

“The Doctrine of Election”
Ephesians 1:3-6
(Preached at Trinity, November 3, 2013)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. After Paul's salutation in **Verses 1-2** breaks into a glorious exposition of the work of God in our redemption. Paul's focus is upon the praise of God. It is divided into three stanzas, each ending with the refrain, "to the praise of His glory."
Ephesians 1:6 NAU - "to the praise of the glory of His grace"
Ephesians 1:12 NAU - "to the praise of His glory."
Ephesians 1:14 NAU - "to the praise of His glory."
2. **Verse 3** is also a doxology of praise. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
Ephesians 1 is all about God and His work in the fullness of His triune being.
To Him alone be all the glory.
3. Then Paul declares that this God who is worthy of all praise has blessed us with all "spiritual blessings." For the next 11 verses Paul will describe these blessings. In the Greek it is one continuous sentence of over 200 words.
In **Verse 4** Paul states the foundation of these blessings.
Matthew Henry called it the secret spring from which the others flow.
Paul makes a statement that today often finds itself in the midst of controversy.
He says Christians are chosen: He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world"
4. The word for "chose" is from the Greek word, ἐκλέγω. It simply means "to select."
It is the preference of one object to the exclusion of another.
The tense of the verb indicates point in time, as well as a sense of definiteness.
The theology of this verse is clear:
 - God "chose us"
 - God chose us "in Him" (Christ)
 - God chose us "before the foundation of the world"
 - God chose us "that we should be holy"
5. Then in **Verse 5** Paul uses another word that many modern Christians also openly reject. "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself"
Immediately upon beginning this letter Paul sets forth the doctrines of election and predestination. God chose us and predestined us unto salvation. Election is God's choosing of a mass of mankind and predestination involves what they are chosen to.
6. This word "predestined" is from a Greek word which means to determine before or foreordain.
 - a. God chose a particular people from the rest of humanity and determined to adopt them as His children. And who are they? "US"
 - b. When did He determine this? Paul states this clearly in **Verse 4**. He chose us before the world began.

- c. In this verse we find God’s sovereign election, the centrality of Christ, and God’s eternal purpose to redeem us from our sin.
7. Even though it would seem to be an easy passage to understand with little possibility for confusion, multitudes stumble at this very point.
Paul says that God chose us before time began that we might be holy and He foreordained that we would be adopted as His sons.
8. There are two objections people usually offer regarding the doctrine of election.
- A. Many say it infringes upon our free will.
Man doesn’t give up his autonomy easily. He wants to rule his own life. He wants to be in control. Election puts God in control with sovereign dominion over all things, including the salvation of man. God gets all the glory.
Tom Nettles writes in his book, *By His grace and for His Glory*, “The doctrine of unconditional election, perhaps more than any other biblical doctrine, inspires a marvelous awe before the almighty God and humbles His creatures. While shattering all glory that man may seek for himself, the doctrine rivets in our minds the truth that God indeed is the blessed and only potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who will bring to pass in His own time not only the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ but all things. To Him be honor and might forever!”
- B. The other objection is that election is unfair. It is unfair that God would choose some to salvation while leaving the rest to go to hell.
What they are really saying when they say that God is unfair is that He is being unjust—that injustice is being done—that God is unjust if He doesn’t deal equally with all men.
God never acts unjustly. He righteously gives some mercy while he gives the rest justice. He can never be accused of being unrighteous.
The plain simple truth is that no man deserves the marvelous grace of God.
Justice demands that all face God’s condemnation.
- Benjamin Warfield* – “The marvel of marvels is not that God, in his infinite love, has not elected all of this guilty race to be saved, but that he has elected any.”
9. This morning I want us to examine the great doctrine of election – that God has chosen to redeem a people for Himself
- I. There are several things we need to understand about election
- A. First, election is an expression of the sovereign will of God
Ephesians 1:5 NAU - "according to the kind intention of His will,"
KJV - "according to the good pleasure of his will,"
1. In the Old Covenant God chose Israel from among all of the other nations of the world. This serves as a type or example of God’s election of individuals unto salvation. Why did God choose Israel as a nation?
Deuteronomy 7:7-8 – “The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all But because the LORD loved you”
(In other words, God chose them because He chose to choose them)
- a. God chose Abraham out of His divine prerogative. It would be through the seed of Abraham that the Savior would ultimately come. But in of this God’s sovereign prerogative prevailed.
He chose Isaac over Ishmael.

- b. Isaac had two twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the first-born. Being the first-born carried particular blessings. God ordained that Jacob would receive the blessings of the first-born son. It would be through Jacob that the covenant promise would come. Jacob's name would be changed to Israel and he became the father of the nation. He had twelve sons who would become the tribes of Israel.
- c. God chose Jacob before the world began. Why did God choose Jacob over Esau?

Romans 9:10-15 NAS - "Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac; ¹¹ for though *the twins* were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to *His* choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, ¹² it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." ¹⁴ What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

- 2. Paul makes it clear here that God has chosen individuals unto salvation. Why did God choose you as an individual? He chose you only because it pleased Him to do so.

The phrase "kind intention" is from a single word that refers to something that pleases someone. We find the word in **Phil. 2**

Philippians 2:12-13 KJV - "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. ¹³ For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his good pleasure*."

- 3. This is the design of election—that God chose to save a multitude from among the host of lost humanity simply because it pleased Him to do so.

B. Second, this act of God's choosing a people took place in eternity past

- 1. It presupposes the fall of mankind into sin although election took place before the world began. God chose His elect people from among the fallen race of men.

Psalms 53:2-3 NAU - "God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there is anyone who understands, Who seeks after God. ³ Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one."

- 2. Election preceded creation

Ephesians 1:4 NAU - "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world"

2 Thessalonians 2:13 NAU - "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth."

- C. Third, election is unconditional –
1. In no way was election dependent upon any foreseen faith or good works
The Bible teaches that we believe *because* we were ordained to eternal life not that we were ordained to eternal because we believed
Acts 13:48 – “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.”
2 Timothy 1:9 NAU - "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,"
 2. The nature of man renders him totally incapable of loving God or keeping His commands. – “All of sinned and come short of the glory of God”
The lost man has no way of pleasing God. There is nothing he can do to earn God’s favor. The only thing he has earned is God’s wrath and condemnation.
 3. If election was based upon our least effort, then ultimately our salvation is based upon our works, which Scripture denies.
Ephesians 2:8-9 – “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.”
- D. Fourth, God’s election is irresistible
1. Those whom God has chosen *shall* be saved.
This does not mean that God overpowers the human will. Lost men willfully continue in their sin until God performs His work of grace
 2. It does mean that God by His Spirit transforms the heart of a man which enables Him to believe and which makes him willing. In essence, He changes our nature giving us a transformed will to follow Him. All elected by God will come to Him.
John 6:37 NAU - "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."
 3. In fact God changes our heart in such a way that we find Christ most precious and irresistible.
- E. Fifth, and most important. Election is founded upon the work of Christ.
1. In the Covenant of Redemption God purposed to redeem a particular people. He chose a particular people to give to His Son.
 2. Jesus pledged to redeem them through His own death.
The finished work of Christ makes the salvation of the elect certain
 3. According to Divine purpose, Jesus was sent to actually accomplish the redemption of a particular people
Ephesians 1:4 NAU - "just as He chose us in Him"
Matthew 1:21 NAU - "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."
John 6:38-39 NAU - "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."

4. There is not the slightest hint of uncertainty in God's work of redemption
Romans 8:30 – "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

II. The Comfort in knowing our election

- A. It is glorious to know that God has set His love upon us
 1. We cannot explain election
 - a. We cannot know why God chose one person over another – why Jacob over Esau, why God chose Peter over Judas
 - b. We cannot know why we were born where the gospel is preached while millions perish having never heard
 2. The only thing we know is that He loved us because He loved us and because He loved us He chose us unto salvation and because He chose us He sent forth Christ to save us from our sin.
- B. Because God chose us and sent forth His Son to redeem us God will never allow us to fall away
John 10:27-29 NAU - "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ "My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand."
 1. We are in the hands of our omnipotent God
 2. Not a single one of the elect shall be lost
Romans 8:38-39 KJV – "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
 - a. Upon what is that wonderful passage based?
 - b. It is based upon God's wonderful love shed upon us before the world began
Romans 8:35-37 NAS - "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."
- C. We have the comfort of knowing that God is working His purpose for our good
Romans 8:28 – "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose."
 1. It is of infinite comfort to know that God has a purpose and that we are a part of that purpose. It is of infinite comfort to know that God has chosen us adopted us as His dear children.

2. We don't understand all of the workings of God's Providence but we can know that He has chosen us and loves us and that He is working for our good. And we can trust that the God of glory is just in working out His Divine will and purpose.

Conclusion:

1. Election must be approached properly
 - a. It must not be the focus of the lost. The Gospel does not teach men to seek whether they are the elect. We are told to seek Christ.
With regard to faith and repentance every man is to presume he is one of the elect.
John 6:37 NAS - "the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."
 - b. With regard to self-examination for the believer, no man is to presume he is one of the elect. We are to examine our lives for evidence of regeneration.
2 Peter 1:10 – "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:"
2. Never forget, God has chosen us unto holiness. In other words, election produces holiness. This is the character of Christians. You know you are elect because you are holy.
May we demonstrate with our lives the reality of God's life-changing grace. He has chosen us that we might be holy.