

Election: How Scripture Treats the Subject

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These are simple outlines of the logical interpretation of main texts concerning election. These are not theological treatises, but simple setting forth of what the text most clearly says. It doesn't explain away any verse, but tries to emphasize it in all its glory while considering context and true meaning.

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INTRODUCTORY VERSES

1 Corinthians 1:27-31 – “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

Romans 11:33-36 – “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

ELECTION VERSES

Romans 8:28-34 – *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

- v. 28 – them that love God are parallel to those called according to purpose. These are believers with more than a general call: this is specific and effectual as verse 30 shows.
- v. 28b – the purpose of God is at the fore of the context. His purpose here is glorification and manifestation of the sons of God.
- v. 29-30 – 1st comes foreknowledge (active and personal, individual marking out... not of a person's decision but of the person himself), 2nd comes predestination (the determination of destiny as sons), 3rd comes the call (effectual – John 6), 4th comes justification sovereignly

effected, 5th comes glorification (no break in the chain is seen up to glorification. The sovereign power that was at the first is the same at this point).

- v. 31 – God is for us, that is, in the entirety of His dealing with us; thus no one can complicate or confound His purpose.
- v. 32 – Centers God's sovereignty at the cross, telling us these are not arbitrary purposes, but good purposes of love and devotion to salvation.
- v. 33 – Being God's elect = being without charge, because justification is inseparably linked with foreknowledge (v. 29). God's purpose is ONE; it cannot be divided or stopped half way. Yet only believers can claim this presently. This question *cannot* come in for the unsaved who *are* guilty.

Romans 9:20-24 – *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

- v. 20-21 – God's sovereignty is not to be questioned. Period.
- v. 21b – Context: national exaltation, which serves as a basis for applying the truth in verses 22-24.
- v. 22 – Note the focus: God's part: shows wrath, yet restrains it in long-suffering. Man's part: fitting himself to destruction.
- v. 23 – Note the focus: God's preparation unto glory, not man's ability.
- v. 24 – The subjects: individuals as representatives of their ethnicities.

Romans 11:4-8 – *But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.*

- We must approach this carefully, since national elections intersects personal election in the chapter.
- v. 5 – While those nationally part of God's elected body (Israel) were apostatizing, there was a remnant part of national election as well as personal election to salvation as a believing remnant.
- v. 6 – The focus is pure, unadulterated, unmerited grace – not of works at all.
- v. 7 – Don't forget the cause of judicial blindness: unbelief. The elect received the Saviour, against what they deserved judicially; but others were blinded according to what they deserved, so they could not receive the Saviour. However, this does not say God gave them this blindness because of pre-birth reprobation.

Ephesians 1:3-14 – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having*

predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

- v. 3 – Gives a context: positional blessing before God in Christ.
- v. 4 – “In Him” qualifies the nature of election: it is centered around Christ, His merits and position.
- “before the foundation of the world” tells us that being chosen doesn't happen at salvation.
- “holy and blameless before Him in love” describes the blessedness, glory, goal, and greatness of what election accomplishes. This, in context is positional.
- v. 5 – predestination: assumes election, and is unto adoption (thus all sonship entails)
- the basis: the good pleasure of His will. This is ALWAYS positive in Scripture and can connote to us nobility in God's fore-ordination. Election/predestination are noble! We need not fear the good Judge of all the earth Who will do right.
- v. 6 – the goal of sovereign purpose: to show His grace in bringing us into a position of favor in Christ.
- v. 7-10 – personal redemption is part of another sovereign purpose to head up all things in Christ according to God's inexhaustible wisdom in dispensational dealings.
- v. 11-14 – God's purpose is again at the fore, man's responsibility also included as he hears the gospel (v. 13), eternal security established because of God's sovereign purposes. Election here is presented as means of PERSONAL encouragement in POSITIVE light. Reprobation is not mentioned at all. His glory is the last concept, thus the ultimate purpose.

Colossians 3:12 – *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering...*

- The context: the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him Who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew.... but Christ is all in all...
- Elect of God: if this title can be spoken of in regards to the unsaved, then this is a requirement for the unsaved elect. But obviously, it is address to the *saved only*, thus making the topic of election only applicable when salvation is already accomplished.
- This also denotes the special character of those in Christ, the elect: they are treasured.

1 Thessalonians 1:4 – *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.*

- “Your election of God” – something that is recognized when and after the preaching of the gospel bears true and lasting fruit.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 – *But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit*

and belief of the truth:

- “brethren beloved of the Lord” – God marks His own as beloved.
- “because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation” – we are beloved because of God's choice (election)... this salvation is not ultimate salvation, but salvation from sin's penalty, as expressed in those who are damned for not loving the truth... this salvation is sovereign by choice and procurement, for it is by the setting apart of a soul by the Spirit... belief of the truth, the necessary response and conviction of a soul that will obtain salvation.
- “to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Election never stops at salvation from sin's penalty: it envisions eternal glory as the ultimate end.

2 Timothy 2:10 – *Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

- The question: is this salvation immediate, thus designating “elect” as those who would be saved, or is this salvation ultimate, thus designating “elect” as the already saved? This will affect how gospel preaching is viewed, whether it is simply calling the elect to salvation or preaching to the lost.
- Some factors to consider:
 - Though the gospel is mentioned briefly in verse 8, the main context is personal faithfulness in the ministration of God's Word to believers.
 - The verses following speak of ultimate salvation as our goal, tying in with the “eternal glory” of verse 10.
 - “Elect” in the New Testament refers to believers.
 - A.T. Robertson says “also” implies “that [the elect] as well as I may obtain...”, implying Paul too was striving for this, as in Philippians 3. (He says plainly too in his commentary that this is ultimate salvation)
- Exegetically, the better conclusion is that “the elect” were believers as everywhere in the NT who were striving for ultimate salvation. Thus, Paul was not simply preaching to the elect in the gospel, but suffering for the sake of God's people in light of their ultimate end.

Titus 1:1 – *Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;*

- Again, God's elect are seen as being those who subscribe to the faith. How can this rightly apply to unbelievers?

1 Peter 1:2-5 – *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

- “elect according to the foreknowledge of God.” The only way this can be Arminian foreknowledge is if the knowledge is of decisions, not of persons; but persons are in mind here. God knew individuals beforehand in a caring and personal way. This is something we enjoy even now: “The Lord knows them that are His.”

- “through sanctification of the Spirit.” Foreknowledge described the manner of election. Sanctification of the Spirit describes the means of bringing election to fruition. See 2 Thessalonians 2:13 – “chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”
- “unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” The blood must be APPLIED for it to take effect in one's life. This would clarify the issue on limited atonement which seems to forget the distinction between the *shedding* of blood and the *sprinkling* of blood. Even for the elect, the blood must be applied for it to have any effect in salvation. The shedding of blood is for *provision*, and Scripture describes Christ's work as giving Himself a ransom for ALL. But only when obedience unto Christ is wrought in a soul is the sprinkling made which is the *purification*.
- v. 3-5 – Note the utter assurance surrounding the salvation of the saints. Truly if God were not sovereign in salvation, these things would not follow.
 - *He* begot us to a living hope.
 - Our inheritance is reserved in the heavens for us.
 - We are kept by the power of God through faith.

2 Peter 1:10-11 – *Wherefore the rather, brethren, use diligence to make your calling and election sure, for doing these things ye will never fall; for thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be richly furnished unto you.*

- The context: coming into the fullness of our salvation and what it means to participate in the divine nature.
- The contrast: a man who knows nothing of what salvation should effect in his life.
- The call: in time – by obedience we come into the good of it. This is the call of Romans 8:30.
- The choice: in eternity – by living out holiness, we give evidence of it, as if this is an assumed, untroublesome part of Christian thinking. Biblically, Christians *want* to be sure and confident of their election.

Acts 13:48 – *And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.*

- This is foresight; thus believers are in mind as subjects of positive election when thinking of this appointing to eternal life. It does not say the rest were damned from eternity. This passage is the obvious application of the concept we find in 1 Thessalonians 1. When one is saved, we understand that he is part of the elect. This is the same conclusion from another perspective; these people were saved, thus meaning they were appointed to eternal life. Thus, those who were appointed unto eternal life believed. Again, this does not mean Paul preached to any less than the whosoever in the audience. The only way election comes into the picture is by foresight.
- There is another way to view this, however, bearing in mind the concept of the word “appointed.” In 1 Corinthians 16, the word is used of the house of Stephanus who “devoted themselves...” There it is active; here, however, it is passive. With them, it was a constraining force that compelled them to serve the saints. Here, it could be, rather than divine election, the compelling force of God's Spirit in salvation, as described in John 6.
- However, context of Jew and Gentile must also be borne of in mind. The Gentiles accepted what the Jews rejected, and so the thought may be loosely argued that the Gentile community as a whole was ordained to eternal life. But because it is “as many as” (indicating individuality),

we cannot dismiss personal election or a personal effectual call as being in this parameter.