

predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will." And in Colossians 3:12 Paul urges: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

Speaking of the Great Tribulation period in Mark 13:20, Jesus says: "If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom He has chosen, He has shortened them."

Since we are naturally not inclined to turn from our sinful desires and habits, and since we are naturally not inclined to trust in and commit ourselves to Jesus Christ to deliver us from our sins, we are naturally not inclined to respond favorably to the gospel by choosing Christ and His salvation – deliverance from sin and its consequences and to God's righteousness and its benefits. Left to ourselves, we choose to go our own way – the way of our sinful desires and habits, the way that ultimately leads to death and destruction.

Thus the only way we can do an about-face is for God to turn us, to incline us, to motivate us, to persuade us to repentance and faith in response to the gospel message.

Some people have represented election as though it were a political vote, like the man who said, "Election is like this: God casts His vote for my soul, the devil casts his vote for my soul, and I cast the deciding vote." Of course, the problem is that in my natural condition I inevitably cast my vote for sin and self, not for God and righteousness. How then can sinful human beings be saved?

The Bible pictures my natural condition as that of a sheep that has gone its own way and is lost. The good shepherd goes out, finds the lost sheep, lifts it up on his shoulders, and carries it home to the sheepfold. The picture is not that of a sheep going out into the desert to find the shepherd, encouraging the weary - shepherd to climb on its back, and carrying the shepherd safely home to the fold!

Some people object to the implications of this picture. They feel that it destroys human freedom, violates the will, and kills motivation.

Actually, God doesn't coerce or force people to repent and trust in Christ; He sweetly persuades them. He doesn't violate the will; He influences people to turn from their sins and to Christ most willingly. And He doesn't destroy motivation; He provides sound reasons and a solid rationale for trusting in Jesus and His atoning work.

In addition, some people feel that election is unfair to those who are not chosen. Actually, God does not prevent people from salvation or put obstacles