

Salvation—Election (2nd)

(The study for today continues to show that election was not merely by the sovereign mercy and grace of God, but that it was purposed by Him in eternity and not based on any good in the creature. It was according to the will of God to the praise of His glory and honor.)

In our previous podcast we introduced the doctrine of election and gave an overview of this doctrine by those who believe that God elected some unto salvation based on Him foreseeing who would believe. Romans 8:29 shows that this is contrary to the teaching of God because it was “whom” God foreknew that He elected and not “what” was foreknown. Likewise, the Scriptures declare that sometimes to know someone refers to know intimately. Genesis 4:1, 17, 25 and Amos 3:2 are a few places where the word know is used to clearly show that it carries the idea to know intimately or to love. John 17:23-25 clearly shows that God the Father loved the elect as much as and as long as He love Christ Jesus and that was “before the foundation of the world.” Therefore, since the election of God unto salvation was not based on any foreseen merits of man, we will direct our attention to a few of the many passages that show that it was solely on the sovereign mercy and grace of God.

Ephesians 1:3-14 is a classic passage that teaches many things regarding the salvation of God and verse four states that God “hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world”; that is, God chose some in Christ Jesus unto salvation before creation. The verse further testifies that the purpose of election is that the elect “should be holy and without blame before him in love.” Whether the “in love” should be connected with verse four or to the beginning of verse five is for scholars to answer; however, in either case, it is obvious that those loved by God before creation are the ones elected and predestinated unto salvation. As we continue with this passage, it is the elect that are to be “holy and without blame,” “made accepted in the beloved,” “obtained an inheritance,” and “sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” All of these things (and others things that we did not mention) were “predestinated according to the purpose of him” (i.e., God) “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” In other words, these things included in the salvation of God were not based on any foreseen merit of man; they were done according to the “purpose” of God that works “all things after the counsel of his own will.” Election unto salvation was by the sovereign will of God and not based on any action of man, not even his will. (That the elect will seek the Lord is certain, but that is for a later study.) Not only is salvation according to the counsel of the will of God but it is also according to “the good pleasure of his will” as stated in verse five. This verse further states that the elect are predestinated unto adoption into the family of God. (We plan to discuss the subject of adoption in a future podcasts.) Furthermore, verse seven declares that the saved “have redemption” and “forgiveness of sins” through the blood of Christ according to the riches of the grace of God. Note: they have, not will have these things if something is done. To clarify that all of these things (as well as other blessings listed in this passage) are according to the sovereign purpose and grace of God, verse nine also states that God purposed all of it “in himself.” No wonder Paul began the passage with such a paean of praise to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Dear believer, when is the last time you thanked God for sovereignly electing you unto salvation. No, the doctrine of election is not something for believers to argue about; it is for the honor and glory of God. Verse six says that it is “to the praise of the glory of his grace,” and verses twelve and fourteen resonate with to “the praise of his glory.” Yes, dear believer, election honors and glorifies the sovereign majesty of God and we should render that praise to Him for electing us before creation.

Another passage that clearly proclaims that election unto salvation was according to the sovereign purpose of God is found in the ninth chapter of the book of Romans. Paul begins the chapter

discussing his love and concern for his ancestors. After listing some of the blessings of the Jewish people, he shows that because one can trace his lineage back to Abraham it does not mean that he is in the family of God. First he notes that the promise was given to Isaac and not to Ishmael. Then he sets forth the children of Isaac and Rebecca—Jacob and Esau. While some may say that it is obvious that the promise was to Isaac and not Ishmael because Ishmael was a child of Abraham by a servant and not his wife like Isaac. However, Jacob and Esau, being twins, had the same father and mother, but God elected Jacob and rejected Esau before their birth while in the womb of Rebecca. Verse eleven makes this plain: “For *the children* being not yet born, neither have done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.” Here again we see that this was “the purpose of God” and that it was “according to election.” Furthermore, the election of Jacob was not of works because it was before either of them had “done any good or evil.” God did not elect Jacob because he was deserving of it nor did He overlook Esau because of doing evil. God elected according to His purpose. Immediately, many will cry that this is not right because God did not give Esau a chance to be saved. Verse fourteen and following addresses this with the question: “What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid.” This “God forbid” is the strongest negative that can be made. In other words, the idea that God does anything that is unrighteous is absurd and should never enter into the mind of anyone. God, the Creator of the universe, has the right to do with it as He pleases. In fact, He said to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy,” Romans 9:15-16. Therefore, salvation is not according to the will of anyone nor is it because anyone seeks after it. It is because of the purpose of the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Actually, when one seriously desires salvation and seeks for it, it is because God has already begun a work of grace in them. These things are evidences of salvation, but we plan to say more about this in a later study.

The natural man and, sad to say, many professed believers do not like this truth. Several years ago, a young minister came into my office inquiring about my belief. As I tried to explain the Scriptures to him, he became somewhat upset and argumentative. Finally, I simply opened my Bible and began reading the ninth chapter of Romans. At one point he stopped me and said, “That’s your interpretation.” I said to him that I had not interpreted anything and that I was simply reading the Scriptures. At that point he slammed his fist on my desk and cried out, “I won’t have any part of a God like that.” It is certainly a sad day when professed believers refuse to bow their mind and heart to the plain teaching of the Word of God. I can certainly understand unbelievers saying such things because before the Lord changed my wild and rebellious heart I said that I would never believe this doctrine of the sovereign election of God unto salvation. However, I am appalled that someone who professes to believe the Scriptures would refuse to believe what God says about anything, much less the doctrine of sovereign election. At this point what is the answer to the logical question as to why God elected some and bypassed others? Listen to the Divine answer to this question given to us by Paul : “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his (i.e., God’s) will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing form say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? *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?” See Romans 9:19-24.

Some try to say that this passage is only referring to the Jewish nation, but verse twenty-four denies this interpretation because it plainly declares this election (“whom he hath called”) is “not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.” Man, especially in his natural state, does not like this truth

and hates the idea that he is under the rule of the sovereign God of all creation. However, he can never succeed in fighting against God. His only hope is bowing to God and submitting to His sovereign rule to which he is commanded. Even in the beginning when Adam was in the garden God did not leave it to Adam as to how He was to be served. Adam was not given a choice regarding the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God commanded him not to eat of it and told him the consequences if he did. Equally, election unto salvation, like all of the creation of God, begins with God and not with man. In closing, allow me to quote from Robert Traill: "Election is that eternal and adorable act of free grace, wherein God the Father passed over his love to a select company of mankind, that were to come into the world; appointing them to salvation; appointing a Saviour for them, and all means fit to accomplish his design of love on them, to the praise of his grace, Eph. 1. 4, 5, 6." *The Works of Robert Traill*, Volume 1, page 76. Farewell until our next study.