

DOCTRINE MATTERS: ESSENTIAL TRUTHS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Message 17: Election: God's Glory in Our Salvation

Ephesians 1:3-14 (ESV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ **to the praise of his glorious grace**, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ 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, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be **to the praise of his glory**. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, **to the praise of his glory**.

The doctrine of election:

Election is the free and sovereign choice of God, made in eternity past, to set his love on certain individuals, and, on the basis of nothing in themselves but solely because of the good pleasure of his will, to choose them to be saved from sin and damnation and to inherit the blessings of eternal life through the mediatorial work of Christ.

- John MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

Baptist Faith and Message, 2000

Some people today say that they are perplexed by the doctrine of God's sovereignty and election. I am amazed that anyone who believes in God should stumble at God's sovereignty and election. For if there is a God, a King, eternal, immortal, invisible, and almighty, He has to be sovereign, and He must do all things according to His will, and He must choose according to His purpose! Whom shall He consult? With whom shall He seek counsel and advice? One may dislike these doctrines; but you cannot get rid of them without denying altogether the existence of the infinite, wise, glorious God of heaven and earth. God would not be God were He not absolutely sovereign in His eternal pre-arrangements and His present doings.

– Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

By dying for everyone, Jesus purchased everyone as his possession, and he then applies his forgiveness to the elect—those in Christ—by grace, and applies his wrath to the non-elect—those who reject Christ. Objectively, Jesus' death was sufficient to save anyone, and, subjectively, only efficient to save those who repent of their sin and trust in him.

- Mark Driscoll, *Doctrine*

The subject of predestination, which in itself is attended by considerable difficulty, is rendered very perplexed, and hence perilous, by human curiosity, which cannot be restrained from wandering into forbidden paths...Those secrets of his will which he has seen fit to manifest, are revealed in his Word—revealed in so far as he knew to be conducive to our interest and welfare....Let it, therefore, be our first principle that to desire any other knowledge of predestination than that which is expounded by the Word of God, is no less infatuated than to walk where there is no path, or to seek light in darkness....The best rule of sobriety is, not only in learning to follow wherever God leads, but also when he makes an end of teaching to cease wishing to be wise.

- John Calvin

Election – Some Presuppositions

1. _____ knowledge is impossible (and even *impermissible*) when it comes to election.
2. Election is a _____ issue, not a primary one. Our view of election does not define us. Our view of the Gospel does.
3. We can and should work together with those whom we disagree on secondary issues as long as orthodoxy on primary issues is intact.
4. Election is a doctrine for Christians, not non-Christians. It is not part of the _____, per se.

Election – What is Clear

1. Election is a recurring theme of _____ and _____ alike.
2. Election is a work of God determined before _____.
3. Election is about God's _____.
4. Election is rooted in God's _____; it is not a matter of _____, it is pure _____.
5. Election is entirely of God without _____.
6. Election is God's work to _____ lost man, it is not God's work to _____ lost man.
7. Election and _____ is the way God brings about His sovereign will.
8. Election affirms God's _____ without denying man's _____.

Matthew 11:20-24 (ESV)

²⁰ Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. ²¹ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

Matthew 11:25-27 (ESV)

²⁵ At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Election – God-intended Effects

1. _____.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (ESV)

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

2. _____.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 (ESV)

¹³ But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴ To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. ¹⁶ Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

3. _____.

Titus 1:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began

Revelation 13:8 (ESV)

⁸ ... and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

4. _____.

2 Timothy 1:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ⁹ 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 2:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ 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.

5. _____.

Titus 1:1-3 (ESV)

¹ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began ³ and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;

1 Peter 1:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² 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: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Romans 10:14-17 (ESV)

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

6. _____.

Acts 18:1-11 (ESV)

¹ After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, ³ and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. ⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. ⁵ When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. ⁶ And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." ⁷ And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸ Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. ⁹ And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." ¹¹ And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Romans 10:9-13 (ESV)

⁹ ... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Some conclusions:

God will not hold us responsible to understand the mysteries of election, predestination, and the divine sovereignty. The best and safest way to deal with these truths is to raise our eyes to God and in deepest reverence say, "O Lord, Thou knowest." Those things belong to the deep and mysterious Profound of God's omniscience. Prying into them may make theologians, but it will never make saints.

- A. W. Tozer (1897-1963), *The Pursuit of God*

We give our hand to every man that loves the Lord Jesus Christ, be he what he may or who he may. The doctrine of election, like the great act of election itself, is not intended to divide between Israel and Israel but between Israel and the Egyptians. Not between saint and saint, but between saints and the children of the world. A man may be evidently of God's chosen family and yet, though elected, may not believe in the doctrine of election. I hold that there are many savingly called who do not believe in effectual calling and that there are a great many who persevere to the end who do not believe the doctrine of final perseverance. We do hope the hearts of many are a great deal better than their heads. We do not set their fallacies down to any willful opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus, but simply to an error in their judgment which we pray God to correct. We hope that if they think us mistaken, too, they will reciprocate the same Christian courtesy. And when we meet around the cross, we hope that we shall ever feel that we are one in Christ Jesus.

- Charles Spurgeon

*Theology is for **doxology** and **devotion**—that is, the praise of God and the practice of godliness.*

- J.I. Packer

NEXT WEEK: The Gospel Call