

DOCTRINE OF ELECTION AND CALLING

I. Introduction.

- A. Election and calling are separate but related actions of God. Mat.22:14; Rom.9:6,8,10-13; 2Pet.1:10
- B. This doctrine also addresses coterminous/converging Biblical concepts of foreknowledge, predestination, justified and glorified, as they relate to election and calling.
- C. The primary passage that explicitly articulates these combined concepts regarding this doctrine is Rom.8:28-30.
- D. These concepts have eluded many interpreters as to their definition and subsequent relationship to one another.
- E. Each concept must be understood individually before attempting to determine how they relate to each other.
- F. In addition, other doctrines are necessary in order to protect one from making false assumptions and conclusions such as:
 - 1. The doctrine of Divine Institution #1, Volition, as it relates to man's free will. Act.3:23; every third class condition in the Greek such as 1Joh.1:9; every subjunctive mood, which indicates potential; and every alternative such as Joh.3:36.
 - 2. The doctrine of Unlimited Atonement. 2Cor.5:14-15; 1Tim.2:6; Heb.2:9; 10:10,12; 1Joh.2:2
 - 3. The doctrine of the Universal Gospel. Joh.3:15-17; Act.2:21, 38-39; Rom.3:22-23
 - 4. The doctrine of the Impartiality of God. Job 34:19; Rom.2:11; Gal.2:6; Eph.6:9; Col.3:25; Jam.2:9
- G. Some have used these concepts to teach the false doctrine that God has predestined some people to go to hell, leaving them no choice (no free will) in the matter, widely known as Calvinism (the classical reformed version taught by John Calvin, a reformist in the 1500's).
- H. Christ Himself taught that volition is the axis around which this doctrine revolves. Joh.6:37-40

II. Vocabulary.

- A. For the term "election":
 - 1. Hebrew vocabulary.
 - a. בָּחַר – verb; to pick, select, choose, elect.
 - b. בָּחִיר – adj.; one who has been elected, selected or chosen.
 - 2. Greek vocabulary.
 - a. αἰρέω – verb used 3x; to pick for oneself, to choose, to prefer.
 - b. αἰρετίζω – verb used 1x; to choose or select.
 - c. ἐκλέγω – verb used 21x; to pick or choose, to select.
 - d. ἐκλεκτός – adj. used 22x; to choose, chosen, the elect.
- B. For the term "calling":
 - 1. Hebrew vocabulary: נָקַח – verb; to cry out, to call to, to call.

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2. Greek vocabulary.
 - a. καλέω – verb used 160x; to call to, to call out, to name, to invite or summon someone to something.
 - b. κλήσις – noun used 11x; a call or invitation.
 - c. κλητός – adj. used 11x; those who are called or invited to something.
 - C. For the term “foreknowledge”:
 1. While there is not a specific Hebrew term, its concept was clearly espoused in the OT. Deut.31:14-21; Isa.46:10; 48:5; 65:24; Jer.1:5
 2. Greek vocabulary.
 - a. πρόγνωσις – noun used 2x; it refers to the foreknowledge or actual content of what one knows beforehand.
 - b. προγινώσκω – verb used 5x; to know something beforehand or in advance, to choose or appoint beforehand, to have previous knowledge.
 - D. For the term “predestination”:
 1. Again, there is no specific term in the OT, but the concept of God predetermining beforehand that, which will occur in time, is evident as seen in creation itself. Gen.1:26 cp. 27
 2. Greek vocabulary: προορίζω – verb used 6x from ὀρίζω; means to define something, to mark the limits or boundary, to determine or appoint, to settle or ordain. When used with the prefix προ, it comes to mean to do all these things beforehand, to predetermine or predestine.
 - E. The term “justified” is a salvation term. It indicates the judicial prerogative of God to exonerate mankind from the guilt of sin based on the imputation of +R (God’s absolute righteousness). See Doctrine of Justification.
 - F. The term “glorified” relates to overt honor/praise/glory bestowed upon someone or thing. Glory bestowed by God upon man is culminated in the concepts of eternal life and resurrection. Phil3:20-21
- III. Definitions of “election” and “calling”.
- A. Election refers to that process by which one makes a selection or decision with regard to something while rejecting or eliminating other possibilities.
 - B. Out of a group of items, one chooses that which he finds acceptable over that which does not meet his standards.
 - C. Election therefore, is an act of volition that eventuates in something being elected, selected or chosen.
 - D. Election as applied to God is a manifestation of His attribute of sovereignty.
 - E. The term “call” is used in a variety of ways, but has three primary emphasis:

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1. “To call out” emphasizes what the voice says; it’s speech or that which is communicated. Isa.40:6, “*A voice says, “Call out. Then he answered, “What shall I call out?”*”
2. It identifies, designates or names that to which is being called to. Mat.1:21, “*...and you shall call His name Jesus,...*”
3. It infers an invitation or summons to set apart for a purpose. 2Thess.2:13, “*And it was for this (“this” being “salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth” of vs.13) He called you through our gospel,...*”
4. Calling then, refers to audible communication to specific individuals for a collective purpose.
5. As the natural order of events demands that one select/elect/or choose before the process of calling can occur, so it is with Divine election and calling.
6. And just as election and calling are functions of human volition, so is the Divine election and calling functions of God’s sovereignty.

IV. An analysis of election.

- A. The election of God is synonymous for all believers of all time, who are referred to as “the elect”. Mat.24:22,24,31; Mar.13:20,22,27; Luk.18:7; Rom.8:33
- B. As stated earlier, many misinterpret God’s action of election as a mystery not to be understood in this life.
- C. Their position is that God selected certain people to enjoy the blessings of salvation and His kingdom at random or arbitrarily while rejecting others, for reasons not fathomable to us.
- D. If one understands the essence of God, particularly the concept of justice, they could figure out that God cannot be arbitrary or capricious. Job 8:3; Psa.89:14
- E. In other words, under perfect justice, God is not partial to anyone and therefore cannot select one and reject another arbitrarily or based on looks, station, personality, race, sex, etc. Deut.10:17; Rom.2:11
- F. A system of choice based on partiality also rejects the system of grace that underwrites God’s plan for mankind. Rom.11:5, 6
- G. Man in his condition of spiritual death and sins cannot please God based on any human merit or achievement. 2Tim.1:9; Ti.3:5
- H. Therefore, the grace basis for man’s election mitigates against human contribution removing any partiality of God’s choice.
- I. His method of election then, cannot be biased as a respecter of persons.
- J. The corresponding terms that attach themselves to election, are the terms foreknowledge and predestination. Rom.8:29,30a
- K. Though the term election is not in the Roman passage, it is the elect that are the contextual subject in view.
- L. All three of these terms are viewed as actions that occurred in eternity past.

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- M.** God's method/procedure of election, is found in His attribute of omniscience, specifically His foreknowledge.
- N.** Unlike election being a Divine Decree, foreknowledge is simply God's ability to foresee all things of the future, including individual response to the gospel.
- O.** That His selection/election stems from His foreknowledge is undeniably documented in 1Pet.1:1-2 cp. Rom.8:29
- P.** As God, in eternity past, He was able to perfectly anticipate all those who would be positive (+V) to the gospel hearing and therefore make provision for them.
- Q.** Since foreknowledge is only predictive and not causative, it allows volition to function and therefore the election that follows is unbiased with regard to being a respecter of persons as to their genetics and other human merits.
- R.** This leaves then the one determining factor available of which, God made His choice i.e., volition.
- S.** In other words, God does not acquire information; He has always known all things and hence He knew who would be positive or not, who would believe the gospel or not.
- T.** Because God knows what men will choose to do in time, He is able then to predetermine and execute His plan accordingly and perfectly, without violating or coercing man's volition. Isa.25:1; Lev.26:15; 1Chr.28:9
- U.** It is in this sense then that the elect are "predestined" (Rom.8:29), in that God in His plan for mankind predetermined the grace system necessary for salvation and instituted all that is necessary for His system to become reality to those who He anticipated to be +V.
- V.** Predestination, as with election, is also a function of His sovereignty.
- W.** It is important to note that predestination is never used of unbelievers, only believers. Rom.8:29-30; Eph.1:5,11
- X.** The Word of God does not support any notion that God predestined anyone to hell.
- Y.** Rather His ultimate predetermination was to make everyone who would choose to believe, like His Son. Rom.8:29
- Z.** A clear understanding of election can now be articulated:
 - 1.** Election is God's Divine Decree of choosing for Himself in eternity past, all those who would manifest +V to the SAJG in time.
 - 2.** His unbiased choice was made possible through His attribute of foreknowledge.
 - 3.** His foreknowledge was not capable of causing/making one +V or -V, it only gave Him the ability to perfectly anticipate/foresee/envision what men would do (His prescience into the sophistication and workings of volition).
 - 4.** In anticipation of those who would believe, He instituted His plan on their behalf.

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5. Under His Divine selecting process, He predetermined/predestined the formulation and execution of a plan that allows for everything that is necessary for the elect to be saved and to go as far as they choose spiritually.
 6. Some specific items that God predestined for the elect:
 - a. The sufferings of Christ. Act.4:27-28
 - b. Our present dispensation, the Church Age. Eph.3:8-11
 - c. Our gospel hearing. Rom.8:30
 - d. Conforming us to the image of Christ. Rom.8:29
 - e. Our sufferings. Phil.1:29; 3:10; Rev.2:10
 - f. Bible doctrine for those who will avail themselves of it. 1Cor.2:6-7
 7. It is His actions of election and predestination that guarantees that those who are +V will be saved based on His previous anticipation of their existence.
- AA. It is this interpretation that maintains the integrity of and in complete harmony with the other pertinent doctrines mentioned above and maintains status quo God's attributes of sovereignty, justice/impartiality and omniscience.
- V. The sequence of events as related to election and calling.
- A. God is perfect and immutable, so all these concepts enveloped in this doctrine have always been realities with Him.
 - B. One did not precede another, since God is not bound by time.
 - C. For us who are however, these concepts are viewed as they relate to time.
 - D. The order of events is documented in Rom.8:29-30.
 1. Foreknowledge preceded all events.
 2. While election is not mentioned, it occurs next. Cf.1Pet.1:1-2a
 3. Predestination follows, since God "knows" those with whom He has to work.
 4. Calling relates to the presentation of the gospel to those who are +V.
 5. Justification points to their saving faith and acceptance of the call.
 6. Glorification is guaranteed to all whom God foreknew would believe.
 - E. Foreknowledge, election and predestination are functions that occurred in eternity past.
 - F. Calling and justification occurs in time.
 - G. Glorification is still in the future for believers.
 - H. Therefore, God's actions of eternity past require three steps that occur in time to arrive at the ultimate goal.
 1. Calling, the invitation to join God's plan. God predetermined that each one He had selected would receive a gospel hearing. Rom.8:30; 2Thess.2:14

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2. Justification, the act of God imputing His righteousness to everyone who accepts the gospel. Rom.8:30; Gal.2:16
3. Glorification, the resurrection of the body in future time, completing the steps necessary to make us like Christ. Rom.8:29 cp. 30; 1Joh.3:1-2

VI. The recipients of election and calling.

- A. Several people and categories are involved in the election and calling of God.
- B. First and foremost, Christ was elected from eternity past to be the Savior and focal point of the plan of God. Isa.42:1 cp. Mat.12:18; 1Pet.1:20
- C. The Church is selected and called by God. 1Pet.2:9
- D. Israel has an election that follows the same principles and pattern as ours. Deut.7:6; 14:2; Psa.105:6
- E. Believers, who are given the title of “the elect/chosen”, with the following characteristics:
 1. They are the few, not the many. Mat.7:13-14; 22:14; Rom.9:27; 11:5
 2. They are generally not:
 - a. Of high IQ or educated types. 1Cor.1:26
 - b. Of the rich and powerful. Jam.2:5
 - c. Of the ruling class. 1Cor.1:26
 3. They are: (1Cor.1:27-28)
 - a. The foolish things according to cosmic standards.
 - b. The weak things according to the cosmos.
 - c. The inferior/base of the world.
 - d. The despised of the cosmos.
 - e. Those who are not anything special under cosmic standards.

VII. Positive volition (+V) and negative volition (-V) as it relates to election and calling.

- A. Christ taught that volition is the key issue in election and calling in His discourse on the bread of life, specifically Joh.6:37-40.
 1. The principles of election and calling are articulated as seen in:
 - a. Those in view are who the Father gives to Christ. Vss.37a, 39b
 - b. Therefore, His focus is on those who believe or are +V.
 - c. His giving is related to present time (vs.37a) and past time/eternity past with existing results (39b).
 - d. The actions of His giving in time of vs.37a includes the individual “coming to Christ” and is further expanded in vs.40 of the individual “beholding and believing in Him”.
 - e. It is these actions that picture the due process of +V in time under the concepts of “calling and justification”.

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- f. Vs.40c concludes the calling and justifying in time with the future reality of resurrection or “glorification”.
 - g. God’s action of giving in eternity past of vs.39b relates directly to His sovereignty of vs.39a.
 - h. This points to His election in eternity past as it pertains to both Christ and man.
 - i. It also concludes that His sovereignty stipulated a predestined future for the individual in 39c.
2. That it is volition, hence the souls of believers that is the primary focus is seen in the neuter gender of the words “all that”, in the phrases “*All that the Father gives Me*” and “*that of all that He has given Me*” in vss.37a and 39b respectively and “it” in the phrase “*but raise it up*” in 39c.
 3. The only contextual correlation of a neuter gender is the noun “will”, used 4x in vss.38,39,40.
 4. Therefore, that Christ explicitly states that the issue between Himself and God relates to God’s sovereign will (vs.38,39a,40a), He is inferring that the “will” also is the issue behind whom “all that He gives to Christ”.
 5. He is declaring that it is those souls that are positive that God foreknew, therefore elected (has given, vs.39b), predestined (raise it/soul up, vs.39c), called (gives and comes to Me, vs.37), justified (beholds and believes, vs.40) and will glorify (raise him up, vs.40c).
 6. Therefore, Christ relates the doctrine of election and calling to the fact that all that are +V are insured to receive salvation.
 7. This is because God Himself has secured possession of their souls as part of His plan in eternity past and time, in order to fulfill His promise that Christ is to inherit all believers. Joh.17:2 cp. 6; Eph.1:22; Heb.2:13
 8. For further documentation see class notes on Joh.6:37-40.
- B. As +V is related to this doctrine, so is –V.
 - C. As mentioned, God does not predestine anyone to hell as the vocabulary of predestination is never used of unbelievers.
 - D. God can and obviously does, create people even though He is aware of the fact that they will reject Him and end up in the lake of fire. Rev.20:15
 - E. Since God cannot be less than just and fair and is not partial to anyone, their fate must be what they deserve.
 - F. God has the right to create people and give them life as He chooses. Isa.42:5
 - G. Beyond this, He has the freedom to use those who are –V as He sees fit, since He is the Creator. Rom.9:21
 - H. He can therefore, use unbelievers to further His plan and to glorify Himself without violating their volition or His justice. Rom.9:17-18

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- I. He is under no obligation to give negative volition a gospel hearing and so many die without hearing the truth.
 - J. However, He is obligated to get the truth to those who are +V, as He has predetermined this from eternity past.
 - K. Others may hear the good news of salvation, but because they are –V, they reject it. Mat.22:14
 - 1. Many in the world hear and have heard the gospel.
 - 2. Most have rejected it and continue to do so.
 - 3. The call goes out to many that are not elect or chosen, but they just reject the invitation.
 - 4. The few who are positive accept the invitation and believe.
- VIII. Problems associated with Calvinism and their view.
- A. Calvinism represents an attack on the true doctrines of election and calling and fall under Gal.5:8, “*This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you*”.
 - B. According to their doctrine, foreknowledge means foreordination, which equates to predestination, a function of His sovereignty.
 - C. As stipulated, this is not the case.
 - D. Calvinism has used the acronym TULIP to explain their views:
 - 1. Total depravity.
 - 2. Unconditional election.
 - 3. Limited atonement.
 - 4. Irresistible grace.
 - 5. Perseverance of the saints.
 - E. While unconditional election on its own is bona fide, the other views surrounding it automatically distort it.
 - F. Total depravity says that because of man’s sin condition, God did not have to provide salvation, but that some are saved as a matter of grace.
 - G. Scripture teaches that the character of God is such that He was bound to provide salvation and not something He could refuse to do. Joh.3:16; 1Tim.2:4; 2Pet.3:9
 - H. Limited atonement states that Christ only died for the elect, which scripture clearly refutes. 1Tim.4:10; 1Joh.2:2
 - I. Irresistible grace teaches that those who are called cannot refuse the calling and will ipso facto believe and thus have no choice.
 - J. The Bible teaches that many are called who are not saved and people choose to reject God’s plan. Isa.66:4; Jer.35:17 Mat.22:14; Luk.7:30 Act.7:51; 18:5-6; 19:9
 - K. Finally, perseverance of the saints declares that all that are elected and called will automatically pan out spiritually.
 - L. The Bible is replete with verses that document that believers are not only able to self-destruct, but they can and do. 1Cor.5:1ff; 1Tim.1:6,19-20; 4:1; 5:15; 6:9

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- M.** In addition, they reject that believers fall into reversionism and therefore remove the force of all the exhortations and commands for believers to comply with God's directive will.
- IX.** The security of election and calling.
- A.** In that election is the sovereign act of God executed in eternity past, it should be evident that no one can change the choice God has made. Rom.9:11
 - B.** Since our call is based on our election, it should be evident that both are eternally secure. Joh.6:37; 10:27-30; Rom.11:29
 - C.** Therefore, it is important to understand that all that God chose will be called and justified in the course of time.
 - D.** That the volitional act of believing in Christ for salvation carries with it this eternal security, see Doctrine of Eternal Security.
- X.** Things that we are said to be called to.
- A.** The call to salvation and sharing the eternal life glory with Jesus Christ entails more than simple believing in Him.
 - B.** The call does demand faith in Christ in order to qualify one to participate in the kingdom.
 - C.** However, the call contains other aspects necessary if one desires to exploit their position in that kingdom and obtain the ultimate in terms of Ph₃ glory (see Doctrine of Surpassing Grace/SG₃).
 - D.** We are called to:
 - 1.** Be saints. Rom.1:7; 1Cor.1:2
 - 2.** Fellowship with Christ. 1Cor.1:9
 - 3.** Inherit Ph₃ glory. Heb.9:15; 1Pet.3:9; 5:10
 - 4.** Ph₂ sanctification. 1Thess.4:7
 - 5.** Peace. 1Cor.7:15; Col.3:15
 - 6.** Freedom from the STA/OSN. Gal.5:13
 - 7.** Light, out of darkness. 1Pet.2:9
 - 8.** Suffer for and with Christ. Phil.3:10; 1Pet.2:21
 - 9.** Our spiritual office. Rom.1:1; 1Cor.1:1
 - E.** Our call to participate is obviously issued by God Himself and is compatible with His essence and plan. Gal.1:6; 2Pet.1:3
 - F.** While God uses man to communicate His word, it remains His ultimate responsibility to insure that those who are +V indeed receive the call. *(What will mankind do immediately after the rapture and removal of all believers from the planet?)*
 - G.** The call is according to the principle of grace. Gal.1:6,15
 - H.** It is according to God's own purpose. 2Tim.1:9
 - I.** His call carries with it some exhortations.

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1. We must live a life consistent with the character of the One who called us. Eph.5:1; 1Pet.1:15
2. We should remain in the niche in which we were called. 1Cor.7:17,18,20,24
3. We are exhorted to exploit SG₃. 1Tim.6:12
4. We are to expend every effort to solidify our position before God. 2Pet.1:10

XI. Conclusion.

- A. God knew in eternity past what each individual would be in terms of their volitional response to Him and to His plan.
- B. This allowed Him to select or elect certain people to be saved, without being a respecter of persons or unjust.
- C. God then determined that this group of people would be conformed to the image of His Son.
- D. For those whom He elected, He formed a plan that guaranteed their call (a gospel hearing) and eventual salvation.
- E. Their glorification is guaranteed by His plan realized at the rapture and resurrection of the saints.
- F. Foreknowledge is a function of omniscience and not of sovereignty; therefore it makes nothing certain, but only anticipates what is certain. 1Tim.4:1; 2Tim.3:1ff
- G. Election and predestination are functions of sovereignty and cannot be thwarted or frustrated. Isa.43:13; 46:10
- H. No one whom God foreknew and was therefore elected will fail to hear the gospel and believe. Joh.6:35-39; 10:14-16
- I. God's plan and provision for us, both in time and into eternity, preceded our personal history. 2Tim.1:8-9
- J. God's plan for your life is perfect and cannot be thwarted by Satan or anyone opposed to God's plan. Joh.17:4-5,15; Rom.16:20
- K. Election in no way prevents or hinders the operation of free will regarding salvation in its fullest of terms. Joh.3:16,18; 6:29
- L. The correct interpretation of the doctrine points to the crux of the Angelic Conflict (A/C), in that God does not choose or condemn the living beings of His creation **based** on His sovereignty, but **based** on His attribute of omniscience, which is not causative.
- M. Therefore, His creation of free moral agents is allowed to operate under that premise, autonomously/self governing/free.
- N. His choosing or rejecting is determined then, by the free choice that men or angels make regarding His Person and plan. Cp. the 5 "I wills" of Satan in Isa.14:12-14 that show his determination to:
 - A. Take God's place as his long-term goal, "*I will ascend to heaven*".
 - B. Rule the angels, "*I will raise my throne above the stars of God*".
 - C. Establish his throne on planet earth, "*I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north*".

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- D. Rule over the planet, *“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds”*.
- E. Be like God, *“I will make myself like the Most High”*.
- O. It is the volition of angels and men that determine their own destination with regard to God’s plan and thus removes any liability from God as a creator or partner of evil.
- P. This is the evil espoused by Calvinism that removes free will from the equation of God’s elect and places the cause of whether men do good or bad back to God. *(This is insight that Michael Servetus had regarding Calvin, whom Calvin had arrested and was eventually burned at the stake as a heretic. Encyclopedia Britannica. Macropedia, vol.3, p.674a.)*

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He will also bring it to pass. 1Thess.5:23-24 cp. 1Cor.1:8,9