

**“What it means to be Reformed”; Session # 18 – “Sola Gratia – God Perfectly Sovereign in Election”, Prepared for the Adult Sunday School class on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014, by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

**Read 1st Peter 1: 2** - “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.” “Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

My fourth point on the doctrine of election is this:

**4. All of God’s elect were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God in respect to their salvation, and all the means of saving grace which would be used by Him to accomplish their salvation.**

**Paragraph 6 of Chapter 3 of our Confession says:** “As God hath appointed the elect unto eternal glory, so He hath, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto, wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed in Christ.

The Pulpit Commentary says this on this verse – “It is interesting to note that the substantive “foreknowledge” (πρόγνωσις) occurs nowhere else in Holy Scripture except in St. Peter's Pentecostal speech (Acts 2:23). We mark the agreement of St. Peter and St. Paul (comp. Romans 8:29, “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son;” comp. also Romans 11:2 and 2nd Timothy 2: 19). Election is “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”; but not simply, as the Arminians taught, ex praevisis meritis (by foreseen merits); for we cannot separate foreknowledge and predestination; the foreknowledge of an Almighty Creator must imply the exercise of choice and will; what he knows, that he also willeth; God does the electing. Thus in 1st Peter 1:20 “foreknown”, the more exact rendering of the Revised Version must imply the “foreordained” of the old translation. But that foreknowledge is the foreknowledge of God the Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but our Father also. He careth for his children; we must trust in him. The potter makes one vessel for honor, another for dishonor; but he makes none for destruction. A veil of awful mystery hangs round the relations which exist between the Almighty and his creatures; but “God is Love.”

**5. God’s choice in election is not based upon anything good or bad in those whom He has foreknown.**

**Read Romans 9: 6-15** – “But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect.” “For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but ‘In Isaac you seed shall be called.’ “That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.” “For this is the word of promise: ‘At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.’ “And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election

might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.” “As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.’” “For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’”

Now notice that the word of God’s promise never fails to accomplish the desired effect of what God intends that it effect, according to His purpose in election. Not all of the natural seed of Abraham are spiritual seed of Israel. They are not all children of God just because they are the descendants of Abraham. But it was only in Isaac, Sarah’s son, that the promised Messiah would come, and be the Savior of the world. It was only those who believed in this promise of grace through Christ that would be saved in Old Testament times. The “children of the flesh”, those who had the privileges of being a part of the Old Covenant people, but who didn’t believe the promise and live by faith in the promises of God, these were not the children of God. Rather it was the children of the promise who were, and are, counted as the true seed of Abraham.

And to descend to particulars in a paraphrase of verses 10-13: “When Rebecca had conceived by Isaac, the children having been conceived by her had not done anything good or evil; in order that the purpose of God according to election might stand (that salvation was not by their works in any respect, but rather that it comes from God who first chooses them, and then effectually calls that person to salvation), God said to Rebecca, “The older son shall serve the younger.” And this distinction which God made between these two persons, Jacob and Esau, in His choosing one, Jacob, and His rejecting the other, Esau, in this case extended even to their descendants and what God would make of them as nations. Just as it is written in the book of Malachi, chapter 1, verse 2 – “I have loved you,” says the Lord.” “Yet you say, ‘In what way have You loved us?’” “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” says the Lord.” “Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountain and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.”

Thus we see that God’s choosing of some does not take place on the basis of their having done anything good or bad. It is simply God is showing mercy where He wills to do so, for reasons that we do not understand; reasons which relate to His own purpose which is to sovereignly show mercy and glorify Himself in the salvation of some; and to glorify Himself in the demonstration of His justice in others. His purpose according to election will stand.

This being given saving grace is the deliberate act of God, according to the loving foreknowledge of His eternal purpose; to show mercy where it was undeserved. The saving mercy shown to any person is shown to them according to God’s loving foreknowledge of what He intended all along to do for them, from the foundation of the world. From the time of their birth to the time of their conversion they were a child of wrath even as the rest who have never savingly believed. But when they believe they spiritually become a child of God. The reasons why God chooses one person and not another are known only to Him and you and I who are mere men do not have the right to pry into the secrets of God, as to why God has chosen one person and passed by another, in regard to saving them. Neither those who are chosen, nor those who are passed by, are worthy of eternal life. They are all deserving of eternal condemnation.

**6. God’s electing of some persons to eternal life, and His rejection of others, leaving them in their sins, has a different basis of consideration in His holy mind.**

God, who has created all men, permitted the Fall of all men in the first man Adam. In the decree of election God saw all men fallen in Adam, and He exercised His sovereign right to show

undeserved mercy to some in electing them to eternal life. But in the decree of reprobation (His rejection of all the others whom He has not chosen) He has shown His just and holy determination to pass them by and not show them mercy. He does this, not because He is cruel or unfeeling in relation to the non-elect, but because He knows that they truly deserve to be punished eternally, having loved their sin more than God. In this act of preterition, God determined before the foundation of the world, even from eternity to leave them to themselves and their sins; and according to His justice, He then determines to punish them for all of their sins, which they justly deserve.

Turn with me over to 1st Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 8-11 – “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.” “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Notice here that it is not God’s will that any Christian fall away and end up in hell. God’s appointment for everyone who believes in Jesus is that they will obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Dear Christian, this is truly reason to take heart. “Christ Jesus died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.” “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”

Why does God appoint certain people to wrath? It is for their sins, not because He arbitrarily created them to destroy them.

Jeremiah 5: 27-30    Proverbs 16: 4    Romans 9: 17-24

William G.T. Shedd – Dogmatic Theology, Vol. 1, P. 433 is very good on this subject.

**7. God’s choice of every person who would be saved (the elect) is according to the pleasure of God’s will, not your will as a man or woman.**

Ephesians 1: 5 and 6    Matthew 11: 25-30    John 1: 12 and 13    Romans 9: 16-18

Our own 1689 London Baptist Confession says in Chapter 3, Paragraph 5 – “Those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel of the good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto.”

James 1: 18

**8. It is God’s election of these particular persons, in connection with the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, which forms the basis of God’s conveying all the blessings of grace to them.**

Romans 8: 28-30    1st Thessalonians 1: 1-5

**9. Let’s remember that all those who are chosen are chosen in Christ, and that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is called God’s elect. Therefore we ought to glory in being called the elect of God, and we ought to be willing to endure all things for their sakes in our service to Christ.**

Isaiah 42: 1-9    1st Peter 2: 4 and 5    2 Timothy 2: 8-10