

Divine Election and Human Responsibility

Lesson #4

Memory Verse: Ephesians 1:4-5

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

Who decides whether a person will be saved, God or the person? The Bible teaches that God unconditionally chose, predestined, and elected individuals to salvation before the foundation of the world. The Bible equally teaches that every individual is culpable for his sin and responsible for belief and repentance. In this lesson, we will examine these two truths.

I. Predestination and Election

Predestination is the Biblical teaching that God, in His sovereignty, predestined the course of human history and the lives of individuals. Election is the gracious, free, and sovereign act of God by which He chooses sinners to become His children.

A. Predestination and election are the prerogative of God.

1. According to Matthew 11:25-27, who will come to know the Father? _____

2. What is the prerequisite for a person to come to Christ (John 6:37, 44, 65)? _____

3. Does God choose the elect or do they choose God (John 15:16)? _____

4. According to Romans 9:11, who controls election, when was the decision made, and on what is it based? _____

 - a. When was God's choice made? _____
5. Why did Paul give thanks for the church in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:2-4)? ____

B. Predestination and election are unconditional.

1. According to Ephesians 1:5, 11, what is the basis of God's election? _____

2. Read Romans 9:10-21 and answer the following questions.
 - a. Could the choice have been made on the basis of anything within the individuals (vv.11, 16)? _____
 - b. Was God's choice unjust (v.14)? _____
 - c. Are there any human conditions stated to receive God's mercy (vv.15-16, 18)? _____

 - d. What is the significance of the potter/clay analogy (vv.20-21)? _____

C. Predestination and election are individual.

1. What promises are given to elect individuals in Romans 8:28-30? _____

2. Re-read Romans 9:10-21. How does Paul illustrate the fact that predestination and election are individual rather than collective? _____

3. In Matthew 13:11, which individuals were chosen to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and which were not? _____

D. Predestination and election are past tense.

1. According to Ephesians 1:4, when were the elect chosen by God? _____

2. Why did Paul yet again give thanks for the church in Thessalonica (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)? _____
3. On the basis of Matthew 25:34 and Revelation 17:8, what did God do before the foundation of the world? _____

E. Predestination and election are in Christ.

1. How is the phrases "in Him" and "in Christ Jesus" used in Ephesians 1:4 and 1 Corinthians 1:2-4? _____

*Whatever may be said about the doctrine of election, it is written in the Word of God as with an iron pen, and there is no getting rid of it. To me, it is one of the sweetest and most blessed truths in the whole of revelation...*¹

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F. Predestination and election are by grace.

1. According to what did God call the elect to salvation (2 Timothy 1:9-10)? _____

2. How is election described in Romans 11:5-7? _____

G. Predestination and election are unto salvation.

1. For what did Paul say the elect were chosen (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)? _____

2. What do John 6:37-40, Ephesians 1:11, and John 17:4-12 tell us the Father's gift of the elect to the Son, the will of the Father, and the Son's fulfillment of the Father's will? _____

3. How does the fact that election is God's prerogative make salvation certain (Romans 8:28-33)? _____

H. Predestination and election are evidenced by belief.

1. How are those who are Christ's sheep (i.e. the elect) contrasted with those who are not Christ's sheep in John 10:26-29? _____

2. How many people in the audience believed in Acts 13:48? _____

I. Predestination and election are Old Testament concepts

1. Describe God's actions and declarations regarding Israel (Deuteronomy 7:6). _____

¹ Carter, Tom: *2,200 Quotations from the Writings of Charles H. Spurgeon*. Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Books, 1988.

2. According to Deuteronomy 9:4-6 what characteristic of Israel had no impact on God's choice of them? _____

3. How does Isaiah 45:4 describe election by grace? _____

J. Predestination and election are ultimately for God's glory.

1. How did Paul explain the God's motivation for election in Ephesians 1:4-6? _____

2. Why does God endure with patience those who have prepared themselves for destruction (Romans 9:22-23)? _____

Before the foundation of the world, God chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies... Sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord.²

II. Human Responsibility

God has made the blessings of salvation freely available to all through the gospel, and it is the immediate duty of all people to accept them by sincere, penitent, and obedient faith. Failure to do so is the result of nothing but their inherent depravity and willing rejection of the gospel, resulting in eternal condemnation in hell.

A. Man is responsible for his sins and bears the full guilt of them.

1. How much guilt is associated with sin (Matthew 5:22)? _____

2. What is the punishment for sin (Romans 6:23)? _____

3. What is the eternal destiny of those who rebel against the living God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Revelation 21:8)? _____

4. What is the status of who does not believe in Jesus (John 3:18, 36)? _____

² Grace Community Church Doctrinal Statement, <http://www.gty.org/MeetGTY/DoctrinalStatement#Salvation>

B. Man is responsible to repent and believe in Christ.³

1. What invitation did Christ give to all people in Matthew 11:28 and Revelation 22:17?

2. What command did Jesus give to all people and what is the consequence for disobedience (Acts 17:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, 2:10-12)? _____

3. Why did Jesus rebuke the Jews in John 5:39-40? _____

4. What promise did Jesus give to anyone who is willing to believe (John 3:16)? _____

5. What desire did God reveal and what command did He give in Ezekiel 18:32 and 33:11? _____

If I was asked, "Why is a man damned?" I should answer as an Arminian answers, "He destroys himself." I should not dare to lay man's ruin at the door of divine sovereignty. On the other hand, if I were asked, "Why is a man saved?" I could only give the Calvinistic answer, "He is saved through the sovereign grace of God, and not at all of himself." I should not dream of ascribing the man's salvation in any measure to himself.⁴

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III. Reconciliation of Divine Election and Human Responsibility

Divine sovereignty in predestination and election as well as human responsibility are both in the Bible, so neither should be over-emphasized to the minimization of the other and neither should be forgotten. Both truths should be equally accepted, appreciated, and loved.

A. These doctrines are difficult to reconcile, because our understanding is finite.

1. What does Isaiah 55:8-9 teach us about the wisdom of God? _____

³ Please see lessons #6 and #7 for more information on this topic.

⁴ Carter, Tom: *2,200 Quotations from the Writings of Charles H. Spurgeon*. Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Books, 1988.

2. Read Romans 11:33-36 and answer the following questions.
 - a. Why is it impossible to fully understand God’s purposes in election? _____

 - b. Why should we never impose our human reason and logic on God? _____

 - c. What is the ultimate purpose for which God does everything that He does? _____

 3. Re-read Romans 9:19-24. What can we learn from this text about questioning God regarding His purposes in election? _____

- B. These doctrines are reconciled in the fact that God works in the hearts of believers.⁵
1. According to Philippians 2:12, who is responsible for “working out salvation”? _____

 2. According to Philippians 2:13, how does one work out his salvation? _____

IV. Personal Application

- A. How have you been comforted by the doctrines of predestination and election? How have they moved you to praise God for your eternal salvation? _____

- B. How does the knowledge of human responsibility and guilt drive you to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”? _____

- C. How can you keep a healthy perspective regarding divine sovereignty and human responsibility? How does it encourage you in evangelism? _____

⁵ Please see lesson #6 for more information on this topic.