

God's Election of Grace

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Unconditional election! What a repulsive doctrine to the carnal nature! What a settling doctrine to the Lord's people! Many people pervert, abuse, and misunderstand the doctrine of election. The doctrine is opposed and neglected by most modern preachers. It is a blessed doctrine, which, like all Bible doctrine, is profitable for our growth in grace. Election is woven through the entire fabric of Scripture. It is like a thread that begins with the beginning and ends with the ending of the Word of God. Not only does the Bible teach the doctrine, but it is a prominent doctrine. As some preacher in the distant past put it, "If you take election from the Scriptures, you might as well get rid of the Bible." So this brings us to the first topic under the heading of election.

1. WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF ELECTION?

What do you believe about it? It's a Bible doctrine, so we are obliged to believe something about it. The words "elect" and "choose, chose, chosen," are synonyms. I will cite some passage which use words which are synonyms of election. As you begin reading the Bible, you will soon come to this statement:

*And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they **chose**. -- Genesis 6:1,2.*

That is the first use of the word in Scripture. One of my Bible teachers told me there was a principle of "first mention" in the Scripture. That means

that whenever a thing is mentioned for the first time, it usually sets the precedent for its meaning through the Bible. I have found that to be true. We can readily see from the verses I just quoted that the sons of God chose wives from among the daughters of men. They did not choose all of the daughters of men for wives but picked out some from the many.

The same can be said of the next Scripture using the word.

*Then Lot **chose** him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. -- Genesis 13:11.*

It is plain to see that Lot chose from among the different options available to him as he and Abraham were separated. Let me just mention the next one and we will say this is sufficient for this point.

*And Moses said unto Joshua, **Choose** us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. -- Exodus 17:9.*

All three of these beginning Scriptures show the same thing. Choices were made by somebody out of the many available. I think all of us agree on that point.

When we consider the doctrine of election as it pertains to God's people, we are not speaking about choices of things, lands, etc. We are speaking of the fact that God chose (or elected) some of the human race. Well, let us prove that statement from Scripture.

2. WHO DID THE CHOOSING (OR ELECTING)?

*Blessed be **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as **he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the*

adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. -- Ephesians 1:3-6.

I have quoted one of Paul's long complex sentences which covers verses 3-6 of Ephesians 1. Notice these verses teach that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath chosen us. To whom is he speaking? We notice in verse 1 of the first chapter that he is speaking to "...the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus..." We know there was a church at Ephesus, so we can rightfully presume that when he addresses the saints, he is addressing the Ephesian church. These are saved people. They have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and still believe. So, Paul is telling them that they (gentiles) and us (Jews) (he uses the pronoun "us") were chosen.

The primary application is to those people in that place at that time. The secondary application is to all saints. It is just as true that God the Father has chosen us in Christ, just as God the Father chose the Ephesian brethren. Now let us look at another passage.

*But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because **God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation** through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. -- 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.*

Again, we see that God is the one who did the choosing of people to salvation. I am amazed at the people who say that they chose God (at their salvation experience). If we could admit that, it would be like us choosing, then God "rubber stamping" it - or then choosing us. Cannot be!

So, we understand that election is not salvation in itself, but election is to salvation. Election was done in eternity past while the experience of salvation happens in time. That brings us to the next part of our lesson.

3. WHEN DID GOD CHOOSE HIS PEOPLE?

I have already quoted two proof verses for this topic, so I won't quote them completely again. Let me extract a portion for our consideration: *"...he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,"* -- Ephesians 1:4a. He chose us before the foundation of the world. What are we to believe about that? The foundation of the world is the first thing laid in the formation of things that are made. Before the first things were set in motion in creation, God had chosen His people!

That is precisely what 2 Thessalonians 2:13 teaches as well. Notice: *"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation..."* The most sensible explanation comes with comparing Scripture with Scripture. *"In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth."* -- Genesis 1:1. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* -- John 1:1. This beginning is not referring to *"the beginning of the gospel"* as some allege. Additional Scriptures add validity to God's choosing before the world was. Consider these facts.

A. Jesus is a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of **Christ, as of a lamb** without blemish and without spot: **Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you, -- 1 Peter 1:18-20.*

*And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the **Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*** -- Revelation 13:8.

Same idea as the choosing. God had a plan perfected before the world was. Jesus Christ was the center of the plan to come and give his life, shedding His precious blood to redeem his people from their sins. Some people call this God's decree. Others refer to it as a covenant. Some people say it is God's purpose. I choose to call it God's eternal purpose.

B. God wrote our names in the book of life before the foundation of the world.

*And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not **written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.***" -- Revelation 13:8

*The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not **written in the book of life from the foundation of the world,** when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."* -- Revelation 17:8.

C. God prepared a kingdom for the sheep from the foundation of the world.

*"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit **the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:**"* -- Matthew 25:34.

D. God's works were finished from the foundation of the world.

For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest:

*although **the works were finished from the foundation of the world.***" -- Hebrews 4:3.

We do not know all the works referred to, but it is right to say that those things which pertain to God's purpose were completed. This leads us to the next thought.

4. WHAT IS GOD'S STATED PURPOSE IN CHOOSING HIS PEOPLE?

Let us go back to the Scripture I quoted from Ephesians 1. *"That we should be holy and without blame before him in love:"* -- Ephesians 1:4b. This passage proves that God chose us with no foreseen good in us. His purpose in choosing us was that we would eventually be conformed to the image of Christ that God's son might be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29). It was not that God saw good in us, but that we should be holy and without blame before him. Foreseen good would certainly include saving faith.

That God foresaw our faith is freely admitted, but that faith is a gift is proven in Scripture. *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.* -- Ephesians 2:8-9. Saving faith is not something that depraved sinners have of themselves. It is the gift of God. Our Baptist forefathers have said with many voices that *"faith and repentance are the fruits of regeneration or the new birth."* As we consider that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, we can see that the new birth, faith, and repentance all come in a moment as an act of God - by the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost.

5. ELECTION IS BY GRACE AND NOT WORKS.

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of

Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. **And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.** -- Romans 11:1-6.

In the very same way that God reserved unto himself seven thousand beside Elijah in his day, in His grace, He elected some for our time. Paul said, "*Even so (in the same way) then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*"

6. ELECTION OF THE PEOPLE AND THE MEANS IS TO GLORIFY GOD.

*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: **That no flesh should glory in his presence.** But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. -- 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.*

A person would have to be willingly ignorant indeed not to realize that Paul is here speaking about the people in the Corinthian church. Men and women, just like you and I. They were the basest that the world had to offer. Very few wise and mighty people are chosen - some, but not many. Most are like you and I - common folks. The grass roots. Why? Because it pleased God to choose them so that no flesh could glory in His presence! He will not give His glory to another.

I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. -- Isaiah 42:8.

7. SOME PERSONS WERE GIVEN TO THE SON BY THE FATHER - THEY WILL COME.

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. — John 6:37.

Will you say that the Father gave everybody to the Son? I cannot say that. If the Father gave everyone to the Son, then everybody would come. Millions of souls in hell prove that is not the case. I have watched people die personally who never believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Many of you have done the same. Those given to the Son will come to Him - and He will in no wise cast them out. Blessed promise!

8. THE BIBLE SAYS SOME ARE ORDAINED OR PREPARED UNTO GLORY.

*Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering **the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:** And that he might make known the riches of his glory on **the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called,***

not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." --- Romans 9:21-24.

This speaks of God and His sovereignty in making vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath from the same lump. He afore prepared some as vessels of mercy unto glory - even us, whom He has called.

And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." -- Acts 13:48.

I read something years ago where the writer tried to make the word "ordained" mean "disposed to." That is not the case. It means ordained. The word is translated from the Greek word "tasso" which is a verb otherwise translated "appoint, set, determine, and addict." There is no way this can mean "disposed to" which alludes to a predisposition in man that he has an inclination toward eternal life. He was ordained to eternal life - as an act of God, but the man was passive.

9. THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF PEOPLE NOT YET SAVED AS BELONGING TO HIM.

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. -- John 10:16.

Notice the tenses in the statement of our Lord. "*Other sheep I have* (present tense), ... *them also I must bring* (future tense), *and they shall hear my voice* (future tense). Jesus said He had them. In what sense? They were His people, which He came to save from their sins.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. -- Matthew 1:21.

Jews, you say? He didn't save all the Jews. Not many of them were saved when Jesus came in proportion to those who lived. His people are the same ones He foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified.

Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." -- 2 Timothy 2:10.

Paul knew no more about who the elect were before they were saved than you and I do. He was speaking of what he had to put up with to preach the gospel to all in order that the elect might obtain the salvation in Christ Jesus. They are the sheep, and they will hear! Our job is to declare the gospel. God will save His people! Let us be obedient and strive to "*preach the gospel to every creature.*"

Let us go forth declaring the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world! We are made to rejoice when we go in obedience to the command of our great Lord and King who has chosen some to salvation. God's unconditional election makes our work a sure thing. His word will not return unto Him void.