

Systematic Theology: Soteriology God's Sovereign Election/Predestination 3/15/26

Introduction:

- Biblical salvation begins not with a decision of man in time, but the decree of God in eternity past.
- The testimony of Scripture is that God loved and chose those who would be saved in eternity past, prior to creation.
- This is the first step in salvation

Eternity Past/Prior to Creation:

1. Sovereign Election/Predestination

- Salvation begins all the way in eternity past

Election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies. His choice is not dependent upon anything in the individual chosen. It depends entirely upon his own, uninfluenced, free will. God predestines those to salvation not due to any foreknowledge of their merit (since all are congenitally depraved and thus possess no merit), but because of his own grace, mercy, and love (Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:4-11; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:1-2).

- God's sovereignty in salvation must be understood in the context of:

- God's comprehensive sovereignty

Is there anything over which God is not sovereign?

Psalm 103:19 The LORD has established His throne in the heavens,
And His sovereignty rules over all.

Psalm 115:3 But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

Isaiah 46:9-10 "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me,¹⁰

Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'

- The depraved condition of humanity
- Various supporting texts

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Romans 8:28-30 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Ephesians 1:3-5 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will

➤ Taking a closer look at Ephesians 1:4-5

V. 3 tells us that we have been "blessed us with every spiritual blessing"

V. 4a - what's the way he has blessed us here?

1. Chosen
2. 1:4 ἐξελέξατο. Aorist middle indicative from ἐκλέγομαι, meaning, "I pick out, I choose" (Abbot-Smith, p. 139). This verb occurs 22 times in the NT, five of which, in the aorist middle, refer to God selecting people for salvation (John 15:16, 19, Mark 13:20, Acts 1:2, Ephesians 1:4).
3. The verb "chose" (aorist middle) indicates that God performed the choosing for himself and by himself; it was an independent choice; an

active, willful choice on the part of the subject, independent and unconditional of the object of choice

4. "in Him" - in union with Him (Christ); in relationship with; united to.

When did he choose?

1. "Before the foundation of the world" - "laying down," "casting down," or "foundation" (TDNT, vol. 3, p. 620; Abbott-Smith, p. 232). On ten of the eleven occasions καταβολῆς is used in the NT (except in Hebrews 11:11), κόσμου follows directly after, indicating the throwing down or foundation of the world.

Why did he chose?

1. To make the "us" something-Holy and blameless
2. What is that talking about? - for salvation. So then, what is one reason a person is chosen by God and saved? Holy and blameless

v. 5 - what is another way God says his people are blessed?

1. He predestined us to adoption as sons
2. What does "predestine" mean?

A compound verb: "limit," "set the limit," "fix," or "appoint" (TDNT, vol. 5, p. 452). Thus, the compound verb is rendered "foreordain," or "predestinate" (TDNT, vol. 5, p. 456). To "predestine" reemphasizes God's independent, unconditional choice

Why did he choose? (vv. 5-6)

1. "In love"
2. According to the kind intention of his will
3. To the praise of his glory of his grace

How was this grace given? (v. 6)

1. 'freely bestowed' on us in the Beloved.
2. grace - receiving blessing/benefit that we have not earned and when we deserve the opposite.

The "us" here - how did they get such a privileged and blessed state? What did they do to get chosen?

1. Nothing. The world wasn't created yet.

What motivated God to bless "us" as explained in vv. 4-6?

1. His kindness - v. 5b
2. His grace - v. 6
3. His will - v. 6

Summary: Before God created the universe, he selected all who would be saved, independent of all outside influence, because of his grace and for his glory.

Romans 9:11-16 for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who call, ¹² it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." ¹³ Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." ¹⁶ So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

- Taking a closer look at Romans 9
 - What had the twins done (v. 11)?
 - What is the purpose that is stated in v. 11?
 - Why is the question asked in v. 14?
 - Would that question be asked if it were not speaking of God's sovereign election?
 - Upon what does salvation hinge, according to v. 15?
 - Why does v. 16 mention "the man who wills" and the "man who runs?"
 - Upon what does salvation hinge, according to v. 16?

Romans 9:17-23 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom

He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. ¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹ Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? ²² What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³ And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

- Upon whom does mercy and hardening ultimately depend, according to v. 18?
 - What objection does v. 19 anticipate?
 - If the passage were not speaking of predestination in salvation, would the anticipating objection in v. 19 be addressed?
 - What is the answer to the objection to sovereign election in vv. 20-21?
 - What are vv. 22-23 saying that God desired to do in sovereign election?
- Greek words in the NT:
 - ἐκλέγομαι (*eklegomai*) (used about 45 times of divine choosing)
 - Eph 1:4 He chose us in Him before ...
 - 1 Pet 1:1-2 "who are chosen according to the foreknowledge..."
 - Col 3:12 "as those who have been chosen of God..."
 - 1 Thess 1:4 "knowing, brethren beloved of God, His choice of you..."
 - Titus 1:1 "for the faith of those chosen of God..."
 - αἰρέομαι (*haireomai*) -- to lift out for oneself, to pick (as fruit)
 - 2 Thess 2:13 "because from the beginning God chose you..."

Testimony of Christians throughout history

- b. These truths were not thought up in our day, but observed from Scripture since the beginning by God's people.
- c. Clement of Rome (ca. A.D. 90): "It being the will of God that all his beloved ones should be made partakers of repentance, he has established them firmly by his own Almighty purpose."
- d. Augustine (A.D. 430): "Grace came into the world that those who were predestined before the world may be chosen out of the world."
- e. Remigus (9th century): "Almighty God did, from the beginning, prior to the formation of the world, and before he had made any thing, predestinate some certain persons to glory, of his own gratuitous favor."
- f. John Huss (early 15th century): "Predestination does make a man a member of the universal Church...God wills that the predestinate shall have perpetual blessedness, and the reprobate to have eternal fire."
- g. Westminster Confession of Faith (1646, some 151 people):
 - i. (Chapter 3, God's Eternal Decree) III. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.
 - ii. IV. These angels and men, thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.
 - iii. V. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, has chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.
 - iv. VIII. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the

will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the Gospel.

- h. Charles Spurgeon (1892): "Scripture continually speaks of God's people one by one and speaks of them as having been the special objects of election."
- i. RC Sproul: "What predestination means, in its most elementary form, is that our final destination, heaven or hell, is decided by God not only before we get there, but before we are even born. It teaches that our ultimate destiny is in the hands of God." (*Chosen by God*)