

1 Thessalonians 1:4 – Elected Because Beloved

Introduction: Luther v Erasmus. In the 16th century God raised up a great man of God with a genius of a mind - a very introspective monk named Martin Luther - a man whose conscience tormented him. This was a man who truly saw himself for the helpless sinner that he was. And while the Protestant Reformation is usually considered in terms of the twin doctrines of Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone) and Sola Fide (justification by Faith Alone), there was another battle-cry that in some ways was louder and even more important than them both - GRACE ALONE. What does it mean to say we are saved by GRACE ALONE? The Roman Catholic priest and humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, wrote a book called: “On the Freedom of the Will” to which Martin Luther wrote a volcanic blast of a response in his famous “Bondage of the Will.” Strangely, throughout Erasmus’ book, he took an approach toward the question that was very cavalier. Although he was arguing for the absolute “freedom” of man’s will to decide whether or not he will be saved, he continually dismisses the question as “unimportant, inquisitive, irreverent, and superfluous - much the same way many in our day and many since have likewise ignored the question as unimportant. Luther could see, however, that this question cut to the very heart of how it is that God saves sinners - and that how one answers the question: “who saves who?” is radically important. Hear Luther’s response to such indifference about the doctrine of unconditional election:

“Therefore, it is not irreverent, inquisitive, or superfluous, but essentially salutary and necessary for a Christian, to find out whether the will does anything or nothing in matters pertaining to eternal salvation. Indeed, as you should know, this is the cardinal issue between us, the point on which everything in this controversy turns. . . . [If I don’t know what I can and cannot do with regard to my salvation], I cannot worship, praise, thank, and serve God, since I do not know how much I ought to attribute to myself and how much to God.”

I can only worship when I see my salvation as *entirely* and not *partially* of God. And it can only be *entire* of God if God chose me *unconditionally*.

The key question before us is: As the gospel is preached, why do some people believe it and others reject it? What makes the difference? Is it something we do, something God does, or is it a situation where we do our part, God does his, and hence we’re saved?

Big Idea: The Love of God is Expressed in His Sovereign Election of Sinners unto Salvation

Elect Because Beloved – v4.

[State] What does Paul mean here by “elect?” The term here simply means “a special / divine choice.” The first section of the Canons of Dort [brief background - Jacob Arminius and the Remonstrance - **Election is in view of foreseen faith and good works**], article 7:

Article 7: Election [or choosing] is God's unchangeable purpose by which he did the following: Before the foundation of the world, by sheer grace, according to the free good pleasure of his will, he chose in Christ to salvation a definite number of particular people out of the entire human race, which had fallen by its own fault from its original innocence into sin and ruin. **Those chosen were neither better nor more deserving than the others, but lay with them in the common misery.**

“knowing, brothers beloved by God, your election.” God elects because He chooses *freely* to love.

In the very first section of the Canons of Dort, **Article 1: God's Right to Condemn All People:** Since all people have sinned in Adam and have come under the sentence of the curse and eternal death, God would have done no one an injustice if it had been his will to leave the entire human race in sin and under the curse, and to condemn them on account of their sin. As the apostle says: The whole world is liable to the condemnation of God (Rom. 3:19), All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), and The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).*

The Freeness of God's Grace – UNCONDITIONAL = Sola Gratia. Romans 11:5-6 “Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 And if by grace, then *it is* no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if *it is* of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.”

Without Unconditional Election, Salvation is not SOLELY by grace. Partly / mostly perhaps...

Common Objections to Unconditional Election

- a. **Election is unfair to those not so elected.** Great Divorce. *Their Heart's desire accords with nature.*
- b. **Election makes pursuing holiness meaningless:** “You guys are saying there could be a person who truly repents and believes the gospel of Christ and pursues holiness and even serves as a missionary – but dies and finds out they weren't one of the elect. Or there could be a person who lives their entire life as a thieving, lying, murdering drunkard who beats his wife, abuses his children, and mocks God and the Bible all the way to the bitter end of his life – but then dies and finds out he was elect and goes to heaven.”
 - Misunderstanding is: *God elects men *merely* unto salvation but ALSO unto faith and holiness.* **Romans 8:29-31** “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,
 - **John 6:37** “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”
 - **Titus 2:13-14** “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.”
- c. **Election destroys our motive for evangelism.** Ends and *all* means are decreed. No one understood this better than Saul of Tarsus – the apostle Paul.
 - Spurgeon quote on Paul's conversion and zeal: “I trace Paul's exceeding evangelism to the fact that he was so remarkably converted. He could not be content with the surface of truth, he dove into the depths of grace and sovereignty. He saw in himself the boundless power, the infinite mercy, the absolute sovereignty of God; and therefore he bore witness more clearly than any other to these divine attributes.”
 - **Galatians 1:15-16** “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, to reveal His Son in me...”
 - **1 Corinthians 15:9-10** “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; [**this ignited abundant labor in evangelism!**] but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was* with me.” **NOT, we worked together!**
 - **2 Timothy 2:8-10** “8 Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” **This is why Paul traversed the world preaching! FOR THE SAKE OF THE ELECT.**
- d. **Because God Elects to save only some and not all of the fallen race, this makes God only “partially” and “imperfectly” loving –**
Opponent of UE, Geisler: “Suppose a farmer discovers three boys drowning in his pond where he had placed signs clearly forbidding swimming. Further, noting their blatant disobedience he says to himself, “They have violated the warning and have broken the law, and they have brought these deserved consequences on themselves.” Thus far he is manifesting his sense of justice. But if the farmer proceeds to say, “I will make no attempt to rescue them,” we would immediately perceive that something is lacking in his love. And suppose by some inexplicable whim he should declare: “Even though the boys are drowning as a

consequence of their own disobedience, nonetheless, out of the goodness of my heart I will save one of them and let the other two drown.” In such a case we would surely consider his love to be partial and imperfect.”

RSP (following White / Storms): Not what it does say, but what it *doesn't say*.

1. The Farmer, a mere creature (sinner). **Replace:** as infinitely holy God.
2. Trivialization of sin – 3 good ole’ boys in a swimming hole? **Replace:** attacking / burning/ robbing
3. Nothing said of boys’ response to Father’s attempt to save them. **Replace:** utter mockery / contempt
4. The Farmer’s desire to save them is called an “inexplicable whim”!? Storms: “This sort of needless caricature portrays God’s solemn, most blessed, and altogether gracious determination to save as *little more than a bothersome afterthought*, with no purpose or design. What the author of this illustration calls a ‘whim’ the Word of God calls ‘the kind intention of His will’ – Eph. 1:5.”
5. Amazingly: Geisler’s illustration makes no mention of the cost of this salvation: His own Son.

Divine, biblical love, on the other hand, entails that the farmer casts his own son into the pond, knowing full well that if his son makes an effort to save the boys he will die. The son swims to the three boys, notwithstanding their vehement and hostile cries that he get out of the water and leave them alone. As he reaches the three, he extends his arms in love to but one of them. Though that one boy is vile and reprehensible in every respect, the son of the farmer brings him back safely to shore, but in doing so he himself drowns. The two remaining boys laugh and mock that the farmer’s son has drowned. Their glee is beyond control. The one boy for whom the son gave his life to save is suddenly brought to tears as he senses the magnitude of the love that has been shown him, while he was yet hateful and full of blasphemy. The farmer lifts the boy up, dries him off, cleans the mud and filth from his body, and clothes him in the garments of his own dear son. They embrace in everlasting love. The young boy falls to his knees in gratitude, tears flowing. The two who remain in the water continue hurling their taunts at the farmer, declaring that even if they could start anew, they would dive defiantly into the middle of that pond without a moment’s hesitation. I will tell you what love is. It is not providing a life line to drowning men who have no arms or hands with which to grasp it. It is sacrificing your only son to jump in and rescue someone by wrapping that rope around his waist and drawing him firmly but surely to the safety of the shore. And what of the two who remain, and demand loudly that they be left to their chosen plight? “So be it,” says the farmer. “You not only deserve to drown, but take delight in it as well. Have it your way.” And they do.

God is free to make distinctions in His love – just as we do. God has a general benevolence toward all men, but freely bestows saving, redemptive love on whomever he chooses.

Wonderful Benefits of Unconditional Election

- a. **Humility** - If there has ever been a generation that needs humbling, we are that generation.

Proverbs 30:11-14 [11] *There is a generation that curses its father, And does not bless its mother. [12] There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, Yet is not washed from its filthiness. [13] There is a generation--oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. [14] There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, And whose fangs are like knives, To devour the poor from off the earth, And the needy from among men.*

Personal Testimony - I remember like it was yesterday, sitting in a room in an apartment and reading through Romans 9 for the 20th time and it finally hitting me like the whole world had just caved in on me: *You are not a Christian because you are better, smarter, more spiritually sensitive, or more righteous than others. You are a Christian because God pursued you, God broke your will, God terrorized your sinful soul, and God drew you to Himself and granted you repentance and saving faith.* **Romans 9:16-18** [16] So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. [17] For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, *"For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."* [18] Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

- b. **Assurance** -

John 6:37-39 [37] All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. [38] 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 the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.

John 17:2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

Thomas Brooks - Christ is to be answerable for all those that are given to Him, at the last day, and therefore we need not doubt but that He will certainly employ all the power of His Godhead to secure and save all those that He must be accountable for. Christ's charge and care of these that are given to Him, extends even to the very day of their resurrection, that He may not so much as lose their dust, but gather it together again, and raise it up in glory to be a proof of His fidelity; for, saith He, "I shall lose nothing, but raise it up again at the last day.

- c. **Confidence in Evangelism** - Spurgeon said: "God, save the elect, and elect some more!" The modern missionary movement. Carey, Livingston, Paton, Edwards, Whitefield, Brainerd, Spurgeon - all of them to a man were Calvinists - and it was their Calvinism that ignited their missionary zeal - It is not that perhaps God will save some of the heathen - but they MUST be saved! In the worship of Christ in heavenly glory we read:

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

Conclusion: Hosea 11:1-8 [1] "When Israel *was* a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.[2] *As* they called them, So they went from them; They sacrificed to the Baals, And burned incense to carved images.[3] "I taught Ephraim to walk, Taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them.[4] I drew them with gentle cords, With bands of love, And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped *and* fed them. [5] "He shall not return to the land of Egypt; But the Assyrian shall be his king, Because they refused to repent. [6] And the sword shall slash in his cities, Devour his districts, And consume *them*, Because of their own counsels. [7] My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, None at all exalt *Him*. [8] "How can I give you up, Ephraim? *How* can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? *How* can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred.

Jude 1:24-25 [24] Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present *you* faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, [25] To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, *Be* glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.