

# Be on Guard for Yourselves and For all the Flock

## 7- The Danger of the Heresy of Pelagianism

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February 21, 2021

### **Romans 5:1-13**

**5 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,**

**2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.**

**3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;**

**4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;**

**5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

**6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.**

**7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.**

**8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**

**9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.**

**10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**

**11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.**

**12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—**

**13 for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.**

Now there are several Truths in the Bible that are not popular with the majority of people, who say they love God; and who say they are saved. And the result of these Doctrines not being popular- is that they are often *minimized* or even outright *overlooked* in the Teaching by far too many Leaders of the modern Church. And as a result of these Doctrines not being taught *fully*- or not being

taught *at all*- is that they are often *misunderstood*; and people are *ignorant* of them; and completely *unaware* of how these Truths affect their daily lives. And among those unpopular Doctrines are:

- Original Sin
- Our Need for Grace

Now you may be surprised to see “Grace” as being one of the Doctrines that are *misunderstood* by vast numbers of modern “church-goers”- as much as Grace is sung about; and talked about; and taught. But when you really begin to question people about what Grace actually is- their answers are both confusing and even frightening. You usually get one- or two- word answers when you ask, “*Tell me what Grace is*”. And their answers belie a gross ignorance about what should be very easy for believers to discuss.

But the Issue of Grace is tied in with other very important Truths that involve deep and profound Issues like:

- The Fall
- Total Depravity
- Sin
- Human Self-Determination

... and Questions should be asked about these Topics like:

- What exactly happened in the Fall?
- What is “Total Depravity”?
- What is Sin and from where does it come?
- How does God’s Sovereignty relate to Human “free-will”?

... and many others.

Now these are *titanic* Issues that MUST be understood by every believer. Why? Because they radically affect how we think about God; and Salvation; and the “State” of Human Beings; and why intelligent people commit “spiritual suicide” by *continuing* to rebel against a perfectly holy and righteous God- who has *guaranteed* horrific and eternal Punishment for unrepentant Sin.

But there is also another almost forgotten Issue that the Bible speaks about clearly and repeatedly and that is:

**How important it is to God that human beings are humbled and**

## **not allowed to boast- *especially* about Salvation**

Now “boasting in knowing and understanding God” (**Jeremiah 9:23**); or “boasting in the Lord” (**1Corinthians 1:31; 2Corinthians 10:17**); “boasting in Hope” (**Hebrews 3:6**); and “boasting in our weaknesses” (**2Corinthians 12:5**) is actually *commanded* and *approved of* by the 40 writers of sacred Writ. But “boasting in who we are”; “boasting in what we have”; “boasting in our own abilities”; “boasting in our accomplishments”; and “boasting in what we supposedly did to justify ourselves before God”- is *expressly* forbidden. For example, the Apostle John was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to write:

### **1John 2:15&16**

**Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.**

So, “boasting” like that means that the Love of the Father is NOT in us- which means we aren’t saved. And the Apostle Paul agreed with John when he said,

### **Galatians 6:14**

**But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**

So, it is a Sin to boast like that; and it is condemned by God. Another example is in how the Apostle Paul taught about Salvation.

### **Ephesians 2:8**

**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;**

Here, the Apostle infallibly teaches that Salvation is brought about by two different things:

1. “By” God’s Grace
2. “Through” Faith

Now I have been faithful to teach you about the Faith that Salvation is “through”. Paul said that Faith was:

**... not of yourselves, it is the gift of God...**

So, the Faith that Salvation is “through” is two things:

1. Not of ourselves
2. A Gift of God

This tells us that the Faith that Salvation is “through” is NOT *inherent* in the lost person. In other words, a lost person doesn’t already have this Faith *through which* he may be saved. That’s what it means to say that Faith is “**not of yourselves**”. And then Paul went on to teach that the Faith that it takes to save lost souls is a “**Gift of God**”. So, “Saving Faith” must be *given* by God to the lost person. And that means that, in our lost condition- we do NOT already possess this Faith.

Okay. But WHY did God set it up this way? Why don’t we already have this Faith? Why does Faith have to be a Gift from God that is given? Look at the very next verse:

**Ephesians 2:9**

**not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

So, no human can take credit or glory for something he supposedly did- to save himself. And part of the way God gets all the Glory- is by *removing* any way that we could rob God of some of the Glory- through our boasting.

So, us not being *able* to boast- is how God gets all the Glory. And I get that from the word, “**may**” in **Ephesians 2:9**. There, Paul said, “**so that no one may boast**”. So, God set up Salvation in such a way so that we “may” NOT boast. In other words, we do NOT have God’s Permission to boast about what we did to save ourselves. We have NOT been given the privilege or the opportunity or the allowance or the right to boast about something we did- that *caused* us to be saved or that “brought about” our own Salvation.

But Why? Shouldn’t we be proud of what we have done? Shouldn’t we take great pride in all the hard work we have expended to accomplish the things we have accomplished in this life? Why is that wrong? And if we are not supposed to take Pride in our accomplishments- what is the motivation to do anything? Paul gave us the motivation when he wrote this in **1Corinthians 10:31**:

**Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**

... so, us doing all that we do so that God alone receives all the Glory and so that God will look utterly Magnificent- is our motivation to do *everything* we do: from preaching the Gospel; to marrying a wife; to having children; to building a home; to eating oatmeal.

We must realize, dear friends, that one of the main reasons that God does all that He does in the earth- is so that He alone will receive all the Glory. God is “white-hot” in His Passion to be known and loved and enjoyed and worshipped and glorified. So, God does what He does- because of His Own Good Pleasure; and for His *Own* Benefit; and to make Himself look glorious! And that *especially* applies to Salvation.

Look at what the Apostle Paul wrote as to *why* God saves wicked rebels- by what He alone does for them:

### **Ephesians 1:6a to the praise of the glory of His grace...**

So, God set Salvation up- in such a way- that the Glory of God’s Grace will be seen and praised. So, three things are true:

1. God’s Grace has a “Glory” to it
2. When people see that Glory demonstrated (by wicked sinners being saved)- they praise it
3. No human can boast against God’s Grace

... which tells us a lot about Grace.

So, for Grace to have a “Glory” to it- means: that Grace has a “Value” to it; an “Importance”; a “Beauty”; and a “Worth” to it. And as we ponder just what that means- we are forced to define just what Grace is:

- The *unmerited* “Favor” of God
- The *undeserved* “Love” of God
- The *unearned* “Special Treatment” of God

So, Grace is:

The free Benevolence of God toward chosen wicked rebels- by which God’s Will in Salvation is accomplished in them.

... and the phrase, “*the Free Benevolence of God*” has to do with *how* God chooses to *distribute* His Grace.

It is clear from reading the Bible that God does NOT give His Grace to everyone. And we know that because not all are saved. But it is also clear from the Scriptures that, even with those to whom God does give His Grace- not all are given Grace in equal amounts.

So, *how* does God *distribute* His Grace? Grace is distributed according to God's Own Divine *Prerogative*. In other words, by saying that Grace is "unmerited" or "undeserved"; or "unearned" by Man- is to also say that Grace is not "obligated" on God's part. God doesn't *have* to give anybody His Grace- He isn't *obligated* to give anyone His Grace. He is not under any *restraint* or *duty* to give us His Grace. God voluntarily *chooses* to give *some* filthy sinners His Grace; and He voluntarily chooses to give that Grace to those chosen sinners- in the amounts; and at certain times- that pleases Him.

Now, by definition, this means that Grace is distributed UNEQUALLY. It isn't given equally. So, everyone does NOT receive God's Grace. And, even with those who DO receive Grace- *some* receive it in *greater* amounts; and some receive it- more *frequently*. And this means that the distribution of God's Grace is predicated on only one thing: God's Good Pleasure. So, us *wanting* God's Grace; and us *needing* God's Grace; even us *praying* for God's Grace- is NOT the criteria by which Grace is distributed.

But something that is often overlooked is the fact that Grace is NOT merely what allows lost people to be saved. No, Grace is also: The Power of God- by which already saved people *continue* to follow after Jesus; the Power of God to *overcome* Sin; the Power of God to *resist* Temptation; and the Power of God that allows saved people to *pursue* biblical Holiness through our ongoing struggle against the lusts of our flesh- to obey the Scriptures.

Look what the Apostle Paul wrote in **2Corinthians 9:8**:

**And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;**

So, in addition to Grace being unmerited Favor so that lost people can be saved- Grace is also the Power of God that gives us "**sufficiency in everything**"- to what end? So, we may "**have an abundance for every good deed**". And this is with people, who are already saved. So, we need Grace for Salvation- but we also need Grace for Sanctification as well. And it is this Issue of Grace that was the area that was attacked by the Heresy of Pelagianism.

Now on November 13, 354AD, Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis was born. And "Augustine" (as he came to be known) was the *greatest* Christian Leader during the first 1,000 years of Church History- perhaps even the greatest of all

time. And I could spend an enormous amount of time- teaching you how God used this man to help establish the Christian Church through his amazing grasp of the Scriptures; and his ability to piece together very important and very deep Issues and formulate them into very clear and precise Doctrines. It is very hard to even imagine anyone having a greater impact on the Church- other than Jesus and the Apostles.

Now just to give you some idea of Augustine's influence- you may remember, back in 2003, when this nation entered into war with Iraq, the President of the United States, George W. Bush quoted Augustine when he talked about a term that has been used by every President since George Washington to justify this nation entering into war. The term is the "*Doctrine of Just War*" and it was developed by Augustine to reconcile how Christians, who have been commanded in the Bible to not kill, may fight for their country; and destroy the enemy; and still be in right standing" with a perfectly righteous God. So, God anointed Augustine to develop the "*Doctrine of Just War*".

Another example of Augustine's influence is found in the Protestant Reformation. We call the titanic struggle with the Roman religious system back in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century a "Reformation" and NOT a "Rebellion" or a "Revolution"- because what the Reformers did- was to simply *return* the Church back to the *original* model that was established by the Apostles in the New Testament- which model that was articulated by Augustine. So, the Reformers never created a single new Doctrine- they simply *revived* the original Doctrines hammered out by Augustine and that were found in the Epistles- which had been ignored and discarded by Rome. This is how important Augustine was and is to the Christian Church.

Now Augustine wrote several books, and I urge all of you to read all of them.<sup>i</sup> But between AD 397 and 400- God moved on this man to write down 13 separate books (which were later gathered together into one book)- consisting solely of his open and sincere and clear confessions of his own personal sins. And "*Confessions*"; or "*The Confessions of St. Augustine*" is one of those books that I highly recommend to every believer. And in "Book 10; page 29" of *Confessions*, Augustine prayed what he considered to be a very simple and noncontroversial prayer:

"Lord, give what You command and command what You will."

... and as Augustine's book with this prayer began to circulate throughout the late 4<sup>th</sup> Century world- a monk, over in Britain, named, "Pelagius" read it and almost immediately- went berserk. Now Pelagius had no problem with the *second* part of this prayer, where Augustine said,

... [Lord], command what You will.

... because Pelagius believed that God was Lord of Heaven and Earth and had the Right to command whatever He desired. It was the *first* part of this Prayer that troubled him.

Lord, give [grant] what You command...

... because that had to do with the Grace of God. And so, Pelagius wrote to Augustine and asked him, "*Why does God have to grant whatever He has commanded? The fact that God commands us to do something presupposes that we already have the ability to do it- or else God could not hold us responsible if we don't obey. All that lacks in the Commands of God- is our Will to obey Him. But we already have the ability- or God would have never commanded it in the first place.*"

Now you may not realize this- but what Pelagius was doing- was to attack the Grace of God. And so, this simple Prayer by Augustine ignited what became the *greatest* and most important battle in all of Church History- what is, today called, "The Pelagian Controversy".

And at stake in this battle was nothing short of several key Doctrines:

- God's Grace
- Original Sin
- The Fall of Man
- God's Sovereignty
- Man's "Free-Will" (Human Self-determination)

So, back and forth the letters went between these two men. And as the Controversy grew- more and more Issues came into play. Pelagius begin to focus on two main Issues:

1. Man's Innocence after the Fall
2. Our Need for Grace

Pelagius taught that the only one affected negatively by the Fall was Adam himself. He taught that those born *after* the Fall were born "*Tabula Rasa*"- which is a Latin phrase meaning: "*blank slate*". So, Pelagius taught that people are born today- as a "*blank slate*" or as a "*clean sheet of paper*"- completely unaffected by



the Fall. Augustine rebuked Pelagius- quoting from the Apostle Paul's **Letter to the Romans**, where he taught,

### **Romans 5:12**

**Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—**

Now the Apostle Paul was teaching several things here- among them are:

- Death came from Sin
- All men die- because all men sin

So, before Adam sinned- there was no Death. *Nothing* died until after Adam sinned. And this Reality is one of the main Truths that defeat Darwinian Evolution- which *requires* that the various "life-forms" mutated and died- *repeatedly*- over billions of years until Man was brought forth. But Paul infallible teaches here that, even though today- EVERYTHING dies: stars die; animals die; plants and trees die; insects die; people die. But NOTHING died- until *after* Adam sinned.

But wait! Why do babies die? Babies do NOT sin themselves- because they can't. And yet babies die all the time- from a variety of ailments. Even *unborn* babies die. So, why is that? Based on this Passage here in **Romans 5**- Augustine taught that, even though babies do not sin *themselves*- they are cursed by God (from the very moment of Conception) with what he termed, "Original Sin". And to prove this- Augustine said that the Apostle Paul taught three things in this verse:

- **Through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world**
- **Death [entered the world] through sin**
- **Death spread to all men, because all sinned**

So, before Adam sinned- there was no Sin *anywhere* on earth. Nobody sinned- until Adam sinned. And there was also no Death anywhere on earth. So, until Adam sinned- neither Sin nor Death existed. The Apostle Paul clearly taught here that Death entered the world- THROUGH SIN. So, Sin CAUSED Death. Sin brought about Death. So, Death was introduced to the world through the Sin of one single Man- Adam.

But then Paul also taught that Death spread to all human beings- precisely because all human beings sinned. And the word, "**sinned**" here is "past tense"- meaning the Sin that all human beings are guilty of- happened at some point in the Past. And based on this Passage- and in response to the Heresy of Pelagius- God used Augustine to "hammer out" the "Doctrine of Original Sin".

Now, many within the modern church take the Doctrine of Original Sin for granted- as though it has always existed. But it didn't always exist. The Doctrine of Original Sin was born in the fire of the Pelagian Controversy- as a biblical Response to the Heresy that Pelagius taught about "Tabula Rasa", which is Latin for "clear tablet" or "clean slate". So, Pelagius taught that those born after Adam were NOT tainted with Original Sin- but were born as a "clean tablet" and were ONLY accountable for the sins they personally committed.

But even though many take the Doctrine of Original Sin for granted- most don't realize that this Truth has two parts to it:

1. All humans born after Adam sinned- have the very same "sin nature" that Adam had after he fell
2. All humans born after Adam sinned- are personally guilty of the Sin of Adam

Now, most everyone in the modern church agrees with #1. So, they teach that- as soon as babies mature and are "able to sin"- they WILL sin. And this illustrates our fallen "sin nature".

But very few within the modern church have even heard of #2. And so, very few teach how devastating the Fall really was. But Augustine taught that not only do all humans born after the fall have the same "sin nature" of Adam- babies are conceived in their mother's womb with the personal GUILT of Adam as well. And he based his Doctrine on this Passage here in **Romans 5** and the Passage in **Hebrews 7** called the "Federal Headship of Adam".

You see, in his Teaching in **Hebrews 7**- the unknown writer said that Abraham "paid tithes" to Levi- even though Levi had not yet been born. But how did he do that? Because Levi *would be* born from Abrahams' lineage- later on. And this had the effect of making Abraham the "Federal Head" of the children of Israel.

So, using this same logic- Augustine taught that Adam was the "Federal Head" of the entire human race. And so, when Adam sinned- we sinned with him- because we were in his loins when he sinned. And that means that, in addition to everyone born after Adam having the same "Sin nature": of Adam- we are also *personally guilty* of the Sin of Adam. And that means that Paul was correct: All now die- because all "have sinned" in Adam.

Now the Doctrine of Original Sin also had the net effect of making God's Grace MANDATORY for Salvation. Since all humans are now both "personally guilty" of the Sin of Adam; and since everyone who is able to sin- DOES sin- we are doomed- unless God gives us His Grace. So, Grace is not nice; it isn't helpful. No, Grace is REQUIRED- or nobody is saved. So, we NEED Grace.

Now the Heresy that Pelagius began to champion became known as, “*Pelagianism*”. And you may be wondering why I am spending an entire Sermon on a Heresy that began over 1,600 years ago. I mean, History may be nice- but why do I want you to understand what Pelagius and Augustine argued about back in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Centuries? Well, here’s why. The “Doctrine of Demons” that first deceived Pelagius himself and the Heresy that Pelagius was determined to propagate around the world- is the Foundation of what today is called, “Secular Humanism.”

Now “Secular Humanism” elevates the glory of Man. It is all about the *deification* of Man. And so, Humanism magnifies Man’s importance- at God’s expense. It makes Man to be his own “god”; while it makes the God of the Bible to be completely irrelevant. Secular Humanism came forth from that which Pelagius taught in the fourth and fifth centuries- but it didn’t stop there. Today, Humanism has successfully infiltrated our public school system; our colleges; the business world; our newspapers; magazines; radio and television news organizations; and the Local, State, and Federal Governments of this nation.

But what is even *worse*- is that many theological seminaries- that used to teach the Bible- now unashamedly teach and promote Secular Humanism.

Pelagianism, in the form of Secular Humanism, has become so dominant today that the very same tenets that Pelagius taught over 1,600 years ago are point by point; and line by line- the very things that are being taught and enforced and laid out as being true in a church somewhere near you.

For example, most of those who espouse godless, “Darwinian Evolution” quote freely from Pelagius. Many “Hollywood types” who, for some reason, are looked at as knowing what they are talking about, quote from Pelagius all the time. Time, Newsweek, US News and World Report, ABC, NBC, CBS, and CNN news organizations; the History and Discovery Channels and National Geographic are filled from top to bottom with radical Humanists, who value Pelagius as their hero. Harvard, Yale and Princeton Divinity Schools, who, many years ago, turned out some of the greatest Christian Preachers the world has ever known, have completely capitulated to the Pelagian Error and today promote Humanism more than they promote Biblical Truth. These once proud and venerable Universities at one time held to a strict, biblical Confession of Faith and were bastions of clear, sound Doctrine. But today, these same Universities are dens of iniquity; and the habitation of every abominable and creeping thing.

So, when you hear me talk about a Heresy that began some 1600 years ago- don’t think for a minute that what I am saying has no relevance to you today. We, who love and serve the Lord, and who value the Bible; and believe that the Bible is the infallible and inerrant and God breathed written Revelation of God to Man- are

an island- literally *surrounded* by a godless sea of the modern- day equivalent of Pelagius' lies and falsehoods.

Beloved, we need to understand that how we view God; and how we view Man; and how we view Salvation and how we view Grace and how we view Sin- will shape our entire view of everything else. And if our view is not biblical- then by default- it *will* be Humanistic. So, let's examine how prevalent the ancient Pelagian doctrine is- in our modern American culture.

Pelagianism has taken over the hearts and minds of American business as well as the Medical Profession. We advertise and sell goods and services today- and we exalt and promote business practices in this country based entirely on a pagan, humanistic, Pelagian world-view that promotes Greed; Materialism; and Self- gratification above Honesty; godly Love and Humility.

The view of Man that speaks about concepts like "Self- esteem"; "Self- worth"; "Self- fulfillment"; and "Self- help" that *dominate* our Culture; and that are promoted and taught and propagated by the American Psychological Association; and the American Psychiatric Association- are in fact unbiblical and pagan Concepts- which exalt the "internal Goodness of Man"; while *minimizing* or outright *eliminating* our need for God's Grace. But they didn't originate their own beliefs. The approach to human nature that was made famous by the atheistic Sigmund Freud- was actually articulated by the Heretic, Pelagius about 1500 years BEFORE Freud. And this approach- that is the basis of most of the secular counselling efforts in this country- actually fights against people from coming to Faith in Christ; and is therefore, the enemy of the Gospel.

The entire discipline of modern Education called, "Sociology" is a godless and humanistic Perversion of what the Bible teaches about Man and why people do what they do. Sociology is based upon the Pelagian Heresy that teaches that Man is his *own* "god" and given Education; Opportunity; and Money- "bad" people will automatically become "good". So, I pray that you can see that, although Pelagius put forth his heresy over 1600 years ago, Pelagian Heresy is all around us today.

And all of that would be bad enough. But this very same Heresy that started with Pelagius and was fought against by the heroes of the Church many hundreds of years ago- has now been welcomed back into the modern Church with open arms- because it has been "repackaged" as being a "new and improved" Revelation from God by some of the most famous Preachers and Teachers of our day.

The Truth is that "Secular Humanism", which is the modern-day version of the ancient heresy of Pelagianism- is responsible for the greatest destruction of human lives that the world has ever known. Adolf Hitler, with his vision of a "superior race"; Joseph Stalin in Russia; Pol Pot in Cambodia; and Mao in China;

along with Margaret Sanger- who created Planned Parenthood; and who *championed* the “Eugenics Movement” here in the United States- were all avowed Humanists- who, collectively annihilated over 100 million human beings in the last Century.

My Christian brothers and sisters, we must not fail to cry out against the dismal lack of spiritual discernment that is in the Church today- which is a direct result of years and years of promoting Individualism as it pertains to Truth; and *minimizing* Sound Doctrine; or putting it on the back burner.

We who lead in the Church, have a Duty and a Responsibility to rise up; and be awake to what is going on around us. We have got to “sound the alarm” about the glaring lack of a love for the Truth in far too many churches. And we must “raise the bar” about Truth- and put the Divine, Absolute Objective, Propositional Truth of Scripture- back to where the Bible put it. And we have got to establish a much higher Standard as to what we accept as being from God- other than it “sounds cool”; or because it “makes the hair on the back of our necks stand up”; or because it is popular.

Now there is a lot to despise about Pelagianism. But I want to focus on one other *major* Problem with it- which has to do with what is now called, “Human Free-Will” or “Human Self-Determinism”. So, while Augustine prayed,

“Lord, give what You command and command what You will.”

... Pelagius was teaching,

*“If I ought- then I can”.*

In other words, Pelagius taught that, since Man was unaffected by the Fall- he possessed everything he needed to affect Salvation- BY WHAT HE DID FOR HIMSELF. So, instead of teaching about the Beauty and the Majesty of Grace- this Heretic taught in Man’s supposed “Free-Will”, which is also called, “Human Self-determinism”.

Now this part of Pelagius’ Teaching is a *perversion* of what the Bible DOES teach: “Human Responsibility” or “Human Accountability”. And this Truth says that Man is responsible to God; he is accountable to God for what he does; and what he believes; and what he thinks. And this biblical Truth is what allows God to damn unrepentant sinners into Hell.

But while the Bible absolutely DOES teach “Human Responsibility or Accountability”- that is not all it teaches. The Bible also teaches about the “Absolute Sovereignty of God”. So, while God is absolutely Sovereign over everything- all the time; Man is always responsible to God; and is held accountable

by God- for what he does; and what he believes; and what he thinks. So, if people don't do the "right thing" (i.e. repent and believe the Gospel)- God is free to eternally damn them- and still remain perfectly Just.

Now in how Human Responsibility works along side of God's Sovereignty- the Bible is silent. So, we do not know HOW these two, seemingly contradictory Truths co-exist. We only know that they do. So, somehow- we are *always* accountable to God while at the same time- God is always Sovereign. So, both are always true.

Now this does NOT make us to be robots- who have no personal volition. But it does do great damage to the false Concept that human beings have "free-Will". We don't. But we never did have "free-Will"- even BEFORE the Fall.

Now the problem with the Concept of "Free-Will" is NOT with the word, "Will"- but with the word, "Free". The word, "Free" has to do with "*Autonomy*"- which comes from a Latin word that means: "Self-governed" or "Self-ruled". And, whereas the notion that Man is autonomous might sound great- it has NEVER been true.

We must understand that Mankind- from the very first breath taken in the Garden after Creation- has NEVER and will NEVER be "Self-governed or "Self-ruled". Adam was NOT created to be autonomous and to rule over himself. Not for one second. Adam was ALWAYS underneath God's Rule or "God's governing Authority". And that is a Concept called, "*Theonomy*" (God ruled). So, from the very beginning- Adam was assigned certain Tasks, Duties, and Responsibilities (i.e. keep the Garden; lead his wife, etc.) and was ALWAYS accountable to God for what he did.

The Bible teaches clearly and repeatedly that while human beings were created to "rule over" the created world- we were NEVER created to be "in charge". God has ALWAYS maintained His absolute Authority over Man. So, all humans were created to be slaves. And we are one of two types of slaves:

1. Slaves of Sin (**Romans 6:6**)
2. Slaves of Christ (**Ephesians 6:6**)

... but slaves we are; and slaves we will always be.

And as "slaves of Sin- we are also "slaves to those which, by nature are no gods" (**Romans 6:8**); and slaves "to impurity and to lawlessness" (**Romans 6:19**). And as "slaves of Christ"- we are also "slaves of Righteousness" (**Romans 6:18**).

So, those who teach that mankind can become "gods"; or that we can rise to a place in the Spirit, where we have all Authority – are liars and false Teachers.

But Pelagius taught then; and Secular Humanism teaches now- that Man CAN become his *own* god; and is completely autonomous- escaping any Accountability with God. And so, Pelagius created the Concept of “Human Self-Determinism”- which wars against the Sovereignty of God.

Now the Concept of “Human Free-Will” or “Self-Determinism” robs God of the Glory that only He is entitled to receive- *especially* as it pertains to Salvation- which was exactly Pelagius’ Goal.

And so, Pelagius taught that Man was a “Free-Moral Agent”; and that God was so impressed with our supposed “Free-Will” that He would never “violate” it. So, while God *wanted* to save everybody- He couldn’t- because to work to save us against our Will- would violate our “Free-moral” Status and God would be sinning against us. In other words, Pelagius taught that even though God was Sovereign- He voluntarily *limited* His Sovereignty- in order to preserve our “Free-Will”.

Now I would gather that most- if not all of you- have heard similar Statements at some point in your life. And that is testimony to how pervasive Pelagianism really is- even in our day. But as you heard these Statements (and maybe even agreed with them)- you probably never knew that these kinds of Statements came from the evil Heretic- Pelagius. But even though that is true- sadly, these Statements are *routinely* taught in most of the Evangelical churches of our day. Let me repeat that: The most common Statements about “Human Free-Will” (especially as it pertains to Salvation) that are taught in nearly every Evangelical church in our day- are NOT found anywhere in the Bible- but were *invented* and made famous by the evil heretic Pelagius- who fought AGAINST the Grace of God in Salvation.

Okay, Brother Blair- if “Human Free-will” is NOT taught in the Bible- how does God remain Sovereign and still hold us accountable? How do these two contradictory things work together? Augustine can help us here.

First of all- we must understand that human beings don’t start out as being “neutral”. All human beings are *already* “fallen”. We are *already* cursed by God as being totally depraved and unable and unwilling to love God and obey Him gladly. Original Sin teaches that, at the very moment of Conception, we have the rebellious “sin nature” of Adam; AND we also are “personally guilty” of the Sin of Adam as well. So, we are not “Good” and we are NOT “innocent”. We are “God-haters” at the moment life enters into us; and we are what the Apostle Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:1-3**, when he said:

**And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of**

**the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.**

But we DO have “Volition” or “Will” or “Choice”- and it is this Reality that makes us all *culpable* for our own Sins. But because we are all “Fallen”- our “Volition”; “Will”; and “Choice” are also “fallen” and “corrupted” by the Fall.

So, “Yes!”- we choose- we make decisions all the time. And that is what makes us totally responsible or accountable to God for what we choose. But even though we choose- our Choices are NOT “free”. Our Choices are predicated- they are based; they “sit atop” something else. Okay, what are our Choices based on? Augustine taught that our Choices are predicated on what we love; what we want; and what we desire.

So, WHY do we choose what we choose? What is the *basis* or the *origination* or the *foundation* or the *impetus* for our Choices? We choose what we “love”; and what we “want”; and what we “desire”. So, when asked, “*Why did you do that?*” Our answer is always, “*Because I wanted to.*” Or, “*Because I just love that.*” Or, “*Because that is my desire.*” And that is true. But that is what makes us all culpable for our Choices.

But we must press further. WHY did you *want* to do that? WHY was that your *desire*? WHY did you *love* that? And the answer to that is: “*That is my Nature.*” Or, “*That is who I am.*” Or, “*That is my very Being or Essence.*” And now we are understanding just how radical and how devastating the Fall really was.

You see, the Fall change EVERYTHING about us: Our physical bodies began to die- because Disease and Sickness entered into the world. But even worse, our hearts became corrupt and out of our hearts precede all the Evil in the world. In **Matthew 15:10-20**, the Apostle said,

**10 After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand.**

**11 It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."**

**12 Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?"**

**13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.**

**14 Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."**

**15 Peter said to Him, "Explain the parable to us."**

**16 Jesus said, "Are you still lacking in understanding also?"**



**17 Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?**

**18 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.**

**19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.**

**20 These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."**

... and the best "Summary Statement" about the condition of our Hearts and Natures after the Fall is found in **Genesis 6:5** that says,

**Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

Now the word, "**great**" here means: *all- pervasive*. So, the "wickedness" of Mankind was, "*all-pervasive*" after the Fall- meaning: *it affected every area of life*. No area of Humanity was left untouched by the Fall. Our minds; our thoughts; our natures; our loves; our wants and desires- EVERYTHING became "fallen" and 'corrupt' and "sinful" because of Adam's Sin. But now look at the last phrase of this verse:

**... and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

Every single "**intent**" of the "**thoughts of our hearts**" was: "only Evil- all the time" (continuously). This is the most insulting and the most vivid description of WHY our choices are NOT "Free" and WHY our Choices are ONLY sinful as a lost person. Here Moses infallibly wrote that- due to the fall of Adam- every single human being is "All Evil- All the Time". There is now NO capacity for "Good" in us- AT ALL. No area of our Natures that was left undamaged by the Fall. And as a result- our very Natures are now "fallen"- meaning: they are "All Evil- All the Time"- with no capacity for any "Good"

Now this doesn't mean that everybody is as bad as they could be. We all manifest or display our "fallenness" in different ways. Some are violent and obviously wicked, while others may be quiet and seemingly okay. But ALL of Humanity was radically and negatively affected by the Fall- and nobody escapes it.

So, because our Natures are corrupted- our loves, wants and desires- are also corrupted. And as a result- we only choose Sin and Self as lost people. And even when lost people do seemingly "nice" or "noble" things- they do so- out of a desire to either make themselves look good; or to make themselves feel good; or to

further their own agenda. So, by Nature, we are, inherently, sinful creatures and are underneath God's Judgment. And as a result, we CANNOT love God; and we see the "**things of the Spirit of God**" as being patently "**foolish**" or absurd (**1Corinthians 2:14**).

But Salvation changes all that. And so, when a lost person is "born again"- by a sovereign Act of God alone- what changed was our "Nature"; Our "Essence" or "Who we are". And in that one, single Act- God sovereignly opened our eyes (so we may behold the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus [**2Corinthians 4:3-6**]); He unstopped our ears; and God sovereignly took out of us that stony, heard heart- that rebelled against God; and that loved the Darkness rather than the Light; and that delighted in Sin and Self- and God gave us a soft heart- that delights in God; and that loves God; and that has both the ability and the power to believe. And look at how the Prophet Ezekiel describes the Grace of God at work in our lives in Salvation:

#### **Ezekiel 36:25b-27**

**25 ... I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.**

**26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.**

**27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**

... this is what God does for us- by Grace- in the Miracle of the New Birth.

So, 1600 years ago, Augustine fought against Pelagius and taught that as a result of changing our Natures in the New Birth- our Loves; Wants; and Desires changed too. And so now- our Choices- our Decisions- freely proceed forth from those new Loves; Wants; and Desires. And that is why lost people choose what they choose; and why saved people choose what they choose. So, until our Natures are transformed in the Miracle of the New Birth- lost and fallen human beings CAN'T "choose" God nor love God; nor can they delight in God.

So, as a fallen human being- we have "Will"- Yes! But our "Will" is NOT "free". It isn't autonomous. Our Wills are "in bondage" to our fallen Natures. So, yes, we choose. But our choices are NOT "free". We choose what we love; what we want; and what we desire. And because our Natures are fallen- all our loves, wants, and desires are sinful.

But because the Nature of saved people HAS been changed- we DO choose God; we DO love God; and we DO delight in God. And this is what Augustine taught- 1600 years ago. And this is what the Protestant Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup>

Century restored. And this Truth about Grace and “Human Free-Will” is all part of WHY we are NOT Romans and WHY we are Protestants. We believe the Bible. And everyone that disagrees with the Bible- is wrong- no matter how old their Teaching is and no matter how popular it might be.

Okay, so, what happened to Pelagius and his false Teaching? Well, the Church convened another Council to decide the matter in AD 418- the “Council of Carthage”- where Pelagianism was formally and officially condemned as a Heresy. Great. Did that settle the Issue? No. As I have already taught you- you can’t kill a Heresy. False Teachings simply go somewhere else- to deceive somebody else. And that is why I am teaching this Heresy to you this morning. To warn you that Pelagianism is alive and well in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

And so, over the Centuries, Pelagianism morphed and was re-packaged as “Secular Humanism”, which is now the official Religion of the Government of the United States of America. And that is why I say that this Nation is NOT becoming more and more “Secular” it is becoming more and more “Pagan”. And so, Humanism is more popular today than Pelagius could have ever dreamed.

But what is infinitely worse- is that basic fundamental tenets of Pelagius’ unbiblical, God-hating; Grace denying false Teaching is being taught this morning in a Church near you. “Human Free- Will”, which denies the Sovereignty of God and that fights against God’s Grace- is more popular today than it has ever been. It is being promoted with great Joy by many of the most famous and popular Preachers and Teachers of our day.

So, we are living in the Age of the “Pelagian Deception” of the Church. And so, we have a lot of work to do. We must be faithful to proclaim the biblical Truth about the “Bondage of the Human Will” and the utter Majesty of the Grace of God- loudly and unashamedly. We must *continue* to denounce Pelagianism- everywhere we see it. And we must hold fast to the infallibility of the sacred Scriptures- to the very end. And we must take Hope in what Jesus Himself promised in **Matthew 16:18b**:

**... I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.**

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

<sup>i</sup> This is the best list I could find on books written by Augustine

- On the Beautiful and the Fitting (Latin: De Pulchra et Apto, 380)
- On Free Choice of the Will (De libero arbitrio, 388-395)
- On Christian Doctrine (Latin: De doctrina Christiana, 397–426)
- Confessions (Confessiones, 397–398)
- The City of God (De civitate Dei, begun c. 413–426)
- On the Trinity (De trinitate, 400–416)
- Enchiridion (Enchiridion ad Laurentium, seu de fide, spe et caritate)
- Retractationes (Retractations): At the end of his life (c. 426–428) Augustine revisited his previous works in chronological order. The English translation of the title has led some to assume that at the end of his career, Augustine retreated from his earlier theological positions. In fact, the Latin title literally means "re-treatments" (not "Retractions") and though in this work Augustine suggested what he would have said differently, it provides little in the way of actual "retraction." It does, however, give the reader a rare picture of the development of a writer and his final thoughts.
- The Literal Meaning of Genesis (De Genesi ad litteram, 393-4)
- On the Catechising of the Uninstructed (De catechizandis rudibus)
- On Faith and the Creed (De fide et symbolo)
- Concerning Faith of Things Not Seen (De fide rerum invisibilium)
- On the Profit of Believing (De utilitate credendi)
- On the Creed: A Sermon to Catechumens (De symbolo ad catechumenos)
- On Continence (De continentia, 395)
- On the teacher (De magistro, a dialogue between Augustine and his son Adeodatus)
- On the Good of Marriage (De bono coniugali)
- On Holy Virginity (De sancta virginitate)
- On the Good of Widowhood (De bono viduitatis)
- On Lying (De mendacio)
- To Consentius: Against Lying (Contra mendacium [ad Consentium])
- To Quodvultdeus, On Heresies (De haeresibus ad Quodvultdeum)
- On the Work of Monks (De opere monachorum)
- On Patience (De patientia)
- On Care to be Had For the Dead (De cura pro mortuis gerenda)
- On the Morals of the Catholic Church and on the Morals of the Manichaeans (De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum)
- On Two Souls, Against the Manichaeans (De duabus animabus [contra Manichaeos])
- Acts or Disputation Against Fortunatus the Manichaeon ([Acta] contra Fortunatum [Manichaeum])
- Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental (Contra epistolam Manichaei quam vocant fundamenti)
- Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon (Contra Faustum [Manichaeum])
- Concerning the Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans (De natura boni contra Manichaeos)
- On Baptism, Against the Donatists (De baptismo [contra Donatistas])
- The Correction of the Donatists (De correctione Donatistarum)
- On Merits and Remission of Sin, and Infant Baptism (De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum)
- On the Spirit and the Letter (De spiritu et littera)
- On Nature and Grace (De natura et gratia, 415)
- On Man's Perfection in Righteousness (De perfectione iustitiae hominis)
- On the Proceedings of Pelagius (De gestis Pelagii)
- On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin (De gratia Christi et de peccato originali)
- On Marriage and Concupiscence (De nuptiis et concupiscentia)
- On the Nature of the Soul and its Origin (De natura et origine animae)
- On the Magnitude of the Soul (De animae quantitate)
- Against Two Letters of the Pelagians (Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum)
- On Grace and Free Will (De gratia et libero arbitrio)
- On Rebuke and Grace (De correptione et gratia)
- On the Predestination of the Saints (De praedestinatione sanctorum)
- On the Gift of Perseverance (De dono perseverantiae)
- The Christian Combat (De agone Christiano)
- On the Harmony of the Evangelists (De consensu evangelistarum)

- Treatises on the Gospel of John (In Iohannis evangelium tractatus)
- Soliloquies (Soliloquiorum libri duo)
- Enarrations, or Expositions, on the Psalms (Enarrationes in Psalmos)
- On the Immortality of the Soul (De immortalitate animae)
- Answer to the Letters of Petilian, Bishop of Cirta (Contra litteras Petiliani)
- Against the Academics (Contra Academicos)
- On eighty-three various questions (De diversis quaestionibus octaginta tribus, 396)
- Sermons, among which a series on selected lessons of the New Testament
- Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount
- Homilies, among which a series on the First Epistle of John (In Epistolam Joannis Ad Parthos Tractatus Decem)
- On Music (De musica, 387-391)
- On Order (De Ordine)
- On Dialectic (De Dialetica)