

- d. Reprobation and its relation to man's deserts and his responsibility for sinfulness
 - (1) Preterition and fallen man's deserts

It is quite clear that God did not pass by some fallen human beings because they were sinners since all human beings were sinners. Both those whom He elected to salvation and those whom He passed by were sinners. Thus preterition cannot be based upon sin.

If election is unconditional, grounded in the sovereign good pleasure of God, then preterition must also be unconditional, grounded in God's sovereign will.

Sometimes it is contended that if some human beings are chosen to salvation, then all human beings deserve to be chosen; and that if some human beings are passed by, then all human beings deserve to be passed by. Now it should frankly be admitted that all fallen, sinful human beings do deserve to be passed by, and condemned for their sins. However, it is with the former condition that issue must be taken. It should frankly be asserted that, if some human beings are chosen to salvation, it does not follow that all human beings deserve to be chosen. In fact, no fallen human being deserves to be chosen! If fallen, sinful man were to get his just deserts, he would be punished for his sins!

If God, wishing to show His mercy and the exceeding kindness of His grace, chose some from among the whole race of undeserving sinners, then the rest did not, by virtue of that choice, deserve to be chosen also. God's choice of some undeserving sinners still leaves the others undeserving. In fact, it still leaves the chosen ones undeserving! God's choice of unworthy, undeserving sinners is not only an instance of God's sovereignty; it is a manifestation of His grace!

Some people say that if God is going to choose anyone, He should choose everyone; and if He is not going to choose everyone, then He should choose no one. This, they say, is the only way in which God can be fair in His dealings with man.

However, this is not a question of fairness, or justice, or even-handed dealing, or what is equitable. Neither elect sinners nor nonelect sinners deserve anything but wrath and punishment. If God chooses to select some sinners and save them, it is not a question of what is fair; it is a manifestation of pure grace! And if God chooses to pass by some sinners and condemn them, it is certainly fair of Him to give them exactly what they deserve. And His justice is evenhanded and equitable! It certainly may not seem fair of Him to save some sinners, and that should be admitted. It is not fair not to give those sinners exactly what they deserve! And yet God is not fair, for He gives them exactly what they do not deserve! Instead of wrath He grants them grace; instead of eternal death He gives them eternal life instead of hell (which all sinners deserve), He gives them heaven (which no sinners deserve)!

Some persons have felt strongly that since God's general love in terms of benevolence appears to be bestowed upon all human beings equally (i.e., He causes His sun to shine and His rain to fall upon the just and the unjust alike), therefore His special love in terms of