

Saved By Grace IV – Election and Foreknowledge

Introduction – Sometimes it isn't too difficult to believe, in a general way, that God is in control of everything. It is nice to sing 'He's got the whole world in His hands' as long as we don't try too hard to push that general doctrine out into all the corners. But the one corner we most often want to stay away from is the corner of man's free choice over his eternal state. The modern evangelical church and the general 'Christian' religion of our nation today hate this doctrine. But then, Jesus didn't get a great response when He taught it either (Luke 4:16-30, John 6:65-66).

Inescapable Election – If we are going to ascribe any interaction of God with man in history, we will have to deal with some form of election in one way or another. God elected Abraham and not His neighbor. Jesus chose twelve disciples and not others. Paul was directed away from Asia and towards Macedonia. These particular interactions have eternal consequences that we can see today.

The Blessing of Election (Eph 1:3-6) – First things first. If Paul praises God for His electing love, so must we. If God speaks of election as similar to all the blessings He gives to His people, if He claims it comes from His love and the good pleasure of His will, then so must we. If God says that His work of election (and the declaration of it) to the world is '*to the praise of the glory of His grace*', then so must we. We may not hide from the doctrine of election, nor may we hide it from the world.

The Joy of the Trinity in Election (Luke 10:21-22) – God's free, electing love is the subject of rejoicing by the whole Trinity in this passage. God, as three Persons, is completely unified in His choice to elect some to eternal life. God does not consider this a terrible, dry doctrine. He is pleased with Himself in how He created and controls the destinies of all men. The point is not that there are only certain classes of men who are chosen. The point is that there is no class that guarantees anyone's salvation, nor damnation, and that God is free to choose the least likely (by our estimation) candidates.

He Elected "Us" – not a category, 'those who decide to believe'. In 1 Cor 1:27-29 we see that He chose 'this' person and not 'that' person so that no one would boast in the flesh. Election is not a decision to save those who would believe. It is the selection of a specific number of individuals determined by God. As we learn in John 10:25-26, belonging to the sheep is not dependent upon believing, rather, believing is dependent upon belonging to the sheep.

Unconditional Election (2 Tim 1:9) – God makes clear that there is nothing in a man that causes God to notice him and 'choose' him as one of the elect. There are no works at all involved in His decision. Hence in Eph 1:4 we were chosen before the foundations of the world. We were chosen before we did anything. The fact that we call Him 'Father' is all because of His work (Isaiah 64:7-8), His choosing.

The Pleasure of God in Election – His election is particular and its basis does not reside in us, but it does have a basis. God's election resides in the counsel of His own will, and we are not privy to those reasons. We are told that He elects '*in love*' that '*we should be holy*' and '*to the praise of the glory of His grace*'. If it were to depend upon us, we would only reduce the praise of His glorious grace.

Foreknowledge: Didn't I choose first? - 1 Peter 1:2 says that our election was "*according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...*". Many today argue that the scriptures teach that God looked down the corridors of time and saw that we were going to believe on the Lord Jesus and therefore chose us. God chose us because we chose Him. But scripture does not teach that we elected God.

Those He Foreknew, He Predestined (Rom 8:29-30) – If 'those He foreknew' means simply the ones He knew beforehand, that would be everyone and this passage would teach universalism. We can see that Paul doesn't use this term like that in 11:2. In Amos 3:2, speaking of His election of Israel, God says "*You only have I known of all the families of the earth...*". Foreknowledge can be translated "to approve beforehand", and makes sense in these passages. Jesus 'knows' His sheep, and to those who are not His sheep He says, knowing them full well, "*I never knew you*".

Election: No Basis on Anything Future (Rom 9:6-12) – The whole point of Paul's argument in these verses goes against considering that God's election stood upon the future works or decisions of men.

Conclusion – "*We love because He first loved us*" (1 John 4:19). We might just as easily say "We choose God because He first chose us." This is the teaching of scripture. It was not invented by Calvin and the Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries; it was recovered, declared and defended at that time. More than a millennium before Calvin, Augustine said "*The grace of God does not find men fit to be elected, but makes them so*", and "*The nature of the Divine goodness is not only to open to those that knock, but also to cause them to knock and ask.*"

Election and Hope – Some who believe these doctrines act arrogantly towards those who are not saved, and miss the point. This doctrine humbles us to our very core, a core full of nothing to merit God's kindness. But when this doctrine gets a hold of you, you realize you worship a truly free God, a God who delights in the praise of His grace, a God who elected not only your salvation, but your full and complete glorification.