God is Sovereign in the Dispensing of His Grace

This is to say that God is the authority when it comes to who receives grace and who does not. If it was not this way, man would be “sovereign” in this matter and could therefore boast. But then grace would no longer be grace, it would no longer be “freely” bestowed to whomever He wills to have mercy upon, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy.” (Rom 9:15)

Luke 4:25-28 - 25 “But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; 26 and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." 28 And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things: NASB

This idea is seen in many places in the Bible and concerns matters much broader than just salvation.

1 Chronicles 29:11-13 - 11 Thine, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O LORD, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all. 12 Both riches and honor come from Thee, and Thou dost rule over all, and in Thy hand is power and might; and it lies in Thy hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone. 13 Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name. NASB

Exodus 4:11 - 11 And the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" NASB

Isaiah 45:7 - 7 The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these. NASB

God Sovereignly bestows the revelation of Salvation on whomever He wishes

Salvation is a revelatory process and comes by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. The way God saves is by regeneration (being born again). See the above lesson on Regeneration. Now consider how Jesus rejoices in the fact that some have this revelation from God and some do not.

Matthew 11:25-28 - 25 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. 26 "Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. 27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. NASB

Or even more than this, consider that the Scripture plainly declares that God is responsible for the blindness of some.

Romans 11:7-10 - 7 What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened. 8 just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day." 9 And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, And a stumbling block and a retribution to them. 10 "Let their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs forever." NASB

Isaiah 6:8-10 - 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" 9 And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.' 10 "Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Lest they see with their eyes, Hear with their ears,, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed." NASB

Now, specifically in regard to salvation, since man is dead in trespasses, and has a Natural Inability to even know or understand the Gospel, it is clearly seen that God fulfills the electing process through the work of Regeneration. This is accomplished by His own free and sovereign dispensation of the revelation of sin, righteousness and judgment, which He gives to His elect and by which they are brought to the point of repentance, faith and conversion. Consider the following quote from Hodge……. Theology pg 441 #4

"God is no less sovereign in the distribution of his favours. He does what He wills with his own. He gives to some riches, to others, honour; to others, health; while others are poor, unknown, or the victims of disease. To some, the light of the gospel is sent; others are left in darkness. Some are brought through faith unto salvation; others perish
in unbelief. To the question, Why is this? the only answer is that given by our Lord. "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

In summary, we can say that God has had a special love relationship with the elect from all eternity,(foreknowledge), and this love relationship is His choosing them for salvation. The ultimate question of why God chose some for salvation and left others in their sinful state is one that we, with our finite knowledge, cannot answer. We do know that God's attributes always are in perfect harmony with each other, so that God's sovereignty will always operate in perfect harmony with His goodness, love, wisdom, and justice.

Reprobation
If God does elect people to be saved from out of the whole of humanity, then He obviously passes over those He does not choose. This is called Reprobation. Consider this definition from Grudem…. “When we understand election as God’s sovereign choice of some persons to be saved, then there is necessarily another aspect of that choice, namely, God’s sovereign decision to pass over others and not to save them. This decision of God in eternity past is called reprobation. Reprobation is the sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons, in sorrow deciding not to save them, and to punish them for their sins, and thereby to manifest his justice.”

The Scripture speaks of this reality in many places. Here are a few….. (Rom 9:17-21, Ps 92:5-7)

Romans 11:6-8 - 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. 7 What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; 8 just as it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day.’ NASB

1 Peter 2:8 - 8 and, “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. NASB

The fact is this is a very terrible thing to consider but is nonetheless true. The reality of Hell and Damnation is in fact a horribly difficult matter to consider, but it is nonetheless still a part of God’s eternal plan by which He is glorifying His own nature as God. Reprobation and Damnation are purposes of God which serve His higher purpose of the manifestation of His Glory (see page 23 above). The Scripture is clear about this matter.

Exodus 9:16-17 - 16 But, indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power, and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth. 17 Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go. NASB

Proverbs 16:4 - 4 The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil. NASB

Nevertheless, there is a very real sorrow on the part of God when people perish.

Ezek 18:32 - 32 “For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,” declares the Lord GOD. “Therefore, repent and live.” NASB

Grudem comments... “But it might be objected at this point, if God genuinely feels sorrow at the punishment of the wicked, then why does he allow it or even decree that it will come about? The answer must be that God knows that this will ultimately result in greater glory for himself. It will show his power and wrath and justice and mercy in a way that could not otherwise be demonstrated. Certainly in our own human experience it is possible to do something that causes us great sorrow but which we know will result in long-term greater good. And so, after this faint human analogy, we may somewhat understand that God can decree something that causes him sorrow yet ultimately will further his glory.”

Election comforts, produces thanksgiving and glorifies God and His people
For those whom God has chosen, election is a very comforting thing because it speaks to us about the certainty of our salvation. If God has chosen to save us, then who will thwart His intended purpose? The fact is, no one will because our salvation is rooted in the eternal counsel of God’s decree from before the world began.

2 Timothy 1:9 - 9 who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity. NASB
Ephesians 1:4-6 - 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. NASB

Romans 8:30-35 - 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? NASB

When we consider that our salvation is rooted in the free and sovereign purpose of God, we should rejoice with much thanksgiving, for we were not worthy to be saved but, on the contrary should have rightfully perished because of our sin and rebellion against God. So then, we exult and rejoice in this amazing grace, which has come to us and set us free from sin and death. We should glorify God for our salvation and proclaim His goodness by thanking Him because of it. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 - 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. NASB

Psalm 65:4 - 4 How blessed is the one whom Thou dost choose, and bring near to Thee, To dwell in Thy courts. We will be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, Thy holy temple. NASB

Psalm 106:4-5 - 4 Remember me, O LORD, in Thy favor toward Thy people; Visit me with Thy salvation, 5 That I may see the prosperity of Thy chosen ones, That I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, That I may glory with Thine inheritance. NASB

**Election should encourage Evangelism**

We should be zealous to preach the Gospel and evangelize people because God has promised to save people from every tribe and nation, indeed from every language and ethnic group in the world.

Revelation 5:9-10 - And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 10 "And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." NASB

When we see Paul in his missionary journeys in the book of Acts, we see him being encouraged by God to evangelize in certain areas because of God’s election of people there.

Acts 18:8-11 - 8 And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. 9 And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; 10 for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.

11 And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. NASB

Paul later reminds us that he does everything he does for sake of God’s elect, the church whom he so zealously sought to save by his relentless preaching of the Gospel.

2 Timothy 2:10-11 - 10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. NASB

Further, Paul, after reasoning in Romans chapter 9 that God elects according to His own free and sovereign purpose, explains that people get saved when they call upon the name of the Lord. He explains that we must preach the Gospel in order for God’s purpose in election to be accomplished saying, **“How shall they hear without a preacher?”**

Romans 10:12-15 - 13 for "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" NASB
From the Canons of the Synod of Dort

Consider a few statements from the Synod of Dort…..

ARTICLE 7. - Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He has out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from the primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom He from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect and the foundation of salvation. This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God has decreed to give to Christ to be saved by Him, and effectually to call an draw them to His communion by His Word and Spirit; to bestow upon them true faith, justification, and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of His son, finally to glorify them for the demonstration of His mercy, and for the praise of the riches of His glorious grace; as it is written "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves." (Eph 1:4-6). And elsewhere: "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” (Rom 8:30).

ARTICLE 8. - There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those who shall be saved, both under the Old and New Testament; since the Scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose, and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which He has chosen us from eternity, both to grace and to glory, to salvation and to the way of salvation, which He has ordained that we should walk therein (Eph 1:4,5; 2:10).

ARTICLE 9. - This election was not founded upon foreseen faith and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite, cause, or condition of which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc. Therefore election is the fountain of every saving good, from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to the testimony of the apostle: "For he chose us (not because we were, but) in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." (Eph 1:4).

ARTICLE 10. - The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which does not consist herein that out of all possible qualities and actions of men God has chosen some as a condition of salvation, but that He was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to Himself, as it is written: "Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad — in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls — she (Rebekah) was told, 'The older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written: 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'" (Rom 9:11-13). "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48).

ARTICLE 11. - And as God Himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient, and omnipotent, so the election made by Him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled, or annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished.