“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” Galatians 4:4-6

The Bible, because it is the word of the eternal, righteous, and immutable God, never contradicts itself. When properly understood, there is an amazing symmetry and consistency in the historical facts it cites, the ethical standards it upholds, and the theological truths it champions. Whenever an apparent contradiction occurs, the disharmony is not in God’s book, but in man’s mind. The interpreter’s challenge, consequently, is essentially a matter of synthesizing each verse with its immediate context, then with the particular book in which it appears, then with the other inspired writing of that same human author, and finally, with the many other claims the Bible makes as a whole. He does this by comparing scripture with scripture. When a level of consistency is achieved so that the truths fit together in a unified way, like the many pieces of jigsaw puzzle go together to form a big picture, then he can be reasonably certain that his view is correct.

Admittedly, accurate interpretation is not easy. But neither is it impossible. Divine help notwithstanding, the more you know- the better grasp you have of the big picture-the easier it will be to understand how all the theological pieces fit together. Remember, the goal is to understand every truth in the light of every other truth so that a kind of theological unity, consistency, harmony, and symmetry prevails.

With that premise, I proceed to state a hypothesis which I will then endeavor to prove: The
Biblical doctrine of the Trinity makes the doctrines of unconditional election, particular redemption, irresistible grace, and eternal security a necessity. In other words, "the doctrine of grace" is the only theology of salvation that is consistent with the revealed truth that God is triune.

That's my hypothesis. Let's attempt to establish it Scripturally.

God is Tripersonal

Scripture teaches unequivocally that God is triune. The Godhead is composed of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (I Jno. 5:7). Few tenets of the Christian faith have come under greater attack than the doctrine of the Trinity, and few verses of Scripture have been the subject of greater technical scrutiny that I John 5:7, no doubt because it is so unmistakably clear.

First John 5:7 defines the Trinity in terms of "three Persons within the unity of one God:" "There are three that bear record in heaven... and these three are one." God is, therefore, triune, for "trinity" means "tri-unity." This doctrine is, in Pauline language, a Divine mystery. There is more to it than finite minds can comprehend. From passages like Matthew 28:19, however, where the Lord commissions the church to baptize " in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," a formula for expressing this mysterious doctrine emerges. Note the distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost implied by the use of the conjunction "and" : "...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The language implies that there is a distinction of persons in the Godhead. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father. They are distinct, the one from the other. Now note that the word "name" is singular. Jesus did not say "in the names of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Spirit," but "in the name...", singular. This suggests that there is a unity of essence within the Godhead. From this verse, the Christian faith derives the formula expressing the doctrine of the Trinity in terms of "a distinction of Persons but a unity of essence." In other words, there is within the Godhead three Divine Persons - the Father, the Son, and the Spirit - who are one in mind, in attribute, in design, in purpose, in ability, and in glory. The Father is 100% God; the Son is 100% God; and the Spirit is 100% God. Yes, that is a mystery, not unlike the mystery of the two natures of Christ who was at the same time God of very God and man of very man, not half God and half man. Formulae like this are not intended to explain everything so that no mystery remains, but to safeguard the mystery so that God is not misrepresented by those who speak in His name.

Both oneness and threeness are basic to the being of God. When Christians say they believe in the Trinity, they are not saying that there is one Person in the Godhead who wears three masks, like comedian Red Skelton playing his three famous characters - Klemm Kididdlehopper, Freddie the Freeloader, and The Mean Little Kid - all in the same skit. It is not that God
sometimes plays the role of the Father, then decides to be the Son, and then puts on the mask of the Spirit. That's unitarianism! The unitarian model fails to explain how there could be interaction within the Godhead as expressed in John14:16: "I [the Son] will pray the Father and He will send the Comforter, that He may abide with you forever;" and Psalm110:1: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make the enemies thy footstool." God is not a unit, but a unity. Neither are they saying that they worship three Gods. That's tritheism! But they are saying that there are three Persons in the Godhead, but one God (I Cor. 8:4-7; cf. Deut. 6:4; Jno. 10:30; 2 Cor. 3:17). Biblical and Historical Christianity is unquestionably trinitarian (Lk. 1:35; Jno. 14:16; Jno. 15:26; Eph. 2:18; Mt.28:19; 2Cor. 13:14; I Jno. 5:7; Rev. 1:4-5).

Salvation is the Work of God
So, God is a trinity. That's premise one. Now let's establish a second premise from Scripture, namely, that salvation is God's work, not man's: "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jon. 2:9); "so then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:16); "[God] who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9).

What does it mean to say that salvation is God's work? It means that God works alone, apart from man's assistance in the salvation of sinners; therefore, all glory goes to God: "But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is make unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. 1:30-31). It also means that the three Persons of the Godhead work together in the salvation of sinners. "Salvation is of the Lord" means that salvation is the work of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, for God is Tripersonal.

Theologians employ a special phrase ("the economy of the Godhead") to describe the united operation of the three Persons. In whatever activity God engages, the three Divine Persons move in perfect unity, harmony, and cooperation. For example, Creation was the work of the Father (Gen. 1:1) by the Son (Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2) through the agency of the Spirit (Gen. 1:2). Compare also Genesis 1:26-27. There was no conflict, difference of opinion, or disunity within the Godhead in the work of Creation. The combined operation of the Godhead is also displayed in the resurrection of Jesus. Scripture attributes Christ's resurrection to the Father (Acts 2:24; Acts 13:30), the Son (Jno. 2:19; Jno. 10:18), and the Spirit (Rom. 1:4; Rom. 8:11; I Per. 3:18). Although the three Persons of the Godhead have their respective offices and distinct identities, yet a marvellous oneness and unanimity prevails.

The economy of the Godhead shines most brilliantly in the work of salvation. Note the Divine
cooperation expressed in verses like Isaiah 48:16, "The Lord God and His Spirit hath sent Me...", and 2 Corinthians 5:19, "...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself...". Nowhere is this scene more vivid than in rich theological passages like Ephesians 1 and Romans 8, where Father, Son, and Spirit are pictured as a Divine Team in their respective covenant activities. The covenant of grace was planned by the Father (Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 8:28-29,33; 2Tim. 1:9), executed by the Son (Eph. 1:7; Rom.8:3-4,34; Jno. 6:37), and applied by the Spirit (Rom. 8:2,9,15). From start to finish, salvation is of the Lord, without the slightest hint of inconsistency or incongruity within the Godhead.

Three New Testament passages express the economy of the Godhead in salvation concisely. By comparing them with one another, we can sharpen the focus on the respective roles of each Divine Person in the Work of salvation. The first, Galatians 4:4-6, heads this essay. The second is I Peter 1:2; "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ..." The third is Jude 1: "Jude...to them that are sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, and called..." Do you see the references to Father, Son, and Spirit in each of the above verses? By putting these verses together, a composite picture of Trinitarian cooperation in salvation emerges.

(1) The Work of the Father - The passages in Peter and Jude present the Father as the Orchestrator of salvation in the covenant. Election, Foreknowledge (I Pet. 1:2a), and Sanctification (Jude 1a) refer to the initial act of God whereby He chose those whom He loved and set them apart to salvation before the foundation of the world. Each term refers to God's covenant activity. Contrary to popular interpretation, "foreknowledge" is not synonymous with the attribute of God's omniscience, but a relational term expressing the idea of covenant love (Cf. Gen. 4:25; Mt. 7:23; Jno. 10:27b). In other words, the word does not refer to rational knowledge, but relational knowledge, not to information but to intimacy. In this sense, God foreknew people, not events: "For whom He did foreknow..." (Rom. 8:29a). God's choice of a people before the world began was based on His own initiative to establish a covenant relationship with those whom He loved: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God..." Those whom He loved and chose, He also set apart for Himself, that is, He sanctified them (Jude 1a).

Again, the reference to sanctification as a work of the Father must be understood in terms of the covenant of redemption before the world began. In the same way that the Father "sanctified" the Son (i.e. set Him apart in the covenant of grace) and sent Him into the world (Jno. 10:36, He also sanctified His people (again, He set them apart in the covenant as His own special people) and "sent redemption" to them: "He sent redemption to His people: He hath commanded His covenant for ever: holy and reverend is His name " (Ps. 111:9). It was precisely this group of people, i.e., those set apart in the covenant, who were redeemed by Jesus Christ: "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). The Galatians passage presents God the Father as the great Choreographer of salvation, dispatching (sending) the Son (v.4) and the Spirit (v.6) at the precise and appropriate time, in order to bring us into his family as His adopted sons. The Father who initiated the covenant also orchestrates and deploys the covenant requirements for salvation (cf. Eph. 1:5).
(2) The Work of the Son - Galatians 4:4-5 presents the Son as the Redeemer. The verb "to redeem" means to buy back by paying a price. It presupposes prior ownership, for one cannot "buy back" what one never owned. By definition, then, the doctrine of redemption is inseparably connected to the doctrine of election. Are you beginning to see a kind of continuity in the plan of salvation? The Father sent redemption to His people, and the Son carried out the Father's plan completely, securing redemption for them all. The Son did not merely make men redeemable, savable, or reconcilable. He actually redeemed (I Pet. 1:18). He accomplished salvation (Jno. 19:30). He reconciled (Col. 1:21)! When he ascended back to the Father's right hand, He had "obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:12). In Christ, all the elect "have redemption through His blood" (Eph.1:7). I Peter 1:2c presents the Son as the Purifier, the One who by the sprinkling of His blood cleansed "His own People" from their sins (Heb. 13:12; Rev. 1:5). This is definitive sanctification (Heb. 2:11; I Cor. 1:2). Jude 1b presents Him as the Warden, who guards the souls He has redeemed. Tereo, the Greek word translated "preserved" means "to keep an eye on; to guard like a warden guards a prisoner." Because they are guarded by the Good Shepherd, no man is able to pluck the sheep from Christ's hand (Jno. 10:27).

(3) The Work of the Spirit - Galatians 4:6 presents the Holy Spirit as the Divine Resident of the soul. The Father sends the Spirit to indwell the same people for whom the Son was sent in redemption: "Because you are sons [that is, by adoption] God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). When he takes up residence in the soul, the Holy Visitor promotes spiritual desire for God comparable to a child's intuitive desire for its parent. Through this "Spirit of adoption" we cry "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:9). I Peter 1:2 pictures the Spirit as the Sanctifier, the One who personally applies the blood of Christ to the soul, individually and vitally cleansing the heart from personal sin. In contrast to the Father's sanctifying work, which we called "covenant sanctification," and the Son's sanctifying work, which we called "definitive sanctification," the Spirit's work of sanctification in respect to eternal salvation might be expressed by the term "vital sanctification." When a person is born again, he is cleansed and washed within by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:24; Titus 3:5; Jno. 13:10). Jude presents the Spirit as the Voice, the One who calls the chosen and redeemed individual, though personally dead in sins, into new life by His sovereign, life-giving voice (Jno. 5:25). The Spirit only calls those whom the Father elected: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). But, He calls them everyone: "For whom He did foreknow, them He also did predestinate...moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called..." (Rom. 8:29-30). Do you see the unity and consistency that prevails in God's plan of salvation? Interestingly, the word kletos, translated "called" in these texts speaks of the power, force, and Divine greatness of the call. The word does not speak of an invitation, like "the call of the wild," but of a creative fiat, a Divine imperative. The call of God in regeneration is an effectual call, accomplishing God's intended
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Written by Michael L Gowens

objective every time.

Application
My hypothesis states that the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity makes the doctrines of unconditional election, particular redemption, irresistible grace, and preservation of the saints a necessity. There is no other school of soteriological thought that is consistent with the revelation of the Godhead. If one accepts what the Bible says about the Being of God, he is forced to the conclusion of sovereign grace, if he will be consistent. On what basis can I make such bold (and some may say, dogmatic) claim? On the basis of this fact:

Every other position regarding how sinners are saved disrupts the unity of the Godhead. Take, for instance, the idea of general atonement (i.e. Christ died for all men without exception and offers salvation freely to all who will repent, believe, accept, etc.). I ask, will all for whom Christ died ultimately be saved? General atonement says, "No, for only those who accept His offer will be born again by the Spirit." This position disrupts the unity of the Trinity, for it teaches that the Son died for all, but the Spirit will only call some. What about the popular belief that God chose those He forenew would believe in Him, although He loved the entire human race and made salvation available to them all at the cross? By defining election in terms of the foreseen faith of the believer, a consistency is reached between the work of the Father and the work of the Spirit, but what about the work of the Son? This position says that the Father chose some, the Son died for all, and the Spirit will call some. Again, there is disunity. Many Christians, I venture to say, believe that God the Father loves all people equally, that God the Son died for all people equally, but that the Spirit will only call those who respond in faith to the gospel. Again, this position introduces an element of inconsistency into the Trinity. The idea that some who have been redeemed can backslide to the point that they lose their salvation also interjects an element of uncertainty and incongruity into the Godhead. Whatever form it takes - the Father chose all, the Son died for all, but the Spirit will only call some; the Father chose some, the Son died for all, but the Spirit will only call some - the interjection of a human element into the work of salvation contradicts the Biblical testimony concerning the harmony and unity of the Trinity and makes the outcome of salvation vague and uncertain. The old adage puts it succinctly:
A chain is no stronger than its weakest link
.

Is salvation uncertain? 2 Timothy 2:19 says, "The foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His...." 2 Samuel 23:5 says that God's covenant is "ordered in all things and sure

...." Matthew 1:21 says that Jesus "shall save
His people from their sins." Language of certainty like this is unintelligible so long as salvation
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depends on man at any level.

The "doctrine of grace" is the only model of salvation that preserves the unity of the Trinity by maintaining consistency and harmony from start to finish. God the Father chose a people. God the Son redeemed that precise people. God the Holy Spirit calls that same people from death in sin to life in Christ. Not one shall be lost. Everyone the Father intended to have with Him will be with Him. One day Jesus will say, "Behold I and the children that Thou hast given me" (Heb. 2:13), not some of the children or most of the children, but every one the Father loved, the Son redeemed, and the Spirit called. From start to finish, Salvation is of the Lord, by His free and sovereign grace.

Few verses more plainly demonstrate the consistency and continuity of the work of salvation than Romans 8:29-31. Trace the "whom's" and the "them's" in the passage: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Because salvation is God's work, the "glorified" at the end of verse thirty are precisely the same people designated as the "foreknown" at the beginning of verse twenty-nine. Salvation is of the Lord, by free and sovereign grace! No other school of thought harmonizes with the other Bible doctrines. No other missing piece fits the puzzle. The doctrine of the Trinity makes belief in the doctrine of grace the only option for those who would be true to the word of God.