts 17:28**, “*For in him we live and move and have our being.*” It was his obedience, suffering and death on the cross that satisfied every charge against those for whom he died and earned for them a righteousness, which the Father freely imputed to every sinner he died for.

**2 Corinthians 5:21**, “*For he (God the Father) hath made him (God the Son) to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*” God the Father laid on God the Son the sins of every sinner he represented, and punished those sins in Christ on Calvary. God raised him from the dead, declaring his satisfaction with Christ’s work of redemption. He freely imputed the righteousness Christ established in his death to every sinner for whom Christ died. These alone are the righteous, made so by his work alone with no contribution from the sinner as to his salvation or keeping him saved. If Jesus paid it all, what can the sinner owe? NOTHING. If a sinner owes nothing he must go free; else God is not a just God and Savior. Is this the God you trust?

Well, of those who do, it is said; **V-1** “*they shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever.*” The righteous are unmovable. These that are trusting in the Lord have always been the apple of God’s eye and the objects of his love and always will be so.

Mount Zion is Jerusalem and was the center of Jewish worship through the times of Christ. It was surrounded by a mountain range that added protection from her enemies. Christ prophetically spoke of this rock upon which the temple was built as a type of that Rock upon which, “*I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” As Mount Zion, (another name for Jerusalem) was the center of worship to Israel, so the true church is the only place of true worship today for the Israel of God. These alone are “*they which cannot be removed but abideth forever.*” The Hebrew word “forever” is an oxymoron, a word with opposing meanings. It is the word *olam*, and means antiquity and futurity. (Always was and forever is). This Mount Zion has stood, is standing and will forever stand.

Mount Zion has not always existed. God created it. This Mount Zion, the church has always existed and always will. There has always been a number whose names were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, loved of the Father and given to Christ in the everlasting covenant of grace made before time and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb at the cross. Though transgressors in the fall and enemies in our minds by wicked works and deserving of God’s wrath, yet never separated from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Though fallen in Adam, God’s Elect did not fall out of Christ. God didn’t love them before the fall, hate them when they fell in Adam and now loves again after salvation. He declares in Malachi 3:6, “*I am the Lord, I change not. Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed*” **1 Peter 1:5** says, “*We are kept by the power of God through faith (Christ’s faithfulness, not the sinners) unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*” Faithful to execute his offices as Prophet, Priest and King in our salvation. The Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, is the church, according to **Ephesians 2: 20**, that is “*founded upon the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*” It was founded upon the doctrines of the prophets and apostles. Christ is the head of his church; believers are the body. If we are in Christ we abide forever in him. (Always were, forever are.)

God's Elect, the righteous are shut up to Christ. He has rendered all the obedience they owed, He has satisfied all the law they transgressed, He has suffered all the wrath they earned, he has died the death they deserved, he paid the ransom they could not and he has provided for them a robe of righteousness they had no part in producing, that imputed to them, secures them forever in an unchangeable state of justification in the family of God. **The lot of the righteous is:**

**1. An unchangeable position in the family of God. V1-2** "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God.*" Christ, the elder son, we his brethren.

**2. An unconditional promise by the faithful God. V3-4**

God has made a promise to "*They that trust in the Lord.*" He has promised to show to every heir of grace the benefits and blessings of Christ's Person and finished work to secure for them a full, free salvation based solely on the merits of the obedience and death of Christ. He will do this in conjunction with his promise made to Christ in the Everlasting Covenant of Grace to save every sinner for whom Christ died. How he would accomplish this is seen in **V-3 of Psalm 125.**

*"For the rod of the wicked."* The rod of the wicked is none other than the Law of God. To the wicked the law is a rod. A rod is a scepter, a symbol of authority whereby one governs in strict justice. The law of God speaks nothing of grace, only inflexible justice. **(Do and live, disobey and die.)** For the wicked (Satan and his henchmen, the unrighteous) it is the medium used to hold sinners in bondage to sin. It is the law of God used unlawfully to entice the ignorant to seek justification before God based on their law keeping. "If you will do your part, God will save you." "If you will repent God will save you." To the righteous it is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. (Galatians 3:24) The rod of the wicked knows nothing of a just God and Savior. It speaks nothing of grace and motivates the lost to dead works and fruit unto death. **V-3.** "*Shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.*" What is the lot of the righteous? More specifically, who is the lot of the righteous? It is none other than Christ himself. He is the portion of the righteous. **Psalm 16:5,** "*The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.*" **Psalm 119:57,** "*Thou art my portion O Lord: I have said I would keep thy words.*" The rod (God's law) of the wicked shall not rest upon Christ. It shall not remain unfulfilled by him. He will not fail to satisfy every jot and tittle of it. **Read Matthew 5: 18** "*Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*" He said in **Matthew 5:17,** "*Think not that I have come to destroy the law: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*" Christ honored the law, (by obedience to it) he magnified the law, (by satisfying its demands) and He is the end of the law for righteousness. **(Romans 10:4)** His life and death earned and established a righteousness the Father freely imputed to every sinner for whom Christ died, which is all our salvation.

Had Christ not fulfilled and satisfied all the law's demands against the righteous, we would be left under its bondage. Had the Holy Spirit of God not come and revealed his finished work to us we would still be under its bondage, "*putting forth our hands unto iniquity.*" This phrase simply means we would be still going about seeking to be justified before God based on our law keeping. The Psalmist here speaks of "the rod of

the wicked.ö A rod was a straight stick used to drive the sheep. To the wicked God's law (ROD) says, "do and live, disobey and die."ö **Read Galatians 3:10.** "For as many as are of the works are under the curse: for it is written, cursed it everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." In the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm he speaks of a "rod and staff."ö A rod was used to drive the sheep. A rod and staff had a crook on one end and was used to lead, to draw, to rescue, to guide the sheep. A rod and a staff guide the redeemed. (The Law and the Gospel) In the hands of the Holy Spirit of God sinners are made to know the utter impossibility of being justified before God by our law keeping and are led to Christ for all our salvation. Our anthem becomes this: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (King David wrote, "O how I love thy law.") He saw it fulfilled in Christ.

God made a conditional promise to Christ to justify every sinner for whom he died. To the righteous (those made so by imputation of his righteousness alone) he made an unconditional promise that they would not "put forth their hands unto iniquity." **Read 1 John 3:6.** "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

Those who have been delivered from "putting forth their hands unto iniquity," (thinking anything but the imputed righteousness of God could recommend them unto God) cannot go back to the law's bondage. Why? **V-4**, God does "good" to them. He keeps them from falling. **Jude 1: 24-25** "Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless (upright hearts) before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior be glory and majesty both now and ever, amen." He said in **John 6:37**, "All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." God's unconditional promise to his sheep is that every sinner for whom he died shall be made to see that the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous. "Call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins." What sins? (Seeking acceptance before God based on their law keeping.)

#### **The lot of the righteous is:**

1. An unchangeable position in the family of God. Always were, forever are.
2. An unconditional promise from the faithful God. The rod shall not rest.

#### **3. The unending peace of an infinite God. V-5.**

The contrast is obvious in this Psalm as in most of the scriptures between the righteous and the unrighteous. If the lot is cast for the righteous, it is of necessity cast for the unrighteous and the whole disposing is of the Lord. God has cast his lot with the righteous. With whom is your lot cast? This is evidenced by the "way" you go. (**V-5**) The unrighteous will God "lead away."ö **HOW?** "With the workers of iniquity" unto their crooked ways: salvation based on something other than the imputed righteousness of God. The righteous enter in at the straight gate, "led of the Lord"ö in **paths of righteousness** that leads to life everlasting. That way, the way of the righteous is the way of Peace.

How can I know which way I am in? We are all, right now in either one or the other. The answer is simple. Are you led by the rod of the wicked or the rod and staff of the Good Shepherd? If you think any thing but the imputed righteousness of God is all your salvation you are in the crooked ways of the unrighteous. If your plea is Christ's blood and righteousness alone you are in the way of peace.

God has made peace with Israel. He accomplished this at Calvary when Christ shed his blood and paid the sin debt they owed. His law has no claim against those for whom he died. I stand here and declare to you that God is at peace with his people, made so by the Prince of Peace. Are you at peace with Him? If your lot is Christ, "*peace shall be upon you.*" He has made peace by the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:20) Make your peace with him. How? "*Be ye reconciled to him,*" based on his righteousness imputed.

**Deuteronomy 32:9.** "*For the Lords portion is his people, Jacob (Israel, Jerusalem, Mount Zion) is the lot of his inheritance.*" Mount Zion, the church, which cannot be removed, is the Lords portion. If Christ is my portion then I am Gods portion. The lot of the righteous has been cast.

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