

ELECTION AND REPROBATION (PREDESTINATION)

*The biblical doctrine of election is that before Creation God selected out of the human race, foreseen as fallen, those whom he would redeem, bring to faith, justify, and glorify in and through Jesus Christ. This divine choice is an expression of free and sovereign grace, for it is unconstrained and unconditional, not merited by anything in those who are its subjects. God owes sinners no mercy of any kind, only condemnation; so it is a wonder, and matter for endless praise, that he should choose to save any of us; and doubly so when his choice involved the giving of his own Son to suffer as sin-bearer for the elect.*¹⁵ (J. I. Packer)

*[Election] signifies to single out, to select, to choose, to take one and leave another. Election means that God has singled out certain ones to be the objects of His saving grace, while others are left to suffer the just punishment of their sins. It means that before the foundation of the world, God chose out of the mass of our fallen humanity a certain number and predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son.*¹⁶ (A. W. Pink)

*We shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the wellspring of God's free mercy until we come to know his eternal election, which illumines God's grace by this contrast: that he does not indiscriminately adopt all into the hope of salvation but gives to some what he denies to others.*¹⁷ (John Calvin)

*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.*¹⁸ (Wayne Grudem)

What does the Bible teach about election/predestination?

Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. (Acts 15:14)

... even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. (Ephesians 1:4)

In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:5-6)

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will. (Ephesians 1:11)

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. (John 15:16)

¹⁵J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, 149.

¹⁶A. W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Election*. (Pensacola: Chapel Library, 2001), 2.

¹⁷John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1 & 2. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Vol. 1. The Library of Christian Classics. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 920.

¹⁸Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 670.

If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (John 15:19)

And he said, "The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth. (Acts 22:14)

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Acts 22:14)

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

... who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began. (2 Timothy 1:9)

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood. (1 Peter 1:1-2)

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

... you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off." (Isaiah 41:9)

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. (John 6:37)

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 6:44)

And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48)

So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. (Romans 11:5)

... though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." (Romans 9:11-13)

For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." (Romans 9:15)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Unconditional Election:

God's choosing of his people is unconditional in that it is not based upon anything that God sees in them that makes them worthy of his choosing. Furthermore, election and predestination are not contingent upon man's response to God's grace because man, in his fallen state, is both unable and unwilling to respond favorably to Christ's offer of salvation.

*God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause, of God's choice...God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.*¹⁹ (David Steele & Curtis Thomas)

Misunderstandings of the Doctrine of Election²⁰

1. Election is ***fatalistic*** or ***mechanistic***

The Bible presents the picture that the entire outworking of our salvation is something that is brought about by a personal God in relationship with personal creatures who make willing choices that have personal and universal impact.

2. Election is based on God's ***foreknowledge*** of our faith

- foreknowledge of persons, not facts (...*those whom he foreknew*...)
- our faith is never given as a reason for God's choosing of us
- election based on something good in us (our faith) would be the beginning of salvation by merit
- predestination based on foreknowledge still does not give people free choice

Common Objections to the Doctrine of Election²¹

1. Election means that we do not have a choice in whether we accept Christ or not
2. The doctrine of election means that unbelievers never had a chance to believe
3. Election is unfair
4. The Bible says that God desires to save everyone

¹⁹David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 16-17.

²⁰Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 674-679.

²¹*Ibid.*, 680-683.

To me, it is one of the sweetest and most blessed truths in the whole of Revelation; and those who are afraid of it are so because they do not understand it. If they could but know that the Lord had chosen them, it would make their hearts to dance for joy.²² (Charles Spurgeon)

The Doctrine of Reprobation

Reprobation is the sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons, in sorrow deciding not to save them, and to punish them for their sins, and thereby manifest his justice.²³

For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jude 4)

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. (Romans 9:17-18)

You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory. (Romans 9:19-23)

What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day." (Romans 11:7-8)

...They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. (1 Peter 2:8)

How Should Christians Respond to the Biblical Teaching of Election and Reprobation (Predestination)?

1. Christians should find **comfort** in the doctrine of election

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)

2. Christians should respond to the doctrine of election with **praise** to God

... he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:5-6)

²²Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*. Vol. 39. (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1893), 374.

²³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 684.

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

3. Christians should respond to the doctrine of election by displaying *evangelistic* fervor

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. (2 Timothy 2:10)

There is no more humbling doctrine in Scripture than that of election, none more promoting of gratitude, and, consequently, none more sanctifying. Believers should not be afraid of it, but adoringly rejoice in it.²⁴ (Charles Spurgeon)

The preeminent reason why God did not leave all humanity in the just reward of their sin was so that the glory of his grace might be praised. Election was undertaken to establish a platform on which the glory of God's saving mercy might be seen and magnified and adored and praised (cf. Eph 2:7). Here we see again a consistent theme in Scripture: all that God does, he ultimately does to glorify himself!²⁵ (Sam Storms)

How can a right understanding of the doctrine of election strengthen our intimacy with God?

How can a right understanding of the doctrine of election strengthen our missional activity?

²⁴Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, Evening November 25.

²⁵Sam Storms, *Chosen for Life: The Case for Divine Election*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 41.