

ELECTION

(God's sovereignty / man's freewill)

The doctrine of election has, for whatever the many reasons, proven to be difficult for man to understand and to correlate. In this little handout **it is not** my intention to attempt to settle this long disputed issue. It is, rather, an attempt to set forth a few simple thoughts as to how I believe this great doctrine might be understood. I believe the problem with the misunderstanding of this doctrine comes from man's misunderstanding about what God He has done.

Election has to do with the sovereign choices of God. Since He is sovereign and omniscient He is able to make choices and do things finite man cannot understand. Yet, man can understand that "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." Psalm 19:9.

It seems to me election, as does predestination (a term closely related to election), relates to those who are saved, **never** to those who are lost. By that I mean, God ***has not chosen some men to be saved while He has chosen some men to be lost***. If that were true, then the many Scriptures which deal with the freewill or volition of man's will, would be either useless or a falsehood or a useless falsehood. Neither of which is true! (see 1 John 1:9, John 6:37 [election/freewill in same verse], Romans 10:13, 2 Peter 1:10, John 3:16, 1 John 2:1 to name just a few.)

It is obvious God, on occasion, chooses certain men for certain purposes. For instance, God called Moses to confront Pharaoh and lead His people out of Egypt, but not without Moses submitting willingly to God's call on his life. God chose Pharaoh in order to prove to the world He was the only true God and truly sovereign. But Pharaoh chose to allow the events he experienced at the hand of God to harden his heart instead of soften his heart.

Both Judas Iscariot and Peter were chosen as an Apostle by the sovereign will of God. Judas Iscariot chose to betray Christ and Peter chose to deny Christ. Both failed the Lord although the Lord "foreknew" they would. Their end was the result of another choice they made. Peter chose to "repent" in a manner so as to find renewed favor with God, whereas Judas Iscariot chose to "repented himself" and in remorse and regret took his own life instead of finding God as gracious to him as Peter found Him to be. Remember, Jesus called him "friend."

Men have developed many questions around the sovereignty of God and the freewill of man which, I'm afraid, has complicated their understanding of this great doctrine of election instead of clarifying this great doctrine. The problem is not with what God has said or done. It is how man has tried, with his limited wisdom and understanding, to understand what God has done.

Can I explain how these two great things work in concert so everyone will understand? I cannot! But I can remind us God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all involved in this great doctrine of election which neither negates their sovereignty nor man's ability to choose. It is my opinion finite man cannot conceive, completely, the mind and plan God has for lost mankind, but he can certainly consider what He has done with confidence that He which is "the judge of all the earth (shall) do right." God does not desire robots to serve Him, but rather men who willingly choose to serve Him in light of what He chose to do for them through His Son at Calvary.

Some things the Word of God says about election:

1. Election is according to God's foreknowledge: 1 Peter 1:2
2. Election is wholly of grace apart from human merit: Roman 9:11; 11:5-6
3. Election proceeds from divine volition or will: John 15:16
4. Election is the sovereign act of God whereby certain chosen from among mankind for Himself: John 15:19
5. Election is God's sovereign act whereby certain elect persons are chosen for His distinctive service: Luke 6:13; Acts 9:15 (With God, election is always inclusive and never exclusive.)

In 2 Peter 1:10 we see Peter instructing the saints scattered abroad to be diligent, which carries the idea of being zealous in making their "calling and election sure." If election were all a sovereign work of God, then, it seems to me, there would be no need for Peter to instruct his readers to exercise personal intellect, emotion, and will in determining the matter.

In 1 Peter 1:2 we find, although in light of God's foreknowledge, He never violates an individual's own volition or will. God woos, but does not intrude. He does not endue His creatures with wills of their own, with the power of choice and personal accountability, and then act as if those things did not exist. Election takes into account the response, either positive or negative, of the individual being offered salvation by a sovereign God through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

According to the Scriptures, God elects, calls, predestines, foreordains, and chooses. It appears there is to be a total number of redeemed that make up the company known as the elect of God. And it is also true that God's grace works throughout the whole process. God calls. Some people respond positively to accept God's call and others refuse. God's sovereign will work in either case. His sovereignty is not diminished when some refuse. We must understand God's sovereignty does not run roughshod over others. According to John 1:9, the Holy Spirit sees to it that everyone has the opportunity and ability to respond to the call of God.

There is no doubt that the doctrine of election is a major Bible doctrine worthy of our closest attention. Let us be sure to seek the aid of the Holy Spirit to enlighten us rather than enmeshing ourselves with the various attempts of sincere men to explain election from their limited insight into where the sovereignty of God and the will man merge into the great work of salvation. It is a gracious God has made available to the "whosoever" wills of this world.

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