

PROFITABLY UNDERSTANDING TRAGICALLY MISUNDERSTOOD BIBLE PASSAGES
Part XI: Understanding Acts 13:48 That Both Sides Of The Calvinist-Arminian Debate Badly Mistranslate

I. Introduction

- A. In the Calvinist-Arminian debate, each pertinent Scripture verse has been used to favor each side's view, and Acts 13:48 is one such verse. The KJV, NIV, ESV and NASB variously agree it should be translated to mean that as many as [were or had been] [ordained or appointed] [unto, for or to] eternal life believed.
- B. Arminians claim this verse reveals God chose men to believe due to His foreknowledge of faith, but that makes election illogically unnecessary. Calvinists say God chose who **could** believe, but that leaves faith illogically unnecessary. Both views thus err, C. H. Pinnock, Defense of Biblical Infallibility, 1967, p. 17!
- C. Yet, even *worse*, if Acts 13:48 then claims that God established **who** would believe, we then would have an **illogical** and thus an **errant Bible** contrary to what Jesus in Matthew 5:18 claimed!
- D. Thus, we view the Greek text for the right interpretation and offer the right doctrines on these subjects:

II. Understanding Acts 13:48 That Both Sides Of The Calvinist-Arminian Debate Badly Mistranslate:

- A. Acts 13:48 teaches that men authored their own faith to *believe* in Christ (as follows):
 - 1. The Greek term for "were ordained" is *tetagmenoi* that the English translations have taken to be a perfect **passive** participle of the verb, *tasso*, cf. U. B. S. Grk. N. T. (1963), p. 470; J. Gresham Machan, N. T. Grk. for Beginners, p. 186.
 - 2. Yet, in New Testament Greek, the perfect **passive** participle is *spelled the same way* as the perfect **middle** participle, so one can translate that verb in the middle voice as Richard B. Rackham has done to mean: "as many as had marshaled themselves . . . believed," Rackham, Acts of the Apostles, p. 221.
 - 3. The **context** of Acts 13 with the book of Acts and the rest of Scripture supports the middle voice:
 - a. The crowd that heard Paul in Acts 13:48 had planned to hear him for a week due to news of his first presentation of the Gospel back in Acts 13:43-44. They had been "marshaling" themselves toward hearing Paul and thus receiving eternal life by faith all week since the last Sabbath Day gathering!
 - b. Also, the expression "eternal life" that appears in Acts 13:46 and 13:48 does so only in those two verses in **all** of Acts, cf. Moulton & Geden, Conc. to the Grk. Test., p. 422-423. Well, as Acts 13:46 shows the **hardened judging themselves** unworthy of "eternal life," it fits for Luke to present the **Gentiles** in **contrast** in Acts 13:48 equally *marshaling themselves* toward gaining God's gift of "eternal life" (middle voice) over having divine predestination be the cause of it (passive voice)!
 - c. Negatively, to take *tetagmenoi* as a passive would mean every person there that day ("as many as" = "all") that believed would **ever** do so, a level of insight into divine predestination that no other author in Scripture but Luke would then have known! Such great insight strains against Calvin's assertion that we are not to plumb the depths of predestination, Institutes, Book III, ch. XXI, 1-7!
- B. Accordingly, we give a **very brief** overview of the Bible's correct view on election and predestination:
 - 1. The Bible teaches man authors his faith: Matthew 8:10 and Mark 6:6 show Jesus marveled at either the greatness or dearth of faith in people; that would not occur if God gave one the faith to believe.
 - 2. Then, what God elects is **people** He *foreknows* **WILL** believe, and all to be blessed **after justification**:
 - a. In 1 Peter 1:1-2, people are chosen by God's foreknowledge to be sprinkled with Christ's blood, a picture not of salvation, but of a holy life as a believer (Heb. 10:22; Ex. 24:8 and 1 Pet. 1:13-16).
 - b. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, the "salvation" unto which these believers were elected by God is not the justification of the soul by faith in Christ, but the rapture, the obtaining of Christ's glory, v. 14, 1-12.
 - c. In Ephesians 1:4, believers are chosen of God to be holy and without blame before God in love, and the word "before" means the visible presence of God in heaven, not justification of the soul.
 - d. As we are **not** chosen *to* believe, but God has **chosen believers** based on His knowing they **will believe**, and that **choice** is *unto* blessings that **follow justification**, election deals with blessings planned for those God knows will believe rather than a selection of who will become a believer!

Lesson: Acts 13:48 has been errantly mistranslated to teach God ordained who would ever trust in Christ when it should be seen showing people themselves author faith and thus are saved by God!

Application: The Bible consistently reveals men author their own faith while God elects them to blessings that follow justification due to His foreknowledge of their faith. The Bible is thus inerrant!