

**“What it means to be Reformed”; Session # 19 – “Sola Gratia – God’s Choice of Jacob”, Prepared for the Adult Sunday School class
On December 7th, 2014, by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

Read Romans 9: 6-15 – “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.’”

My 5th point concerning the doctrine of Election is this:

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

A. The Bible teaches us that God saves His elect one at a time. And He does not necessarily choose to save all within a family. (Although sometimes in the book of Acts we find whole households of people who trusted in Christ at the same time. We will speak of this later.) Jacob and Esau were both sinful young men; both were totally depraved. God did not choose to save Jacob because he was an upright young man, or because he was a better person by nature than Esau.

We should also see from these verses that Jacob was not chosen because of foreseen faith that he would exercise. Before his conversion he was a very tricky and deceitful man. His name Jacob meant “Supplanter”, or “deceitful”. He stole his brother Esau’s birthright by cunningly taking advantage of his brother’s hunger. (Genesis 25: 29-34) He stole his brother Esau’s blessing by going along with his mother’s sneaking plan to trick Isaac into thinking that he was Esau, bringing him food, whereupon Isaac did give Jacob his special spiritual blessing even though he had not intended it. (Genesis 27: 1-29) I hope that you can see, and that you are convinced, that Jacob was not chosen because God foresaw some good thing in him that he would do to merit his salvation. God had to take 20 years of Jacob’s life to straighten out his heart, after his conversion in order that he could learn the right way to go about living righteously. (Genesis 28-33)

Thus we see that God’s choosing of any person, to set His love upon them, to save them, does not take place on the basis of their having done anything good or bad. It is simply that 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 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.

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 He 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.”

B. Election is solely based upon God’s purpose, which is, to show mercy on certain individuals and even certain nations.

Genesis 26: 21-23 Malachi 1: 1-5

Let us understand that the purpose of God according to election starts before a person is born. God creates all things and all people for His purpose. He forms each and every person who has ever lived, according to His good pleasure; physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Let’s look at God’s choice of Jeremiah, from the womb, to be saved and to become a prophet to the nations: Jeremiah 1: 4-12

But in His wisdom and according to His eternal purpose, He has not chosen to save all men. Even though all are sinners, all will not be saved. Could God have saved all men? Undoubtedly He has the power to do so. But this would not have brought glory to Him in regard to the greatness of His attributes in relation to the purposes of His redeeming a people. Those whom He has chosen are saved to the praise of His glorious mercy and grace. Those whom He passed by and does not choose to eternal life perish forever because of their sins. Their eternal destruction they have brought upon themselves, and God’s bringing them under His eternal justice in punishing them eternally will be to the praise of His glorious justice. Psalm 76: 1-12

We want to look first at His merciful choice to save many people who were undeserving unworthy sinners. And after that we will look at the doctrine of reprobation which is His passing by the others whom He did not elect, bringing them to judgment on account of their sins. First we need to see that God’s purpose in election is to save a multitude of people whom no man can number.

Revelation 7: 9-12

C. God is also able to save many people at a certain and particular time period of His choosing.

We should see here that God’s purpose in election included the election of the nation of Israel, and not the nation of people which descended from Esau; those who became the Edomites. In New Testament, New Covenant times, God has, through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile making them one new man in His Church.

Ephesians 2: 14-16

And He has established each individual believer in Himself as being part of “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that we might proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1st Peter 2: 9 and 10

We also find that God is able to save whole households of people at the same time if it is His purpose to do so.

Acts 11: 13-15 Acts 16: 31-34

Just because these individual and family conversions have been God's regular way of doing things over the course of this Church age thus far, it does not mean that God has not purposed in electing love to save much larger numbers, even through electing whole nations in relation to their receiving the gospel of His Son so that Christ's kingdom will some triumph in the earth. It is evident from many passages of Scripture that eventually He will call the Jews as a nation, as an ethnic people, to Himself. (Romans 11: 25-29) This is not dispensationalism. Rather, it is the extension of His electing work to a greater level of saving many people, and even the majority of whole nation groups, so that they will be generally seen as Christian nations in the latter times of this present dispensation. The pouring out of God's Spirit, to give success to the preaching of the gospel, will someday result in the conversion of nations to Christ. Even though many Christians do not presently believe this, they should carefully study the following passages and ask themselves whether any of these great things have yet come to pass in the history of the Church.

Isaiah 2: 1-4 Isaiah 59: 20 – 60: 12 Isaiah 19: 18-25 Isaiah 26: 1-3

Zechariah 2: 10-13 Zechariah 8: 20-23 Ezekiel 39: 21-29

The Savoy Confession of 1658 says this in its 26th Chapter, Paragraph 5 –

“As the Lord in his care and love towards his Church, hath in his infinite wise providence exercised it with great variety in all ages, for the good of them that love him, and his own glory; so according to his promise, we expect that in the latter days, antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear Son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged, and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable and glorious condition than they have enjoyed.”

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

Charles Spurgeon in his sermon on Hebrews 5: 14 – “Strong Meat”, Sermon # 506 says: “The doctrines of grace are also generally esteemed to be very strong meat. He that is not full grown in the faith will discover much in the doctrine of predestination that will stagger him. No doubt many young believers have felt God’s fore-ordination to be like a stone rolled in their way,

over which they can scarcely climb. They have looked upon this glorious truth as a mountain, blocking up their path; they have not understood that though it be a mountain, it is one upon whose summit God communes with man. How many have been distressed with the precious doctrine of election. It is meat; it is hallowed meat — meat fit for the priests of God and for the Lord's mightiest warriors, but many there be who have been so scandalized thereat that they have been fain to write bitter things against themselves on account of it. So with the doctrine of the immutability of God, and the consequent safety of the Lord's people, seeing that because he changes not, the sons of Jacob cannot be consumed; this, though sweet as honey dropping from the honey-comb, is not a doctrine for every man. Only they who do business upon the great waters, and have learned the need of solid food, can usually feed on these things with satisfaction. Oh! dear brethren, what a mercy it is that there are such things as the grand old truths which men nickname Calvinism, but which are the very marrow of the gospel. I find when the heart aches, and the spirit is heavy, there is nothing like reading the eighth and ninth chapters of the Romans; and when things go amiss with me, and everything is perversely disappointing my hopes, it is very delightful to throw oneself back upon the soft couch of God's eternal purpose, to pillow one's head upon the certainty that what he said he will perform, and that what he has commanded shall stand fast. Here are royal dainties! Costly cheer for fainting pilgrims! If you want the wings of eagles, study these doctrines, and they shall bear you up aloft; if you would creep along the ground, and be full of doubts, and fears, and miseries, and distractions, live on baser food; but if you would walk in the strength of a giant, and fight with the valor of a David, live you on these loaves of heaven's best bread, and your youth shall be renewed. Yet these things are strong meat, and are not for babes, but for men."