

# ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION

## INTRODUCTION

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“To suggest that the merciful, long-suffering, gracious, and loving God of the Bible would invent a dreadful doctrine like election, which would have us believe it is an act of grace to select only certain people for heaven, comes perilously close to blasphemy.”

“To say that God sovereignly chooses is the most twisted thing I have ever read, making God into a monster, no better than a pagan idol.”

“The flawed theology of pre-selection is an attempt to eliminate man’s capacity to exercise his free will, which reduces God’s sovereign love to an act of a mere dictator.”

“[The doctrine of election] is the most unreasonable, incongruous, self-contradictory, man-belittling, God-dishonoring, scheme of theology that ever appeared in Christian thought. No one can accept its contradictory, mutually exclusive propositions without intellectual self-abasement. It holds up a self-centered, selfish, heartless, remorseless tyrant for God and bids us to worship Him.”

Quoted in *Hard to Believe*, John MacArthur, 34-35.

- Admittedly, the doctrine of election is a difficult issue....godly men through the ages have wrestled with this issue and attempted to understand it
- It is important that we first accept what the Bible says about election and then try to synthesize and understand it and its implications
- We must avoid the temptation to first try to understand it in order to accept it
- When dealing with this difficult issue we must not say: “It does not make sense” or “It is not fair”
- We may have our own ideas of how we would like God to act in saving people, but that may not be the way God does it so we must always bring our thoughts into subjection to what God actually tells us
- We have to recognize our limitations and let the biblical texts speak for themselves
- Some presuppositions to begin with:
  1. There is nothing God could do to sinful men that would make Him unjust
  2. There is nothing man could do to make himself just before a holy God

## OBJECTIONS TO ELECTION

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1. Election means that we do not have a choice in whether we accept Christ or not; it hinders our freedom; it makes us puppets or robots, not real persons with choices

Reply: If God does not elect, no one is saved! Salvation is not the product of combined or cooperative action or force. Dead men do not conjure up faith.

2. Election makes God arbitrary

Reply: God chooses to save some simply out of His mercy

3. Election is not fair

Reply: It is fair because God is always just and man must still believe. The real question to ask is not, “Why is it fair God chooses some but not others?”; rather it is “Why does God chooses anyone?”

- Scripture never holds someone accountable for being non-elect
- Scripture holds people accountable for not believing
- The emphasis in Scripture is always man's responsibility; Therefore, God is not responsible for man's rebellion...Man is...Mankind chooses not to believe

4. Election eliminates a genuine Gospel offer; unbelievers never had a chance to believe

Reply: Everyone has a chance to respond to God’s general call, but most reject it

5. Election discourages evangelism

Reply: Election actually encourages evangelism; we just throw seeds and let the Lord take care of who receives it; Plus, the whole book of Acts disproves this objection

6. Election produces pride and laziness in the elect

Reply: A true understanding of election produces the opposite

## ELECTION

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- Definition: An act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of His sovereign good pleasure (Grudem)
- This election has been called unconditional: 1) By “election” we mean that God sovereignly, of His own choosing, selects those who will be saved; 2) By “unconditional” we mean that God’s choice of who is saved is not in any way affected by what that person does
- There is no condition man must meet before God chooses to save him...it is not based on anything the sinner does

### Election in the Old Testament

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God chose Abraham:

**Genesis 12:1-3** ~ Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

**Genesis 18:19** ~ For I have **chosen** him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.”

**Nehemiah 9:7** ~ “You are the Lord God, Who **chose** Abram And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, And gave him the name Abraham.

God chose Isaac:

**Genesis 17:17-21** ~ Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before You!” But God said, “No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless

him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.”

God chose Jacob:

**Genesis 25:23** ~ The Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger.”

**Malachi 1:2-3** ~ I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have You loved us?” “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.”

God chose Israel:

**Deuteronomy 4:37** ~ Because He loved your fathers, therefore He **chose** their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power,

**Deuteronomy 7:6-8** ~ For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has **chosen** you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 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, 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.

**Deuteronomy 10:15** ~ Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He **chose** their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day.

- Throughout the OT, God’s sovereign choice of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is clearly evident
- Unconditionally, and completely apart from any consideration of human merit, God elected these men and their descendants to be His people
- It is through these sovereignly elected people, the Israelites, through whom the Redeemer would come

## **Election in the New Testament**

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### ***Under the idea of “choosing”***

**Ephesians 1:4** ~ just as He **chose** us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

**Colossians 3:12** ~ So, as those who have been **chosen** of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

**1 Thessalonians 1:4** ~ knowing, brethren beloved by God, His **choice** of you;

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** ~But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has **chosen** you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

**Titus 1:1** ~ Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those **chosen** of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,

**1 Peter 1:1-2** ~ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are **chosen** according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

### ***Under the idea of “appointing”***

**Acts 13:48** ~ When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been **appointed** to eternal life believed.

- Notice the passive verb: it was done to them

- Notice the order: it was those who were appointed/elected who believed, not vice versa
- The prior election of God is the reason some believed while others did not

**John 15:16** ~ You did not choose Me but I chose you, and **appointed** you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

### *Under the idea of “predestinating”*

**Romans 8:29** ~ 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;

**Ephesians 1:5** ~ He **predestined** us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will

**Ephesians 1:11** ~ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined** according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

- “predestination” comes from 2 words: *pro* (before) and *horizo* (to mark out a boundary); this is where we get our English word *horizon*
- Thus, predestination means to mark out the boundary of who is saved, thereby emphasizing the end results of election
- Predestination is similar to election but slightly different
- Whereas election is the conceptual act of choosing someone, predestination is taking possession of that person; Predestination makes God’s election/choosing a reality

| Election    | Predestination |
|-------------|----------------|
| Choosing    | Taking         |
| Conceptual  | Reality        |
| Transaction | Possession     |

### *Under the idea of “calling”*

**Romans 1:6-7** ~ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, **called** as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**1 Corinthians 1:2** ~ To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by **calling**, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

**Galatians 1:6** ~ I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who **called** you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

**Ephesians 1:18** ~ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His **calling**, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

**Ephesians 4:1** ~ Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the **calling** with which you have been called,

**Hebrews 9:15** ~ For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been **called** may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

**1 Peter 1:15** ~ but like the Holy One who **called** you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

### *Elect angels*

**1 Timothy 5:21** ~ I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His **chosen angels**, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.

## Romans 8:29-30

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**Romans 8:29-30** ~ 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; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

- Note the unbreakable chain
- God is not presented here as a helpless, waiting love, but rather a sovereign, active love...God's sovereignty in salvation cannot be impeded, stopped, or overridden

## Romans 9

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### *Romans 9:9-13 God's Sovereignty in Election*

- God purposed to establish this principle clearly at the beginning of His relationship with His chosen people
- In the case of Rebecca's children, God's choice was indicated before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad
- This demonstrated that God's sovereign choice was not by works but by Him who calls
- "calls" (vs. 11)...This term means to command or speak to another person in order to bring him nearer—either physically or a personal relationship
- It was often an official summons by a recognized authority
- It was also used to refer to an invitation to an activity or function

- 2 types of calls:

#### 1. General Outward Call

- In a general way, there is a broad outward call that is directed to all who hear the gospel
- This call can be rejected since many do choose to refuse to believe the truths of the Gospel.

**Matthew 11:28** ~ Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

**Matthew 22:14** ~ For many are called, but few are chosen.

#### 2. Effectual Inner call

- In a much more specific way, God has an effectual (it always works) call that He uses to draw all believers to Himself
- This call cannot be rejected and always produces God's desired result—drawing a sinner to Himself

**Romans 8:30** ~ and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

- "God's love and hatred"
  - God's plan (8:28; 9:11), and not man's works (4:2-6), is the basis of His election
  - God's "love" for Jacob was revealed in His choice of Jacob and God's "hatred" for Esau was seen in His rejecting Esau for the line of promise
  - The word "hatred" conveys not just dislike of certain actions, but also a permanent and deep-seated hostility towards a person...even in secular writings it was used for the divine hatred of unrighteous men who are the objects of divine punishment
  - Here in Romans 9 Paul quotes Malachi 1:2, referring to God's previous decision to love Jacob and hate Esau without any basis on either of their personal merit
  - The emotion of "hatred" is probably not so much in view as much as the fact that God chose one nation for divine blessing (Israel) and one nation He left to divine judgment (Edom)

### ***Romans 9:14-18 Is God unjust?***

- Paul introduced the question undoubtedly in his readers' minds: *Is God unjust in choosing Isaac over Ishmael, and Jacob over Esau?*
- The Greek negative particle (*me*) with a question implies a negative response
- Paul responded in his usual emphatic way: "Not at all! Absolutely no way!!!"
- As the sovereign God, He has the right to show mercy to whomever He chooses
- In fact, He is not under obligation to extend mercy to *anyone!*...No one deserves or can earn His mercy

**Exodus 33:19** ~ And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

- "The Illustration of Pharaoh"
  - To Pharaoh God said through Moses, "I raised you up to demonstrate My power."
  - God's power was demonstrated as He freed the Israelites from under Pharaoh's hand
  - Paul concluded, God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy and He hardens whom He wants to harden (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:27; 14:4, 8; cf. 14:17)
  - Because of God's choice, Pharaoh then hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:13-14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34-35)
  - While the text says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it doesn't mean that God actively created unbelief or rebellion in his heart; instead, God withdrew His restraining influences in Pharaoh's life which ultimately led to Pharaoh experiencing the full consequences of his sinful rebellion (see Rom 1)

### ***Romans 9:19-29 Is man at fault? How can he resist God's will?***

- Once again Paul anticipated the questioning response of his readers: If God makes the choices, how can He hold man responsible? Who can go against what He does? How can God blame anyone for sin and unbelief when He has sovereignly determined that person's destiny?
- In response Paul reaffirmed the reality of God's sovereignty and why such questions are an affront to God's sovereignty....man, the created one, has no right to question God, the Creator

**Isaiah 45:9** ~ Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker—An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?' Or the thing you are making say, 'He has no hands'?

- Drawing an analogy between the sovereign Creator and a potter, Paul clearly shows that the pot has no right to question its maker

### **Basis for Election**

- It is important to remember that God's choosing of some to salvation depends not on anything in man
- The basis for God's sovereign choice is not a person's own will to believe (John 1:13; Rom 9:16), a person's own choice (John 15:16), the family in which they were raised (John 1:13), or a person's "righteous" works (Eph 2:9; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 3:5)
- Rather, the basis for God's sovereign choice in election is simply His gracious and loving plan to exercise His mercy on undeserving sinners for His glory
- Paul, in 2 Timothy 1:9, indicates that God's choice to save some is "according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."
- Before the foundation of the world, God chose some to lavish His mercy upon (Rom 9:16, 23)
- And He did so in order that "the riches of His glory" might be made known (Rom 9:23) and that those who receive His grace and mercy might be "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph 1:6)

## Implications

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### *It should promote worship, thankfulness, and gratitude*

- We need to remember that if God did not choose anyone, no one would be saved
- Unconditional election is the logical corollary to total depravity
- Thus Jesus Christ taught: “*No one* can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.... *No one* can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father” (Jn.. 6:44, 65)
- This is best understood after we’ve been saved and we look back and realize that God did it all!

We shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the wellspring of God’s free mercy until we come to know his eternal election...How much the ignorance of this principle detracts from God’s glory, how much it takes away from true humility, is well known...If—to make it clear that our salvation comes about solely from God’s mere generosity—we must be called back to the course of election...”

John Calvin

### *It should promote holiness, not a license to sin*

- This doctrine should compel holiness...not make us think that we are now free to live any way we like

### *It should promote evangelism*

- Election encourages evangelism; we just throw seeds and let the Lord take care of who receives it

## WHAT ABOUT DOUBLE PREDESTINATION?

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- Double Predestination defined: God’s eternal purpose to pass by certain specific individuals in the bestowment of special grace, ordaining them to everlasting punishment for their sins
- “Some have viewed double predestination as a matter of equal causation, where God is equally responsible for causing the reprobate not to believe as He is for causing the elect to believe” (Sproul, Essential Truth of the Christian Faith, 165).
- Two views:
  1. Positive-positive
    - God positively and sovereignly works in the lives of the elect to bring them to salvation
    - Likewise, He also positively and sovereignly works in the lives of the non-elect to prevent them from coming to faith
  2. Positive-negative
    - God positively and sovereignly works in the lives of the elect to bring them to salvation
    - In the case of the non-elect, He does not actively prevent them from coming to faith, but simply passes over them, leaving them to their own sinful devices
- Possible Biblical references to double predestination:

**Matthew 25:34, 41** ~ Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’... Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’

**Romans 9:22-23** ~ 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 in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory”

**Romans 11:7** ~ What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened

**1 Peter 2:8** ~ and, ‘A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE’ ;for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed

Note: Human responsibility evident in this verse – *“they are disobedient”*

**Jude 4** ~ For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ”

Note: Human responsibility evident in this verse – *“deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ”*

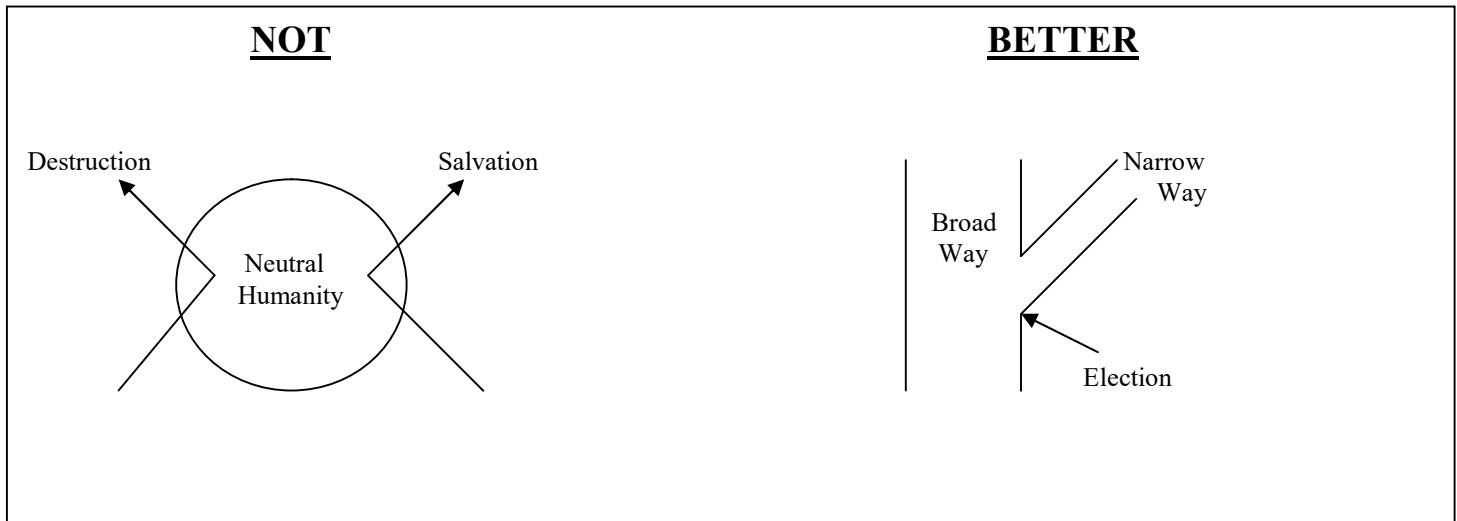
- But:

**Ezekiel 18:32** ~ ‘For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,’ declares the Lord GOD. ‘Therefore, repent and live.’

**1 Timothy 2:4** ~ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth

**2 Peter 3:9** ~ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance”

- Conclusion: A positive-positive view cannot be accepted Biblically...A positive-negative view seems acceptable



- Summary statements:

- “In the presentation of Scripture the cause of election lies in God, and the cause of reprobation lies in the sinner” (Grudem, Systematic Theology, 686)
- It is significant that no terminology like “elect unto destruction, etc.” occurs in Scripture; Thus, one may not posit an equal but opposite action
- What applies to the non-elect is not specific selection unto eternal damnation out of the state of lostness but a divine passing over. Election is that specific selection out from one state into another
- “While logically the election of some implies the rejection of others, Scripture is clearly reluctant to set these two ideas in strict balance” (Milne, Know the Truth, 185)