

Why Choose to Study about God's Choosing?

Before we continue our study from last week and look at some questions, perhaps we should address the most basic question as to whether it's even necessary to study about God's choosing, calling, electing of sinners, and to determine who chose whom. Many would probably think that doctrines of grace are not that practical or don't have much of an impact on everyday life, but most of the greatest men in church history disagree.

George Mueller was an amazing man of faith and prayer and founder of several orphanages in Britain in the 1800's. He is well known as a great and godly hero of the Christian faith, beloved by so many, and a kind and warm-hearted man of deep prayer and incredible trust in God. It's unfortunate, though, that although many have heard *about* him, not many are aware of the theology that undergirded his faith and life and made it possible. In 1829, he became sick in God's providence and went to a small town called Teignmouth to recover.

Piper writes:¹

There in a little chapel called Ebenezer at least two crucial discoveries were made: the preciousness of reading and meditating on the word of God, and the truth of the doctrines of grace. For ten days Mueller lived with a nameless man who changed his life forever: "Through the instrumentality of this brother the Lord bestowed a great blessing upon me, for which I shall have cause to thank Him throughout eternity." --George Mueller, *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealing with George Muller, Written by Himself, Jehovah Magnified. Addresses by George Muller Complete and Unabridged*, 2 vols. (Muskegon, Mich.: Dust and Ashes Publications, 2003). Vol. 1, p. 39. [hereafter simply "Narrative"]

"Before this period I had been much opposed to the doctrines of election, particular redemption, and final persevering grace; so much so that, a few days after my arrival at Teignmouth, I called election a devilish doctrine. . . I knew nothing about the choice of God's people, and did not believe that the child of God, when once made so, was safe for ever. . . . But now I was brought to examine these precious truths by the word of God . . .

Being made willing to have no glory of my own in the conversion of sinners, but to consider myself merely as an instrument; and being made willing to receive what the Scriptures said; I went to the Word, reading the New Testament from the beginning, with a particular reference to these truths. To my great astonishment I found that the passages which speak decidedly for election and persevering grace, were about four times as many as those which speak apparently against these truths; and even those few, shortly after, when I had examined and understood them, served to confirm me in the above doctrines. As to the effect which my belief in these doctrines had on me, I am constrained to state, for God's glory, that though I am still exceedingly weak, and by no means so dead to the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, as I might and as I ought to be, yet, by the grace of God, I have walked more closely with Him since that period. My life has not been so variable, and I may say that I have lived much more for God than before." [Mueller, *Narrative*, 1:46]

¹ http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Biographies/1531_George_Muellers_Strategy_for_Showing_God/

He was led to embrace the doctrines of grace—the robust, mission-minded, soul-winning, orphan-loving Calvinism that marked William Carey, who died in 1834, and that would mark Charles Spurgeon, who was born in 1834. About forty years later, in 1870, Mueller spoke to some young believers about the importance of what had happened to him at Teignmouth. He said that his preaching had been fruitless for four years from 1825 to 1829 in Germany, but then he came to England and was taught the doctrines of grace.

“In the course of time I came to this country, and it pleased God then to show to me the doctrines of grace in a way in which I had not seen them before. At first I hated them, ‘If this were true I could do nothing at all in the conversion of sinners, as all would depend upon God and the working of His Spirit.’ But when it pleased God to reveal these truths to me, and my heart was brought to such a state that I could say, ‘I am not only content simply to be a hammer, an axe, or a saw, in God’s hands; but I shall count it an honor to be taken up and used by Him in any way; and if sinners are converted through my instrumentality, from my inmost soul I will give Him all the glory; the Lord gave me to see fruit; the Lord gave me to see fruit in abundance; sinners were converted by scores; and ever since God has used me in one way or other in His service.’” (1:752)

This discovery of the all-encompassing sovereignty of God became the foundation of Mueller’s confidence in God to answer his prayers

This subject of God’s election is not mere theological minutia, and we are not looking at this subject merely for the sake of academic interest. Salvation is not an irrelevant subject. God’s glory is not a secondary matter, and who gets the glory and credit in salvation is not an insignificant question.

These doctrines of sovereign grace ignited the Reformation. They helped transform entire societies in Europe. They were the views of the Pilgrims and most of the early settlers in this country, and in fact schools like Harvard and Princeton were founded to train ministers to preach these doctrines. The Southern Baptist Convention was founded on these principles and the majority of Baptist until the 20th century firmly believed these things. These convictions fueled the Great Awakening and revival in America under Edwards and Whitefield, they drove the Great Missionary Movement, and although many today no longer believe in predestination, man’s depravity, or God’s absolute sovereignty, God is awakening many to a rediscovery of these truths.

Whether or not you believe God is truly and fully sovereign will have a profound impact on your everyday life, prayer, and trust in God. Like George Mueller, we want to go back to the Bible, even though our flesh or minds may initially resist God’s absolute sovereign right to do as He wills, we want to humbly receive what the Scriptures say, and like him, be willing to ascribe all glory to God in everything and be content to merely be an instrument in His sovereign and saving hand.

Common Questions about Divine Election

The following resources go more in-depth into answering questions and objections than is possible with this study:

Online articles:

http://www.monergism.com/directory/link_category/Election/Objections-to-Unconditionl-Election-Answered/ (Numerous articles by noted scholars and teachers)
<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0041.htm> (“Election” sermon by C. H. Spurgeon)
<http://www.biblebb.com/mac-a-g.htm> (scroll down to “Election” series by MacArthur)

Online audio:

http://www.monergism.com/directory/link_category/Election/Multimedia/
(see especially links on above to Steve Lawson, parts 5 & 6, MacArthur, Curt Daniel, etc)
<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/histtheocalvin.html>
(complete series by Curt Daniel above)

Books:

Sinners in the Hands of a Good God, by David Clotfelter (especially chapters 4-6)
Chosen by God, by R.C. Sproul
The Doctrines of Grace, by James Montgomery Boice, and Philip Graham Ryken
The History and Theology of Calvinism, by Curt Daniel (very thorough textbook format)

For those who find themselves disagreeing with God’s sovereign election or predestination, I would encourage you to continue to study, with both open Bible and open mind and heart to humbly submit to whatever God’s Word teaches. As we pray for God’s illumination and guidance in pursuing the truth of His Word, we should not ignore the past of what great God-centered thinkers and Christians have written before us on these topics they have studied more deeply than us. Do not be quick to argue or quarrel about these issues, which far greater and godlier men than us have wrestled with and written on. We must also recognize our mind and logic cannot overturn clear scriptural teaching. For those of you already convinced of these doctrines of grace, let us make sure we communicate that same grace towards others we interact with who may differ (we are all growing, and the longer we have been taught otherwise, the harder it is to embrace a whole new world of scriptural truth). May God’s grace grow us all, not to be better *debaters*, but to be better disciples and mature gospel-bearers of our Sovereign Savior.

1. Does the Bible teach election (that God chooses, predestines, calls, and effectually draws all who will be saved)?

YES <See handout for last week>

- Hebrew word for God’s choosing estimated over 100x used of sovereign election
- Greek forms of this word for God’s choosing estimated 50x used in similar ways
- Word “called” used over 3,000x, a good number of which are divine sovereign calling
- As we saw last week, virtually every N.T. book contains such language in 1st chapter Steve Lawson has demonstrated (*Foundations of Grace, Vol. 1*) that every biblical writer and virtually every O.T. book teaches these things, including history / minor prophets

A few examples from one book (gospel of John) should be enough:

John 15:5 (NASB95)

5 “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

John 15:16 (NASB95)

16 “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

John 15:19 (NASB95)

19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but **I chose you out of the world**, because of this the world hates you.

John 17:6-9 (NASB95)

6 “I have manifested Your name to the **men whom You gave Me out of the world**; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

7 “Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You;

8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.

9 “I ask on their behalf; **I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me**; for they are Yours;

John 6:37-40 (NASB95)

37 “**All that the Father gives Me will come to Me**, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not 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 Him who sent Me, that **of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day**.

40 “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

John 6:44 (NASB95)

44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 6:63 (NASB95)

63 “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

John 6:65 (NASB95)

65 And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”

- ‘Chose’ - Select groups / individuals out from a bigger group (Ps. 78:67-70, Jn. 15:19)
 - Jesus told His disciples “You did not choose me, but *I chose you*” (Jn. 15:16)
 - In the middle voice in Greek, the word emphasizes God *Himself* choosing (Eph. 1:4), in other words “by Himself and for Himself”
- ‘Elect’ - *Chosen one(s)* - Mt. 24:22, 31, Lk 18:7, Rom. 8:33, Rev. 17:14, etc.
- ‘Called’ - A saving summons by God (Rom. 8:30, 1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 1:9)
- ‘Predestined’ – God’s prior plan of salvation and adoption (Eph. 1:5, 11, Rom. 8:29-30)

2. Does the Bible teach man’s responsibility for his sin and response to God?

YES <See handout for last week>

John 5:40 (NASB95)

40 and **you are unwilling to come** to Me so that you may have life.

John 6:37 (NASB95)

37 “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and **the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.**

John 6:47 (NASB95)

47 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

John 10:9 (NASB95)

9 “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

Now the fact that man is called upon and is responsible to believe, repent, come, etc., does not mean fallen man will, *or even wants to*. In fact, last week we saw in John 3:19-20 that fallen mankind loves their sin with the strongest love possible (agape) and refuses to come to the light because it exposes sin. God must work in them if they’ll come (v. 21)

Romans 3 clearly says “no one seeks after God ... no not one” – we would all be in trouble if Jesus didn’t come to “to seek and to save the lost” (His self-described mission).

If we want to talk about “seekers” (a popular term today often used in relation to church style), Jesus is the seeker. No one seeks God unless He is first sought by God. People speak of finding God, but God is not lost, we’re lost. As we sing in “Amazing Grace” we all “once were lost but now am found” – God finds us. C.S. Lewis said “Amiable agnostics will talk cheerfully about man’s search for God. For me, they might as well talk about the mouse’s search for a cat ... God closed in on me.”² He’s the hound of heaven.

God tracks *us* down. We *should* find and follow Him but *He finds us* by search and rescue, as we were all going astray, each of us turning to our own way. Our “free will” chooses to do what’s right in our own eyes, and our willful sin makes us all culpable. Man’s responsibility and God’s sovereignty in salvation are taught in balance:

- By Jesus (Mt. 11:28 vs. John 6:44, 65 vs. Rev. 22:17)
- By Paul (Rom. 10:9 vs. 1 Cor. 12:3)

²Cited by Blanchard, *Complete Gathered Gold*, 160.

- By Peter (Acts 2:21 vs. 2:39, 3:19 vs. 5:31 & 11:17-18)
- God is sovereign even over sinful acts of men (Acts 2:23, 4:28, etc.) as well as in salvation and sanctification (Phil. 2:12-13, 1 Cor. 15:10, etc.)

3. How do we reconcile these 2 truths of sovereignty and man's responsibility?

Starting points:

- Both are taught in scripture
- Both are true (not either / or)
- As I wrote on last week's outline "what God joins together, we dare not separate"
- Do we need to "reconcile" the two, or "recognize" the two?

Spurgeon wrote: "I never have to reconcile friends. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility have never had a falling out with each other. I do not need to reconcile what God has joined together." Neither do we. Both are taught in Scripture, and we must live with the tension. (Lawson, *Made in Our Image*, 105)

- Some have described the two as parallel tracks side-by-side that will only meet far in the future (eternity). The classic analogy is a sign over the door "whosoever will may come" but once you get through the door into heaven and look back at it, the other side says "Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." When we are in heaven, we may understand things more clearly, but for now let us content ourselves with what scripture says and let God be God.
- There is no difficulty in the mind of God over this, the fact that biblical truths are hard for us to fully grasp is just a reminder that we are finite and we're not God.
- It's also evidence to me that the Bible is inspired by God, as human authors would have never invented doctrines like total depravity and the election with all of its difficulties (editors fix apparent contradictions, but God sees no contradiction)
- Some have described the groups as "the whosoever will" and the "whosoever won't" – just keep in mind that we are totally responsible for our sin and have no one to blame but ourselves, but God gets 100% of the credit and glory for any that are saved, and we have no one to thank but Him
- When we speak of mystery associated with election, we are not saying it's a mystery whether or not the Bible teaches sovereign election. That is clear fact and beyond dispute or question – the Bible definitely teaches election.
- When we speak of mystery or the fact that theologians have been discussing implications of this for centuries must never be an excuse for us to not study what scripture says and submit to it. The N.T. is not shy to present this truth, and especially as a motive to greater praise for God.
- It's interesting that some other countries and cultures do not resist this truth as much as Americans do. Those who live under kings and absolute monarchs can relate to a sovereign ruler who has right to do as he wills, but in our American society of equity and democracy and affirmative action where election is always by the people, and in churches where so much poor preaching is prevalent, either that never deals with the subject, or in some cases which outright teaches against sovereign election by God and caricatures and paints a false straw man picture of what predestination teaches, and where so many are too lazy to study the Word, or who get their theology from the internet chatrooms or blogs or from our postmodern culture ... you can see why it takes many of us awhile to embrace this

The Bible does have answers to questions – just not always the ones we want

Deuteronomy 29:29 (NASB95)

29 “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

John Calvin wrote:

The subject of predestination, which in itself is attended with considerable difficulty is rendered very perplexed and hence perilous by human curiosity, which cannot be restrained from wandering into forbidden paths and climbing to the clouds determined if it can that none of the secret things of God shall remain unexplored. When we see many, some of them in other respects not bad men, every where rushing into this audacity and wickedness, it is necessary to remind them of the course of duty in this matter. First, then, when they inquire into predestination, let them remember that they are penetrating into the recesses of the divine wisdom, where he who rushes forward securely and confidently, instead of satisfying his curiosity will enter in inextricable labyrinth. For it is not right that man should with impunity pry into things which the Lord has been pleased to conceal within himself, and scan that sublime eternal wisdom which it is his pleasure that we should not apprehend but adore, that therein also his perfections may appear. Those secrets of his will, which he has seen it meet to manifest, are revealed in his word—revealed in so far as he knew to be conducive to our interest and welfare.³

Isaiah 55:1-9 (NASB95)

1 “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost.

2 “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance.

3 “Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David.

4 “Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples, A leader and commander for the peoples.

5 “Behold, you will call a nation you do not know, And a nation which knows you not will run to you, Because of the Lord your God, even the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you.”

6 Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.

7 Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

8 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord.

³Calvin, J., *Institutes of the Christian religion*. Translation by H. Beveridge; Originally published: Edinburgh : Calvin Translation Society, 1845-1846. (III, xxi, 1).

9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Ezekiel 33:11 (NASB95)

11 “Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’

Romans 11:29-36 (NASB95)

29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

30 For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience,

31 so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

32 For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?

35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?

36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

4. Aren’t *all* people chosen and called equally?

Matthew 22:14 “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Note: The sense of “called” here is the verbal human invitation of the gospel. Not even all hear the gospel, but of those that do, few are chosen to salvation. We are responsible to call as many as possible to come to Christ, but of course we know that not all will

Matthew 11:25-27 (NASB95)

25 At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.

26 “Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.

27 “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; **nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.**

*Notice in the very next verse Jesus calls on all to “come” – in the same breath where he explains that divine truth is hidden to fallen man unless the Lord wills to reveal it to them, Jesus indiscriminately calls *all* to come unto Him and universally offers salvation.

Matthew 13:11 (NASB95)

11 Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to **them it has not been granted.**

John 6:65-70 (NASB95)

65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?"

68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

69 "**We have believed** and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

70 Jesus answered them, "**Did I Myself not choose you**, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?"

Psalms 78:67-70 (NASB95)

67 He also rejected the tent of Joseph, And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,

68 But chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved.

69 And He built His sanctuary like the heights, Like the earth which He has founded forever.

70 He also chose David His servant And took him from the sheepfolds;

5. What about the Arminian⁴ view that man's free will choice is what causes election? Does God merely look into the future to see who will choose Him and love Him and know Him, and therefore man's "election" causes God's?

John 15:16 (NASB95)

16 "**You did not choose Me but I chose you**, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

1 John 4:19 (NASB95)

19 We love, **because He first loved us**.

Galatians 4:9 (NASB95)

9 But now that you have **come to know God, or rather to be known by God**, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

Romans 11:5-6 (NASB95)

5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.

⁴ Not to be confused with ethnic *Armenians*, this is a theological term for the followers of Jacob Arminius who in the 17th century objected to the sovereignty of God in salvation and the Reformation "doctrines of grace" (see last week's handout). Arminian theology teaches: 1) true believers may lose their salvation; 2) God's atonement and grace is only general rather than particular and effectual; 3) and due to universal 'prevenient' grace, man's depravity is not truly "total" - fallen man's *free will* has the power and ability of saving faith, which is the condition upon which a watching God chooses whom to save or "elect."

6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

Romans 3:9-13 (NASB95)

9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

10 as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one;

11 There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God;

12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one."

If verse 10 is true that "no one seeks God" how can the Arminian view be true that God looks into the future to see who will seek Him? God knows everything, of course, and the fact that he knows the truth of Romans 3:10, means God must come and do the seeking and saving by His sovereign mercy.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (NASB95)

26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

29 so that no man may boast before God.

30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

31 so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."

<For more on Rom. 8:29, read website sermons dated 4/1, 4/29, 3/4/07>

In Scripture, to "know" a person includes intimate love relationship

Matthew 1:25 (NKJV) says Joseph "**did not know her** till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus." (NASB "he kept her a virgin until ...")

Matthew 7:23 (NKJV)

23 And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you**; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Matthew 11:27 (NASB95)

27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and **no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son**, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

John 10:14-17 (NASB95)

14 "I am the good shepherd, and **I know My own and My own know Me**,

15 **even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father**; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

1 Corinthians 8:3 (NASB95)

3 but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

1 Peter 1:1-2 (NASB95)

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are **chosen**

2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

Verse 20 says Christ “was **foreknown before the foundation of the world**, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you”

NKJV translates “foreknown” as “foreordained” here, NIV has “chosen” – it’s not just that the Father knew about Jesus ahead of time or knew what He was going to do, God who had an intimate relationship with His Son before time began, foreknew or foreordained and chose that His Son would be the lamb who would redeem the people mentioned in verses 1-2

Amos 3:2 (NKJV)

2 “**You only have I known** of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

The NASB translates the literal “known” as “chosen” – when the Bible speaks of God foreknowing people, it is essentially synonymous with choosing beforehand, pre-determining to set His intimate love upon someone in a personal relationship

Jeremiah 1:5 (NASB95)

5 “**Before I formed you in the womb I knew you**, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

God knows about all people in His omniscience, but the comfort He wants to give Jeremiah here is that before he was born, God’s intimate love relationship was already aimed at him in particular. Jeremiah doesn’t say “big deal, God, you know everyone” – the biblical word “know” goes a lot deeper than our English word, and here you see that it is tied in with God’s consecrating and appointing him.

So when David begins and ends Psalm 139 saying God “knows *me*” this is relational knowledge. God knows His own, the righteous, in a deep relational way as opposed to the wicked who He does not know in this sense.

Psalm 1:6 “*The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish*”

This Hebrew word for “know” was used of the most intimate LOVE relationship, for example, “Adam *knew* his wife Eve, and they conceived and bore a son.”

J. I. Packer writes: The word *know*, when used of God in this way, is a sovereign–grace word, pointing to God’s initiative in loving, choosing, redeeming, calling and preserving . . . “I am the good shepherd; *I know my sheep* and my sheep know me . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep. . . . My sheep listen to my voice; *I know them*. . . . They shall never perish” (Jn 10:14–15, 27–28) . . . It is a knowledge that implies personal affection, redeeming action, covenant faithfulness and providential watchfulness toward those whom God knows. It implies, in other words, salvation (*Knowing God*, 36-37)

So Romans 8:29 speaks of God’s prior and particular love and determination beforehand to enter into an intimate personal love relationship. The rest of the verse makes very clear that these recipients of God’s loving knowledge were predestined, those who were called, those who were justified (saved) and those who were glorified (in heaven).

The word “foreknew” does not mean mere foresight, that God is like a passive spectator who merely knows what’s going to happen because he’s watched the end of the tape. This word does not mean that God saves us because He foresaw in us something better than others, or because of some good or merit or some foreseen faith or decision of our own will or our own works, He decides on that basis whom He wants to choose. It’s not that God simply *reacts* to what man does, as Open Theists and some Arminians teach, that man is truly sovereign over human destiny. No, those whom God “foreknew” are those whom Christ first set His love upon and chose to be in an intimate relationship as His bride.

If “foreknew” in v. 29 only means whoever God knew about, then it would also mean that everyone will be saved, because whoever he foreknows in v. 29 is called, justified, glorified in v. 30.

But the word for “know” in v. 29 is the rich Greek word *ginosko*, not the word in verse 28 “we know” (*oida*) which refers to knowledge or understanding we have or to “know about someone” (BAGD, p. 555).

When God is the subject of this word “foreknow” it always means ‘enter into relationship with before’ or “choose, or determine before” (Rom. 11:2, 1 Pet. 1:20; Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:2). It doesn’t mean just to “know about” or “know what they would do”

6. Isn’t election just to service or position or a corporate thing rather than God’s choosing of individuals for salvation?

2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB95)

13 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.

John 10:3 (NASB95)

3 “To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and **he calls his own sheep by name** and leads them out.

2 John 1 (NKJV)

1 The Elder, **To the elect lady** and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth,

2 John 13 (NKJV)

13 The children of **your elect sister** greet you. Amen.

Romans 16:13 (NKJV)

13 Greet Rufus, **chosen in the Lord**, and his mother and mine.

Revelation 17:8 (NASB95)

8 “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, **whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world**, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

Individual names are written in the book of life since before time!

- 7. This doesn't seem fair that God doesn't choose to save all, and that election is based on His will which we can't thwart or resist, so how can He find fault? Is there injustice with God?**

This is probably the most common object of all. If Paul had been teaching the Arminian view (man's really the one that chooses, not God) then there would be no reason to raise the objection that Paul raises in Romans 9, but he anticipates that this is what his reader will be thinking? And notice how he replies in verses 15-16

Romans 9:14-16 (NASB95)

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.”

16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

Romans 9:19-23 (NASB95)

19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?”

20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it?

21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

These are hard words, and they are precisely in response to this most common objection about God's sovereign right to mercy on whom He will. God doesn't soften the teaching, He strengthens God's sovereign right to have mercy and compassion on whom He will.

But remember, if we think of "fair" as *what is deserved*, Paul has already made very clear what would be fair for mankind who has rejected His common grace in both creation and conscience and kindness that should lead us to repentance rather than rebellion

Romans 1:18-32 (NASB95)

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of **men who suppress the truth** in unrighteousness,

19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that **they are without excuse**.

... 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are **worthy of death**, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Romans 2:1-6 (NASB95)

1 Therefore **you have no excuse**, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

2 And we know that the **judgment of God rightly falls upon those** who practice such things.

3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

5 But **because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath** and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

6 who will render to each person according to his deeds:

Romans 2:14-16 (NASB95)

14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,

15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, **their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing** or else defending them,

16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:19 (NASB95)

19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, **so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;**

Genesis 18:25 (NASB95)

25 “Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! **Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?**”

It is a given to God’s people that God is just, God will do what’s right. God is the standard of right, man is not the Judge before whom God must give account.

Deuteronomy 32:4 (NASB95)

4 “The Rock! His work is perfect, For **all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice**, Righteous and upright is He.

God is absolutely just in whatever He chooses to do, by definition of His character. We should content ourselves with that in what He chooses to do with sinners.

2 Peter 2:4 (NASB95)

4 For if **God did not spare angels when they sinned**, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

God did not give any of the fallen angels an opportunity to repent and be redeemed. It was perfectly just for God to cast all the fallen angels into hell without giving mercy, and it would be perfectly just for him to do the same with fallen humanity.

Mankind is not an innocent bystander, he’s not a puppet or robot, he sins freely and willfully. Man does have a free will in a sense, but that’s not the solution to this theological problem, *man’s will is the problem*. Man is unwilling to Christ on His terms. There is a sense in which man does have a real choice – the problem is he makes the wrong choice because he loves sin so strongly.

John 3:19-20 (NASB95)

19 “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and **men loved the darkness** rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

20 “For everyone who does evil hates **the Light, and does not come to the Light** for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

John 5:40

40 and **you are unwilling to come to Me** so that you may have life.

John 8:44 (NASB95)

44 “You are of your father the devil, and **you want to do the desires of your father ...**”

Matthew 23:37 (NASB95)

37 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and **you were unwilling**.

God can say “thy will be done” to those who do not want to be with Him in eternity

Spurgeon wrote (*New Park Street Pulpit*, #41)

“But there are some who say, "It is hard for God to choose some and leave others." Now, I will ask you one question. Is there any of you here this morning who wishes to be holy, who wishes to be regenerate, to leave off sin and walk in holiness? "Yes, there is," says some one, "I do." Then God has elected you. But another says, "No; I don't want to be holy; I don't want to give up my lusts and my vices."

Why should you grumble, then, that God has not elected you to it? For if you were elected you would not like it, according to your own confession. If God this morning had chosen you to holiness, you say you would not care for it. Do you not acknowledge that you prefer drunkenness to sobriety, dishonesty to honesty? You love this world's pleasures better than religion; then why should you grumble that God has not chosen you to religion? If you love religion, he *has* chosen you to it. If you desire it, he has chosen you to it. If you do not, what right have you to say that God ought to have given you what you do not wish for? Supposing I had in my hand something which you do not value, and I said I shall give it to such-and-such a person, you would have no right to grumble that I did not give to you. You could not be so foolish as to grumble that the other has got what you do not care about. According to your own confession, many of you do not want religion, do not want a new heart and a right spirit, do not want the forgiveness of sins, do not want sanctification; you do not want to be elected to these things: then why should you grumble? You count these things but as husks, and why should you complain of God who has given them to those whom he has chosen? If you believe them to be good and desire them, they are there for thee. God gives liberally to all those who desire; and first of all, he makes them desire, otherwise they never would. If you love these things, he has elected you to them, and you may have them; but if you do not, who are you that you should find fault with God, when it is your own desperate will that keeps you from loving these things—your own simple self that makes you hate them? Suppose a man in the street should say, "What a shame it is I cannot have a seat in the chapel to hear what this man has to say." And suppose he says, "I hate the preacher; I can't bear his doctrine; but still it's a shame I have not a seat." Would you expect a man to say so? No: you would at once say, "That man does not care for it. Why should he trouble himself about other people having what they value and he despises?"

... He has elected you to holiness, if you love holiness. If any of you love to be saved by Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ elected you to be saved. If any of you desire to have salvation, you are elected to have it, if you desire it sincerely and earnestly. But, if you don't desire it, why on earth should you be so preposterously foolish as to grumble because God gives that which you do not like to other people?"

Job 38:1-4 (NASB95)

1 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,

2 “Who is this that darkens counsel By words without knowledge?

3 “Now gird up your loins like a man, And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!

4 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding,

Job 40:1-8 (NASB95)

1 Then the Lord said to Job,

2 “Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.”

3 Then Job answered the Lord and said,

4 “Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth.

5 “Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; Even twice, and I will add nothing more.”

6 Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm and said,

7 “Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me.

8 “Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?”

God is God and we are not. If God was obligated to give mercy equally to all, it wouldn't be mercy by definition. If we want to talk about what's fair, every single one of us should be dead long ago and already in hell.

What should boggle our minds is not why doesn't God save everybody, a far more difficult question is why does God choose to save anybody?

‘For the biblical writers, and especially the psalmists, the real problem of God's justice is not why He punishes the wicked but why He is taking so long to do so!’ (Clotfelter, 36)
“How long, O God, will the adversary revile, And the enemy spurn Your name forever? Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand?” (Psalm 74:10-11, NASB95)

God is God and we are not. Our opinion about how things should work or what is fair doesn't determine how things work, because we're not in charge. God does not answer to us, we answer to Him. He is good, He is sovereign, He is merciful, and He is also just. Everyone who will go to hell goes there justly and fairly and deservedly, and none will be able to complain, as it says in Romans 3:19 every mouth will be stopped and the whole world will be accountable in God. The Scripture also says that every knee will bow and acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, no one will be denying God's Lordship and right as judge that day, and His justice will be indisputable.

8. If God is truly this sovereign, why pray?

Compare Rom. 9 & 10:1, Eph. 1:3-6 & 1:15-20, 2:1-10, 6:18-20, John 17

<Note: Mark Freeman will be teaching more on prayer in future class>

9. Doesn't believing in election and “the doctrines of grace”⁵ kill evangelism?

Acts 13:48 (NASB95)

48 When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and **as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.**

⁵ This is the term I prefer, although common synonyms for this view include “Calvinism” (after Reformer John Calvin) or “Augustinian” (after early church father Augustine) or the “Reformation / Reformed” view of salvation and God's sovereignty. We do not pledge allegiance to man (1 Cor. 1:12) or labels or systems, but believe by scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) the Reformation was right on these points.

Note the order: they believed *because* they were appointed to eternal life by God, and all who were appointed did in fact believe. The belief was a result of the appointment, they were not appointed as a result of their belief.

Acts 18:9-11 (NASB95)

9 And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent;

10 for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for **I have many people in this city.**”

11 And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

The truth that God has His elect out there is a great motivation to missionaries and evangelists who are called to be faithful but not rely on their own human abilities – God works through the Word, not apart from it, but salvation is not by might, not by power, but by the Spirit of God. Our job is to proclaim the Word, God does the saving.

2 Timothy 2:10 (NASB95)

10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.

Romans 10:9-17 (NASB95)

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

11 For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.”

12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him;

13 for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!”

16 However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?”

17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

In centuries past, most of the greatest missionaries and evangelists ever believed most strongly in the Reformation truths of the doctrines of sovereign grace and election. Virtually the entire first generation of modern missionary movement, William Carey, Adoniram Judson, Charles Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, etc. Calvin himself sent out missionaries. The Great Awakening and Great Missionary Movement were led by Calvinists committed to election. D. James Kennedy (who just passed away last week) was famous for his helpful “Evangelism Explosion” ministry which has been used all over the world. God’s sovereign working does not make evangelism unnecessary, it makes it more effective.

10. What are practical benefits of believing in God's sovereign election?

Actually *motivates* God-centered evangelism and prayer (see above)

Humility (Eph. 2:1-9; 1 Cor. 1:26-31, 4:7)

Should motivate labor for our Savior (Eph 2:10; 1 Cor 15:10; Phil 2:12-13)

[Perhaps a better word for "labor" would be "living for our Savior"]

Comfort / assurance (Rom. 8:28-39; 2 Pet. 1:10)

Praise and worship (Eph. 1:3-14, Rom. 11:29-36)

John Newton never got over God's "amazing grace" (his most famous song). He knew his conversion was not by his own will but was a sovereign rescue operation by God, a solo mission by God to seek and save a slave trader and a depraved wretch whose only hope was for effectual grace to initiate, intervene, and infallibly carry him safe thus far and all the way home, Newton knew he was lost and needing to be found, he was blind and needing someone else to cause him to see.

In the words of Ephesians 2, even when Newton was dead in his trespasses and sins, and hopeless and helpless, God gave him life and faith and a grace that was not of himself, it was all a gift of God, not of anything he had done or would do, and no one can boast or even take a fraction of credit for one's conversion. The effectual sovereign grace of God in his life he considered amazing till the end:

'I commit my soul to my gracious God and Savior, who mercifully spared and preserved me, *when I was* an apostate, a blasphemer, and an infidel, and delivered me from the state of misery on the coast of Africa into which my obstinate wickedness had plunged me; and who has been pleased to admit me (though most unworthy) to preach his glorious gospel.

He considered himself a committed Calvinist and believed in sovereign election with all his heart, but it was not something he beat people over the head with, or emphasized to the exclusion of other matters – he preferred to stir it in with proper balance like a sugar that sweetened and permeated everything, rather than debating the divisive. He also was patient to people not there yet in this doctrine, remembering God's patience with him:

I have been thirty years forming my own views; and, in the course of this time, some of my hills have sunk, and some of my valleys have risen: but, how unreasonable within me to expect all this should take place in another person; and that, in the course of a year or two.

In the preface to the Olney hymns, he wrote, "The views I have received of the doctrines of grace are essential to my peace; I could not live comfortably a day, or an hour, without them. I likewise believe . . . them to be friendly to holiness, and to have a direct influence in producing and maintaining a gospel conversation; and therefore I must not be ashamed of them."

This doctrine of election is not something we should be ashamed about, it's something we should be amazed about. As we seek to grow in our knowledge of this truth, we hope the end result is that we will worship more deeply and fully God's truly amazing grace.