

A Conversation about the Translation of Acts 13:48  
by Brian Abasciano

Over the past 5 years or so, I have shared my letter to the NIV Translation Committee [LINK] with a number of people. Now that the letter has been posted publicly on the Society of Evangelical Arminians website, I thought it would be helpful to post this conversation I had via email with another scholar concerning my suggestion in that letter that *tasso* in Acts 13:48 should be translated as “disposed” or something similar. The scholar was quite skeptical about my position at first, but was won over to the view through our dialogue. While the dialogue focuses on translation, I believe it gives some good insight into, and conceptual support for, an interpretation of Acts 13:48 that takes *tasso* as “disposed” or the like in the verse. I have edited the exchange to fix typos, makes some things clearer, streamline the discussion some, and keep the scholar with whom I dialogued anonymous. The scholar’s comments are marked by “You said” and my comments are marked by “My response.”

Going through this correspondence again, I think I may have stressed too much that translating *tasso* as “appoint” favors a Calvinistic interpretation of the verse. I do mention more than once that there are Arminian interpretations that are consistent with “appoint,” but my equating of “appoint” with a Calvinistic reading may still have been too strong. So let me take the opportunity to stress that there are good Arminian interpretations of Acts 13:48 that understand *tasso* as meaning “appoint.” In fact, tomorrow we will post one of those as expressed by F. Leroy Forlines in his book *Classical Arminianism: A Theology of Salvation* (Edited by J. Matthew Pinson; Nashville: Randall House, 2011); after that post goes up, we will replace this note about it with a link to the post. But in this discussion, I strongly advocate for the translation of *tasso* as “disposed,” which can stand alone in harmony with Arminian theology or can be combined with a view like Forlines’. Here is the discussion:

**You said:** I think most would agree that *tasso* has a wide range of meaning, and the passive could be middle, and that passive isn't necessarily a divine passive.

But however you translate it, roughly the same meaning is left. The suggested solutions are:

"as many as were disposed to eternal life believed"

"as many as were aligned for eternal life believed"

"as many as were positioned for eternal life believed"

"as many as were set for eternal life believed".

These all appear to say (in English) that something happened to the person which enabled them to believe.

**My response:** That is actually incorrect. Although I have no problem with that sense, something I will explain below, these English translations can all be understood as stative just as the Greek can [editorial note: a stative construction is one that conveys a state rather than an action or process], and should be (periphrastic pluperfects are typically pluperfects of existing state, though they do not have to be; see Burton, *Syntax of The Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, §

91; cf. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, § 290; BDF, § 352; Greek scholar Carl Conrad's comments I quoted in my letter to the NIV Translation Committee: "HSAN TETAGMENOI EIS ZWHN AIWNION should be understood as a 'stative' construction"). If I say that "as many as were disposed to go on the trip signed up to go," that does not most naturally read as referring to something having happened that disposed these people to going on the trip. I could run through this with each of the possible translations above, and none of them demand what you're saying here, and in fact they would more naturally read as referring to a state without any particular reference to what brought about that state. Please read the comments I quoted from Conrad again. He illustrates this with the example of talking about someone prepared for a test. As he said (this is now just an excerpt of what I quoted previously):

[Begin Quote] I really don't think anything more is meant by this phrase than we mean by saying "All those who were prepared for the test passed it with flying colors." Nothing is said about who prepared the persons in question, whether they had hit the midnight oil for several nights in a row or someone had given them half a dozen help sessions to make sure that they understood all the problems on which they would be examined. What the phrasing says is nothing more than "those who were ready for the test passed it" and of course it's also implied that "those who weren't ready didn't pass it."

I would like to think that matters regarding this verse are that simple and that there's no need to make this verse the buttress for more than it actually says." [End Quote]

The Greek of Acts 13:48 can certainly be construed in such a way. I believe this should be indicated in translation ideally (i.e., use a construction that can be taken this way) or at least noted as a legitimate alternative.

**You said:** "Who caused it to happen?"

**My response:** The point is that the text itself does not say explicitly. That is the effect of the passive without a stated agent. In my letter to the NIV Translation Committee, I gave some reasons for why that would be that accord with typical reasons for the omission of mention of the agent with the passive. The cause of it must be drawn from the context if the text has the cause in its purview at all.

**You said:** The preacher? Surely the implication is that God did something which enabled them to believe.

**My response:** Are you suggesting that the preacher played no role in their coming to faith? My contention is that any cause(s) for their setting/positioning for eternal life must be drawn from the context. If so, then I think it is clear that the preaching of the gospel is a main factor that led them to faith and that it would be a prime factor in their positioning for eternal life if indeed tasso is to be understood as a positioning as opposed to an appointment. If tasso refers to their disposition towards eternal life, then of course the preacher was one of the reasons for their

coming to this disposition, presented as their reaction is in the context of response to the gospel. I completely agree that there is also implication that God did something which enabled them to believe. But enabling to believe does not imply irresistible causation of belief. Such language of enablement would normally imply ability to believe or not believe. I would say that there is more than one act of God that enabled these Gentiles to believe, including the work of Christ, opening up the gospel to Gentiles, the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas (e.g., 13:47), his work in the hearts of the hearers, etc., (though I must admit that his work in the hearts of the hearers is more of a theological assumption drawn from other texts [e.g., Acts 16:14] than one that is specifically mentioned here in Acts 13). As I said in my letter to the NIV Translation Committee, there seem to have been various influences at work that brought these Gentiles to the place of readiness for receiving eternal life by faith--God's work, Paul's preaching of the gospel, the people's consideration and response to what they heard preached to them, etc. Apart from other literary aims I mentioned in my letter to the NIV Translation Committee, Luke's reporting it this way has the rhetorical effect of commending faith in the gospel as the true (and only) way to eternal life. It essentially says, everyone who was intent on eternal life believed the gospel. It is like an advertisement that says everyone intent on good service comes to our store. That commends going to the store if you want the best service.

One thing I wonder is whether you are inadvertently assuming that something that is accomplished or done was irresistible, or to put it another way, that a cause is necessarily irresistible. I would argue that many causes are actually resistible, and that if one thinks about it even briefly, this is typical of personal relations (such as we have here with the offer of the gospel and response to it). Here's an example: Say you go to a restaurant and are placed at a table by the hostess. Does that mean that you had no other choice than to sit at that table? Surely not. It is true that the hostess chose the table for you to sit at and that she can be called a cause of you sitting there. But you could have refused to sit at that table or asked for another one or left the restaurant. The hostess placed you at the table resistibly. Similarly, the preaching of the gospel and God's working on the human heart can put people in a place in which they are set for eternal life, ready for it, set on it even. But there is no implication that it does so irresistibly. This is very normal human speech in which we speak of people and things accomplishing something in a resistible way in the realms of personal interaction and of personal action.

It would be different I think if *tasso* means "appoint" here though. Given the context, "appoint" gives the strong impression of a unilateral action of God that irresistibly brings about these Gentiles' faith. I think there has been overstatement of the extent to which a meaning of "appoint" rules out any non-Calvinistic reading. There are certainly ways of understanding the text as "appoint" or even "ordained" that are compatible with Arminian theology. See, e.g., Howard Marshall's commentary on Acts or Chrysostom's classically Arminian comments (though he rejects a meaning of "ordain"). But "appoint" does strongly favor a Calvinistic reading. This can't be a reason to reject it of course. What I am arguing for is a translation that brings out the ambiguity of the Greek more and a note indicating the two main more specific options for understanding *tasso* here, or at the very least a note indicating that *tasso* could mean "disposed" or the like. Arminian theology fully embraces that God must take the initiative in salvation. The real theological question is the nature of the initiative, whether it is resistible or irresistible. "Appoint" strongly favors irresistibility whereas "disposed" or even "set" allows for either resistibility or irresistibility.

**You said:** "All the suggestions are passive. If they are made to be reflexive the English becomes a bit silly:

"as many as disposed themselves to eternal life believed"

"as many as aligned themselves for eternal life believed"

"as many as positioned themselves for eternal life believed"

"as many as set themselves for eternal life believed".

What did they do to themselves? They gritted their teeth and believed? Or they turned round to take aim before they went forward and believed?"

**My response:** A few things here. First, let me underscore that I am *\*not\** arguing for a reflexive middle. I believe tetagmenoi is passive, which allows for the subject's participation but says nothing about it either way. However, I do disagree that the reflexive is silly; I think it far from silly and that this can be demonstrated. Take "as many as aligned themselves for eternal life believed" as an example. Is aligning oneself for a benefit really silly? On the contrary, it makes excellent sense. Our last presidential election here in the U.S. was historic. Imagine an Obama supporter saying something like this: "Those who aligned themselves with hope and positive change voted for Obama," or "as many as were set for hope and positive change voted for Obama," or "as many as were disposed to hope and positive change voted for Obama." That seems perfectly natural to me. Examples could be multiplied.

You ask, "What did they do to themselves?" If the text were talking mainly about them doing something to themselves here, it would be talking about them setting their desire/intent on eternal life, a perfectly natural manner of speaking (i.e., someone setting himself to some benefit or inclining himself to some benefit). But the view I am espousing does not even rely on the people themselves necessarily having done anything to themselves. The view works whether one thinks of the text only speaking of God working in their hearts as setting them toward eternal life or only the preaching of the gospel or whatever, just as in my example of how we would say the hostess placed me at the table (or in the other examples I have given). Nevertheless, I think the most likely view is that their participation is partially in view among other elements such as the preaching of the gospel and God's activity. Their participation would include their choice and response to what was preached to them for coming to the point of readiness for eternal life, which they could obtain through faith. That is why they then believed. Is it not generally agreed upon that God's work in our lives does not typically get fulfilled apart from our involvement and participation? It seems to me that such an understanding best fits the complex personal nature of how people come to faith.

**You said:** "Non-Calvinists, like me, have to live with the fact that the NT speaks about election. And Calvinists have to live with the fact that the NT speaks about choice and personal responsibility.

Jews at the time lived with the same dual and contradictory views, e.g. Akiva summed it up: "Everything is foreseen and yet free will is given" (m.Abouth 3.15)

I don't think there is an easy answer to this - or have I missed something?"

**My response:** Arminians wholeheartedly believe in election and do not necessarily find any tension in it. They believe it is conditional on faith in Christ. But reading “appointed” for tasso in Acts 13:48 runs somewhat contrary to that. This cannot be a reason to translate tasso otherwise, and that is not the reason I propose. My reasoning rests on lexical, grammatical, exegetical, and contextual data. It has been held by a number of scholars, and I think it is pretty certain that it is a reasonable possibility. It only makes sense to translate the verse in a way that preserves the ambiguity of the Greek and to alert readers to the two main possibilities in such an important and theologically charged text. Scholars used to debate the issue much more in the 1800's, and all seemed to understand that a meaning like “disposed” averted a necessarily predestinarian reading of the text. Your main objection to it or something like it seemed to be that it would not ultimately be different than “appointed.” But I think I have shown that there is a great difference, one that has been appreciated for centuries.

By the way, the Akiva quote is precisely the Arminian view, but one that runs contrary to the Calvinist view, at least according to the way that the vast majority of people understand free will (Calvinists affirm free will but redefine it from the way that almost everyone understands it so as to be compatible with determinism).

**You said:** "As I understand your comments, you are suggesting two things

1) that the alternative translations could mean something like:  
"all those who were wanting eternal life, believed."

**My response:** Yes, that is mostly correct. But I would say that there seems to be two main aspects to being positioned for eternal life: (1) desire/intention for it ; and (2) readiness/preparedness for it. So a fuller statement of the dynamic meaning would be: “as many as were wanting and ready for eternal life believed.”

**You said:** “The best translations to convey this (among those suggested) would be “were disposed to” or “were set for.” I think you are saying that this is stative and not reflexive, though I'm not sure about this." "

**My response:** First, I do believe this is a stative construction and \*not\* reflexive [editorial note: a stative construction is one that conveys a state (like being inclined to something, being happy, being afraid, being full, being tall) rather than an action or process]. But my view does not necessarily rely on this. Even if the construction referred to a specific event of placing, all the possibilities for who or what performed the action and how remain. Second, I would say that “were set for” is \*not\* good for clearly conveying this meaning. That is the translation I suggested as best for the most neutral translation, allowing for understanding either appointment or disposition, to be joined by a footnote indicating the two clearer renderings for the alternative understandings: “were appointed” vs. “were disposed.”

“Were disposed to” is the classic and traditional one. I am not sure if there is a better one than that. “Were aligned for” also seems quite good. “Were set on” gets at a lot of the meaning,

though this one does not do justice to the preposition *eis* (to be set on something as it would be phrased here typically means to be intent on it). If we were to move away from the literal tie to the idea of position, we could render “were inclined to” or “were ready for.” It would be the ideal to try and capture both inclination and readiness, but this seems to require more than one word, something like this: “were disposed to and ready for.”

All in all, “were disposed to” or “were aligned for” are probably the best simple translations. “Were set on” seems to be a good partially dynamic rendering (only partial because the “set” is quite literal, whereas the “on” is dynamic).

And “were ready for” would seem to be a good dynamic rendering. Indeed, it would go quite well with the fact that the Gentiles generally are characterized as rejoicing over the good news of salvation being opened up to them in the verse. For it then seems like something more is involved with “as many as” indicating a limitation even among the group that was rejoicing over the good news, so that it seems that the Gentiles there generally were happy about the news, but only those ready for eternal life actually believed (i.e., those ready for all that is entailed in receiving eternal life, such as submitting themselves to God, laying down their lives, taking up their crosses, following Jesus, enduring persecution, etc.).

**You said:** “2) You also allow for the idea that the meaning is a real passive, so that this represents something done by a preacher or by God, - i.e. they were persuaded (by a preacher) or given freedom or power to believe (by God) and that they still exercised free will because they could choose to believe or not believe

**My response:** Yes, but keep in mind that the passive without identification of an agent allows for all of this at the same time, which matches the complex web of influences and causes involved in someone coming to faith (God's action, evangelists' action, the subject's attitudes and actions, situational factors, etc.). It is not an either/or, but any and all. Remember too that when passives are not accompanied by an agent, then the subject himself can be the, or an, agent, a point I think is quite demonstrable (but remember again that such instances would not be a directly reflexive meaning; grammatically, no agent is identified, and so the verb and grammar itself do not say anything at all about the agent; that would need to be inferred from the context).

**You said:** "I don't think this works as a non-Calvinist reading, because of the context. If they could still choose to not believe after being persuaded or enabled to believe, why does it say ‘as many as...’? "

**My response:** Because once one is persuaded to believe, then he believes. As many as are persuaded to believe, believe. That seems obvious, does it not? However, the statement that someone is persuaded refers to a state the person has arrived at in response to resistible influence. Someone can try to persuade the person, but the person is only said to be persuaded if he yields to the persuasion. So in the Arminian view, God sought to bring all who were present to the point of being intent on and ready for eternal life, but only those who yielded to his influence could be said to have been disposed/ready for eternal life. Moreover, it is important to be precise here. Being set/ready for eternal life does not refer merely to having been enabled to believe. As just explained, it would not be a problem if it referred to having been persuaded to

believe. But to be technical, it is hard to tell if it involves the state of having been persuaded to believe, or if it is itself a state that naturally leads to finally being persuaded to believe. I would say that it refers to the state in which someone can believe and also is intent on obtaining the eternal life held out in the gospel and is willing to take up all that is involved in receiving it. This is the very precipice of faith, and it is hard to tell exactly where yielding to persuasion toward faith lands. But I don't think it matters. That's not the focus of being ready to believe; desire/intent towards eternal life and readiness to do what is necessary to obtain it are what is in view.

**You said:** “This would need a different translation, because the English implies that ALL who were persuaded or enabled did follow through and believe.”

**My response:** I think this is incorrect, as my above comments indicate. “Disposed/ready for eternal life” does not indicate a mere condition of being able to believe. It includes that, but is more than that. It may well indicate a condition of having been persuaded to believe, but that is unobjectionable as explained above. If a teacher provides ice cream for her grade school class, it would make perfect sense to say, “as many as were disposed to have ice cream accepted the teacher’s offer to have some.” But I tend to think it does not include having been persuaded to believe, but is wholly tied up in being so persuaded. One fully desires the eternal life held out in the gospel and is willing to do what is necessary to obtain it. Therefore, one becomes persuaded to believe. It would appear that there were Gentiles who rejoiced over the good news that salvation was opened up to them, but were not yet ready to commit to Christ. They were not yet ready for eternal life. But as many as were, believed.

**You said:** The English doesn't quite say that they believed by necessity, but it does imply that they believed by consequence, and that they wouldn't not-believe, even if theoretically they could do.

**My response:** From my comments so far, it should be obvious that I don't find this problematic, given the nature of being disposed/ready for eternal life. This merely indicates the reason for why they believed.

**You said:** Which is your favourite proposal for a different, properly ambiguous, translation?

**My response:** I would say, probably “as many as were set for” is the best I can think of at present for the best neutral translation, though it is a little awkward. If used by a translation, I think a footnote should be added giving the two main alternatives: “disposed to/ready for” vs. “appointed.”

I don't think the “as many as” is a problem for the Arminian view if disposed or the like is used of tasso, because being disposed is contingent upon the free will and choice of the person disposed. Moreover, the passive leaves it open for what disposes the person and how the person is disposed. It could refer to God resistibly bringing the person to such a disposition, to the person's own inclination, the preaching of the gospel leading the person to such a disposition, or to any number of other factors. It should be no surprise that only some come to such a place.

That is exactly what Arminian theology believes. As I said, this seems to be indicating the reason these Gentiles believed—they were ready to receive eternal life and all that is necessary for this.

But “appoint” does not allow for this very well. “Appoint” seems to imply a unilateral action of God, especially because of the “as many as.” Everyone who was tasso-ed believed, and only some were tasso-ed. If tasso means “appoint,” then God only appointed some, and they all certainly believed. That is Calvinistic and not readily compatible with Arminian theology. (Though as I mentioned at one point, there are reasonable Arminian views that can deal with “appoint”). But if only some were intent on and ready for eternal life, and everyone who was intent on it and ready for it believed, this is completely consistent and expected by Arminian theology.

**You said:** "Your main reason for disliking “appointed” is that it favors a Calvinistic interpretation, though does not necessitate one. You'd prefer something more neutral which doesn't provide what appears to be a proof text."

**My Response:** Well, that's the practical theological concern that drives us to address this particular verse. But the main reason is really the lexical, grammatical, exegetical, and contextual data. The theological significance of this particular text does call for special care in getting the translation right. I should also add that “appoint” \*strongly\* favors a Calvinistic interpretation. It does not absolutely necessitate one, but it certainly makes it read like one even if there are some reasonable ways to avoid the Calvinistic interpretation.

**You said:** Your preferred “neutral” translation is: “as many as were set for” though you'd like translations to give a footnote giving the two main alternatives: “disposed to/ready for” vs. “appointed.”

**My Response:** Yes, I think that would be the best solution. But the neutral translation would still be much better even if a footnote is not included. I think that not going with the neutral translation would demand a footnote of the other main option to be responsible with such an important and theologically charged text. So if a translation wants to avoid a footnote, I think the neutral translation would be the best way to go.

**You said:** We may love footnotes, but others fear or loath them.

**My Response:** Well, that has not been my experience. People seem to like to know if there is a major translation alternative, particularly in theologically charged texts. It puts some of the “power” in their hands, rather than having to rely solely on their pastor to tell them, “actually, that can also be translated as such and such.” Moreover, obviously some footnotes are necessary. And this text is among the most theologically charged texts in the Bible, and perhaps the one most impacted by translation. It seems like a footnote would be warranted here if anywhere, granting that there is a legitimate alternative translation. However, as I mentioned above, if a translation does not use a footnote, then a neutral translation would be the best route.

**You said:** As someone who has a bias against Calvinistic tidiness and who leans towards freewill rather than predestination, I am still unsatisfied that we have got a good understanding of



this verse.

If I read this like a 1st century rabbi, I read it a little differently. A rabbinic reading always looks out for self-evident missing elements, because they are always trying to abbreviate things as much as possible. And, for the same reason, a rabbinic reading will always try to find a reason why every phrase or even every word is included.

Let me use a very literal English rendering and append the thoughts I would have as a 1st Century rabbi:

"And hearing this, the Gentiles were rejoicing" - they were happy [with whom? with what?]

"and were glorifying the word of the Lord" - they gave praise for the message [to whom?]

"and believed" - they responded to the message by believing [in what or in whom?]

"as many as were" - this is going to tell me something about the group of people who believed

"set/appointed to/for eternal life" - they are "set" [by what or by whom?]

I notice from my thoughts along the way, that I'm asking a set of questions about a missing element. If this was a rabbinic passage, I'd expect these questions to all be answered with the same missing word or phrase. In this case, they can all be answered by "God". This, of course, makes the passage fall in line with the Calvinist view."

**My Response:** While provocative, I don't think this ultimately works (even if it did, it would only be one way of approaching the text). It is probably too simplistic. God does not quite fit for each question. For example, the text actually tells us what the Gentiles were rejoicing over, the word of the Lord. If one asks what they believed, again, the word of the Lord/the gospel is the most direct answer from the text. And then if one asks, "believed in what or whom?", the answer would more directly be the Lord = Jesus rather than specifically "God". Now, Jesus is God of course, so there is overlap there. But the Jewish reading you refer to would undoubtedly have the whom we would call God the Father in view when God the Son is the most direct object of faith when believing unto salvation is in view. (Of course, it is also believing in God the Father. And by believing in the Son, we believe the Father. But still, there is some distinction that I think pushes the scheme you have outlined off mark.) But it would seem that the word of the Lord would fit perhaps most directly here as well. Believed in what or whom? The word of the Lord. So "the word of the Lord" would fit even better for most of the questions. And that would fit perfectly well for what situated/prepared the Gentiles for eternal life. It also seems questionable to assume that this would be what the Gentile Luke had in mind in writing this, though I am one of the first to promote the point that Christian Gentiles could very well be knowledgeable in Scripture and Jewish methods of interpretation.

**You said:** "I also notice that I'm looking for a reason behind each phrase Now I ask myself - why didn't Luke finish with "believed"? What does the end of the verse tell us?"

We appear to be discussing two options:

Calvinist: God made them believe because they were already appointed by him to have eternal life.

Arminian: They believed because they had decided they wanted eternal life.

**My Response:** Well, not quite right on the Arminian view. I think the Arminian view involves their disposition and decision as well as God's activity and the activity of Paul, etc. Thus, the Arminian view allows for the text to envision multiple actors and influences at work, which goes along well with the undeniably complex inter-relational nature of people coming to faith/converting. The people's role in this is the point objected to by Calvinists, and so can come to be thought the sum of the Arminian view. But that is not the case. I also want to say that I think you are overlooking how the Arminian view actually does provide a fitting climax focusing on eternal life. But I'll address that below.

**You said:** "These both act like an anticlimactic caveat.

i.e. "they believed! - but only because God appointed them to"

or "they believed! - but only after they decided to"

Of course, it may be the purpose of Luke, to straighten out some facts, and an anticlimax is the only way to do it.

How would the two sides explain why Luke added this final phrase?

The Calvinists could say that Luke didn't want his readers to go away with the idea that anyone could simply believe and get eternal life without God being involved in an active way.

The Arminians could say that Luke wanted to emphasize that they thought about what they wanted (eternal life) and decided about this before they believed."

**My Response:** I think that you are getting wrong the essence of the Arminian position I am representing here. I think you have perhaps overlooked what I have mentioned as the reasons for Luke's presentation. I would not say that Luke wanted particularly to \*emphasize\* what you say here of the Arminian position. I would say he uses the language he does (tasso) and the passive so as not to expressly indicate how or why these Gentiles came to the position of being ready for eternal life. The how and why are obvious from the context (the preaching of the gospel being one of the biggest reasons among others). But Luke words things in the way he does because he is not here particularly concerned to address how they were prepared or what prepared them. What he focuses on is the obtaining of eternal life by Gentiles. That fits into one of Luke's overarching purposes of showing salvation opening up to the Gentiles. It also fits into why Luke uses the passive, to keep his broader narrative focus on God's opening up of salvation to the Gentiles generally while also managing to indicate the salvation of a limited number of specific Gentiles in this instance. (I.e., Luke couldn't just say the Gentiles believed. Some did not. So he had to narrate that only some believed. But he did not want to lose focus on the salvation opening up to the Gentiles generally).

But beyond this, I also pointed out how this way of narrating the incident has the rhetorical effect of commending faith in the gospel as the true (and only) way to eternal life. It essentially says,

everyone who was intent on and really ready for eternal life believed the gospel. It is like an advertisement that says everyone intent on good service comes to our store. That commends going to the store if you want the best service. Here, Luke commends faith in Christ and the gospel as the way to eternal life. This has an evangelistic purpose for any seekers exposed to Acts. But it also strengthens believers by implicitly assuring them that their faith is well placed-- it obtains eternal life! And it is open to Gentiles as well as Jews.

**You said:** "Even though I'm personally closer to an Arminian position than a Calvinistic one, I find the Arminian explanation for the phrase rather bland and inconsequential. Luke would have been better to end his verse at "believed". The final phrase doesn't help to show that this was a personal choice, and it doesn't tell us anything about the nature of the choice. On the contrary, it might suggest that the choice was *not* their own.

**My Response:** I think my comments above address this and show that the best Arminian explanation of the phrase is neither bland nor inconsequential, but quite in line with Luke's purposes in Acts.

**You said:** "I can't help thinking that the end of the verse should be a climax. Luke has told us the facts - some Gentiles believed - and this is amazing. Now he adds something, and we expect it to be even more amazing. What is it?"

I think we are being distracted from the real climax of the verse which concerns "eternal life". In other words, we aren't meant to be left thinking about the process by which they believed, but the final aim."

**My Response:** I agree and believe that the Arminian view I have presented fits this perfectly. It gives a climax that is in line with Luke's purposes in Acts and concerns eternal life. Moreover, it agrees that "we aren't meant to be left thinking about the process by which they believed, but the final aim." And I would add, that we are also to be thinking of the way to obtain that final aim-- believe. And it avoids turning focus onto the process by which they believed because it uses the passive, and a word like *tasso* that often indicates positioning, which avoids identifying questions of who set or by what process they were set (though I would argue that the answers to these types of questions can be gleaned from the context; they are just not Luke's focus).

**You said:** "Let's follow it through the thoughts of general Jewish reader, rather than a rabbi:

"And hearing this, the Gentiles were rejoicing" - they aren't usually happy with Jewish preaching!

"and were glorifying the word of the Lord" - they don't normally have good things to say about Scripture!

"and believed" - they certainly don't normally believe the message or our God!

"as many as were" - ah - now we are going to hear an explanation, or perhaps a restriction on what they will share with us

"set/appointed to/for eternal life" - What? They join us in the age of ages, with Abraham?

As a Jewish reader I'm left thinking: On who's authority can they share eternal life? And the final

phrase makes it clear that they didn't just decide to come along for the ride, but God is the authority who appointed/set them in eternal life."

**My Response:** Honestly, I am leery of such a reader oriented approach. I believe an author oriented approach is more fit for exegesis, though I think there certainly is value in considering how original readers might have understood the text; obviously the author would take this into account. But the author must be taken as the most reliable guide to his own words. So let me reconstitute this sort of framework you use with the concerns of Acts and the text:

"And hearing this, the Gentiles were rejoicing" - they were rejoicing over the word of God and the news that salvation is opened up to them by faith in Christ

"and were glorifying the word of the Lord" - This is good news [hence, gospel!], and God is to be praised for what he has done in Christ and opening up salvation to the Gentiles!

"and believed" - Ah, that's the way to get eternal life; I want to do that (or, I am glad that I have done that and I want to keep doing that); look, Gentiles can be saved by faith!

"as many as were" - ah - here's a limitation; now we see that not every Gentile believed; but they should of; I know I want to (or again, I am glad that I have done that and I want to keep doing that)

"set/appointed to/for eternal life" - What? They join the Jews in God's covenant with the Jews and get in on the age of ages, with Abraham? Believing in Jesus is the way to get eternal life; but you have to count the cost; you have to be ready for all that obtaining eternal life demands-- following Jesus and "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Whereas the Jews spurned eternal life (v. 36), those who are intent on and ready for it really prize it and will therefore believe in Jesus.

**You said:** "Reading it with these different mindsets, each of them can be said to be adding some unspoken words:

Calvinist: "And hearing this, the Gentiles were rejoicing and were glorifying the word of the Lord, and believed - as many as were set [by God's predetermination] for eternal life"

Arminian: "And hearing this, the Gentiles were rejoicing and were glorifying the word of the Lord, and believed - as many as were set [in their own decisions] for eternal life"

Jewish: "And hearing this, the Gentiles were rejoicing and were glorifying the word of the Lord, and believed - as many as [believed] were set [by God] for eternal life"

Actually, it is more natural to read the Jewish version by translating "all", i.e.:

Jewish: "And hearing this, the Gentiles were rejoicing and were glorifying the word of the Lord, and believed - all of these were set [by God] for eternal life" "

**My Response:** Here I would stress again that you shortchange the Arminian view. Yes, their disposition toward eternal life is in view, but what moved them to those decisions would involve the preaching of the gospel, God's work in their hearts, etc. Also, I must admit that theologically, I really like your Jewish take. But it seems to turn the text on its head. "As many as were tassa" limits who believed and identifies something as leading to their belief, I would say their attitude toward the eternal life held out in the gospel.

**You said:** The Calvinistic and Arminian versions would be:

Calvinist: "And hearing this, the Gentiles were rejoicing and were glorifying the word of the Lord, and believed - all of these were set [by God's predetermination] for eternal life"

Arminian: "And hearing this, the Gentiles were rejoicing and were glorifying the word of the Lord, and believed - all of these were set [in their own decisions] for eternal life"

When I look at the way that Luke uses *hosa* in Acts, I realised it is used in a similar way in Acts 2:39

**Acts 2:39** "For to you is the promise, and to your children and to all those far away - **as many as** the Lord our God may call."

Here the three readings would be:

Calvinist: "For to you is the promise, and to your children and to all those far away - as many as the Lord our God may call [and all of those will respond]."

Arminian: "For to you is the promise, and to your children and to all those far away - as many as the Lord our God may call [and some of those will respond]."

Jewish: "For to you is the promise, and to your children and to all those far away - all of those the Lord our God may call [even non-Jews]."

(I couldn't find a way to express the Jewish reading using "as many as" except by adding lots of other words).

**My Response:** I am not sure if I should bother to mention this, but I have argued in my book on Rom 9:1-9 that the theological concept of calling should be understood as naming. So I would interpretively read Acts 2:39 like so: "For to you is the promise, and to your children and to all those far away - as many as the Lord our God may call [that is, name as his own in response to their faith]."

**You said:** "Now, looking at the "Arminian" ones again, I can't help thinking that the one I've called "Jewish" actually expresses Arminian theology better. Instead of the rather lame message that "they believed, having decided that they wanted eternal life", we have "they believed and there were thereby appointed by God to eternal life".

**My Response:** It is true that the one you have called Jewish more directly expresses Arminian theology. But I am not trying to get Acts 13:48 to express Arminian theology (not that you are either!). I am trying to get most accurate translation, though I admit that I am especially concerned about the translation of this verse because of its theological importance and because I think the major translations strongly and misleadingly favors a Calvinistic interpretation.

I would refer you to my comments earlier in this message for why I do not think that drawing attention to the disposition of those who came to believe is lame at all, but wholly in keeping with Luke's purposes, and I will add, forms a fitting parallel with v. 36 and its reference to the disposition of the Jews who serve as a foil to the Gentiles in this episode.

**You said:** All this leads me to wonder if a truly neutral reading for both of these would be:

**Acts 13:48** "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord and believed - all of whom were appointed for eternal life."

**Acts 2:39** "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - all of whom the Lord our God may call. " "

**My Response:** I like it theologically, but it does not seem to do justice to the text. I do not think this does justice to the hōsōi, which really should read "as many as" or "all who." It also does not do justice to the periphrastic pluperfect. It could very easily be read as they believe and therefore were appointed to eternal life, which is good Arminian theology, but seems to go against the actual wording of the Greek text (not that the text stands against this Arminian position, just that it does not specifically affirm it). Plugging in a pluperfect to the translation you are suggesting here would make it expressly Calvinistic again. I suppose an Arminian interpretation is what you are getting at with the "Jewish interpretation" you are proposing, but I don't think this can be squared with the text. I still think the most neutral translation would be, "as many as were set for eternal life believed".

**You said:** there appears to be a conscious contrast between

**the Jews judged themselves unworthy of eternal life**

and .... What would the contrast be? - one would expect it to be:

**the Gentiles were judged [by God] to be worthy of eternal life**

If this is the case, then v.48 would mean something like:

"they believed - [and] they were all considered worthy [by God] for eternal life"

**My Response:** It is a little surprising that you would take the parallel between v. 46 and v. 48 as you do. Arminians have usually been the ones to highlight the parallel because v. 46 clearly

highlights the Jews' disposition toward eternal life. The tightest parallel suggests that tasso in v. 48 then has to do with the Gentiles' disposition toward eternal life. Verse 46 reads,

“Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: ‘We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles’” (NIV).

[You] do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life is more literally "you judge yourselves not worthy of eternal life". Clearly Luke does not mean that these Jews literally declared themselves unworthy of eternal life, as if they thought themselves unworthy of eternal life. Rather, he means that their action of rejecting the gospel shows them to be unworthy of eternal life, that is, unfit for eternal life. It is implied that accepting the gospel would show one worthy/fit for eternal life. The use of the word "worthy/unworthy" here is difficult for evangelicals. It could mislead one into thinking the text has the ideas of "deserving/not deserving" eternal life in the sense of meriting or dis-meriting it. And that is one use of the word for worthy (*axios*). But it can also be used in the sense of fit for something, appropriate for something. That is almost certainly the use here, as in uses of the word in passages such as:

**Luke 3:8** Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

"In keeping with repentance" is more literally, "worthy of repentance", which makes little sense with the idea of "deserves" or "merits", but excellent sense with the idea of "fit for", "appropriate to", or "in keeping with."

**Acts 26:20** First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

"Prove their repentance by their deeds" is more literally, "performing deeds worthy of repentance", which really means "performing deeds fitting or appropriate to repentance".

Let me give you two more verses that I think help draw out the point well:

**Matthew 10:37-38** "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

The implication is that the one who loves Jesus more than anyone or anything is "worthy" of him. But surely this does not mean deserve him or merit him, but fitting or appropriate for him. (Cf. Luke 9:62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.")

When we apply this sort of meaning to Acts 13:46-48, it makes best sense of the verses, and actually brings out the parallel most forcefully.

As we have said, there appears to be a conscious contrast between

**the Jews judged themselves unworthy of eternal life**

and .... What would the contrast be? - one would expect it to be:

**the Gentiles judged themselves to be worthy of eternal life**

Now, as I have said, "worthy" here surely does not mean "deserving, meriting", but fit for, appropriate for. And that just happens to be roughly equivalent to the meaning for *tasso* I am suggesting--"they believed - as many as were fit/ready for eternal life".

Worthiness in Lukan terminology has to do here with being fit/ready/appropriate for eternal life. Such "worthiness"/"fitness" has to do with willingness to meet the condition for eternal life--believe. Believing showed them ready/fit for eternal life. The point? Believing the gospel is the way to obtain eternal life for Jews and Gentiles, hence readers/hearers of Acts 13 should believe in the gospel (if they don't already) and continue believing in the gospel (if they already do); it's the only way to eternal life. It is what the person who is really intent on and ready for eternal life will do. This is hardly an inconsequential point, but embodies one of Luke's main points in the entire book, coupled with another of his main points, the opening of salvation to the Gentiles.

Now it is true that we have a passive here instead of a middle in my opinion, but I have discussed the reasons why Luke would use the passive here instead of expressing the agent. The parallel with v. 36 strongly suggests that the Gentiles who believed played at least some role in their readiness for eternal life (and note well, it allows for God and other things to have played significant roles as well). Translating with "appoint" would not allow for that role very well.

**You said:** Thank you for your most careful response. What you are saying (as I understand it) is that what I called the "Jewish" reading, which concentrates on "eternal life for the Gentiles" rather than the means by which they are "set" on it, is essentially the way that your Arminian approach would lead you understand the verse. That is, the translation "appoint" does injustice to the verse, not only because it prejudices the reader towards a Calvinistic interpretation, but also because it draws their attention away from the thrust of the phrase. The use of *tasso* in a passive without any implied subject is a deliberate attempt to downplay the force of the verb.

**My Response:** Roughly, yes. But let me clarify that it is not so much an attempt to downplay the force of the verb, but to intentionally downplay the issue of who or what *tasso*-ed them for eternal life or how they were *tasso*-ed. I would think this is implicit *from the context*, but not in the verb itself. A Calvinist could try to find evidence in the context that God should be understood as the sole agent of the verb and that his pre-temporal decree should be understood as the means. An Arminian could argue from the context that it was a complex of factors including the preaching of the gospel, the Gentiles' (who believed) interaction with it, God's work through the apostles and in the hearts of their hearers, etc. (I'll repeat here that I believe this multiple-agent view is one reason for Luke's omission of specifying an agent of the passive construction.)

**You said:** "The translation should therefore convey two things:



- the main point is that Gentiles too were granted eternal life when they believed
- a subsidiary point is that not all Gentiles believed - only those who were "set"

**My Response:** Well, I would not say that the translation should itself convey that Gentiles too were granted eternal life when they believed. That is obvious in the context, but gets away from what the text itself explicitly says. We don't want to force the translation to make explicit what is implicit. Luke left it implicit for a reason (in this case at least partly because it is so obvious from the context and the book that there is no need to do so). But the translation "appoint" does seem to minimize this and divert attention away from this obvious concern in the text. It makes belief come from appointment to eternal life, so the connection to believing to receive eternal life is blurred. But the idea of belief coming from disposition/readiness for eternal life preserves the natural connection of believing to receive eternal life evident in the book as a whole and this episode.

**You said:** "Your preferred neutral translation is still: "as many as were set for eternal life believed" "

(Thanks also for introducing the concept of "naming" - but I think we'd better not pursue that.)

**My Response:** Yes, it seems like the best we can do for a neutral translation because of the range of meaning English "set" has, quite similar to tasso.

(BTW, on naming, you can see my argument for it here: <http://evangelicalarminians.org/brian-abasciano-on-calling/>, which is an excerpt from my dissertation, which was published by T & T Clark under the same title as the dissertation. The whole dissertation is actually available online too, but this link is just an excerpted part on calling.)

**You said:** "While I can see that this is a neutral translation, I still have difficulty reading this in an Arminian way.

I think it is because I can't help but see God as the agent, so it doesn't seem natural to read "set" as "were set [by themselves]".

The most natural way to read the phrase is "as many as were set [by God] for eternal life". In other words, the Arminian reading seems forced."

**My Response:** I understand that, but it can easily be understood otherwise. "Set" can actually mean "intent on" and also "ready" in English. And to be set for something often means to be ready for it (are you set for dinner?). But it may be that this would still tend to be read more naturally Calvinistically. But it would be easy to give the Arminian interpretation from it. It is a whole other matter to have the text say appoint, and then have to say, "well, the Greek word there can mean something else". In the one, you can argue from the translation itself. In the other, you're arguing against the translation. But perhaps reflection could turn up a more ideal neutral reading. I will say this: I mentioned "set for" to my 11 year old son as an alternative translation to "appoint", and he seemed to understand the significance and the Arminian view from it immediately without explanation. (But he is quite sharp.) Let me also remind you that the

best Arminian interpretation isn't "were set [by themselves]", but "were set [by multiple factors including the preaching of the gospel, their consideration of the gospel, God's work in their hearts, etc.]"

**You said:** "Perhaps there isn't anything we can do about this, without abandoning a passive in our translation."

**My Response:** I am afraid that may be the case. But let's think on it.

**You said:** "Let me turn to *hosos*: You have rejected my attempt to translate "all" instead of "as many as", because it moves the Greek away from its meaning."

**My Response:** Oh no, it wasn't "all" I objected to, but "all of whom". I think "as many as" is equivalent to "all who". But "all of whom" in the way you used it seemed to make "the Gentiles" equivalent to those who were tasso-ed to/for eternal life and believed as opposed to the limitation that seems to be envisioned. Let me set the 2 translations side by side:

"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord and believed--all who were set for eternal life."

vs.

"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord and believed--all of whom were set for eternal life."

The Gentiles present generally are the subject of the verbs, and *hosoi* provides a limitation. But this latter translation gives the impression that all the Gentiles believed.

**You said:** "Have you looked into Luke's use of *hosos*? I haven't, but I get the impression that it has a wide range of use, and we might be being distracted by "as many as".

A couple of examples taken from a quick search on the same form:

**Acts 10:45** and those believers of the circumcision were astonished -- **as many as** came with Peter -- because also upon the Gentiles the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out

**Luke 4:40** And at the setting of the sun, they all brought them to him - **as many as** had any weakness with various illnesses - and he put his hand on each one of them, healing them.

It seems to me that Luke is using *hosos* in these verses as a way to introduce a relative clause. There is no implication of "all", except to limit a previous implied "all".

In Act 10:45 he might be implying that "all" the believers of the circumcision party were astonished, so he adds "as many as came with Peter" to limit them.

In Luke 4:40 he might be implying that the people brought everyone to Jesus, so he limits it to those who were ill.

It is more normal in English to translate these as "who" or perhaps "any who", but "all who" may give the wrong impression, eg:

**Acts 10:45** and those believers of the circumcision **who** came with Peter, were astonished, because also upon the Gentiles the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out

**Luke 4:40** And at the setting of the sun, they all brought to him **any who** had any weakness with various illnesses - and he put his hand on each one of them, healing them.

This suggests we should translate:

"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord and those who were appointed/set for eternal life, believed."

**My Response:** It is very interesting that you bring this up, because taking *hosoi* as a simple relative has been suggested to me by a PhD student I know, who has also spoken with Carl Conrad about it, who agrees that it can be so used. But I think this is highly unlikely in general and here. The biggest reason is that the lexicons do not seem to recognize this usage (certainly not BDAG, and I did not see it in a quick look through LSJ). Secondly, it seems to me that taking *hosoi* as a simple relative is hard to prove because just about any example that could be taken as merely relative could very easily be taken with the word's normal meaning ("as many as" etc.). In other words, the normal usage sometimes is practically equivalent to a relative usage. But that should not be taken as replacing the normal usage; it is just that its normal meaning functionally overlaps with the relative sometimes. In fact, what you say goes along with my point: "It seems to me that Luke is using *hosoi* in these verses as a way to introduce a relative clause. There is no implication of "all", except to limit a previous implied "all". " I think the critical point is that it limits the previous group. In Acts 13:48, it limits the previously mentioned group of Gentiles. Not all Gentiles believed, but only those and all of those who had been *tasso*-ed for eternal life. But this does not change the meaning of *hosoi*. It still means "as many as" or "all who" (but not "all of whom"!)." It is just that there is no practical difference between saying "as many as were set" and "those who were set". The translation you offer here seems fine. It just carries no significant difference in meaning from "as many as were set" (perhaps there is a slight difference in emphasis or nuance lost by not using the standard meaning of the word). This could be demonstrated from the other examples you gave too. But I trust I have said enough for you to see how. I don't think tinkering with *hosoi* will change the meaning or translation substantively, at least not rightly.

**You said:** "Having said that these verses are comparable, I am very aware that in these two examples (Act 10:45 and Luke 4:40) the main verb comes AFTER the relative clause ("those who came with Peter were astonished" and "they all, those who were ... ill, brought"). This clearly needs more work to discover if this makes a difference. I suspect that putting *hosoi* after the main verb, as in Act 13:48, means that it isn't a simple relative clause. Have you done any work on this?"

**My Response:** I have not done any focused work on this. But as I said above, I can't see any significant difference in meaning. I would think Luke's reason for putting it after has to do with things we have mentioned, the climactic focus on eternal life for the Gentiles, etc.

**You said:** "But even if 13:48 is more than a simple relative clause, I still feel we are being unfair by adding "all" because this too leans towards a Calvinistic interpretation.

**My Response:** I don't think it leans toward a Calvinistic interpretation, and more importantly, the text really seems to say that all who, or as many as, or even simply those who, were tasso-ed, believed. That seems like something one cannot get around. But I don't see how the limitation is at odds with an Arminian interpretation or favors a Calvinistic one. It is standard Arminian theology that God must work in our hearts for us to be able to believe and that we must be ready for what eternal life demands of us. Arminians also fully believe that only certain people will believe in Christ and be saved.

**You said:** "So perhaps it should be something like:  
"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord and believed - who were appointed for eternal life."

It seems to me that this could carry an Arminian interpretation as well as a Calvinistic one, even if we kept "appointed". The "appointed" would not, of course, be understood as "set themselves" (as you would prefer) but it could be understood as "whoever believed, was appointed by God for eternal life".

**My Response:** The problem here is that this translation misses the pluperfect construction. It could be understood as, "believed - who were [then or therefore] appointed to eternal life. "As many as" or "all who", preserves the pluperfect sense because it makes clear that the tasso-ing occurs prior to faith and leads to it. I think this would be a misleading translation.

I also want to strongly emphasize that I do not prefer "set themselves"! I have been at pains to make clear that I see a variety of interrelated factors, including God, the preachers, the gospel, the people themselves, etc., as bringing these people to the place of readiness for the eternal life held out in the gospel. Let me also remind you that I think one could see God as the one who sets the people in such a position. But that can be understood as something done resistibly (recall my illustration concerning this of a hostess setting you at a table). But "appoint" in this context cannot be readily understood as a resistible act of God.

**You said:** "I am aware that you would prefer:

"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord and believed - who were set for eternal life."

My problem with this is that the English is so strange - it has no simple meaning, and merely begs lots of questions.

What does "set" mean?, and who does the setting?

I realise that these are questions which a neutral translation should not attempt to answer, but a 'natural' translation should have at least one plain meaning on the first reading.

**My Response:** Well, I think you make the obvious point yourself--a neutral translation should not try to answer these questions for us. It should not state what the Greek does not specify, especially in a controversial passage such as this over which scholars debate these very questions. I would suggest that most people would construe a particular meaning on a first reading, but that this would probably differ from reader to reader in line with one of the major meanings, either appointed or disposed/ready. That seems like a fine result. It is also important that the other meaning could be raised relatively easily from the translation itself.

You mention that "set" is very strange. I agree that it is a little strange. But I don't think it is *\*very\** strange. I don't mean to push for "set", precisely because it is not ideal from a stylistic point of view. But it does seem very good for covering the ambiguity of the Greek and the main possible senses, because "set" in English can mean "appoint", "positioned", "intent", "ready", etc.

**You said:** "Do you have an alternative which is both neutral and doesn't cause the reader to wonder what it means?"

**My Response:** Not right now. But we should think on it. However, this may be why a footnote is warranted with this text, whether

-- "set for " is in the main text and the footnote clarifies: "or appointed for or disposed/ready for"  
or

--"appointed for" is in the main text and the footnote states "or disposed/ready for"  
or

-- "disposed for" is in the main text and the footnote states "or appointed for".

Again, because of the theological importance and prominence of this text, I think it is important to be neutral or at least make the reader aware of the major alternative. (I remember reading of a major theologian--I think J.I. Packer, but am not positive which one--who said that this verse convinced him of Calvinism.)

**You said:** I'm sorry to continue this a little longer than necessary. I now see that a lot of what I wrote last time doesn't really work. As you already pointed out, I was trying to pervert the meaning of *hosos*. And I've been trying to keep away from "set" because it doesn't produce a straightforward meaning.

What I'm coming to is:

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and those who were determined for eternal life believed.

Will that satisfy an Arminian reading?

You have demonstrated that the parallels between v.46 and v.48 can give good support to the interpretation that the Gentiles fitted or readied themselves for eternal life by believing, or showed themselves fit or ready for eternal life by believing.

This is getting a little long - I'm having problems keeping all the factors in my head.

I think I'll put aside the idea of translating *hosoi* as "all who", though I'm still enamored by the simple relative, albeit with a restrictive implication - ie "the Gentiles who were set/determined for eternal life, believed".

I do take on board your point that the passive indicates multi-agency, but that is for those with athletic mental abilities. The normal reader will grab one likely agent without realising they are doing so.

I'm still not happy with "set". This might be good in an interlinear or a very literal translation, but not in a real-English translation.

It looks like the best bet may be a footnote. You suggested:

--"appointed for" as the main text and the footnote states "or disposed/ready for"  
or  
-- "disposed for" as the main text and the footnote states "or appointed for".

I'd be interested in your comments on

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and those who were determined for eternal life believed.

**My response:** Regarding your current suggestion, "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and those who were determined for eternal life believed":

It is definitely better than "appointed", but I think that because of the word's association with determinism, in this context it leans too heavily Calvinistic, even though from an objective standpoint it can go either way. But that probably would not occur to the typical reader. An Arminian interpreter might even get accused of twisting the wording if he suggested it could be referring to their disposition toward eternal life.

However, I think that it might be able to be modified to a happy medium thus, though it lands a bit on the dynamic side: "as many as were determined to have eternal life believed"

The problem, of course, is that this gets rid of the preposition and adds a verb! However, it is quite neutral and can easily be read either way. It could be taken as God having determined them to have eternal life or as they were intent on having eternal life. For some reason, adding "to have" seems to loose the expression from overt association with determinism and makes it readily understandable as having to do with disposition, probably because "determined to have" would normally refer to being intent on getting something. But this theological context seems to counterbalance that out into a relatively neutral and happily smooth translation. I just don't know if it is too dynamic. "Set for" really seems to be the most accurate in my opinion. But as you point out, it is odd.

As we have discussed this I have come to the conclusion that "ready" might be the single best word that captures what is involved in tasso in this context. You might remember that I said at one point that there seem to be two ideas involved--intent and readiness. I suppose that either of these can imply the other. "Determined to have" seems to capture intent but shortchanges readiness some, though as I said, one could take readiness to be implied if someone is strongly intent on something (though on the other hand I don't think it necessarily implies it). But it might be the best we can do. It gets at disposition, which is the central issue for the Arminian view I think. So this might be the best we can do. And it might be pretty good considering the complex issues involved (e.g., theological issues, the range of meaning tasso has, finding matches in English, smoothness of translation, etc.).

Just to be clear, I have no problem with translating hosoi as "all who".

I understand your distaste for "set". But you might want to run it by some laypeople you know and see how they perceive it.

Of course I would like to see "disposed for" or "disposed to" (not sure which preposition would be better) in the text of major translations. I do really think it fits the context better, especially the parallel with v. 46. But I would consider it good to get a footnote for it as a legitimate alternative in major translations.