

Election/Predestination

Our Christian religion is full of paradoxes, teachings that go beyond our human understanding. Reason says you can only be in one place at one time. But Christ is at the right hand of the Father and with us individually as He has promised. Logic says one equals one, while Scripture clearly teaches that our God is three in one, three yet one. And so it goes. Our faith created by the Spirit who is the author of the Word must carry us beyond human reason and logic toward understanding the spiritual.

It is not so much a matter of reason being contrary to Scripture, but that Scripture is above reason as a master is above a servant. So long as reason is used in its proper place it is fine. If it tries to rule over the master it is out of place. Reason is like a ceiling in your house. When you are in your house the ceiling presents a limit to how high you can go. Go outside of your house and the sky is no limit even. Faith soars beyond our limited human understanding. The one guide in this is the Word of God which is also the source and grounding of faith.

Now on this earth we have limitations to our understanding that we readily acknowledge, "...our knowledge is imperfect...For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully..." 1 Cor. 13:9,12 The Bible teaching on election is a paradox, beyond our understanding that we must grasp by faith in the Word. In this study we will be considering how God in eternity decided to save us, the elect. Before we were born or conceived, before our parents or any ancestors were born God decided to save us. This is a teaching of pure grace which has nothing at all to do with man's efforts or inclinations in time. As a matter of fact man in his life may fall from faith as David and Peter did. Election comforts us in that when He calls us from this life, He will have us in the faith.

David's Testimony

"For Thou didst form my inward parts, Thou didst knit me together in my mothers' womb...Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance; in Thy book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." Ps. 139:13,16 David goes far beyond his formation in his mother's womb by God. 'The days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none...' points to God in eternity. It is reinforced with "in Thy book were written." David took great comfort when he as a persecuted servant of the king found that the king sought his life over and over again. But even more comfort comes to know God has it in His book about him. God knew David in eternity as His own. It is not just a matter of God knowing the parts that would be put together to make a person, rather that God knew David as a person. God's mind is beyond ours in comparison as the vast earth in its entirety is to a tiny fly speck.

Jeremiah's Testimony

Jeremiah's ministry was evidently a long one, perhaps for over fifty years. (from 627BC to after 586) Read on your own of all the suffering that Jeremiah faced. (11:21, 20:1-2, 26:8, 32:3, 37:15, 38:6, 43:2, 44:15-16) But then remember God's great comfort to Jeremiah in the beginning of his book. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." 1:5 This is not referring just to God's hands at work for nine months in his mother's womb, but to eternity. The person, Jeremiah, God knew and picked for the work. So the suffering does not really matter, if God so chose Jeremiah. God does not act like someone who goes to the store and picks an item, uses it and then discards it. This is not our God. Jeremiah was chosen in eternity and then in time consecrated to the work No matter how long one lives, no matter what persecutions one faces, God decided in eternity to act on the person such that at the end one is in faith.

“We believe in an election of grace, or a predestination to salvation; but we reject an election of wrath, or a predestination to damnation; we reject also every doctrine, by which it is claimed that not solely the grace of God and the merits of Christ are the cause of our eternal election unto salvation...” You can go to the Appendix and read the whole section from Mueller.

The Word for Election

The Greek root word is below:

eklegomai

ek-leg'-om-ahee

Middle voice (in its primary sense); to *select*: - make choice, choose (out), chosen.

The verb is translated as: choose(29 times), choose out(1), make choice(1).

The noun is translated as: chosen(7), elect(16).

The word is not always referring to election in eternity. In Acts 6:5 the choosing of Stephen is obviously a different use. The context has to tell the sense of the word. For instance if men do it we are not talking about the teaching of election. In 1 Tim. 5:21 the word is used referring to angels and not men. When a letter is begun with its use as in Titus 1:1 and 1 Pet. 1:2 it is divine election. Our Lord in speaking of the end times used the word referring back to divine election: Mk. 13:20,22,27. In the following passages there is the use referring to divine election: Lk. 18:7, Rom. 8:33, Col. 3:12, 2 Tim. 2:10.

The Word for Predestination

The Greek root word is below:

pro-or-id'-zo

to *limit in advance*, that is, (figuratively) *predetermine*: - determine before, ordain, predestinate.

This word is not used as much in the New Testament as elect(tion).

- In Jude 4 it is 'ordain.' Here it is a matter of God's foreknowledge. He long ago designated the 'type' that we find “...some who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God...and deny our only Master.” God does not predestine to hell, but has designated that there would be this type of people with the wording of 'some' and 'ungodly persons.' This is a whole other study of the 'foreknowledge' of God.
- In Acts 4:28 it is 'determine beforehand.' God's plan of salvation was determined in the council of the Trinity in eternity. God's plan would be carried out. All messianic prophecies of the Messiah and His work fulfilled in New Testament time show this.
- In Rom 8:29, 30, Eph. 1:5,11 it is 'predestinate.' In the Romans passages it refers to God's

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predestination to heaven. In v. 29 we also see that there is a difference between God's foreknowledge and predestination. In these verses our salvation is treated as an accomplished fact from before time to the ending of time in glory. The tense used in Greek gives us a panoramic picture of the whole work of God in vv. 29-30. In Ephesians we'll look at the words election and predestination used together in context giving us the clear sense and great comfort.

The Two Words Together

1 Pet. 1:1-2 “...to the exiles of the Dispersion...chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified

by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood.” They are chosen and destined before they are converted as the passage shows. The two words used together help to give a complete reinforced sense to something we can only believe.

Eph. 1:3-5 “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, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. He destined us in love to be His sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of His will.”

- This is something done 'in' Christ Jesus. It all centers on Christ. There is no work that a believer can do. Some try to say that God elected us 'in view of our faith'. But that is not stated here or anywhere else. It is in Christ. As conversion is an act of God on man, so is election. Or think how some say election is determined at least in part by good conduct. No, it was decided in eternity in Christ.
- This was done 'before the foundation of the world', in eternity before ever there was even one man. This astounds us, but that is what it says.
- Notice the hand of God alone in this 'according to the purpose of His will' not ours. There is no free will after the fall in Eden.
- He destined us 'in love'. Our God is love. To be in the palm of His hand is true security. And now think for a moment about those who teach also a predestination to hell. How does that sound, God predestines in love to hell?
- Both of the words used here together put the seal on what God is revealing to us. Just as when two lines intersect, you get the point.

Other Wording

2 Tim. 1:9 “who saved us and called us with a holy calling not in virtue of our works but in virtue of His own purpose and the grace which He gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago.” What could that 'ages ago' mean? This letter to Timothy was written between 65-67 AD. Christ was crucified only some 37 years earlier. So 'ages ago' does not seem to refer to Calvary, but before the world began in the Trinitarian council.

In Acts 13:48 we do not have either of the two Greek words we looked at earlier, but a different one referring back to eternity. “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” The word 'ordain' here is:

tas'-so

to *arrange* in an orderly manner, that is, *assign* or *dispose* (to a certain position or lot): - addict,

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appoint, determine, ordain, set

Rejection of Misinterpretation

A number of other Protestants using their reason as the master say if God ordained to heaven then He ordained to hell also. We instead simply go by the simple message of Scripture and follow where it leads. Consider how Rom. 9:22-23 is misinterpreted. “What if God, desiring to show His wrath and to make known His power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory.” Even when you look at this in your native language you see there is a difference between the two vessels. One is 'made for destruction' while the other is 'prepared beforehand'. The Greek also bears this out and tells even more. The root word for 'made...' is:

kat-ar-tid'-zo

to *complete thoroughly*, that is, *repair* (literally or figuratively) or *adjust*: - fit, frame, mend, (make) perfect (-ly join together), prepare, restore.

It is in a form of the verb that can be translated as reflexive, which means you do it to yourself. The vessels of wrath are self made for destruction. God did not make each such. We know there would be such according to a 'type' as we read in Jude 4. The blame and guilt and responsibility for going to hell is man's not God's . There are other passages that speak on this too. For instance our Lord says what will be spoken at the end, "Then He will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Mt. 25:42 Notice for whom the eternal fire was prepared. Man chooses to follow the evil one with the eternally, deadly consequence.

The word for 'prepared beforehand' is:

pro-et-oy-mad'-zo

to *fit up in advance* (literally or figuratively): - ordain before, prepare afore.

When is the 'beforehand'? In eternity as we saw in Eph. 1.

Purely the Grace of God

Our election or predestination does not depend upon: our will or exertion, our merit and good, our impending faith or good intent, or anything else in us. Designated by God for eternity with Him determined in God's eternal council before the world began it all depends on Him. In Christ in love it was written down in His book. I might in life move away from Him. But He is that hound of heaven who pursues me and embraces me such that when the spirit is called forth from my body I will have that simple child-like faith that propels me into the eternal habitation, that place Jesus has gone ahead to prepare for me, that where He is I may be also. To God alone belongs all the praise!

APPENDIX, (from Mueller's My Church and Others)

VIII. OF THE ELECTION OF GRACE OR PREDESTINATION

WE BELIEVE (a) in an election of grace, or a predestination to salvation; but (b) we reject an election of wrath, or a predestination to damnation; (c) we reject also every doctrine, by which it is claimed that not solely the grace of God and the merits of Christ are the cause of our eternal election unto salvation, but that God foresaw also in us something good which prompted Him to elect us (good works, correct conduct, (non-resistance), self-determination, persevering faith, etc); (d) we believe that God does not desire the damnation of any one, but that His love to the sinful world is universal and that the redemption of Christ pertains to all men.

a) Rom. 11, 5. 6. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Rom. 8. 28-30. 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.

Cf. 2 Pet. 3. 9: John 3.16.

c) Rom. 9:11-12. 16. (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth), it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.

2 Tim. 1. 9. Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Cf. Rom. 8. 29, 30; Eph. 1. 3-5

d) John 3. 16. 17. For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Matt. 23. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Cf. I Tim. 2. 4-6; Acts 13. 46; Acts 7. 51.

WE REJECT as unscriptural the following teachings:

1. That God's saving grace is not universal, but pertains only to the elect: Calvinistic Baptists, Calvinistic Methodists, etc. Rom. 11. 32; (3:19). See passages above.

2. That the election of grace depends to some extent upon the good conduct of man: Eastern Orthodox Church, Campbellites, free Will Baptists, Synergists, Arminians, Sectarian churches. Rom. 11. 5, 6; Eph. 1. 3-6; 2 Tim. 1. 9; Rom. 9. 11f.

3. That the election of grace is not from eternity but takes place in time: Arminians, Methodists, Cumberland Presbyterians, Unitarians, Shakers, Salvation Army. 2 Tim. 1. 9; Rom. 9. 11; Eph. 1:3,5. Also many Synergists.

4. That there is no election of grace in the proper sense, since man himself determines his election and salvation: Churches of the New Jerusalem, Unitarians, Mormons, Eph. 1. 3-6; 2 Thess. 2. 13; John 15. 16. All Modernists in the various churches, (Arminians).

5. That the election of grace was an absolute act of sovereign God and was decreed without consideration of Christ and His vicarious satisfaction for the sins of the world: Presbyterians, Congregational Christians, Calvinistic Baptists, Calvinistic Methodists, etc. Eph. 1. 3-6; 2 Tim. 1. 9.

6. That the elect cannot altogether fall from grace or wholly lose their faith even in spite of the greatest sins: Presbyterians, Congregational Christians, Calvinistic Baptists, Calvinistic Methodist, etc. Ps. 51. 10-13; Matt. 26. 69f; 2 Sam. 12: 1-13; Ps. 37. 24; John 20, 25, 29.

7. That the elect cannot be sure of their salvation in spite of their faith in Christ: Roman Catholic Church. Rom 8. 38, 39; 2 Tim. 1. 12; Phil. 1. 6; Luke 10. 20; I Thess. 1. 4; I Pet. 5. 12; 2 Pet. 1. 10.

8. That the wicked are lost not through their own sin and unbelief, but because of the

absolute decree of God, by which He withheld from them His grace and mercy; Calvinistic Churches, Reformed Presbyterians, Calvinistic Baptists, Calvinistic Methodists, Congregational Christians, etc. Hosea 13. 9; Matt. 23. 37; Acts 7. 51; Acts 13. 46; John 3. 19; I Thess. 5. 9; Luke 14. 16-24; Gal. 5. 4; Ezek. 18. 26; I Tim. 1. 19.

9. Lastly, we reject every doctrine of Calvinism which denies universal grace and every doctrine of synergism which denies salvation by grace alone. I Tim. 2. 4; 2 Pet. 3. 9; Tom. 4. 4, 5; Rom. 3. 20-28

Note: Today many rationalistic and modernistic churches still use the terms "deity of Christ," "atonement," "salvation by faith," & "election by grace," but they have changed their meaning so as to suit their rationalism.