

Study Fellowship November 2011 – February 2012:
 “Flowers, Dead People, and Tending Sheep” or What it means to live out Reformed
 Theology in the 21st Century by being a Presbyterian, PCA

Doctrines of Grace – Unconditional Election - Session 8

All serious students of scripture believe that the bible teaches election (God chooses those who will be saved). The question that immediately arises is not, ‘Does the bible teach election?’, but rather, ‘Upon what basis does God choose those who will be saved?’.

I. Definitions

Arminian & Calvinistic Perspectives on Election

Arminian – Conditional Election	Calvinism – Unconditional Election
<p>“God’s choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He elected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what man would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted solely from man’s will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation. God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner’s choice of Christ, not God’s choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.” (The Five Points of Calvinism – Defined, Defended, Documented – Steele & Thomas – pg. 16-17)</p>	<p>“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. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God’s choice of the sinner, not the sinner’s choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.” (The Five Points of Calvinism – Defined, Defended, Documented – Steele & Thomas – pg. 16-17)</p>

II. Implications

- A. Had God shown mercy to none, it would have been perfectly just. God was under no obligation to save anyone.
- B. From before the foundation of the world God chose certain individuals from among Adam’s fallen race to be objects of His undeserved favor.
- C. God’s choice was based solely on His own good pleasure and sovereign will.

D. Those not chosen were passed by and left to their own evil devices and choices.

E. The only way this could be deemed “unfair” is if God were under obligation to save sinners – a position the bible clearly rejects.

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?” But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? “ Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’ Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? (Rom. 9:14-21)

F. This doctrine is best understood within the context of the eternal covenant made within the members of the Godhead.

“Then God said, “Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” (Gen. 1:26)

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Gen. 3:15)

There is a perfect one-to-one correspondence of those whom the Father elects, those whom the Son redeems, and those to whom the Spirit regenerates. This must be so because of the eternal covenant made among the members of the Godhead.

III. Biblical Evidence

A. God has a chosen people

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance. (Ps. 33:12)

“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (Matt. 11:27)

(see also Deut. 10:14-15, Ps. 65:4, 106:5, Haggai 2:23, Matt. 22:14, Luke 18:7, Rom 8:33, 11:28, Col. 3:12, I Thess. 5:9, Tit. 1:1, I Pet. 1:1-2, 2:8-9, Rev. 17:14)

B. God’s choice was made before the foundation of the world and based upon nothing foreseen in those chosen.

1. God did the choosing. *If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. (Mark 13:11)*

(see also I Thess. 1:4, II Thess. 2:13)

2. God's choice was made before the foundation of the world. *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will- (Eph. 1:4-5)*

3. The names of the elect are written in the book of life. *All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. (Rev. 13:8)*

(see also Rev. 17:8)

4. God's choice was not based upon any foreseen merit in those whom He would choose. *...who has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ... (2 Tim. 1:9)*

(see also Rom. 9:11-13, 16, Rom. 10:20, I Cor. 1:27-29,

5. Good works are the result, not the ground of election. *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Eph. 2:10)*

(see also Eph. 1:12, John 15:16)

6. God's choice was not based upon foreseen faith. *When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48)*

(see also Acts 18:27, Phil. 1:29, 2:12-13, I Thess. 1:4-5, II Thess. 2:13-14, James 2:5)

7. Faith and good works confirm calling and election. *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.*

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:5-11)

C. Election is not salvation, but is unto salvation. *Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. (2 Tim. 2:10)*

(see also Rom. 11:7, 16:7)

D. Election was based upon the sovereign, distinguishing mercy of God. *And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. (Exod. 33:19)*

(see also Deut. 7:6-7, Matt 20:15, Rom. 9:10-24, Rom. 11:4-6, 33-36, Eph. 1:5)

E. The doctrine of election is one aspect of the broader doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. Ps. 115:3

Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do. (Is. 46:9-11)

(see also I Chron. 29:10-12, Job 42:1-2, Ps. 135:6, Isaiah 14:24, 27, Isaiah 55:11, Jer. 32:17, Daniel 4:35)

IV. Application

A. How ought this doctrine impact our practice both individually and corporately?

B. In what ways do we need to be careful regarding either misunderstanding or misappropriating this doctrine?