

190109-4 Doctrine Series, God's Election of Grace – Craig Thurman

We read Article #6 of our confession of faith in the last session of our Doctrine Series. As you might recall, this article covers a number of important teachings. I will not again read this article except for that part which concerns the subject of God's election of grace. It reads,

All the elect, being loved of God with an everlasting love, are redeemed, quickened and saved ...

It is Article #24 which specifically addresses the subject of *election*. It reads,

*24. The Elect's Salvation**

Jesus Christ by His death did purchase salvation for the elect that God gave unto Him before the foundation of the world. The free gift of eternal life is given to them and none else. Only these have interest in Him, and fellowship with Him. He makes intercession for these to His Father in their behalf, and to them alone does God by His Spirit apply this redemption.

Eph.1:4; He.5:9; Mt.1:21; Jn.7:6; He.7:25; 1Co.2:12; Ro. 8:29, 30; 1Jn.5:12; Jn.15:13; 3:16.

**Formerly Article 21 of 1644 COF*

Whether one is right or wrong, in truth or in error concerning an issue there will always be disagreement. Obviously, it is better to suffer disagreement because of a right position than for an incorrect one. Every article of our confession of faith has its nay-sayers. Therefore we are to defend the truths of God's word though we suffer much contradiction.

Jude 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation (προγεγραμμένοι, nom. pl. masc. part. perf., and meaning that God proscribed the condemnation of certain men in His word), ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

contend for the faith; the faith is God's directive for what His children are to think, believe, and do.

The doctrine of election, as all doctrine, should be contended for against the naysayers, no matter where the opposition comes from. There is in Christendom, and particularly so among the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, a line of demarcation drawn with the doctrine of election. There are two camps: one is called Arminian, and the other is called Calvinist.

Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) was a Dutch reformer. Upon Arminius' death his followers proposed five articles for the Protestants that are:

1. The free-will of man is only partially depraved.
2. Election was based on foreseen faith.
3. The merits of Christ are universal.
4. Grace is resistible.
5. Men can fall from grace.

The term *Arminian* is applied to those who generally adhere to these first four points. Most Baptists reject the 5th point and confess the preservation and perseverance of the saints.

John Calvin (1509-1564), was a reformer in Geneva, Switzerland, and leader in the establishment of the state church of Scotland, the Presbyterian church. The rise of Arminianism among the Protestant churches necessitated a conference in Dordt, Netherlands (1618-1619) where the Calvinistic Protestants posed their five main points against the Arminians. These are best known by the acronym T-U-L-I-P:

1. Man is **t**otally depraved
2. God's election is **u**nconditional
3. The atonement of Christ is **l**imited to the elect
4. The grace of God is **i**rresistible
5. The **p**reservation and **p**erseverance of the saints against falling from grace.

Both of these men were baptized Catholics which never renounced that baptism. The only reason I raised the names of these two men is because the doctrine of election is most easily identified in Christendom by the use of these two men's names. But the doctrine itself really has nothing to do with either of these men. It has everything do with the word of God. We have a duty to derive this teaching, every teaching from the word of God without respect to any man.

Now, concerning the disagreement there is in these two camps, let's be clear. The disagreement is not whether the Bible teaches God's election of grace. No. Both camps agree that the Bible teaches election. The disagreement is over what election means. Therefore we must all define what election is by the word of God. To do this I'd like to begin with examining three texts which reveal God committing the very act of election.

This act is found in the words, *the Father hath given*. This is the act of election. For the most part, this act of God's giving is described as a past act. The act of giving is accomplished. In fact, it is an act which preceded the establishment of this present age. For this reason we confess that the Bible teaches that there are a people which the Lord gave to the Son *before the foundation of the world*.

The first text to consider is Jn.6.37-40.

Jn.6. 37 All that the Father giveth (present tense verb) me shall come to me; and him that cometh (present tense) to me I will in no wise cast out.

giveth, 3ps. pres. ind. act. of δίδωμι, the Father gives

By this Jesus was saying to his audience that day, that there are those which are presently coming to Him because the Father is working in them to come. Clearly, *giving* precedes *coming*.

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

hath sent, πέμψαντος, gen. sing. masc. part. aor. act. of πέμπω, *to send or thrust*. (vss.38, 39, 40)

hath given, δέδωκε, 3ps. perf. ind. act. of δίδωμι, a completed act. 'The perfect is the tense of complete action.' *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, Dana & Mantey, p.200

40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

In clear terms, vss. 37-40 say that the will of the Heavenly Father for sending His Son was so that every one of them which He gave to the Son, none would be lost, all would see Him, believe on Him, have everlasting life, and be raised up at the last day. The antithesis to this is that outside of the Father giving them to Christ they are not preserved in Christ, cannot see Him, will not believe on Him, shall not have everlasting life, and shall never be raised at the last day. How does that sound to you? Does it sound *hard, harsh, cold, unloving, unkind, untrue, and un-Biblical*? Does this sound like the God of the Bible or not? Well, many think that the doctrine of election, as the Bible defines it is *hard, harsh, cold, unloving, unkind, and untrue*. Many are offended with those who would say that this is the God of the Bible. But let's give this some serious thought. This was the very response that many of the disciples which heard Jesus say these things to them that day. They began to *murmur*, complain at His doctrine. They were offended at it. (v.61) They said, *This is an hard saying; who can hear it?* (v.60)

hard, σκληρός, a noun tss. *hard* (*hard saying, hard man, hard to kick*), *fierce* (winds); from this Gr. we have the English *schlerosis*; other forms of this word, σκληρότης, thy *hardness* and σκληρύνω, *harden* not your heart; and compound words like, σκληροτράχηλος, *stiffnecked* and σκληροκαρδία, *hardness of heart*.

murmured, γογγύζω; once, *grudging*, 1Pe.4.9; to howl, unwilling to give or admit.

does ... offend, σκανδαλίζω, a verb always tss. with the English offend; the noun, σκάνδαλον, is tss. things that offend, offence, stumblingblock, occasion to fall.

The Lord Jesus went on to say,

62 What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing:

*profiteth, ὠφελῆι, 3ps. pres. ind. act. of ὠφελέω; KJV, to profit, prevail, better, advantage ... **nothing.***

Jesus said here that the flesh contributes nothing to receiving everlasting life.

the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

The conclusion is that there were some souls which were coming to Christ that the Father did not give to Him. These would be cast out; He would not preserve them; these do not see Him and believe in Him, and these would not be raised at the last day.

65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

were given, δεδομένον, nom. sing. neut. part. perf. pass. of δίδωμι, to give: a past and completed act by the Heavenly Father.

How is it that there are some that cannot understand what our Lord Jesus said here? There is either a profound ignorance, perhaps willfully so, of the word of God, a working of deception, or worse yet, they are still dead in trespasses and sins, and therefore without Christ.

Apart from the first cause of the Heavenly Father, men come to Christ of their own carnal faith, their own carnal will, based on their own carnal works, their own carnal intellect, seeking for some carnal benefit. The Father is the first cause of all of those which ever come to the Son. Otherwise man is so thoroughly incapacitated being dead in sins, estranged from the life of God, and enemies, haters of God in their hearts and minds that they neither cannot nor will not come to Christ. So, outside of the act of God's choice none from among fallen mankind will come to Christ and be saved.

'If God had never chosen you, you would have never chosen God.' D. J. Ward

Some few disciples heard Christ and received His doctrine that day, but many which heard Him say these things left from following after Him. And it is no different today.

66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

went, ἀπῆλθον, 3ppl. aor. ind. of ἀπέρχομαι, ἀπό from, of, off, out of, since + ἔρχομαι to come, go; meaning went forth

back, ὀπίσω, adv., and tss. after, behind, backward, follow;

But some will remain. How true it is that the churches of Christ are small flocks.

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

I should not be understood to say that everyone rejecting the doctrine of election is an unbeliever. But denying it is to err from the truth. On the other hand, there were those that seemed to receive this teaching which continued in unbelief. Yet they followed Christ for some time. Judas Iscariot was one such man. This much

can be said of him: he was not given to Christ by the Father. He would not be preserved in Christ. He could not see the Son. He would not believe on Him. He would not receive everlasting life. He would be lost. And it is certain that he shall not be raised to life at the last day. Christ chose Judas to fill the office of an apostle and to do a work for which he was appointed. (**Jn.17.12**; also, Ps.35.15; 41.9; 69.25; Acts 4.28; Jude 5)

70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

71 He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

The second text to consider which tells that the Father *hath given* some to the Son is Jn.10.27-29.

Jn.10.27 My sheep hear my voice (pres.), and I know (pres.) them, and they follow (part. pres.) me:

28 And I give (pres) unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish (aor. subj. mid.), neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me (3ps. perf. ind. act.: the giving of the Father preceded the disciples' hearing the voice of Christ, the following after Him, and the receiving of eternal life), is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

So, the hearing, and following, and receiving of eternal life are the results which succeed God's act of giving some to Christ. Let's put the whole matter together: the act of the Father's giving guarantees that some shall hear, follow, receive eternal life, never perish, and the same, only these, are held securely in the hands of both the Son and the Father. Our Lord Jesus closes this section by saying,

30 I and my Father are one.

I interpret our Lord Jesus' words to mean that both the Son of God and the Heavenly Father are agreed concerning this matter. The significance of this doctrine is profound. But for this act of election, which is of God's grace, the whole human race would have perished in sin. Technically, it is true that election does not save us. But what the Father does by it is, He inextricably secures the

object chosen to Himself by putting them in His only begotten Son. Now, the Son stands for them in every way. They have their beginning in Him (when the Father brought forth the Son he brought forth the sons with Him). When Christ was sent & when He condescended they were all in Him. When He wrought righteousness it was for them, and imputed to them. When He suffered He suffered for them. He bore their sins. He died on the cross for them. He raised from the dead and they were all raised with Him. And brethren, whether we can understand or not, the truth is that we are at this very moment seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Eph.1.3; 2.6) All of this is the result of God's election of grace which took place *before the foundation of the world*. Apart from this gracious act of God Christ would have died and saved no one. Apart from this gracious act of God, though Christ had shed His own precious blood on a cruel cross ten thousand times, not a single soul from among men would have been saved. This is how important God's act of giving some to His Son is to the matter of salvation. And, how comforting this is to the children of God that understand it correctly!

And the third text to consider, which reveals the act of the Father's election of some, is Jn.17.24, found in the intercessory prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. By comparing this text to Eph.1.3, 4, we learn that God's choice of some is as prehistoric as the love which the Father has for the Son.

Jn.17.24 ¶ Father, I will (pres.) that they also, whom thou hast given (perf) me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given (aor.) me: for thou lovedst (aor.) me before the foundation of the world. (*the omnipresence of the Son of God, Jn.3.13)*

This is easy enough to understand. Few would deny that the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world. But take this same phrase, *before the foundation of the world* and apply it to the elect and suddenly there is strong disagreement about what this means. Notice,

*Eph.1.3 ¶ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:
4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world
...*

So, as prehistoric as the Father's love was for the Son, is as prehistoric as when He gave His Son these elect.

God's election of grace

The act of election was a free act of the Heavenly Father. That is why it is called an *election of grace*. (Ro.11.5) That means that God acted act, as all of His actions are, without any external suasion, influence. All that God does originates in Himself and He is pleased to do so.

Eph.1.9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

All that the children of God know of Jesus Christ, and of God, is because He was pleased to reveal Himself so. And this will to reveal Himself, it originated in Him alone.

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated (being marked out to a certain course) according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will ...

What God does is because He Himself wills to do so. The history of humanity is an unfolding of the sovereign will of God. He does what He will, when He will, to whom He will. [Ro.11.25; Is.46.9-11; Job 9.12; Ro.9.21.23]

Ps 135:6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

Da 4:35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Lu 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

Next, look again at Eph.1.3, 4. This is a full text. It reveals the Actor, the act, the object of the act, the means by which this act was performed, when the act took place, and the purpose for the act. All of that is here.

*Eph 1:3 ¶ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:
4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

hath chosen, ἐξελέξατο, 3ps. aor. ind. mid. of ἐκλέγω, ἐκ from, of, out, out of, forth + λέγω, to call, speak, tell; ἐκλέγω, is tss. to choose, choose out, and make choice; the middle voice emphasizes that the Father himself did this act.

‘The only difference between the active and middle voices is that the middle calls especially attention to the subject. In the active voice the subject is merely acting; in the middle the subject is acting in relation to himself somehow.’ A Grammar of the Greek New Testament, A. T. Robertson, p.804

‘The middle voice represents the subject of the verb as having a part in some way in the results of the actions.’ Renaissance New Testament, Randolph O. Yeager, vol. 1, p. lviii

The Actor is God the Father. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ...* He is the ‘Committer’ in this text. This is 100% harmonious with the three texts that we considered in the gospel of John (in chs. 6, 10 & 17).

The Father *hath given* some to the Son. The act is in the words *hath chosen*. The Actor committed the act of choosing.

The object of the Actor’s act to choose is *us*. The object *us* refers to the saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus. (v.1) These are the ‘chosen people’ of God. They are the only chosen people of God.

The means by which the Actor’s act was effected is in the words *in Him*. He chose us *in him ...* The Father chose (for Christ) us. The Son of God received the object

of the Father's choice which was *us*. We, by God's election of grace were given into the trust of the Son of God so that whatever Christ is we are in Him. Two of the most powerful words, which undoubtedly form one of the most important prepositional phrases in all of the word of God, and don't miss this, are found in the simple phrase *in Him!* We are, by virtue of God's election of grace, *in Him*.

1Co 1:26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

hath chosen, ἐξελέξατο, 3ps. aor. ind. mid., to choose out for Himself

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Ro.5.15-19 & 1Co.15.20-23, 45-49 are among some of the best examples of what it means to be in Christ. And when He comes from glory, because we are in Him He shall also bring us with Him.

To be in Christ is life. (1Jn.5.20) Christ in me is to live. (Gal.2.20)

The time when the Actor acted to choose us is *before the foundation of the world*. Before there was a sun, moon, or stars; before this globe was spoken into existence by the power of the Word of God, before there was plant or a droplet of water He chose us in Christ.

before the foundation of the world, πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.

the foundation, καταβολῆς, is tss. foundation (10), and conceive (1, He.11.11, Sarah herself received strength to become a foundation for the promised seed to grow).

Remember that God's choice took place at the same prehistoric moment when the Father loved the Son.

Joh 17:24 Father ... thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

And then there is the purpose for the Actor acting to choose us before the foundation of the world. The purpose for God's election of grace was so *that we should be holy and without blame before him in love ...* In other words, the fact that we might now be saints and faithful in Christ Jesus was not the basis for the Father choosing us. Otherwise, rather than this text saying that He chose us Him ... *that we might be holy and without blame before Him in love*, it should have said that he chose us *because we were holy and without blame before Him in love ...* The reason for God's election was not *because of* merit in the object. As we can see, the object had no personal merit. God's choice was not for holiness, righteousness; not because of foreseen faith. The purpose of God's election was to effect an holiness and blamelessness in them.

Jesus said this to the eleven remaining and true apostles (after Judas had left them to betray the Lord): *Joh 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

There are those who charge us with the sin of pride for receiving the doctrine of election as the Bible teaches it. It is evident that they have not considered well enough why God chose any. It was *to be holy and without blame before Him in love*. That's what the Bible says. Rather than being filled with pride, it is quite the contrary. Those properly instructed in the truth of God are humbled. They know that the Father has made Christ everything to God for them. We rather glory in the Lord.

1Co.1.31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

The truth is, those that God *hath chosen* were without holiness and certainly blamable for sins before Christ was revealed to their hearts by faith. God foresaw that all men would incur defilement and guilt. None of Adam's race had merit before Him. Even beyond that, the very creature which sprang from the Creator's hand has no merit that rises to the level where God should grant eternal life; not even in man's original, created uprightness. The elect, through the fall and in Christ, come to a place that far exceeds what an unfallen Adam could have ever enjoyed.

The doctrine of election is important. It radically opposes the thoughts of the natural mind. This is a spiritual truth for spiritual minds. We desperately need our minds *washed* clean of every thought which stands opposed to the word of God. (Eph.5.25-27)

*2Co.10.3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:
4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)
5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;
6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.*

We are to order our lives after the word of God. (Ps.119.33; Is.55.9) Aside from this, though we might be children of God, we will continue to have a very, very distorted view of the faith of Christ, and of His work.

Receiving this doctrine gives great comfort to the saints of God, and affects us in very practical ways. We understand the need of it.

Fallen man is unable to come to Christ. Only by an act of the sovereign God can sinful man be saved.

Practicing this doctrine changes the means of evangelism.

Christ, through the preaching of the gospel, isn't being offered: He is declared, proclaimed as the savior of men.

Joh 12:32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

God forbid that a church, a preacher, or any Christian should think that the souls of men hang on their faithfulness. These are kept in the hands of both the Father and the Son.

Believing this doctrine has even changed the order of our services. We have no earthly altar to come to and pray, we give no altar call, and we sing no invitational hymns. And for this there is less confusion of the carnal feelings with the working of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. God is our witness that there has never been a soul in which God has bestowed His grace which ever failed to make itself known to the congregation, in all the years we've been in this church.

Php 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Now, a summary of the things we have said:

1. By God's grace the elect are kept in Christ; that those who have everlasting life shall both see & believe on Him. (Jn.5.39, 40)
2. Because of God's grace the elect are inextricably kept in the hands of the Son and the Father. They shall hear his voice, follow Him, and never perish. (Jn.10.27-29)
3. The act of God's election is as prehistoric as the love which the Father has for the Son. (comp. Jn.17.24; Eph.1.4)
4. God's election is of His grace. There is no merit in the one's elected. God acted freely from His own pleasure and of his own counsel. (Eph.1.9, 11
And,

5. Eph.1.3, 4 tells us of the Actor, the act, the object, the means, and the purpose of election.

It should come as no surprise that folks are shocked when they hear of the doctrine of God's election of grace for the first time as it is defined in the word of God. Remember, that many of the early disciples were offended at it and walked no more with Him. They thought that was too hard for men to hear. Regardless of the reaction the truth remains the same: had not the Heavenly Father given some to Christ before the foundation of the world all of humanity would have perished. It is because He gave some to Christ, chose them in Christ that any are secured to the salvation which the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, purchased by His shed blood when He died on the cross.

Joh 17:2 ... thou (Father) hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

God help every Christian to understand the importance of both the act of election, AND the knowledge of it. This act was essential if any among fallen mankind would be saved, and the knowledge of it strengthens the faith of the saints. This doctrine is to be received and contended for by the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.