

Big Words You Need to Know, Love, & Share  
Election  
Romans 8:29-30

**Romans 8:29-30** <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified

I remember within the first year of my conversion sitting by myself in tears praying & asking the question “why me?” Little did I know then how the doctrine of election would for the most part answer my query. Not so much the “why me” personally, for that remains a mystery other than I now know it is by his good pleasure & for his own glory. But how divine choice is ultimately behind my & everyone's salvation is now much clearer than it was in days gone by.

It is necessary to understand that this is a heated topic. Many good and godly Christians disagree on the subject.

1. Election cannot be understood apart from the covenant of redemption. It begins in eternity past, works through time & culminates in eternity future. The scope of that purpose begins with election & ends with glorification.
2. Election cannot be understood apart from God's sovereign grace.

In the classic passage on election, Rom. 9 re: Jacob & Esau - **Romans 9:11** <sup>11</sup> 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 his call- ... The fact that God discriminates between Jacob & Esau before they were born & not because of their “good or bad” & “not because of works” implies sovereign *grace* & *election* are bound together with God's eternal purpose.

➤ Grace defined: various meanings but predominately in the OT & NT = *favor* or *good-will*. It is generally granted in blessings undeserved or unmerited in the recipient.

❖ Excursus: 4<sup>th</sup> C debate/Pelagius & Augustine: Historically defining grace has been the battleground as to how sinners are saved (1) Pelagius argued that man had ability to make himself better through external means; man is inherently “good” & grace only helps or enables him to make better choices; do better; be better - “*their native powers are such that men are capable of doing everything God requires of them for salvation.*”

(2) Augustine (once held similar views) came to see that grace was required; was undeserved favor bestowed on helpless sinners who could never help themselves apart from saving grace. He insisted that, “*men are incapable of saving themselves and that all the powers essential to the saving of the soul must come from God*”

The Reformation was a renewal of Augustinianism & currently we are enjoying a return to the “Doctrines of grace.”

The *in between* doctrine is various forms of “semi-Pelagianism”

In this thinking, God does his part and man does his part. Salvation is a cooperative event. Grace helps the sinner in some way, (not all agree as to how) make the ultimate choice. God votes for you, the devil votes against you and you cast the deciding vote.

3. Election cannot be understood apart from a proper understanding of predestination and foreknowledge

➤ Defining “predestination”: “determine beforehand,” “ordain,” “to decide upon ahead of time.”

RC Sproul contends that everyone that is orthodox (not a heretic) believes in “predestination” – “pre” = “before; “destination” = where you end up. They all believe that it took place in the counsels of God before the beginning of time as we know it. So what is the difference?

- The Augustinian or Calvinistic view believes that God predestined out of the fallen human race some for salvation while others were left to run their natural fallen course of sin and ultimate damnation.
- The Semi-Pelagian or Arminian view (with variations on the theme) believe that God, before the foundations of the world, looked down the corridors of time, saw who would choose Christ and on that basis he predestinated or elected them to salvation.

➤ Defining “foreknowledge”: Rom 8:29 - Basic def. = “to know beforehand”- in this “context to know intimately” i.e. “foreloved” – nothing in this text implies God knew something about them i.e. their faith or that they would believe in Christ - For those whom he foreknew he also predestined “those whom” means he knew them not something about them. “he” goes with “predestined.”

To “know” someone or when someone “knows” God in the Bible often means an intimate knowledge as in a close personal relationship.

This is true in the OT & many instances in the NT

- **Gen 4:1** Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain
- **Rom 11:2** Of Israel: God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Not just knew beforehand, but set his love & affection upon them.
- **Jer 1:3, 5** I have loved you with an everlasting love...<sup>5</sup> "Before I formed you [Jeremiah] in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."
- **1 Pet 1:20** He [Jesus] was foreknown [by the Father] before the foundation of the world...
- **Math 7:23** So Jesus could say of the unbelievers in the last day: “And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; Certainly he knew who they were & all about them, but he never knew them in an intimate, loving, saving relationship.

The word “foreknew” as used in Rom. 8:29 can be understood to mean “foreloved” – before the world began, God set His love upon certain individuals and “*those who were the objects of God’s love, He marked out for salvation.*”(Thomas & Steele, Appendix, Five Points). In this context,

“‘those whom the father foreknew’ is best understood to mean, ‘those whom he long ago ‘thought of in a saving relationship to himself,’” (Grudem, ST 676).

- I. Unconditional *Election*: There are 48 verses (using three Greek words) in the New Testament which make reference to some kind of election – elect, election, choose, chose, chosen.

1. Election Technically Defined

- Simply: To elect means to choose some out of a group.

(1) The election of helpers for widows in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 6). *"And they chose Stephen . . . and Philip..."* (Acts 6:5). i.e. picked some & passed by others. (2) Jesus' apostles were ones that Jesus *"had chosen"* (Acts 1:2). Jesus instructed them *"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you"* (John 15:16). He passed by others to specifically choose them *"I have chosen you [disciples] out of the world"* (John 15:19).

2. Election Scripturally Defended:

**Eph 1:4-5** <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us ["he"/"us" - God is the chooser, we are the chosen; personal; individuals] in him ["Christ"] – election is connected to Christ] before the foundation of the world, [i.e. the time of our election was eternity past – Titus 1:2 “in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began”]

Just as it was the same time when the non-elect were passed by: **Rev 13:8** refers to them as ... everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life... **Rev 17:8** ...And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world

Motive #1: In love [=i.e. the motivation is all on God's part & is derived from his “love” toward us] <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, “In love he predestined us” & places us by adoption into the family of God. – “predestined” = to predetermine, decide beforehand; to foreordain, appoint beforehand. **Rom 8:29** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined...

Motive #2 (v5 continued) according to the purpose of his will...

Motive #3 v6 <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace,

What are the conditions of this election?

- II. Unconditional Election: the Pelagian/Augustinian debate rested on this fact. Is there something in man, a “spark of goodness” that God looks to in order to evaluate his righteousness before a holy God. The idea begins in how God viewed man before time & on what basis he elected them. Was it for “foreseen faith” or “foreseen goodness” or “foreseen obedience” or was it based on no condition whatsoever found in fallen sinners, but entirely upon the love, grace & mercy of God?

- A. Unconditional Election Technically Defined: Typical elections, political or otherwise are generally based on merit. Biblical election by definition presupposes that there are no conditions found in sinners to merit salvation. Not all agree &

scathing arguments have been made against this doctrine of election based on sovereign grace rather than human will, foreseen faith or other such conditions.

*“In spite of their best efforts to avoid it, the 'good and necessary consequence' of their soteriology (doctrine of salvation) -- TULIP -- is that God is morally ambiguous if not a moral monster,”* (Roger Olson, professor at Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary, Against Calvinism).

The longstanding Reformed view is otherwise:

*WCF 3.5 Those of mankind ...predestinated unto life...chosen in Christ...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.*

*The divine will is never made dependent on the creature will for its determinations...Any system which substitute a man-made election falls below the Scripture teaching on this subject,*” (Lorraine Boettner, Predestination, 87).

#### B. Unconditional Election Scripturally Defended:

- **John 1:13** who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
- **2 Timothy 1:9** <sup>9</sup> who saved us not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,
- **Ephesians 2:** by grace you have been saved-
- **Ephesians 2:8-9** <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved this is not your own doing
- **Romans 4:2** For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

Turn to Rom 9:10-22 - No clearer passage on the unconditional nature of election & note as we read it, the connection between God's sovereign grace & God's eternal elective purposes – he obviously discriminates between Jacob & Esau apart from any possibility of their involvement, works-wise, will-wise or other-wise!:

**Romans 9:10-22** <sup>10</sup> And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, <sup>11</sup> though they were [1] not yet born and [2] had done nothing either good or bad- [3] in order that God's purpose of election might continue, [4] not because of works [5] but because of his call – [i.e. the call that resulted in salvation; “not according to works” implies the exact opposite “but according to grace” - Jacob & Esau were twins w/same heritage/environment & had no time to prove themselves.] <sup>12</sup> she was told, "The older will serve the younger." <sup>13</sup> As it is written, [6] "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" [from Genesis 25:23].

Question: Was it fair that “God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment,” 2 Peter 2:4)? “*First, we must remember that it is perfectly fair for God not to save anyone,*” (Grudem, theology, 682).

Paul's question is about "injustice" - justice is getting what you deserve, namely all of us deserve hell. None of fallen mankind deserves to be saved! – objection answered – [7] By no means! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." [1. God is sovereign "I will" 2. mercy unlike justice = getting what we do not deserve; this is why we see election tied to grace –

[8] [Yes, but what about "free will?" Paul anticipates that by showing it is NOT man's will but God's sovereignty] <sup>16</sup> So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy [God dispenses mercy as he pleases; also, never forget – man's will is fallen, totally depraved, & not only cannot choose God-ward but will not [Rom. 8:7-8 <sup>7</sup>For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup>Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

They don't even have the desire; God leaves a bad taste in their mouth so why would they choose him? He could if he wanted to, but loves sin & self more than God!

Thankfully, God does not leave all of us to our so called "freedom" but has mercy on some.]. [9] [example from OT – when God hardened Pharaoh's heart it was only further moving him in the direction he already wished to go.] <sup>17</sup> 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." [this dogmatically answers the question about the "who" "what" "why" & "when" of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart] – conclusion – the final blow]<sup>18</sup> So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills

[God's divine prerogative anticipates a deeper question re: fairness & man's guilt]. <sup>19</sup>You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" [Answer: Paul makes no attempt to resolve the mystery of God's sovereign election of mercy while passing by others by withholding the same mercy – he simply says, put your hand over your mouth & be quiet!

Fallen mankind has no moral, logical, rational or Scriptural grounds with which to charge God!] <sup>20</sup>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?" [10] The rhetorical question begs the answer –

Let the sovereign God be God & let fallen man be man!] <sup>21</sup>Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump [note: "same lump" = out of the mass of fallen sinful totally depraved mankind] one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use? [same lump – two destinies] <sup>22</sup> 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, [and all the while God puts up with the remainder of the fallen human race with patience.

Election is unquestionably *Unconditional* - to place any conditions on God's election is (1) to say basically God elects those who first elected themselves which is (2) essentially a denial of total depravity/inability & an impossibility according to this text which says it all took place before they were born & unable to perform anything of merit.

- **Acts 13:48** And when the Gentiles heard this, they

began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were (1) appointed [some translations = “ordained” – passive voice i.e. it happened to them] (2) to eternal life (3) [through faith] believed.

All those chosen will make it to glory – Perseverance of the Saints: John 6:37b “and whoever comes to me I will never cast out”.

### III. Five Practical Applications taken from the doctrine of Unconditional Election:

1. It is a Humbling doctrine 1 Cor 4:7 For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?; 2 Sam 9:1; 5-8 (story of Mephibosheth)

– if this doctrine promotes pride or arrogance in the believer, he does not understand this doctrine. The question is not how does God have the right to damn Esau & you or I who deserve damnation? But rather, Why would God show mercy to Jacob, or you & me who also deserve damnation? We need to exercise caution and patience with this doctrine. It is not a club to bludgeon people who disagree. We dare not write people off as non Christians, or somehow less holy, or stupid – if salvation is by God’s grace alone, then we need to be humble and gracious!

2. It is a Comforting doctrine – (Rom 8:28; 33-39) 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

**Heidelberg Catechism 1 Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death? A. That I am not my Own, but belong body and soul, in life and in death-to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins...[etc].**

3. It is a Sobering doctrine:

(1) It is sobering to know that our election is a call to personal holiness - **Ephesians 1:4** “even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”

(2) It is sobering to know that our calling & election needs a temperature check from time to time. That warrants occasional examination of one’s faith: by faith & good works one confirms his election - **2 Peter 1:10** Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. What qualities? vs.5-6 “make every effort to supplement your faith...virtue...knowledge...self-control...steadfastness...godliness... brotherly affection...love” James 2:17 <sup>17</sup> So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Reformers understood this doctrine would rightly shake up false professors who were depending on their works, goodness, etc.

But also the elect who were weak in faith who might lose assurance – therefore WCF & others added: WCF 3.8 “*The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care,*” *basically to not disturb the assurance of those who were truly obedient to the faith in the Gospel.*”

4. It is a doctrine that encourages evangelism – 2 **Tim. 2:10** Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

The Lord told Paul to enter the City of Corinth with this in mind - Acts 18:10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."

**1 Thes 1:4-5**<sup>4</sup> For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,<sup>5</sup> because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

Historically, some of the greatest preachers, evangelists & missionaries preached this doctrine with conviction. It was used to shut sinners into a corner whereby they would either repent & believe the Gospel & bow before Christ or confirm their condemnation & ultimate damnation.

5. It is a doctrine that encourages worship & praise **Eph 1:4-6** In love<sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,<sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

The *ordo salutis* in Rom. 8:29-30 resulted in Paul's doxology in Rom 8:31-39 & finally in Rom. 11:33-36 **Romans 11:36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

**We owe it all to grace & grace makes us bow before him in reverence, awe, worship & praise.**  
*Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing My great Redeemer's praise, The glories of my god and King, The triumphs of his grace!*