

Election? Is That Fair?

Election is a common Bible theme and the word in its various forms is used so frequently in the Old and New Testament that we might expect the doctrine of election to be generally accepted and believed. That is not, however, the case. Despite Old Testament prophets such as Moses, David and Isaiah clearly explaining election, and notwithstanding Jesus and all the New Testament writers doing the same, many professing Christians are either ignorant or ashamed of 'the purpose of God according to election'.

God's right to choose

Election simply means choosing. The Bible teaches that before the world began, God the creator chose a fixed number of individuals to salvation and everlasting glory. These people were chosen unconditionally. This means their election by God was not provisional or dependent on anything they did or believed, or because they were in some way different from or superior to anyone else. God acts according to His own purpose and pleasure. He distinguished between men according to His own good will.

A people for Himself

Moses is one of the clearest advocates of God's authority and right to choose whomsoever He will. God told Moses, 'I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy'. David realised the implications of electing grace, writing, 'Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance'. The Lord later tells Isaiah 'hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen'.

Election is a work of the Triune God

In the New Testament the Lord Jesus tells us that times and circumstances are ordered for the sake of the elect and explains how God's people will be redeemed, forgiven and saved by grace. Paul speaks of 'the purpose of God according to election' and of 'a remnant people' preserved and delivered 'according to the election of grace'. Peter tells us of those who are 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ'.

Christ is responsible for the elect

In God's wise and gracious purpose certain individuals out of Adam's fallen race have been chosen to salvation. However, because sinners are spiritually dead and can do nothing to deliver their own souls everything necessary for salvation must be accomplished for them and supplied to them by the Lord Jesus Christ. In the covenant of peace the Lord Jesus was appointed to be the Representative and Surety of the elect and they were put into His hands. The salvation and glory of God's chosen people is the sole responsibility of Jesus Christ.

Mercy or justice?

Some people feel the doctrine of election is unfair. They protest that everyone ought to be given a chance to please God by performing a suitable duty and thereby earning salvation. Some imagine obedience and good works to be the measure of acceptance with God but God has said 'by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified'. Others say exercising freewill, trusting Christ and following His example is sufficient. But Paul tells us, 'So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy'.

The real problem

By nature we are carnal people with carnal minds. We are all at enmity with God, dead in sin and incapable of responding to spiritual truth. We are by nature children of wrath who would happily take personal credit and glory in God's presence were we able to save ourselves. However, Paul tells us divine faith alone pleases God and since faith is God's gift, dispensed at His discretion – not to all men and women – it must be particular, discriminating and according to His will.

We highly esteem electing grace

We are all condemned by Adam's original sin and as a consequence of our fallen nature we are all guilty of sinning

against God. But in Christ there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared, worshipped and served. There is a way to life by the death of Christ. There is hope for lost sinners in the gospel of grace. Some protest that election is not fair but by it God's elect discover His love, mercy, grace and saving faith. We know we can never obtain these blessings by ourselves and for them we will eternally praise the Lord.

Amen

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