

**TEXARKANA REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH****SERIES TITLE: YOU WILL CHANGE | SERMON TITLE: ELECTION****DAVE WAGNER**

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Last week we I began a series which I almost called "You Can Change." Sounds like the latest hit in the self-help section. Instead I decided to call it "You Will Change," based on what the Bible actually says. The Bible doesn't tell Christians to cheer up, since they can change if they want to; it tells us we can't possibly continue in sin since Personal Change in holiness is an absolute certainty. It's not "if" you will change, it's "when". And it's not even quite "when", since the change begins at conversion. Christians Will Change, period.

And by "Change" I mean they will grow in holiness, righteousness, godliness, faith, hope, love and obedience to God. This Change cannot be stopped. It is part of a process which the Christian could not stop even if they wanted to, and they won't want to.

Perhaps I should also define the word "Christian". A Christian is someone who, chosen of God before Creation, purchased by Christ on the cross, experiences regeneration by the Spirit; at regeneration the man converts from unbelief to faith, and from disobedience to God to obedience to God. The man repents of his sin, which means he stops serving it as a master; he turns to Christ and serves Christ as a master. From that point on the Christian progresses in holiness and godliness, being energized for a life of consistent obedience to God, though never sinless and never perfect. So, Christians Will Change.

Now, for the next few weeks my job is to show you this is what Scripture says. My plan is to point to various aspects of salvation which are described as leading necessarily to New Life. And we start today with the realities of Election and Predestination.

So here's what I'm telling you today, and this is our main point: You Will Change because God has Elected and Predestined you unto Change; and whatever God Elects and Predestines must come to pass. There is no power which could turn God's predestined plan aside. So, if God has predestined that Christians will Change, and if God's predestination is certain, then we are forced to believe that Christians Will Certainly Change.

Now let's define Election and Predestination. Election is God choosing individuals for salvation; this choice is made before Creation. When we have a Presidential Election, we choose the president. When God elects people, he chooses them to experience salvation.

Predestination is God determining that elect people will arrive at salvation; this determination is also made before creation. A destination is a place you are going. God decides, before creation, where you are going; for Christians he decides that we are headed for salvation.

So Election is God choosing you before creation, and Predestination is God deciding your destiny before creation.

Now if you'd like to understand these ideas better, the best place to study is Romans 9.1-23. Spend some time reading that passage and take note of how Paul talks about Divine Election. For our purpose today, I want to mention just a few things from Romans 9 in order to show you something about Election. I want to show you that what Election means is that Salvation is ultimately the result of God's action, not the result of man's action. Let me show you that from two places in Romans 9:

**Romans 9:10-12** <sup>10</sup> *And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac* <sup>11</sup> *(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls),* <sup>12</sup> *it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger."*

Notice Paul lays emphasis, not on the good or evil actions of the twins, but on God's purpose of election. Salvation is ultimately from God.

**Romans 9:14-18** <sup>14</sup> *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!* <sup>15</sup> *For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."* <sup>16</sup> *So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.* <sup>17</sup> *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."* <sup>18</sup> *Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.*

Notice God gives saving mercy to whomever he wills. Notice also salvation is not based on man's will, or man's effort, but on God showing mercy. Notice lastly that God gives saving mercy to whom he wills, and he hardens whom he wills. Salvation is ultimately from God.

Now I say salvation is ultimately the result of God's action, not man's; but don't get confused. This doesn't mean salvation is in no way the result of man's action. In a lesser sense, salvation is the result of man's actions. Specifically, on the human level, salvation is the result of human faith, which results in justification. If a man has faith, God justifies him. If a man does not have faith, God does not justify him. God commands all men everywhere to have faith, whether they are elect or not. Every man is obligated to believe in Christ and obey him. Faith is the condition for justification; obedience is the condition for passing the final judgment, which judgment is according to works.

I say all this because we are in danger of falling into Hyper-Calvinism, which is an unbiblical, and oftentimes heretical perversion of true Calvinism, and of the Gospel. Hyper-Calvinism pays attention only to the role of God in salvation, while ignoring the truck load of Scriptures which teach man's responsibility in salvation. We need to be careful to strike a biblical balance, and to listen to all God's word has to say, not just our favorite parts. I will be coming back to this subject repeatedly in weeks to come.

But that was a detour. The point here is that Election means salvation is ultimately based on God, not man. And we're saying this to define what Election is. But our main purpose is to show how Election and Predestination make certain that Christians Will Change.

Before we get to the heart of our study today, I need to mention one more thing. Many people believe that God's Election and Predestination are a response to God's foresight of human actions. In other words, these folks believe the reason God chose us is that he knew we would choose him. So his choice is a response to our choice. They think the same about predestination. And admittedly, there are two passages which could be taken to say something like that, at least on the surface. To address this, I will be emailing you all a paper on this question. Stay tuned.

Alright, now for the good stuff. Let me show you that, because of Election and Predestination, Christians are guaranteed to Change. We'll start with Romans 8.

**Romans 8:29** <sup>29</sup> *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Paul tells us here what we are predestined for: Conformity to the image of God's Son. Now Jesus is the perfect Image of God; that's what Adam was meant to be, but he fell. Jesus is the real deal and he didn't fall. So our salvation is a process of being changed into the shape, or likeness, or form, or image of Christ. This is the destiny God decided for us before creation.

But if God predestined us to this, and if predestination is certain, then Christians will certainly change into conformity to Christ. It isn't "if".

By the way, please don't miss what salvation actually is. Salvation does not simply mean I get my sins forgiven and then sit back on my comfy rump for the duration. Salvation is an exceedingly active process; the Christian is highly engaged throughout. You've heard before that regeneration is monergistic, meaning one worker; well know for certain that the process of sanctification is synergistic, meaning two workers. As we continue being saved in our lives we are working together with God to change into Jesus' image. But that means that we must actively work. Passivity will not do. Now look at Ephesians 1.

***Ephesians 1:4*** <sup>4</sup> *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love*

For what purpose did God choose us before the foundation of the world? That we would be holy and blameless before him in love. What does this mean? While it is true we have a holy and blameless standing before God because of justification, I don't think Paul is thinking of our legal standing in this place, because he mentions the phrase "in love."

That phrase typically refers to Christian conduct, love being the chief principle of Christian morality. So, Paul is saying God elected us so we would become people who live lives that are holy and blameless, in Christian love.

But if this is what God has elected us for, and if his election is sure, then it is also sure that We Will Change. As sure as the Decree of God the Father.

***Ephesians 2:10*** <sup>10</sup> *For we are His workmanship, <sup>a</sup>created in <sup>b</sup>Christ Jesus for <sup>c</sup>good works, which God <sup>d</sup>prepared beforehand so that we would <sup>e</sup>walk in them.*

We don't earn our salvation by good works; rather God saves us that we might do good works; and he doesn't leave those good works to chance. God has prepared beforehand, that is, predestined, good works for us to perform.

But if God has predestined good works for us, then it is certain we will walk in them. We didn't perform Christian good works before being Christians, therefore it is certain that Christians Will Change.

**2 Peter 1:5-10** <sup>5</sup> Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith <sup>a</sup>supply <sup>b</sup>moral <sup>1</sup>excellence, and in your moral excellence, <sup>c</sup>knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and in your knowledge, <sup>a</sup>self-control, and in your self-control, <sup>b</sup>perseverance, and in your perseverance, <sup>c</sup>godliness, <sup>7</sup> and in your godliness, <sup>a</sup>brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. <sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor <sup>a</sup>unfruitful in the true <sup>b</sup>knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For he who lacks these qualities is <sup>a</sup>blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his <sup>b</sup>purification from his former sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His <sup>a</sup>calling and <sup>b</sup>choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never <sup>c</sup>stumble;

Peter is describing the Christian's growth in godly character. In v10 he says that such growth helps us be certain that we are chosen by God. The reason for this is what we've already seen: Election leads infallibly to godly character; whoever is chosen will be converted and grow in holiness. Or, to put this another way, godly behavior is a necessary mark of election as a child of God. If you have no good works, no godly character, you have no reason to believe God has chosen you, and no reason to believe you are a Christian! Do you claim God has chosen you? Then do good works to prove it. Do you claim you are predestined? Then grow in holiness to prove it. No personal holiness, no salvation.

And here's another aside for our Hyper-Calvinist friends: Hyper-Calvinists hate the biblical doctrine of progressive sanctification. Progressive sanctification simply means that Christians grow in holiness over time. Hyper-Calvinists don't like this because they reject the Bible's teaching on human responsibility, and, let's face it, they also reject it because they are unholy and want to stay that way. Hyper-Calvinists are antinomian; that means they hate God's law and seek every excuse possible to not live according to it.

Well look again at v8: What are "these qualities"? The Christian virtues which Peter was just mentioning. And what does Peter mean when he speaks of these qualities "being yours and increasing"? What does "increasing" mean? It means exactly what is meant by "progressive" in "progressive sanctification"! So here is Peter telling us to add all these virtues to our life and to make sure we are increasing in them! Sound like progressive sanctification to anybody else?!

That's the end of our aside. The point is that if we've been elected then we will certainly grow in Christian character, that is, We Will Change.

That's the end of our proofs. Let me answer a few questions and we'll be done.

First, after all of this, what does this mean for you if you are not changing? Every elect person changes; they are converted to Christ and they grow in holiness. So what if that's not happening with you?

Your first concern needs to be whether you are really born again. Examine yourself; measure yourself against Scripture. Are you really a Christian? No Change Means No Christianity. Maybe you're Christian life is a farce; maybe you have yourself deceived. You see that election and predestination lead to holiness, blamelessness, love, conformity to Christ, faith, godliness, kindness, self-control, perseverance, knowledge and good works. Be honest; Is that You?

Maybe you are a Christian but you are undisciplined, lazy, and making bad decisions. Stop it. Discipline yourself, get to work, walk in wisdom. Study the word and pray. Do not forsake the assembly. Put your sins to death and replace them with biblical obedience. Take action.

But suppose someone said, "Ok, Dave. You say election leads to holiness. And I'm not holy. I guess I need to worry that I'm not elect, right?"

Only if you're a Hyper-Calvinist. It is Hyper-Calvinists who tell people not to bother believing in Christ until they have an inward feeling that they are elect! But the Bible never speaks that way! And it is the Bible, after all, which must decide for us; the Bible alone is our standard. And what does it say from beginning to end? Does it encourage the sinner to sit around wondering whether they are elect? NO! "Come to Christ, Sinner!", says the Bible.

Forget God's secret decrees; we can't know them until they come to pass anyway. Here is the Bible's promise: Whoever comes to Me I will never cast out! Whoever thirsts, come to the water of life and drink freely! The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" Let the one who hears say, "Come!"

**John 7:37-38** <sup>1b</sup>*If anyone is thirsty,* <sup>2</sup>*let him come to Me and drink.* <sup>38</sup> *He who believes in Me, <sup>a</sup>as the Scripture said, 'From <sup>1</sup>his innermost being will flow rivers of <sup>b</sup>living water.'*

**Matthew 11:28-30** <sup>28</sup> <sup>a</sup>*Come to Me, all <sup>1</sup>who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.* <sup>29</sup> *Take My yoke upon you and <sup>a</sup>learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and <sup>b</sup>YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.* <sup>30</sup> *For <sup>a</sup>My yoke is <sup>1</sup>easy and My burden is light."*

**Isaiah 55:1-3** *Ho! Every one who <sup>a</sup>thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have <sup>b</sup>no <sup>1</sup>money come, buy and eat. Come, buy <sup>c</sup>wine and milk <sup>d</sup>Without money and without cost.* <sup>2</sup> *Why do you <sup>1</sup>spend money for what is <sup>a</sup>not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and <sup>b</sup>eat what is good, And <sup>c</sup>delight yourself in abundance.* <sup>3</sup> <sup>a</sup>*Incline your ear and come to*

*Me. Listen, that <sup>1</sup>you may <sup>b</sup>live; And I will make <sup>c</sup>an everlasting covenant with you, According to the <sup>d</sup>faithful mercies <sup>2</sup>shown to David.*

**Isaiah 45:21-22** <sup>21</sup> <sup>a</sup>Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. <sup>b</sup>Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is <sup>c</sup>no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a <sup>d</sup>Savior; There is none except Me. <sup>22</sup> <sup>a</sup>Turn to Me and <sup>b</sup>be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other.