

Does God Only Enable the Elect to Believe and the Rest is Up to Them?

"God has enabled some; if they believe, they will be saved. If they have the ability to be saved and they refuse to believe, they will not be saved. These people God has enabled or chosen are considered his "elect." This goes with John 3:16 and also with election verses. This also goes with Matthew 18:14 that God is not willing that any should be lost. His call is irrevocable (Romans 11:29), the offer always stands if you choose to believe in him. His call is the offer that enables us to believe, but salvation is revocable if we fall away (Romans 11:19-21)." (Chad Wagner, 2004)

- I. This sermon will refute the sincere, but nevertheless faulty, belief of the young, unconverted Chad Wagner when he was in the early stages of learning the doctrine of Sovereign Grace in 2004.
 1. I had believed in Arminian, freewill salvation for my entire life until December of 2003.
 - A. It was then that I first heard of the doctrine of election.
 - B. I immediately argued against it vehemently (in ignorance) and then embarked on a quest to disprove it with the Bible.
 - C. After a few months of reading through the New Testament and studying diligently to try to understand how election and freewill fit together I thought I had it figured out.
 - D. The quote at the top of the outline is a statement that I wrote down on a piece of notebook paper in 2004.
 2. Let's refute my former self, line by line.
- II. *God has enabled some; if they believe, they will be saved.*
 1. By *enabled* I meant that God had given some people the ability to believe the gospel.
 2. By *saved* I meant eternal salvation.
 3. By this time, I could see that the Bible taught election, but it also appeared to teach that salvation was conditioned upon man's belief.
 4. What I failed to understand was that the "enabling" of the elect *is eternal salvation*.
 - A. I thought that those that were "enabled" were not yet saved eternally, but nevertheless had the ability to hear, understand, and believe the gospel.
 - B. But if the "enabled" ones did nothing, they would die in their sins.
 5. My faulty belief was ultimately a consequence of my lack of understanding of the fallen nature of man.
 - A. The Bible teaches that fallen man in his natural state cannot hear (**Joh 8:43, 47**), understand (**Rom 3:11**), receive (**1Co 2:14**), nor believe the gospel (**Joh 10:26**).
 - B. Neither can the natural man seek God (**Rom 3:11**), do anything good (**Rom 3:12**), nor fear God (**Rom 3:18**).
 - C. This is because the natural man is spiritually *dead* (**Eph 2:1**).
 - i. Life is power.
 - ii. If a man has no power to do the spiritual things listed above (hearing, understanding, receiving, and believing the gospel; and seeking God, fearing God, and doing good), then he has no spiritual life and is therefore spiritually dead.

- D. In order to be able to hear, understand, receive, believe, and seek and fear God, he has to be made alive spiritually which gives him power to do those things.
 - i. The Bible calls this being born again (**Joh 3:3**), quickened (**Col 2:13**), begotten again (**1Pe 1:3**), regenerated (**Tit 3:5**), renewed (**Col 3:10**), and made a new creature (**Eph 2:10 c/w Eph 4:24 c/w 2Co 5:17**).
 - ii. When a man who is dead in sins is regenerated he is given eternal life (**Joh 5:25 c/w Joh 5:24**).
 - iii. A man who has been given eternal life has been eternally saved (**Joh 10:28**).
- E. Regeneration is the "enabling" which gives a man the ability to believe the gospel.
 - i. A man who *hears* and *believes* (present tense) the gospel *is passed* (present perfect tense) from death unto life (**Joh 5:24**).
 - ii. A man who believes that Jesus is the Christ *is* (not becomes) *born of God* (**1Jo 5:1**).
 - iii. In other words, those that have the ability to believe are already saved eternally.
- F. Let's come at it from a different angle.
 - i. In order to believe one has to first hear with understanding (**Rom 10:14**).
 - a. The natural man cannot hear nor understand the gospel (**Joh 8:43, 47; 1Co 2:14**).
 - b. Therefore, the natural man is incapable of believing the gospel.
 - ii. In order to find God and the truth of the gospel, one must first seek for it (**Mat 7:7-8**).
 - a. The natural man cannot and will not seek after God (**Rom 3:11; Joh 5:40**).
 - b. Therefore, the natural man will not find the truth of God in order to believe it.
 - iii. Thus the natural man must be regenerated by God in order to have the ability to seek God and to hear and understand the gospel so that he will be able to believe it.
 - a. Regeneration which enables one to believe is eternal life which is eternal salvation.
 - b. Therefore, if one has been enabled to believe, he already has eternal life and eternal salvation.
 - c. Therefore, belief of the gospel is the *evidence* of eternal salvation, not the *cause* of it.

III. *If they have the ability to be saved and they refuse to believe, they will not be saved.*

1. As we have seen already, if a man has the ability to believe, then he is already saved eternally.
2. Eternal life cannot be lost (**Joh 10:28-29**).
3. Eternal *adj.* - 1. a. Infinite in past and future duration; without beginning or end; that always has existed and always will exist: esp. of the Divine Being. 3. a. Infinite in future duration; that always will exist; everlasting, endless. ¶The New Testament expressions eternal life, death, punishment, etc. are here referred to sense 3, this being the sense in which the *adj.* in such contexts is ordinarily taken.

4. Even if the elect don't believe the gospel, they are still saved eternally (**Rom 3:3-4; 2Ti 2:13; Rom 11:29**).
5. Another thing I failed to understand is that there are two salvations in the Bible: eternal and temporal.
 - A. Eternal salvation is the work of God alone and not conditioned on man's faith or other works (**2Ti 1:9; Tit 3:5**).
 - B. Temporal salvation from things like ignorance, trying to save ourselves, and the consequences of sin in this life is conditioned on man's faith and other works (**Rom 10:1-9; 1Ti 4:16; etc.**).
 - C. If we refuse to believe the gospel we will not be saved temporally in this life (**Heb 3:17-19**).
 - D. But we can never lose our eternal salvation because it is *eternal*.

IV. *These people God has enabled or chosen are considered his "elect."*

1. This statement is true.
2. Although my understanding of "enabling" was incorrect.
3. This statement taken with the previous one is also self-contradictory.
 - A. If the "enabled" ones are the elect, and they can choose to not believe and therefore not be saved eternally, then some of the elect will not be saved eternally according to my former idea.
 - B. This doctrine is false because all of the elect whom God foreknew and predestinated will without the loss of one be glorified in heaven (**Rom 8:29-30**).
 - C. None of the elect will be lost eternally (**Joh 6:39**).