

The Doctrine of Election

Definition: “Election is an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 670).

I. Cardinal Texts Concerning the Doctrine

Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-5; 1 Thess. 1:2-4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:1-2

II. Competing Views of the Doctrine

The Greek verb translated *foreknew* in Romans 8:29 is *proginōskō*, and the related noun translated *foreknowledge* in 1 Peter 1:2 is *prōgnōsis*.

1. Conditional Election
2. Unconditional Election
3. The Crux of the Issue: The Meaning of *Proginōskō* in Romans 8:29

Jer. 1:5; Hos. 13:4-5; Amos 3:2; Matt. 7:21-23; John 10:14; Gal. 4:8-9; 1 Cor. 8:3

III. Crucial Implications of the Doctrine

First, this doctrine is one of the foundational doctrines of the faith. So we must not treat the doctrine as though it is a wholly secondary doctrine or as if it is not in any way necessary for us to know and believe.

Second, this doctrine establishes beyond question that salvation is by grace alone rather than by works.

Third, this doctrine should thus lead us to a deeper humility, *both* before the Lord *and* before one another.

Fourth, this doctrine forms an important basis for our assurance of salvation.

Fifth, and finally, this doctrine provides a motivation for evangelism.

Conclusion: John Calvin offers the following counsel concerning the doctrine of election in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*:

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, everywhere 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. (3.21.1, e-Sword)