

salvation must also be bestowed upon all human beings equally; and that the only reason why not all human beings experience that special love is that some human beings receive it, and others do not. It would seem very difficult in this conception to avoid the implication that those who receive God's special love deserve in some sense to be saved, and that those who do not receive it deserve to be lost. That is, those who receive God's special love in this view do not really feel that they merit forgiveness of sins or a righteous standing before God or eternal life, or that anyone is really worthy of salvation. They simply feel that if any persons in the world deserve to be saved, it is those who accept God's salvation; and that if any persons in the world deserve to be lost, it is those who refuse it. Once again we must agree that if any persons in the world deserve to be lost, it is those persons who refuse God's gift of salvation.

And yet the fact that they refuse God's salvation is not the basic reason why they deserve to be lost. The basic reason is that they are fallen sinners, lacking original righteousness and possessed of the guilt and depravity of sin. Their refusal of God's salvation is simply one symptom, one expression of their sinfulness, which aggravates their guilt and assists the development of their depravity. They deserve to be lost before they ever hear the gospel or have opportunity to refuse it!

However, at the same time we must also assert that, apart from God's decree of gracious election, together with its powerful application by means of the mighty, life giving, heart-opening work of regeneration by the Spirit of God, all human beings would express their sinfulness in their refusal of God's salvation from sin! And thus all human beings would be lost, and all human beings would deserve to be lost!

Once we are past the question of fairness, we are still left with the question, "Why did God choose to bestow His special grace and love on some persons only, and not on all?" There does not appear to be any answer to this question in Scripture. However, in at least two places we are provided with examples of the kinds of responses which we ought to develop to this problem. The first is found in Matt. 11:25-26:

At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father for thus it was pleasing in Thy sight.' "

The second example is found in Rom. 11:33-36:

"Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counsellor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

- (2) Precondemnation and fallen man's responsibility for his sinfulness -- the problem of relating these truths raises two questions:
  - (a) On what basis does God precondemn some fallen men?