

## Election and Predestination

Ephesians 1:3-6

“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.”

Many Christians have the idea that the doctrines of election and predestination are cold, hard doctrines. Many would say they are doctrines that should be reserved only for discussion among ministers or for the most mature students of the Bible. Evidently, Paul didn't have this view. In the salutation of his Epistle to the Ephesian Church, Paul immediately breaks forth in praise unto God; praise that sprang from the thought of these two glorious doctrines. Later in this same epistle, Paul refers to man being dead in trespasses and in sin. The Bible truth of the depravity of man is a foundation upon which all other truths rest. The sinful nature of man and his incapability to save himself must be realized; otherwise, all other truths of Scripture will be tainted with man's work and man's will. Rightly understood, election and predestination should move us to praise, to adoration, and to thanksgiving, considering God's marvelous grace toward undeserving sinners.

First, we see that all spiritual blessings come from God and are in Christ. God's grace, love and mercy, the comfort and peace of the Holy Spirit: these are all spiritual blessings and they come to us through Christ, our Savior, Redeemer, and Mediator. A child of God may be misled or in the dark concerning the source of such blessings, but Scripture is plain – they are in Christ.

Paul not only tells us the source of these blessings, he also tells us the reason these blessings are bestowed upon us. Paul says, “according”... in harmony with, because of, with respect to. What is the giving of these blessings according to? It is according to the fact that God chose us in him, that is, in Christ, before the foundation of the world. What a wonderful thought! God had a people in mind before He ever spoke the first word of creation. Why did He choose them? Did God look into the future and base His ‘choosing’ on what He saw? Was it because He could foresee their faith or their works, or that they would make the right decision? In Psalm 14 and Psalm 53, we find this idea refuted. David writes, “there is none that doeth good.” He further says, “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.” God looked. What did He see? Verse 3 says “They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Paul repeats these words in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Romans, beginning in verse 10; then continues with a very dark description of the nature of man. The entire human race fell in sin. Within this fallen human race, God loved a multitude of people. He chose them and predestinated them to be adopted into His family by Jesus Christ. Another glorious thought! In spite of what God saw, and in spite of our fallen sinful state, God loved a people! His love was such that God determined to save them before the world began. He didn't leave their salvation up to their own works or their own will, because their works were wicked and their will

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was only toward sin. He secured their salvation in His own Son. In 2 Timothy, chapter 1, Paul put it this way: “Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” And all of this was according to the good pleasure of His will.

God’s purpose in election and predestination was that we would stand before Him holy and without blame in love, in His Son Jesus Christ. Since man was dead in trespasses and in sin, this was the only way for us to ever be restored, redeemed back to Him. Rather than depending on the sinner accepting Him, He made us accepted in the beloved, His Son! The fact that a person “accepts” the Lord Jesus Christ is actually evidence that God chose that person and has already made him accepted in Christ. The only way for a person to receive anything of a spiritual nature, or to respond to the gospel, is that they already be born again. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 2, verse 14, Paul tells us that the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit, cannot receive them, in fact, considers spiritual things to be foolishness. God must act first. God gives a person a new nature, a spiritual nature, borns them again, sends the Spirit into their heart, creates them anew, makes them a new creature in Christ. Then, and only then, can that person respond in obedience. The underlying principle that cannot be ignored is: life must always precede action.

In Romans chapter 8, verse 29 tells us, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son.” We have already seen that God looked down from Heaven and saw that there were none who sought Him or did understand. So, this foreknowledge was more than just that attribute of God whereby he knows and sees all things. This foreknowledge was based upon love; God’s everlasting love. Just as a man ‘knows’ his wife in that personal, physical, intimate relationship, so too, God knew a people before the foundation of the world. He loved them and determined that through His Son, nothing would ever separate them from His love (verses 38-39). If God loves a person today, He has always loved them, He will forever love them, and He will draw them with lovingkindness (Jer.31:3)

Notice in verse 30 of this chapter that the same people God predestinated, He also called. Paul goes on to say that these same people were justified and glorified. All of these things are in the past tense. In the mind and purpose of God, having determined to save a people through His Son, these things were as if they had already been accomplished. This is often referred to as the everlasting covenant. Notice also that God predestinated people, not events. There were certain events that God determined beforehand would take place, such as the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But in this passage, it is people that are under consideration. Before the world began, God made glorious provisions for those whom He loved, and all of these provisions to secure the salvation of His people were made in His Son. While we live here in the world, some time between conception and death, the application of these things is made to the hearts of those whom God loves. This is what takes place in the new birth. We are drawn and called by the life-giving voice of the Son of God, and we live! The evidence that we have been called and given life is that we hear Him, and believe on Him. (John 5:24-25)

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Did Jesus teach these doctrines of election and predestination? Let's see from Jesus' own words.

John 5:21 "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth **whom he will.**"

John 6:37-39 "**All that the Father giveth me** shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of **all which he hath given me** I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

John 6:44 "**No man can come** to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 10:26-28 "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. **My sheep hear my voice**, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

John 17:1-2 "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should **give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.**"

One of the arguments against this Bible truth of election and predestination is that such a doctrine is not fair; in fact, it leaves people out that may want to be saved. Nothing could be further from the truth.

First of all, whatever God does, whatever He says, whatever He declares is altogether righteous and altogether just. If His word declares something that doesn't seem fair or that doesn't line up with our way of thinking, then we have the wrong understanding of His word. We have to change our thinking because God is not going to change. Since God is perfectly righteous and just, and since man violated his law, rebelled against God, and fell into sinful depravity, it would have been fair and just for Him to condemn the entire human race to hell, never saving one person. We cannot ask for nor claim justice or fairness; we can only plead for mercy. We must not ask for a chance because we could not make the choice. God has not revealed in Scripture a plan of salvation that gives people a chance to be saved. What He did do is reveal His sovereign will and purpose in saving a people: His people, a great multitude of people. The gospel brings the purpose of God, the grace of God, and life and immortality to light. The gospel doesn't offer chances or propositions for eternal life. It declares and informs the broken-hearted sinner that Christ died for his sins; giving him hope, peace, and comfort. Furthermore, it instructs that broken-hearted sinner what to do to be relieved of his guilty conscience and how to live his life in a way that would be pleasing to God. The only reason a person will ever sincerely have a broken heart and feel guilt over his sins is because God has sent His

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Spirit into his heart and made him a new creature in Christ. Then that person can respond, he can repent, he can believe, and he can obey. The fact that a person is made to realize his guilty condition and mourns over his sins is clear evidence that he has been born of the Spirit already. By the time a person repents and calls on the name of the Lord, that person has already been born again! The new birth and his salvation was a result of God's work, not their own work, choice, or their own will. (John 1:12-13)

Secondly, election and predestination are actually 'inclusive', not 'exclusive'. Some will say that there are people who may want salvation but can't have it because they were not chosen of God. That person has never existed! If you see a person who truly has a desire for Jesus, a desire to live eternally with God, who is sincerely concerned about the salvation of their soul, you are looking at a person who WAS chosen of God and who IS among the elect and who IS already born again. The evidence makes it plain that God loved that person and has already changed their heart from its natural sinful state into a heart with spiritual feeling. The thinking of many is that God loves everybody and will give everybody a chance to be saved by accepting Jesus Christ through the gospel. Doesn't it seem out of harmony with God's character and purpose that He would devise a 'plan of salvation' that depended on man's ability to spread the gospel and only reach a fraction of the world's population down through the ages? The angel told Joseph (Matt.1:21) that the babe in Mary's womb would be called Jesus "for he shall save his people from their sins." According to John 6:37-39 (above), Jesus said he would lose none of those given to him by the Father. When he died on the cross, he said, "it is finished." When Christ shed his blood, not a single drop of it was wasted. When he paid the debt for our sins, he obtained eternal redemption for us. He got what he paid for!

Before the world began, God loved a people. He chose them and predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son. According to God's purpose and grace, He gave this people to His Son to save. The Son agreed to come into the world according to the Father's will and die for all those God gave to him. Christ secured the redemption of all those when he died on the cross and offered himself a sacrifice to God. The Holy Spirit, in this everlasting covenant, agreed to enter into the hearts of every one of those whom God loved and for whom Christ died, applying the blood of Christ to their hearts, saving them, and remaining in them until death. Election and predestination, as God has revealed to us in His word, returns all the glory to God, and they declare that the salvation of people is not dependent on man's free will, but entirely on God's purpose and grace. From the infant in the womb to the old man on his deathbed; from those early saints in the first century to the darkest tribes of Africa; from those with the greatest understanding and knowledge of the gospel to those who have never heard the gospel; God will work His will and He will save His people because God is love, He is sovereign, He is full of mercy; and because of His great love for us, He Himself secured our salvation. Indeed, as Jonah declared, salvation is of the Lord!