

## The Inscrutable Question: The Fallacy of Limited Atonement: Perkins's "Experimental Predestinarianism" & "Practical Syllogism"

- 17) In this work Perkins develops a vocabulary term that illustrates the fallacy of limited atonement:

Kendall, R. T. *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*. New ed. (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997), 8-9:

The thesis in [the treatise] is that a man may think himself regenerate when he is not, but a truly regenerate man "may discern" that he is. In this connection Perkins employs 2 Peter 1:10, a verse he sees as the chief mandate for preaching ... the formula by which Christians may prove to themselves that they have been the object of an *effectual* calling.

It is Perkins's conviction that the regenerate man may discern that he has the knowledge of *saving* faith, or assurance of election. Such knowledge Perkins calls "experimental." The testimony of the Spirit is given by 'an experiment' that is not conjectural but 'an infallible certainty of the pardon of sin.'

This study will refer to Perkins and his followers as 'experimental predestinarians.' These men hold in common the belief that 2 Peter 1:10 is God's command and man's formula for proving to himself his own predestination to salvation. The proof is grounded upon experimental knowledge derived through the "practical syllogism."

This "practical syllogism" may be summarized as follows:

Major premise:	All who have the effects of faith have faith.
Minor premise:	But I have the effects of faith.
Conclusion:	Therefore I have faith.

- 18) The major reference around which Perkins and his followers, even those of today, based this doctrine of "experimental predestination" reads like this in the King James Version:

**2 Peter 1:10 - (KJV) Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.**

- 19) Peter calls his audience "brethren." The word is **ἀδελφός, adelphos**, a familial appellation used by Peter throughout his epistle for fellow believers.
- 20) These fellow believers are indeed saved for they are said to have been "called." We have the possessive genitive of the pronoun **σὺ, su** plus the noun **κλήσις, klasis**, translated "*your calling*."
- 21) Dr. Perkins wants to run a life-long experiment to prove what Peter makes certain. Peter and his audience are willing to accept their salvation on faith. Peter implores them to take that faith and advance in the plan of God to the point that their salvation and election is a spiritual reality.
- 22) That spiritual reality is the conveyance of the believer's escrow account in time which is parlayed into the conveyance of his escrow account in eternity at the evaluation throne of Christ. This is the intent of the mandate in verse 10 and its fulfillment is the subject of verse 11. The expanded translation of both read like this:

**2 Peter 1:10 - (ETL) Therefore, fellow believers, be more motivated to make your calling [ efficacious grace ] and election [ to choose out as recipients of special favor and privilege ] a spiritual reality [ conveyance of escrow blessings in time ]; for by doing these things [ advance described in verses 3-9 ] you will never stumble [ fall into a lifestyle of perpetual carnality ].**

v. 11 - For in this manner [ **advance through the sophisticated spiritual life** ], your entrance into the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ [ **the evaluation throne of Christ** ] will be richly supplied [ **conveyance of the eternal escrow** ].

- 23) Perkins recommends his followers enter into an experiment that requires a person to persevere in “good works” in order to verify whether his “faith” is efficacious. Thus Perkins’s system requires that faith be validated by empiricism and rationalism as indicated by his syllogism:
- Major premise: All who have the effects of faith have faith.  
Minor premise: But I have the effects of faith. (empiricism)  
Conclusion: Therefore I have faith. (rationalism)
- 24) It is evident in Perkins’s system that verifying one’s faith requires works and this cancels grace. The word for faith—**πίστις, pistis**—implies a confidence in the object on which one believes. The emphasis is not on the one who has faith but rather on the object of this faith. Thus a faith that requires works to certify its validity ignores the worthiness of the object. Consequently, this faith is not faith at all but rather doubt, uncertainty, and skepticism that are converted into a false confidence by the production of human good.
- In orthodox theology, efficacious grace is equal to salvation. Election is God’s sovereign choice of those who believe in Christ. The word “election” is the Greek noun **ἐκλογή, ekloge** and means “to choose out as recipients of special favor and privilege.” This refers to escrow blessings imputed **before** we were elected.
- 25) The first things God did for us is the means by which we glorify Him. The way we convert our faith at salvation into the spiritual reality of escrow blessings in time is to advance in the plan of God by means of spiritual growth all the way through to spiritual maturity.
- 26) The first stage of the advance through the sophisticated spiritual life is spiritual self-esteem. It is the springboard that projects the believer into the next two phases of the plan and the fulfillment of 2 Peter 1:10.
- 27) When the believer becomes skillful in applying the problem-solving devices of personal love for God and unconditional love for mankind he will pass providential preventive suffering and move into Stage 2: Spiritual Autonomy.