

The Will of God and the Will of Man in Salvation

Ephesians – Week 4 | May 18, 2022

Tonight’s study is an excursus about election and predestination. I realize that the past two studies in Ephesians have brought us face-to-face with a doctrine that can be both confusing and frustrating.

Furthermore, I understand that we are never going to fully understand the mind of God as it relates to God’s sovereign work of election in Salvation.

Romans 11:33–34

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”

And we must also acknowledge that living under the _____ of God’s sovereign choice and the very real truth of human responsibility is challenging—at best.

The selection of the Father in verses 4-6 reveal a foundational truth that **God _____ people to be saved for His glory and purpose.**

One of the major tenants of _____ is God’s sovereign and unconditional election of people to be saved.

Calvin was only one of the Reformers and the Reformation itself was ignited by _____
_____ in 1517.

The Reformers did not invent this doctrine, they simply _____ a doctrine that can be traced back to the apostle Paul and the early church fathers.

Down through the centuries others believed and taught the doctrine of election.¹

_____ **of Rome** (ca. 30-101) was believed to be a disciple of Peter and Paul. He wrote, "We must, then, approach Him with our souls holy, lifting up pure and undefiled hands to Him, loving our kind and compassionate Father, who has made us His chosen portion."²

_____ **of Antioch** (ca. 35-107) faithfully pastored the church of Antioch until he was martyred. Ignatius of Antioch wrote, "Out of the fullness of God the Father you have been blessed with large numbers and are predestined from eternity to enjoy forever continual and unfading glory."³

_____ (ca. 100-165) was one of the most important Christian writers of the second century and exercised a strong influence over other early Christian theologians.⁴ Justin wrote, "God...showed that those of every nationality who were chosen have obeyed His will through Christ."⁵

_____ **of Lyons** (ca. 130-200) was heavily influenced by Polycarp, who was a direct disciple of the apostle John. Steven Lawson notes, "Predestination, Irenaeus maintained, is according to the determinative foreknowledge of God."⁶

_____ **of Hyppo** (354-430) is regarded by historians "as the greatest man in the church between the apostle Paul and the Reformer Martin Luther."⁷

For the Pelagians think, "We can, through our own power, once we have received God's commandments, become, by the choice of our free will, holy and spotless in His sight and love. And," they say, "since God foreknew that this would be the case, He chose and predestined us in Christ before the foundation of the world." Yet the Apostle says that God did not elect us because He foreknew that we would be such, but in order that we

¹ Excerpts taken from Steven Lawson, *Pillars of Grace: AD 100-1564, A Long Line of Godly Men* (Sanford: Reformation Trust, 2011).

² Clement, *First Clement*, 29, cited in Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, 57.

³ Ignatius, *To the Ephesians*, Salutation, cited in Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, 87-88.

⁴ Steven Lawson, *Pillars of Grace*, 70.

⁵ Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 130, cited in Falls, *The first Apology*, 349-350.

⁶ Steven Lawson, *Pillars of Grace*, 90.

⁷ Adolf von Harnack, *Monasticism: Its Ideals and History; and The Confession of St. Augustine* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1913), 123.

might be such through that every election of “His grace, in which He has graced us in His beloved Son.” Therefore, when He predestined us, He foreknew His own work, by which He makes us holy and spotless.”⁸

Augustine staunchly maintained that God chose in eternity past all those He would save and set His love on a broad cross-section of sinners. He wrote, “What is written, that ‘He wills all men to be saved,’ while yet all men are not saved, may be understood in many ways...but here I will say one thing: ‘He wills all men to be saved,’ is so said that all the predestined may be understood by it, because every kind of men is among them.”⁹

Question 1: God’s Word tells us that whoever believes in Him can be saved. Doesn’t the doctrine of God’s sovereign election in salvation contradict those verses?

First, we need to understand that God does, in fact, _____ the world.

Notice, however, what John 3:16 does not say—it does not say that God’s love will save _____ in the world.

Only those who _____ in the person and work of Christ will be saved.

The word *believes* _____ *whoever*.

⁸ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 38, in *Saint Augustine: Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, 264.

⁹ Augustine, *Rebuke and Grace*, 44, cited in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 5, 489.

2 Corinthians 4:3–6

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Acts 26:16–17

¹⁷ delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Question 2: God's Word tells us that God doesn't want anyone to perish. Instead, God wants everyone to repent. Doesn't this mean that God has chosen everyone?

2 Peter 3:9

⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

1 Timothy 2:3–4

³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

There are two different senses of God's will that are expressed throughout Scripture.

God's _____ will involves those things that God—according to His divine pleasure and decree is determined to bring to pass.

God's _____ will or general intention. God's permissive will expresses what God desires but does not decree or has not determined to bring to pass.

There is _____ in the divine will that we cannot solve. But what we know is that God desires the salvation of _____ but decrees the salvation of _____.

There are several attitudes we must work to avoid.

- Election seems _____.
- Election sends people to hell who _____ to be saved.
- Election _____ evangelism.

A proper understanding of the doctrine of election encourages evangelism and guarantees its success. It overcomes the fear of failure when sharing the gospel and empowers people to remain faithful to the message in times of great persecution. They know that the power lies in the gospel message and in God's sovereign election and not in their own feeble presentation. A biblical understanding of election helps one share the gospel freely with all people, knowing that any one of them could be Christ's sheep whom He is calling into His fold (John 10:16). It is not up to us to determine if someone is elect or non-elect, and there is always the promise of salvation for anyone who will repent and believe in Christ. The gospel message should be preached to all people in the knowledge that God will use it to draw His sheep to Himself. ¹⁰

We are disciples of Jesus Christ. We strive to teach _____ the Bible says because we believe fully that it is inerrant, inspired, sufficient, and authoritative.

Our question is always, what does the Bible say, and then we are tasked with aligning our thoughts to God's thoughts—even when it's difficult to wrap our mind around the truth.

Even when a doctrine creates unresolvable _____.

We simply believe in and stand on the Word of God.

God is pleased in this—and that is all that matters.

¹⁰ GotQuestions.org, *Unconditional Election-Is It Biblical?* <https://www.gotquestions.org/unconditional-election.html>, accessed May 18, 2022.