

The Circuit Rider

Published By

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Election

(Part III)

“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.” (Rom. 11:5-6)

Since the doctrine of election is a great mystery, it causes unfortunate controversy among people who demand to understand it. For the redeemed of God, it shows us the greatness of God’s grace and produces humility of spirit as we see God doing His sanctifying work within us. Christ’s death on the cross was sufficient for all, but only efficient for those who believe. That’s because there is no other way to be saved from the penalty of sin outside of Christ’s atonement for sinners and the only way to believe is for God to regenerate the heart and grant faith to believe. An unregenerate man simply cannot pump repentance and faith from his heart like he would pump water from a well. These are gifts to God’s elect. Outside of Christ, man is spiritually dead and a dead man can do nothing whatsoever. Therefore, he must be given life by the supernatural power of God’s sovereign grace.

THE MEANING OF ELECTION

The word, predestination, is used to signify God’s foreordaining of all events. When we use this word theologically, we emphasize the fact that God predestined before the world began the eternal destiny of every individual. Is that hard to grasp? Yes, it is! Are we supposed to understand that truth? It’s not a matter of understanding it, it’s a matter of believing God’s Word and accepting it by faith. If you demand to understand it, then you are not exercising faith and let me remind you that “whatsoever is not of faith is

sin” (Rom. 14:23). We have difficulty in understanding how divine sovereignty and human freedom are compatible simply because we are mere mortals.

The Bible clearly teaches predestination or election of particular sinners for salvation (Rom. 8:29, Eph. 1:4-5,11). Scripture even refers to those who have not been chosen to eternal life (Rom. 9:6-29, I Pet. 2:8, Jude 4). Therefore, when we think of the doctrine of predestination, it includes God electing to save some and the reprobation of others. Some people say God’s choice of saving sinners is based on His foreknowledge that they would choose Christ as Savior. In other words, they say that since God is Sovereign, He knew in advance that the sinner would chose Christ. However, by looking at Adam in the Garden of Eden, we discover what man will do when left to make his own choices. Therefore, God’s foreknowledge speaks of an advance choice that He made. It does not picture God as some spectator, but the very One who took the initiative in choosing a people unto Himself. Sinners are born spiritually dead and a dead man is totally unresponsive. Unless God regenerates the inward man, grants repentance and faith, then it’s impossible for anyone to come to Christ (Jh. 6:44,65, 10:25-28). Sinners choose Christ because God chose them first.

THE PLAN OF SALVATION AND ELECTION

God’s purpose of election dates back “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4) and is the fountain from which flows the means of our conformity “to the image” of Christ (Rom. 8:28-33). Back in eternity past, God chose us to be “saved” (II Tim. 1:9) and appointed Christ to be our Savior (I Pet. 1:19-20). When the “fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4) was come, Jesus came into the world to fulfill the plan of salvation and die for those whom the “Father” had “given Him” (Jh. 17:2,24). Jesus saw Himself as the “Shepherd” Who gave His life for His “sheep” (Jh. 10:11-16, 26-29).

In light of divine election, the command to evangelize the world should never be underestimated. In man’s lostness, we cannot tell “elect” unbelievers from non-elect unbelievers. It’s not our job to try and figure out who will and who won’t believe the gospel. Our commission is to “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15) and leave the result to God. God’s method of saving the “lost” (Lk. 19:10) is to call them out of the world by the power of the Holy Spirit upon hearing God’s divine “truth” (II Thess. 2:13-14). That “truth” is to be delivered by the church (Matt. 28:19-20) to the world (Mk. 16:15) in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:13-17). Evangelism is God’s means of bringing His elect to faith in Christ. It’s not up to us to persuade men to make a decision for Christ, but simply present the claims of the gospel and let the Holy Spirit call out God’s elect.

Reprobation (Rom. 9:18, I Pet. 2:8) is God’s eternal decision regarding sinners whom He has not chosen to eternal life. Only God knows the elect from the reprobate and for that reason, the church must proclaim the Gospel to every creature. We can encourage people to be saved, but the effectual call of God is a particular act of God that results in regeneration (Jh. 10:3-4). We are all born sinners and that means we are all by nature “dead” or in other words, unresponsive to God. It is God’s effectual call

that gives life to the dead. It is an inner call by the Holy Spirit that renews the heart and makes one a new creature in Christ.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND ELECTION

Since election is a secret known only to God, it becomes one of the family secrets of the sons of God. Those who make up the “household of faith” (Gal. 6:10) will appreciate this doctrine of election, while others who are outside God’s family will detest it. Many people will make a profession of faith, but fail to exercise God-given faith unto salvation. They will call their intellectual understanding of the historical Christ, faith. But it will not be a trust and commitment of their “heart” (Rom. 10:9) to the Savior. It will be an academic belief like that of the “devils” (Jam. 2:19) and not saving faith. Therefore, we are admonished to “give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (II Pet. 1:10). Not only do those outside the faith detest the doctrine of election, but also many well meaning but confused believers. Most frequently, these are people who feel that they must make a contribution to their salvation or that the success of a local church is upon their shoulders. This results in doing things that will draw a crowd, giving people what they want, building impressive buildings, and merely operating in the carnal flesh. It’s a mind-set that turns the local church into a community center, social club, and religious lodge. It forgets that our responsibility is to be faithful sowing the “seed” (Matt. 13:23) and the responsibility of Christ to add, “to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47).

The fruits produced from a person’s life show evidence of being one of God’s elect. Paul recognized God’s election of the Thessalonians by their “word of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope” (I Thess. 1:3-6). The more one possesses evidence of spiritual transformation, the more assurance he will have of his election. Regardless of what the future throws at one of God’s elect, we can face it with triumph in our hearts because it will be no accident on God’s calendar of activities (Rom. 8:35-39).

CLOSING

Election is a divine doctrine that is difficult to understand and even more difficult to explain. However, this difficulty does not discount the doctrine or the need to expound it. The only way to “rightly” divide “the word of truth” is to “study” (II Tim. 2:15) it under the teaching influence of the Holy Spirit (Jh. 16:13) and failure to do so will rob us of its blessings and benefits. Since all men are totally depraved, God must take the initiative in bringing us by His grace into a personal relationship with Himself just like He did “Adam” in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:9). Such a move by God is based upon His election and not man’s merit. Every person born into this world deserves damnation in Hell and unless one is “born again” (Jh. 3:3), their eternal destiny will not change. In salvation, man simply exercises the faith given to him by God to trust Christ for his redemption, thus giving evidence of being one of God’s elect.

The doctrine of election emphasizes the sinfulness of sin, the helplessness of man, and the sovereignty of God. Someone has said that God saves a particular person at a particular time under particular circumstances because He intends to do so. Even before the physical birth of God's elect, God made arrangements for their salvation and sovereignly decreed it. If sinful man were left entirely alone, he would never choose God. Therefore, in grace God gives a convicted sinner the desire to exercise his will and trust Christ for his salvation. Humanly speaking, the election of God unto salvation and the free will of man are impossible to reconcile. Man, in his state of innocence, was given the freedom of choice that proved to be unstable and sinful. Upon falling into sin, man lost his ability within his natural liberty to choose God or convert himself to God. Unless God overpowers the sinful will of man, then man will never have a desire for Christ. It is God and not man that takes the initiative in the salvation of a soul. Lost man is spiritually dead and a dead person can do absolutely nothing to help either himself or anyone else. Man can only be freed from his natural bondage under sin by God's grace that enables him to freely turn to Christ and believe.

A MINISTRY UPDATE

As of June 30th, COGM celebrates its fourth anniversary. This August, we enter our third year of broadcasting over WTRU in the Triad. I remind you that our Bible Studies can also be heard over our website. God has been so gracious in allowing me to teach His precious Word to the masses by means of radio and Internet. Currently, I'm editing 29 different articles that were written by my dearly beloved Christian Brother, Jerry Stanley, prior to his death this past October. Hopefully, this booklet that I've entitled, ***"The Heart of a Hurting Pastor"***, will be available by the end of this year. Copies of my book, ***"Shepherding God's Sheep and Herding Goats"***, is still available free of charge for those requesting it. I would like to extend a special thanks to all that contribute to this ministry and enable us to do what we do in the name of our Lord.

Because of His Sovereign GraceBWM

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