

Cultural Cliches vs. Biblical Truth

1.

“God works in mysterious ways”

2.

“Everything happens for a reason”

1.

God works in mysterious ways...

In the Calvinist view, God has predetermined in eternity past who would inherit salvation and who wouldn't. But how does He make His choice? If He makes His choice with any consideration as to the future behavior, character, or actions of the individual, then He has chosen based upon the merit of that individual, and that is the opposite of grace.

To merit salvation by any means is the antithesis of grace. And yet, if God chooses at random then He is a blind judge and not righteous at all.

There are certainly things about God that remain a mystery to mankind simply by virtue of His eternal nature. But in regards to His will—His operation in the lives of men and women—God *does not* work in mysterious ways.

That is the saying so often thrown around today in 21st century culture, and applied to any circumstance or event one wishes. But is it true that God is working in some indefinable way in the personal lives of every individual on earth, aiming to please them according to their own

wicked heart? Or does He have a purpose for the ages, and has left it up to us to either join that purpose or not?

Does God work in mysterious ways in dealing with man? Or has He made known His will?

Deuteronomy 29:29 says,

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Now of course this is in the context of the Law being revealed to the children of Israel, to which they were appointed, for,

...it is not a vain thing for you (Israel); because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it...(Deuteronomy 32:47),

said Moses to the people of Israel.

In the Law given to Moses, God states in no uncertain terms to the nation whom He created exactly what He expected from them and what He would do, whether they were obedient or disobedient, and the rest of the Old Testament and the events recorded therein are based upon those stated terms.

God states the terms of blessing or cursing, and calls witnesses:

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live...
(Deuteronomy 30:19)

Now we may read that and say “*Heaven and earth?*” as if it’s something figurative. But this is God calling literal witnesses. Are we not now witnesses, by His written record, of Israel’s agreement to God’s covenant (Exodus 19:8) and their subsequent disobedience to that covenant? We are. And are there beings who abide in the heavens who are ministering spirits, who minister to those who will inherit salvation? There are.

When it had become apparent that they had not only broken the Law, but generally disregarded God’s covenant and precepts altogether, God calls His witnesses together that He might pronounce the very judgment that He Himself prescribed in that Covenant:

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.
(Isaiah 1:2)

And just as He stated in the Law of Moses,

Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things...

...The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand...

(Deuteronomy 28:47, 49)

God sent the Assyrian Empire to invade and conquer Israel, even up to their neck, that is, leaving the head city, Jerusalem, alone unconquered (Isaiah 8:8).

This is a clear demonstration of how God operated during that time. It was only a mystery to those who neglected what God had said. He had made it plainly known. And yet it remained a mystery to much of Israel after they inherited their land.

This calls to mind the account of King Josiah, in 2 Kings 22, when he sends Shaphan the scribe to Hilkiah the high priest to collect the silver contributed by the people for the work of repairing the temple; Hilkiah tells Shaphan that he has found the book of the Law in the house of the LORD, and Shaphan takes it to king Josiah and reads it to him, and,

...when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

(2 Kings 22:11-13)

I say all this to say, was God working in some obscure, unknowable, mysterious way, as is sometimes supposed, or were men themselves guilty of being ignorant of His clear, stated will? The answer of course is that men were ignorant of His will. God, in His interaction with man, always states His will. He doesn't leave it to us to try and figure out what He wants, so He can then execute judgment when we get it wrong. What kind of cruel and unjust God would He be in that case? Part of God's Divine Nature is that He is perfectly Just—He exercises perfect judgment at all times, to the ends of perfect justice. Even in the case of men, if we were to fail to communicate certain terms in some sort of agreement, and then penalize the other party for violating the terms we failed to state—we ourselves in our fallen humanity see the injustice in this. And yet we ascribe to a Holy and perfect God the same unrighteousness we ourselves shun.

But God had revealed other things prior to the Law of Moses, and He revealed things subsequent to Moses as well. He told Noah of a coming global judgment, and 2 Peter 2:5 says that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. It appears God warned sinful humanity of what was to come. He told Abram He would make of him a great nation, that He would bless him and

make him a blessing; that He would bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him, and would give to his seed the land of Canaan (Genesis 12). The Lord said to him yet again, after Lot departed, that all the land that he could see would be his and his offspring's forever; that He would make his seed as the dust of the earth (Genesis 13). God promised to give him a seed in his old age, and that the number of his offspring would be as the stars in multitude (Genesis 15). And in Genesis 17, when God changes Abram's name to Abraham and gives him the covenant of circumcision, He tells him he will be the father of many nations and that kings will come from him, and that He would establish His covenant with him and his seed after him forever.

This was and is God's stated will to Abraham; Abraham didn't have to guess, it was plainly revealed. This is why Abraham was even willing to sacrifice Isaac, because God had promised that through him these promises would be fulfilled. This is what exactly what Hebrews says:

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. (Hebrews 11:17-19)

Even the manner in which other people could be blessed by God was revealed, which was by blessing Abraham and his offspring.

In Genesis 20, Abimelech's wife and her maid servants were all made to be barren after Abimelech took Sarah to be his own, though he did it ignorantly; and afterward his wife and her servants were all healed on account of Abraham, after Abimelech had restored Sarah to Abraham and given him cattle and servants and land, and Abraham prayed for him and his house. Abimelech was cursed for his transgression against Abraham, and he was later blessed for his blessing to Abraham.

We see this play out in the account of Rahab when she received the spies at Jericho, and she and her family were later spared; we learn later in James 2:25 it was by this that she was justified.

We see Jesus in His ministry to Israel blessing a gentile centurion for,

"...he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." (Luke 7:5)

Similarly, the Canaanite woman was only blessed after having acknowledged the order of blessing God had established to the world, namely, through the channel of His nation Israel (Matt. 15:27).

Another example is how the surviving gentile nations will be judged according to the Abrahamic covenant after the return of Christ to the earth in judgment (Joel 3:1-3; Matt. 25:31-46).

God always leaves us with written testimony of what He is doing. The book of the Acts of the Apostles, for instance, is the written testimony of *Israel's fall*, and the subsequent appointment of a new apostle, Paul, for a *new creature*, wherein there is no Jew or gentile—the Body of Christ. The formation of the Body of Christ *depends* upon the fall of Israel, for it is through their fall that God is justified in giving grace freely to the entire world without distinction.

I say then, Have they (Israel, v. 7) stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? (Romans 11:11-12)

For God hath concluded them (Israel, v. 26) all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. (Romans 11:32)

Acts is the written testimony, penned by Luke, inspired by the Holy Spirit, of Israel's fall and the formation of a new creature, as opposed to God's firstborn son, Israel (Ex. 4:22) who is not a *new creature* at all but who must be born again (John 3:7).

It is only logical that if God were to set aside the nation that He created and dealt with for some 1,400 years that He would leave a written record of the events leading up to that decision as written testimony.

There are more examples we could go through, but let's just examine what God's stated will is *today*, and how He "works," whether it is mysterious or not.

God explicitly states His will for us today, and leaves no room for imagination. Consider the following:

1 Timothy 2:1-4 - *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

God's will today is that *all men* be saved *and* come to the knowledge of the truth. This flies in the face of the Calvinist, who of course reasons that this only means all nationalities, ethnicities, etc...but that is not what the verse says. The verse says *all men*, not all ethnicities or people groups. Of course, not all men will be saved despite God's will, because not all men have faith.

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. (2 Thess. 3:1-2)

And how are men saved? The gospel is stated so clearly a child can understand it in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4,

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures...

And by grace through faith in this good news anyone can be saved.

Another aspect of God's will today is stated in the following:

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 - *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:*

That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: *because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.*

God's will is that we abstain from fornication, and possess our vessels in honor; also that we not lie nor defraud one another in any matter, for God has called us to holiness. This is very straightforward. This is not hard to grasp.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 - *Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

God's will for those in the Body of Christ is to rejoice, to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in everything (not for everything).

Galatians 1:3-4 says,

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father...

God's will today, again, is to deliver all men from this present evil world, in the interim between His first coming, and the time when He returns in judgment. God's will in that future time will not be to save all men, but to execute judgment on His enemies, and to fulfill the prophecies and promises made long ago. In fact, God is said to send the world in that time a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but have

pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:11-12). This is not new information—Paul, by the Holy Ghost, is alluding to prophecy found in Isaiah 66.

Ephesians tells us plainly that God revealed unto us, the Body of Christ, His will for the ages:

Ephesians 1:9-10 - Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him...

Christ revealed to Paul and to us through him the mystery of His will, that is, in the dispensation of the fullness of times, all things which are in the heavens and on the earth will be *in Christ*.

There were in fact authorities in the heavens that rebelled, and subsequently because of these, a rebellion took place on earth, and all of the Bible up to Acts chapter 9 dealt with the reconciliation of that rebellion *on the earth*. God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for a land and offspring and blessing forever, and to David for a King to sit on his throne forever—these all relate to the restoration of the earth. But up until Paul, the rebellion in the heavens and how God would reconcile that rebellion was not made known.

Colossians 1:16 says,

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him...

There are authority structures in the heavens, which were created by Christ and for Christ. Those authorities are currently in rebellion and still occupy those places of power, and have influence over the course of this world.

God's end goal in history then is to reconcile those positions on earth and in heaven by the blood of His cross:

Colossians 1:20 - And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

The Holy Ghost, by the apostle Paul, says of these fallen powers in the heavens:

Ephesians 6:12 - For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Why do we wrestle with these wicked creatures? Why do they hate us? Perhaps because angels cannot be redeemed, for the Son of man didn't take on the nature of angels (Heb. 2:16),

or die in their place, since they are not subject to death. The Son of man died for the sins of men, that they might be reconciled to God. And so if there is to be a restoration of the authorities in the heavens, and those authorities are to be *in Christ*, they must be composed of redeemed men.

That these fallen angels would be replaced by redeemed men is one aspect of the mystery revealed to Paul; but not only are we going to replace angels, we are going to reign as *co-heirs with Christ* (Romans 8:17, 2 Timothy 2:12), as He is the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29).

We must understand the crucifixion itself is not part of the mystery of Christ—the crucifixion was *prophesied*; the devil himself entered into Judas *to ensure* the crucifixion. But Satan did not understand God's hidden wisdom in His secret purpose for this age:

1 Corinthians 2:6-8 - *Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

If Satan knew God's plan for this dispensation, he wouldn't have crucified the Lord of glory. This is why Paul writes,

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord... (Ephesians 3:8-11)

Part of the purpose of the church of this age is to demonstrate to the principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God; this is why the devil works so hard to keep men from seeing these truths, because it puts him to an open shame. The devil is at work in the realm of religion and denominational Christianity. A mystery was revealed to the apostle Paul nearly 2,000 years ago, and it remains largely a mystery in the churches to this day.

God's will, in this age, is to build a body of redeemed saints to inherit places of heavenly positions of power.

2 Corinthians 5:1 - *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

Ephesians 1:3 - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ...*

Colossians 1:5 - *...For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel...*

1 Corinthians 15:40, 42, 44 - *There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another...
...So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption...
...It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*

1 Corinthians 15:49 - *And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

Philippians 3:20 - *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ...*

1 Thessalonians 4:17 - *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

And so (that is, *thus*, or, *in like manner*) we shall ever be with the Lord in the air, that is, in the heavens.

There are probably other examples to be found in the epistles of Paul to demonstrate that we, as the Church the Body of Christ, will inherit the heavens, in contrast to the promises given to Israel for an eternal inheritance on the earth, along with the righteous Gentiles to which they will minister as priests, but I'll leave room for the reader to do his own research.

That God's will today is that all men be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth must encompass these very truths just stated.

And these truths are plainly revealed in the Scriptures, and yet unknown to most. It's right there in the Book; is it God's fault then that men don't know? We are even instructed in 2 Timothy 2:15 to *study* and to *rightly divide the word of Truth*. This is reminiscent of what we saw in 2 Kings 22, when Hilkiah finds the book of the law and brings it to King Josiah. The Israelites were commanded to teach the word of the Lord—that is, the Law—to their children, and to bind them for a sign upon their hands, and to be as frontlets between their eyes, and to write them upon the posts of their houses and upon their gates (Deuteronomy 6:7-9)...and yet by the time of Josiah *they didn't even know there was a book of the Law*.

Yes, God works in mysterious ways...to those who ignore His word and will. But God states His will in black and white for us, and humanity most often neglects it.

And so we cannot say God truly works in mysterious ways, but rather that men generally choose ignorance.

Considering all of this, one might admit that, in terms of the redemption of mankind, God has in fact revealed the manner in which He has chosen to operate. But perhaps the saying, *God works in mysterious ways* is still true in a more general sense. Does God directly control every aspect of the natural world, or the events in the lives of men? Does He micromanage reality down to the atom to bring specific things to pass for each of us *individually*, regardless of our will or the will of others?

Even the wind and waves obey Him, I can already hear in protest. Yes, of course He upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3), but this relates to the laws of nature themselves, things which must operate by some law, and which have no freewill of their own. Christ Himself is their Law, as the creator, sustainer, and redeemer.

Of course we have it on Biblical authority that God *has* intervened at various points throughout history, but those occasions all tie into the grand narrative of redemption itself; they were intentional, purposeful, and we thus have them inspired and preserved for us in the written record of His word. But let us see if God does in fact work in mysterious ways in the everyday lives of people, working each event together for some personally tailored plan for each and every human being. If that were the case, we could say *everything happens for a reason*.

2.

Everything happens for a reason...

...or does it?

Let me just say up front that God *has not* predestinated every worldly occurrence. The word of God nowhere teaches this.

Allow me lay out the common train of thought:

1. God is all powerful and all knowing, with perfect knowledge of even the future.
2. Based upon this knowledge, God must have a will so specific that it pertains even to the everyday lives of all people, down to the minutest detail.
3. And so, whatever is meant to happen, will happen.

This is a common deduction made by many people, Christians and non-Christians alike. This deduction, however logical, is not scriptural. God is all powerful; God is all knowing; God does know the future. But the conclusion that "whatever is meant to happen will happen, and that this is God's will," (since He is all powerful of course), is simply inconsistent with the Word of God,

and is an affront to the free will that He Himself ordained. Thus if we want to align ourselves with His Spirit and with Truth, we must look to His word.

Important to understand is that there are Biblical doctrines—things revealed and taught in the Bible, that would otherwise not be known by men, attesting to a reality greater than ourselves—and then there are the doctrines of men and devils. Where the doctrines of men end and the doctrines of devils begin is not always clear, and I might even assert that they are sometimes one and the same, though not always (as the carnal mind itself is hostile towards God and rather willing to adopt paradigms and delusions that don't conflict with their lifestyles, which themselves are contrary to God).

Chance is a biblical doctrine. *Predestination* is a biblical doctrine only insofar as God's twofold purpose of redemption was predestined—His purpose will stand, and it is up to the individual to either join in that purpose or not.

Consider the following:

Deuteronomy 22:6-7 - *If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young:*

But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.

1 Samuel 6:9 - *And see, if it (the ark of the covenant) goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us: it was a chance that happened to us.*

Ecclesiastes 9:11 - *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.*

Keep in mind that this was written by the hand of the wisest man who ever lived (apart from Christ, who Solomon was a type of in the first half of his life), who prayed for understanding, and to whom Jehovah granted understanding and wisdom according to his prayer (1 Kings 3)—this was inspired also by the Spirit of God, and so we do not have the usage of the word *chance* here as we do in 1 Samuel 6, where it is used by superstitious pagans and doesn't necessarily reflect reality. Ecclesiastes 9:11 makes the statement as a matter of fact.

As a side note, consider that Solomon prayed for,

...an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

And that God gladly granted his petition. Why? Because Solomon prayed *according to God's will*. Deuteronomy 17 commands the king of Israel to make a copy of the Law of Moses, and for him to read it all the days of his life, and to keep all the statutes of the Law and to do them,

...to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel. (Verse 20B)

Certainly Solomon understood this in his wisdom, because he writes in Ecclesiastes 12,

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (v. 13)

Solomon understood that as King the most valuable thing he could receive from God was understanding and wisdom to judge and lead the nation of Israel. And yet we see that all the commands that the Law ordained for the King of Israel, as well as many general commands, Solomon later broke, making him also a type of antichrist later on in life. And because of Solomon's disobedience, the nation was fractured, much like the antichrist's future disobedience will again fracture the nation of Israel between the believing remnant and the apostate.

But Solomon in his youth understood God's will for the King, and he prayed according to that will, and God answered his prayer.

Let's look at Jesus's use of the word chance:

Luke 10:30-31 - *And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

GotQuestions.org cites this passage and appeals to the Greek word *synkyrian* [transliteration of *συγκυρία*, or *sugkuria*] translated as "chance" here, and says the following:

synkyrian...

... is a combination of two words: sun and kurios. Sun means "together with," and kurios means "supreme in authority." So a biblical definition of coincidence would be "what occurs together by God's providential arrangement of circumstances."

And yet biblehub.com defines *synkyrian* as "*accident; chance: by chance, accidentally,*" and cites "*Hippocrates; ecclesiastical and Byzantine writings; Greek writings from Polybius...*"

And so there is a historical precedent to interpret *synkyrian* as "chance." One cannot always appeal to the root and prefix of a word to establish the meaning in ordinary usage. *Epiphaneia*

for instance could have several different meanings based on its root and prefix, and yet in the Bible it is consistently used as *an appearing* and one time as *brightness*.

And so I find it hardly profitable to defer to Greek or Hebrew, when we have a perfectly preserved and inerrant Bible in our own language. God said He would preserve His word, for man must not live by bread alone but by *every word* that proceeds out of the mouth of God, thus *every word* must be preserved—and so it's up to each individual to decide which “version” of the Bible embodies that work, and which body of manuscripts have a witness *throughout history* to work effectually in those that believe, fulfilling the promise and purpose of inspiration as stated in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

It's not my intention to delve into the Bible version issue here, but we must come to understand that if God preserved His words, then there must be an infallible translation, if not, then all versions are full of errors and can't be trusted. There are many places in the Bible in which the Greek of the surviving manuscripts (which are said to be inspired) are actually translations from the original languages spoken (Acts 22 for example). And so a translation very well can retain the exact wording intended in the original language.

Let's consider another example of *chance* in the Bible:

Mark 11:13 - *And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon; and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.*

Webster's 1828 English Dictionary defines *haply* as: *By chance; perhaps; it may be.*

Men are *incurably superstitious* in the flesh, and attempt to read things into circumstances or current events that aren't there. Men also are very prideful in their flesh, and want everything to be about them. Many ascribe God's judgment to natural disasters or accidents. But notice what Christ says in Luke 13:1-5,

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

The assumption was that these men had done something to merit such misfortune; but these things didn't happen because they were sinners, because then all men would deserve such

judgment because all men are sinners. Jesus then warned that all those present would likewise perish except they change their minds, alluding to the coming time of judgment in the great tribulation. In other words, these tragedies were not the judgment of God; when the judgment of God comes, all manner of sinners will be condemned, except they should repent, for God is no respecter of persons. In order to judge sin righteously, He cannot overlook any one person's sin—all sin must be judged. Thus, these disasters *were not* God's judgment, but merely accidents.

That things happen by chance can be biblically demonstrated. But, what about the verses that use the phrase “*predestination*?”

I know that this is no longer addressing a particular cultural cliché, but I feel it's important to address this idea that men are either chosen to receive salvation or damnation by God, and that there's nothing that can be done to alter that decree.

Ephesians 1:5 - *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will...*

This shows that we've been predestined (uh-oh)... *to the adoption*.

We learn what this adoption is in Romans 8:23:

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

To wit means “that is to say,” or “namely.” And so “the adoption” *is* the redemption of our body. When does the redemption of our body occur as members of the Body of Christ?

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

This same event, *the catching up*, is described also in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

The adoption, to which we as members of the Body of Christ, are predestined to, is the resurrection and catching up of the mystery saints, or as it's commonly referred to, the rapture. By implication this means that one cannot lose their salvation as a member of Christ's Body, since once you are placed in it you are *predestined* to the adoption, that is, to the glorification of our body in the heavens.

This is the essence of Philippians 1:6,

...Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ...

The work that Christ has begun in us through faith in the gospel, and the sealing of the Spirit, He will perform until the day of Jesus Christ, that is, until we stand before Him as glorified saints for the judgment we shall receive for the things done in His body, the Church (2 Corinth. 5:10).

Let's consider another:

Ephesians 1:11 - *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will...*

We are predestinated *according to the purpose—His purpose*—meaning that the purpose was predestined, and that when we believe the gospel we become a part of that purpose. This is what 2 Timothy 1:9 says,

...who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began...

The purpose is only *in Christ*. The purpose *is* Christ. And this purpose was decided upon before time even began.

Ephesians 1:4 makes this point:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love...

Notice, we are only chosen *in Him*—that is, by being in Him. And how do we get to be “in Him?” Ephesians 1 explains this for us very clearly in verses 12 and 13:

That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise...

For,

...by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit.
(1 Corinthians 12:13).

We are placed into Christ's body by the Holy Spirit when we hear the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) and trust in that gospel.

To simply believe Christ was God in the flesh and that He died and resurrected isn't enough—we must believe and trust that He did everything necessary to save us from the penalty of sin. This is why Romans 4:5 says,

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Ephesians 1:12-13 says *that we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ.* We must *individually* trust Him. Notice the pronouns in this passage:

we (who first trusted); *ye* (also trusted); *ye* (believed); *ye* (were sealed).

These verses explicitly place emphasis on the faith of the individual as the prerequisite for salvation; *nowhere* do they say God chose some to faith, and thus salvation, and some to unbelief, and thus damnation. This is a theology of man constructed from the white spaces between the words.

Biblical faith, that is, true and correct faith, is contingent upon the preaching and hearing of God's word:

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
(Romans 10:16-17)

In order to have faith, one must hear the word of God, that is, the word of truth. Faith must have content—you cannot have faith in something you do not know. It must be revealed to you, and the divine revelation of truth to man is found solely in God's word. Not in experiences or circumstances, and not in feelings. You must read or hear God's Word in order to believe.

The preaching of God's word is not automatic, but depends on faithful believers being obedient to that call. It depends on man's participation.

...In whom (Christ) ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation...
(Eph. 1:13A)

God does not make anyone believe. God makes truth known, and people choose either to believe it or not.

Romans 8:29-30 is another passage misappropriated by those of the "reformed" persuasion:

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Whom He did foreknow are those whom He has come to know through their union with Him through faith in the gospel. He knew them as Son *and then* predestinates them, meaning, their destiny is set, and it is set to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Consider Galatians 4:7-9,

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Once God has known us, that is, as His children, He predestinates us to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Moreover whom He predestinates, these are those whom He called, and He called us by the gospel:

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 - *But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

This being “chosen” is not exclusive, it’s open to all, because,

(He) will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.
(1 Tim. 2:4)

And so, whom He did predestinates, these He also called, and these who were called and predestinated (that is, those who believed), these He also justified, and those whom He justified, these He also glorified. Thus all things work together for good to those who love God and who are called according to His purpose.

This passage is often read as a chronological sequence of events, but it’s not. The point of what Paul is saying is simply that those who believe the call of the gospel are predestined to glory.

And so,

...we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.
(Romans 8:28)

The context of this passage is in the context of our present sufferings:

Romans 8:18 - *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

And so we have hope because we know God has a greater purpose.

Romans 8:29-30 is also a very strong passage for eternal security, because no one in the process is lost. God had already set your destiny in Christ.

Man must put away his superstition, and must decide to believe the word of God for what it says. Until Christians make a conscious decision to do so, the Bible will remain a closed book.