

ELECTED BY THE FATHER

1 Peter 1:2

INTRODUCTION

- In the opening verses of 1 Peter, the apostle describes to his recipients *who* they are in Christ (vv.1-2) and *what* they have in Christ (vv.3-5)
- In this sermon we will be considering the opening words of v.2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father"
- Election, predestination and foreknowledge are deep theological truths that can be difficult to understand
- For centuries theologians have grappled with these doctrines and many theological wars have arisen over them
- In approaching to understand things concerning the deep counsels of God, we must know our place, and our limited understanding (1 Corinthians 8:2)
- *"I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."* Isaac Newton (1642-1727)
- God has revealed to us in Scripture certain truths regarding election, and we must be careful not to go beyond what is revealed in order to have "all the answers" to complete our systematic theology (cf. Deuteronomy 29:29)
- Election views salvation from God's perspective
- On one side we have the sovereignty of God, and on the other the responsibility of man

- The Scripture speaks in some places of God electing and choosing us to salvation, but it also exhorts us to receive Christ unto salvation
- The Bible says that only the elect will be saved, then it also says that “whosoever will” shall be saved
- Can the two be reconciled? Can God be sovereign, and man be a free moral agent?
- Some will focus on the divine side only and say that man does not have a choice or a will, that God monergistically regenerates sinners without the requirement of them believing
- Then there are others who focus solely on the human side and see salvation as being in man’s hands without the need of divine grace to bring about that salvation
- The apparent antinomy of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility is beyond our human minds to reconcile, yet both are true

I. GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY IN ELECTION

- A. The term “elect” (*eklektos*) is used of different persons/groups in the Bible
 1. The Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:6)
 2. The holy angels (1 Timothy 5:21)
 3. The children of Israel (Romans 9:9-13)
 4. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 5:13; 2 Peter 1:10)
- B. Predestination is a broader and more general term for God’s sovereign ordaining
 1. The *elect* (Romans 8:33) are *predestinated* (Romans 8:30)

2. Predestination describes God's purposes which he carries out in his creation (Acts 4:27-28; Ephesians 1:11)
 3. Election refers to *people*, while predestination refers to *purposes*.
 4. "Double Predestination" is a Calvinist error that claims that not only are believers predestinated to everlasting life, but "others foreordained to everlasting death... thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished" (Westminster Confession of Faith)
 - a. Yet Christ died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2), including those who will deny him and ultimately perish in hell (2 Peter 2:1)
 - b. The Bible nowhere teaches this "doctrine of reprobation"
- C. Foreknowledge (*proginosko*) means to "know beforehand" and is used of both God and man (Acts 2:23)
1. The verb form of this word is translated "foreordained" in 1 Peter 1:20
 2. The question is whether God's foreknowledge involves his determinism or simply his prescience
 3. Arminians view God's foreknowledge in election as God choosing the elect because he knew beforehand they would believe the gospel
 4. Yet God's knowledge of his elect goes beyond his awareness of their choice to believe, and indicates his *relationship* to them
 5. God inhabits eternity, dwelling outside of time, and as such his knowledge is not constrained by the chronology of time, but is eternally present

6. The Scriptures speak of God's "knowledge" of his people as his relationship with them (Jeremiah 1:5; Amos 3:2; Nahum 1:7; John 10:14; 2 Timothy 2:19)

D. God is the initiator of salvation

1. The Lord Jesus Christ was chosen of God (1 Peter 2:4), foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20), and slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8) for our sins
2. He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-6)
3. We love him, because he first loved us (1 John 4:19)
4. No man can come to Christ except the Father draw him (John 6:44,65; cf. John 12:32)
5. God's prevenient grace must first illuminate our darkened, depraved hearts before we can respond in faith
 - a. The Calvinist errs by denying this grace is sufficient, and claims that God must regenerate a sinner before he can believe
 - b. The order in Scripture however is faith *precedes* the new birth and the imparting of life (John 1:12-13; 20:31; Galatians 3:26)

II. MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY IN ELECTION

A. Man is commanded to repent and believe

1. We are called to seek the LORD (Isaiah 55:6-7; Jeremiah 29:13)
2. God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30)
3. Sinners are commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31)

4. Christ invites sinners, laden with the guilt of sin, to come unto him for salvation and rest (Matthew 11:28)
 5. These commands to all people would be a mockery if most of humanity were ordained to destruction with no opportunity to be saved, as Calvinism teaches
- B. God has given man a will to choose him or reject him
1. “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17)
 2. The problem is not so much that men *cannot* believe, but that they *will not*
 3. “And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40)
 4. God’s grace can be resisted by man (Acts 7:51)
- C. God is willing for all men to be saved, and that none perish
1. “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11)
 2. God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9)
 3. Christ was willing to receive the people of Jerusalem to himself, but he lamented, “ye would not” (Matthew 23:37)
- D. Damned sinners will be in hell because of their own sin and unbelief
1. Election does not mean that people are damned because they are not part of the elect

2. The Bible declares sinners are damned because they “believe not” in Christ (Mark 16:16; John 3:18,36), because they obeyed not the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8), because they received not the love of the truth, believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12)
 3. “I cannot repeat often enough that election is God’s choosing us in Christ. I emphasize again that men are not lost because they have not been elected. They are lost because they are sinners and that is the way they want it and that is the way they have chosen. The free will of man is never violated because of the election of God. The lost man makes his own choice.” (J. Vernon McGee)
- E. Numerous verses show both the divine and human perspective of salvation
1. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. (Joel 2:32)
 2. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. (John 6:37)
 3. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles...And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:46,48)
 4. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

III. OUR FELICITY IN ELECTION

- A. There is danger in the doctrine of election

1. It is turned into a fatalism – God sovereignly decrees and controls all things, events and people, so that man ultimately has no will or choice
2. Some may become proud in their election – “I’m elect, you’re not!”
3. Unbelievers who dwell on election can make a stumblingblock in their conversion – “Am I one of the elect? If God has elected me, he will save me regardless of anything I do”
4. False views on election can hinder evangelism – William Carey was told, “Young man, sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do without your aid or mine!”

B. There is great blessedness in the doctrine of election

1. It is a doctrine for believers only, a “family truth” that has no place for the unbeliever
2. Peter opens his epistle reminding the suffering, scattered pilgrims that they were chosen of God the Father, as an encouragement to them in their pilgrimage
3. Election demonstrates God’s eternal love for his people
4. Election provokes us to live as the elect children of God, in obedience and holiness (1 Peter 1:14-15)
5. Election should lead us to “give diligence to make your calling and election sure” by adding to our faith those virtues that accompany salvation, proving our faith by our fruits (2 Peter 1:10; cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:4)
6. Election drives us to praise the Lord who in grace chose us in Christ as is peculiar people (Ephesians 1:3)
7. Election humbles us in adoration of God’s wisdom, knowledge and grace (Romans 11:33-36)

CONCLUSION

1. This doctrine is “strong meat” (Hebrews 5:13) and deals with the eternal counsels of God; we must humbly acknowledge that there is much of it that beyond our human comprehension, and “we see through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12)
2. “Let a man go to the grammar school of faith and repentance before he goes to the university of election and predestination.” (George Whitefield)
3. For the unbeliever, the question is not, “Am I elect?”, but, “Am I a sinner? And have I received the gift of life through Christ’s atonement?” (Romans 5:6-10)
4. If you are saved, thank God for his grace in bringing you to salvation through Christ
5. “I come to the door of salvation and see written over it 'Whosoever will may come.' I enter the door, and look above it, and it says, 'Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.'”