

God's Decree of Election

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[0 : 00] Why are we in here studying God's Word?

! It's not going to be completed in this life.

John Wesley thought it would, but he admitted he was wrong at the end. That's a journey toward Christlikeness and to improve and intensify our worship of God.

That's our goal in here. I also want to say, I guess, do we still have a Berean class? Do they call themselves that? We used to have a Berean, I think it was a men's class.

You know, the Bereans listened to Paul and then went home and looked up in the Scriptures to see if what he said was true. That's all I can expect from anybody in here. Just take these passages, and we're going to cover a lot of them tonight.

[1 : 14] Take them home and look at them. That's all any teacher should desire. And that's certainly my desire. Well, I haven't been avoiding this, but we come tonight to the introduction of the biblical doctrine of election.

People have been killed for doing that. A lot of churches have been through a lot of interesting situations with this. I approach it with a measure of fear and trepidation.

I say that because I'm not fearful of teaching upon it. I'm not even fearful of trying in some small way of defending the doctrine.

My concern is not predicated upon the fact that it has been treated in many churches, probably the majority of churches, as controversial. In our fallenness, many men have treated as divisive.

That's not a concern. The fear I have is born out of the fact that when we come to the doctrine of election, and we're there, we're on holy ground.

[2 : 42] This is the burning bush. And Moses. And take off your shoes, Moses. You're standing on holy ground here. The doctrine was decreed by the one, true, eternal God who manifested Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The decree was issued in eternity past, before the universe was created. And as such, we played no role in its formation or foundation, which is true of every doctrine of God.

They all come from eternity past. Now, as we go through this, there's going to be a number of topics related that we will touch on as we work forward over next weeks.

I'm going to mention the word predestination, foreknowledge, choosing. At some point, we will hear the words Reformation or Reformed theology.

We probably will hear the word Calvinism. We won't hear that a lot. John Calvin never used that word, and I don't like it. I prefer Reform or Reformation. Calvin much preferred the doctrines of grace.

[4 : 13] And it's interesting. There's a lot of good friends of mine around town that slam Calvinism or Reformed theology.

And I'll say, what is Calvinism? They don't know. Calvinism is a systematic theology of looking at the Bible, a way of looking at the Bible.

And Calvin saw, and I'll repeat this in a few weeks, Calvin saw everything through the lens of grace. Everything.

And he called it the doctrines of grace. He wrote what some could argue is the greatest non-inspired writings ever, the Institutes of the Christian Religion.

Originally in four volumes when he was 25 years old. And the word election is in there twice. In four volumes. Now, someone told me that.

[5 : 11] I haven't read them. I tried. It's way over my head. But Calvin saw everything through grace. If you drink a glass of water, it's by God's grace.

If you take a gulp of air to live, that's God's grace. If rain falls on your garden, on your field, it's the grace of God.

Everything, he said, it's all grace. Unmerited favor, undeserved, unearned. That was Calvin. So we're going to look at some point in here the doctrine of prevenient grace.

Wesley's definition probably. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it. And we're going to look at the doctrine of reprobation. And that probably doesn't mean anything to everybody in here.

Some of you understand it. But we're going to look at those things briefly. And if you're unsure of those details, have no fear. We will cover them.

[6 : 19] We will look at all of these, and I'm sure much more, in varying degrees of depth.

And let me say this. If I cannot support the doctrine of election, or any doctrine, with Scripture properly understood, in context, then I have no ground to hold to this.

None of us do. Whatever. Choose a doctrine. If it's not in Scripture, we shouldn't be doing it. I remember someone said to Adrian Rogers once about his Baptist doctrine.

And he stopped him and said, if we got any Baptist doctrine, get rid of it. We need Bible doctrine. That's the kind of doctrine we need. And anyone that wants to reject or refute these teachings, or any teaching on doctrine that is in the Bible, must do so with clear words from Scripture.

For myself, I am driven by a teaching of the Holy Spirit. And he directed the Apostle Paul to give it to us in the great book of Romans.

[7 : 41] And it's a great truth. And actually, one of the few Scriptures I was able to actually memorize, because it's only five words. And it was in the form of a question that should drive, it should be the engine that drives everything we believe in the Word of God, in the Bible, in Jesus and God.

And this is from Romans 4.3. What do the Scriptures say? That covers it all. Well, I believe this. Well, what do the Scriptures say? Well, I believe that. What do the Scriptures say? Or my favorite, God as I perceive Him to be, pull that out real quick when you hear that.

What do the Scriptures say? What does the Scriptures perceive God to be? That should be the great driving force behind all that we hold concerning God and the Bible.

If it is in Scripture, we believe it. If it is not there, we reject it. But remember, we're Christian men, and in all things, we should be charitable one to another.

[9 : 02] Now, I want to begin with some points concerning election, and we will come back to these in the coming weeks. Explore them in varying depth. And I've already mentioned the first one.

When we come to divine election, we are on holy ground. I said this in week one. No one ever went to hell because of divine election.

God's election is the way sinful men get into heaven. The doctrine of election did not originate with John Calvin or Martin Luther.

And I won't probably, well, I know I'm not going to expand on this tonight, but you can even read about it in John 6 and John 10, among other places.

Election, like all biblical doctrines, originated in a decree of God. And the last point tonight, we're not finishing early.

[10 : 07] Not everything that men say about election, pro and con, is necessarily true and accurate. And for that reason, we need to look at what God has to say.

What do the scriptures say? So we're going to be doing a lot of scriptures over the next months. So what is the decree of election? The decree of election is the free and sovereign choice of God.

And I want you to focus on those words. 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 His good pleasure, the good pleasure of God's 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.

And we're going to expand on that. In many many times and explain it more fully. Dr. J.I. Packer probably best known for his book Knowing God and I hope you've all read that.

It was really interesting. It was a textbook and the publisher said well Dr. Packer how many of these do you think you'll need? And he said probably around 200.

[11 : 50] 200. So they set up to print 200 copies of Knowing God and it's sold in the millions. It's one of the most popular books in the world.

I threw that in for free. So he writes another little book I've got it Concise Theology A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs and he begins in that little book with a quote out of Romans 9 which we're

going to be a lot in Romans 9 not tonight but and he's quoting the Old Testament so the Holy Spirit's got it in there twice pretty important Romans chapter 9 verse 15 and 16 for God says to Moses now you understand God's speaking right?

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 man's effort but on God's mercy well that's pretty powerful hope you'll pick up a copy of the lesson tonight and really look at that and the other verses we're going to cover the verb there elect is electos in the Greek language it means to select or choose out the biblical doctrine of election is that before creation God selected out of the human race foreseen as fallen sin had taken over in the garden of Eden our nature changed he selected those he would redeem bring to faith justify and glorify in and through

Jesus Christ and some of you are probably sitting thinking that's not fair well we'll cover that I promise you listen to Paul in Romans and we're very familiar with this section of Romans chapter 8 starting in verse 28 and we know that's pretty powerful and we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and those whom he predestined he also called and those whom he called he also justified and those whom he justified he also glorified what then shall we say to these things if God is for us who can be against us he who did not spare his own son but gave him up and listen to this for us all how will he not also with him graciously give us all things who shall bring any charge against

God's elect it is God who justifies who is to condemn Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that who was raised who was at the right hand of God who indeed is interceding for us who shall separate us from the love of Christ shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword as it is written for your sake we are being killed all the day long we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered knowing all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us for I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ

[16:37] Jesus our Lord that's from Paul that's from the pen of Paul and Paul gave us another tremendous statement as he opened up the book of Ephesians chapter 1 and focus on the things God has done for us not we for ourselves not even us in cooperation with God focus on God here 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 in love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Christ Jesus according to the purpose of his will to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved in him we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in

Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him things in heaven and things on earth in him we have obtained an inheritance!

we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory Paul then moves into the Thessalonian church and in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 he says but we ought always to give thanks to God for you brothers beloved by the Lord because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth to this he called you through our gospel so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord nor of me as prisoner but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of

God who saved us God saved us and called us with a holy calling listen to this not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus who abolished death and brought life and immortality and light through the gospel those are powerful this divine choice is an expression of free and sovereign grace for it is unconstrained it's unconditional it's not merited by anything in those who are its subjects and well I'm glad for that Spurgeon said I'm glad he saved me before the universe began!

because if he was going to save me after I was born and grew up he would never have saved me once he saw me and what I was God owes sinners no mercy of any kind we're in debt to him he's not in debt to us only condemnation because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God so it is a wonder and a matter of!

[21 : 09] praise that he should choose to save anyone and doubly so when that choice involved the giving of his own son to suffer as the sin bearer for the elect I was asking this very class on a Sunday 10 15 years ago why didn't God just save everyone and I said that's the wrong question why did he save anyone I mean I'm sorry I would have started over who would have known let's just start over Adam and Eve messed up we'll start over of course that's why I'm not God his thoughts are not my thoughts and his ways are not my ways now this doctrine involves mystery can stir controversy but it has been brought to Christians to see how great is the grace that saves them and it should move us to humility to confidence to joy to praise to faithfulness and to holiness in response to what

God has done and let me say this this is more packer than me but it's the family secret I like the way he put that he said it's the family secret of the children of God we don't know who else he has chosen among those who do not yet believe nor we don't know why it was his good pleasure to choose us in particular and if any of guys have a reason that he chose!

you let me know! I know! I can't come everything for me what we do know is first that we had we not been chosen for life we would not be believers now and second that as believers we may rely on God to finish in us the work that he starts he always finishes what he starts Paul had this to say in first Corinthians I give thanks to my God always for you of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech in all knowledge even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you so that you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ who will sustain you to the end guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ God is faithful by whom you were called into fellowship of his son

Jesus Christ our Lord God did the calling and we're going to study calling eventually in Philippians 1 6 I am sure of this he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ and then again in Thessalonians chapter 5 1st Thessalonians now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ he who calls you is faithful he will surely do it God does the calling Peter tells us as believers we should be eager that's the word diligent to make our calling and election sure and certain you can read that in 2nd

Peter chapter 1 verse 10 be diligent to make your election and calling and election sure so how do we know who the elect are how do we suspect by fruit it's fruit Paul knew the election of the Thessalonians from their faith hope and love he knew it from their inward and outward transformation of their lives that the gospel had brought about and he wrote this in 1st Thessalonians chapter 1 for we know brothers loved by God that he has chosen you that is the Holy Spirit talking because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction you know what kind of men we prove to be among you for your sake and you became imitators of us and of the

[26 : 18] Lord for you received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit again powerful the more that the qualities to which Peter had been exhorting his readers appear in our lives the sure of our election we are entitled to be God uses those as the proof that we're in him that he called us to be in him well what are some of goodness knowledge self control perseverance godliness brotherly kindness and love and you can read about that in 2nd Peter chapter 1 verse 5 to 7 and it sounds a whole lot like the fruits of the spirit that Paul wrote about in Galatians chapter 5 from one standpoint the elect are the father's gift to the son and people say well why why are people saved and then this guy over here will say since no one's over there

I'll point over there well you know God was lonely God was never lonely let me assure you and if he did it because he was lonely he wouldn't save me it wasn't because God was lonely God is calling out a people for his namesake for his son who are going to worship Christ for eternity that's what this is all about we are the father's gift to the son John 6 39 and this is the will of him who sent me Jesus is talking that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up on the last day he's going to raise up every one that was given to him by the father as a gift in

John 10 another great chapter that we're going to be looking at in depth starting in verse 24 so the Jews gathered around him and said to him how long will you keep us in suspense if you are the

Christ tell us plainly of course what more do you need to do you know anyway Jesus answered them I told you and you do not believe he told them they don't believe the works that I do in my father's name bear witness about me but you now listen to this verse this you do not believe because you are not among my sheep and we totally reversed that in our day you don't you don't not a sheep because you don't believe say four or five words and you'll be a sheep we can make you an instant sheep

Jesus didn't say that he said you don't believe because you are not among my sheep my sheep hear my voice and I know them several parts here one my sheep hear my voice that's believers I know them third and they follow me and then he goes on and says I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand my father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand you see the imagery there we're in the hands of

Christ and the father comes and puts his hands over Christ who's going to get to you like we read in Romans 8:28 and following who's going to and I said this to one of my good Wesleyan brothers and a good man he said but maybe you can jump out because they believe in conditional security you could lose it you can lose it again I told him if you can lose it you will but he said well maybe you just jump out your assignment tonight is to go home and read John 17 that's the inter-trinitarian prayer we're the fly on the wall we hear Jesus talking to the father and praying and interceding for the disciples and for all who would believe as a result of their work let me read a few verses though out of John 17 the high priestly!

[31 : 49] prayer and actually this is really the Lord's prayer when Jesus had spoken these words he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said father the hour has come what hour is that hour of his death glorify your son that the son may glorify you since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him and then in John 17 verse 24 father I desire that they also whom you have given me who gave us to the Jesus the father may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world that's who we really are in

Christ this this is between the father and the son and we get to tag along and Jesus testifies that he came in this world specifically to save those whom God had elected John 6:37 and this is the will of him who sent me that I should lose none of all that he has given me but raise it up on the last day down to verse 40 for this is the will of my father that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day and then back in John 10 I'm the good shepherd I know my own my own know me just as the father knows me!

! father I lay down my life for the sheep who are the sheep we're the sheep he dies for the sheep and he says I've got other sheep that are not of this fold I'm convinced he's talking about the Gentile world I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice so there will be one flock and one shepherd powerful and then John 15 verse 16 you did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide so that whatever you ask the father in my name he may give it to you powerful verses now that's really we're almost at the conclusion here and this has been rattling around in my head because

I don't know when I'm going to be back in this pulpit I'm going to be out probably at least two weeks I can't say for sure so let me say a couple things that are not in the notes stuff I was going to get to in the future but I don't want you to go home saying man I I'm just hanging on this I don't know if I like this or not it is controversial let me say this who are the elect of God that are out there in the world as yet unsaved who are they we don't know okay then help us out here who are the non elect they're not going to get saved no matter what we do we don't know that's why we preach teach and witness to every creature

God has hidden that from us he's hidden it from us we go to every creature and preach and teach and witness Christ Jesus and him crucified Spurgeon used to say I witnessed every man that will stop and listen to me and when one of them get saved I walk off and say boy that's one of the elect wow and let me give you a little warning also I was going to save this for later but I'll do it now don't try to who the elect and who the non elect are don't do that I did that in the early 90's when I was police chief I had an officer and he was profane every other word was the Lord's name in vain he was unkind he was mad all the time

[37 : 04] I mean I could just go on and on and I said in the privacy of my heart I said Lord I will never share the gospel with that man that would be like casting pearls before swine and I'm not

going to do it and about a year and a half went on and I been around him a few times I wasn't around him a lot but he had to come to my office one day and get something and I said why don't you close that door for a second I said you know you used to you had an anger management problem for a long time and your vocabulary you took the Lord's name in vain in every sentence and it suddenly dawned on me I haven't heard that from you and he said

I met a person named Jesus Christ and he radically saved me and that was 30 years ago or 25 and he's still living for Jesus he's still living for Jesus well can you imagine how I felt can you just even guess how I felt I think it was Charlie Graves said I could have sat on the edge of a dime and dangled my feet off of it you know I felt terrible we don't know who they are we witnessed every creature God has hidden that from us who's going to be saved who's going to be lost that's up to God now let me also put a little warning here okay neither do we manipulate people that was the that was kind of the mid-20th century where we would convince a guy to say the sinner's prayer and then proclaim him to be saved and then move on to the next one we give them the true gospel give them the truth of Christ crucified and risen and coming back but don't manipulate somebody to try to get another scalp on your belt

Ron Dunn used to preach here a great man of God and he said you know all these guys going around wanting another scalp on their belt well I led so many Lord last year what did you do well I baptized this many you know he said don't do that preach and teach Jesus and him crucified and let the Holy Spirit do a work let the Holy Spirit do a work