

Here We Stand: Sovereign Election

INTRODUCTION

- The Arminian's first objection to the Reformed position on saving grace had to do with the will of fallen man. The Arminian stated, "*Man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the gospel when it is put before him.*"
- The Synod of Dort responded to this objection by stating that fallen man is Totally Depraved! What the Reformers meant by that phrase is that sin has extended to the farthest part of man's being. Fallen man is spiritually dead! He will not and he cannot comply with the terms of the gospel to repent and believe because those responses are contrary to his sinful nature.
- Arminians believe in "Partial Depravity". They believe sin has affected all men and it has seriously wounded him; but...sinful man still has the ability apart from God's regenerating grace to respond to the gospel with repentance and faith.
- The doctrine of salvation is necessarily built upon the doctrine of sin. If our view of man is one where he is spiritually dead, having no desire for God and no ability in and of himself to return to God; then man's only hope is if God chooses to sovereignly save him by His grace!
- Now this was a second point of contention from the Arminian believers. Arminian's know the Bible teaches the doctrine of election. Their understanding of election is this..., "*Election is a result of God looking down the corridors of time and foreseeing that a sinner will accept Christ, therefore God elects those who first elect Him.*"
- Essentially, all election means is that God looked down the corridors of time and saw those who would choose Christ and then He responded to their choice by choosing them or electing them to be saved. In other words, the Arminian believes in a "conditional election".
- However, if that is what election really is (*man electing God*); then God isn't electing anyone. In that scenario God is simply ratifying your choice of Him.
- The Reformers at the Synod responded to this 2nd point of Arminianism with the "U" in TULIP, Unconditional Election.

Unconditional/Sovereign Election

- The word “elect” is used 15 times in the NT. Where we get the word ecclesia (church) meaning the called out ones. The church is comprised of all the elect. Then there is the synonymous word “chosen”. This is a derivative of the word elect meaning to pick or choose for oneself. This is used of Christ and of His people in the gospel and NT.

The question we’re seeking to answer is, *“How does anyone become elect or chosen?”*

- John 6:37, *“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out.”* V. 44, *“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws Him.”*
- The sole reason for why some come to Jesus is because the Father gave them to Him!
- Jesus doesn’t say no man “may” come; but no man “can” come! May is a word of permission, but can is a word of ability!
- John 10:24-26, *“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.’ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name bear witness about Me, but you do not believe because you are not My flock.”*
- Please notice again the grammar! Notice the dependent clause...the reason **some do not believe** is b/c they are not part of His flock. Jesus doesn’t say the reason you’re not part of My flock is b/c you don’t believe...the reason you don’t believe is b/c you’re not part of My flock.
- John 15:16, *“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.”*
- John 17:1-2, *“Father, the hour has come; 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.”*
- Acts 13:48, *“And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.”*
- It is not all who believed were appointed to eternal life (Arminian view), but all who were appointed to eternal life believed. Believing on Christ is the result of being elected.

- Ephesians 1:3-14, *“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 as sons through Jesus Christ, 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, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”*
- The specific member in the Trinity who is particularly responsible for doing the electing is God the Father.
- The doctrine of election is all about helping Christians understand the Father’s love for them.

5 truths concerning the Father’s electing love...

- #1 The timing of when the Father chose us in Christ was before the foundation of the world. His choice of us has nothing to do with anything we’ve done b/c we hadn’t done anything yet...this choice was before the foundation of the world.
- #2 The Father’s motivation in choosing us in Christ was love v.4. In love, He predestined us...Love and only love motivated the Father to predestine us in Christ!
- #3 The basis of the Father’s electing us in Christ is His own good pleasure and purpose of His will v.5.
- #4 The purpose for which the Father elected us was that we might be holy and blameless v.4.
- #5 The end to which the Father elected us in Christ was so that we might forever live to the praise of His glorious grace v.6.

- This doctrine has massive practical implications! It is meant to provide great assurance and rest to our souls. For if the Father chose us, not for anything done by us, (not even our faith) but solely on the basis that it pleased Him to love us...then...nothing can separate us from that love! We are eternally secure!

- Romans 9 v.1 – 24, *“I am speaking the truth in Christ-- I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit-- that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.” And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad-- in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls-- she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory-- even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?”*

- What the Apostle Paul is dealing with here is the concern that if Jesus is the Promised Messiah and true Savior of the Jewish people, then why are so many not believing in Him? Has the word of God failed??

- The word of God has not failed because salvation comes by the sovereign grace of God.
- The examples of God's sovereign choice between Ishmael and Isaac and Esau and Jacob.
- God's choice of Jacob had nothing to do with his works.
- The Reformed position is the true meaning of this passage because only the Reformed understanding of election can merit the anticipated response of v.14.
- **Is God unjust??**
- If our view of man is that he is dead in sin, having no ability to respond to the gospel, then the only way He can be saved is if God elects him, unconditionally!
- **Is this God's fault?**
- Basically, this 2nd objection goes something like this, *"Are we robots then? If God wills to leave someone in sin, then that's His problem not ours! After all, if TD is true and sovereign election is true, then who can resist His will?? We are reduced to nothing more than robots who are pre-programmed to a fatalistic destiny that God determined! Since I can't believe unless He elects me, and then if He chooses not to elect me, how can I still be responsible for not believing?"*
- God has the sovereign right, out of the whole fallen lump of human clay to pass over some vessels and leave them in that state in order to one day magnify His justice...and...He has the sovereign right to mercy other vessels in order to one day magnify His grace!
- God owes no vessel anything. Some are met with justice, others with mercy.
- When it comes to the doctrine of sovereign election, there is no injustice and there is no fault on God's end. Election keeps no one out of heaven who wants to be there. But it keeps millions out of hell who deserve to be there.
- The mere electing of a people doesn't save them. All election does is single out the recipients of salvation! And since the elect are chosen in Christ, it is Christ who must come and atone for their sins. The redemption of Christ therefore, will be a particular redemption. Jesus really will atone for the sins of all those the Father gave Him.