

“What it means to be Reformed”; Session # 15 – “Sola Gratia – The Doctrine of Election Opened”, Prepared for the Adult Sunday School class on November 9th, 2014, by Pastor Paul Rendall.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2: 13 – “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Having now gone through 5 sessions in establishing the truth of Man’s total depravity, I want this morning to begin examining the first of the precious doctrines of grace with you. I have said to you that to be truly reformed in your thinking as a Christian you will be a person who believes in all the doctrines of grace. You will believe them because they are doctrines which are clearly taught in the Bible; and they show you how all of your salvation is attributable to God’s merciful, purposeful, and powerful working to bring you to eternal life. The first of these blessed doctrines is unconditional election.

Let me give you a definition of the doctrine of election. Election is God’s having chosen in Christ, from before the foundation of the world, a certain and definite number of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation to receive the gift of eternal life; their being unable and unwilling to choose for themselves apart from the grace of Christ. He chose them, not based upon anything good in them, but according to His purpose in Christ, to have a people for His own possession. God knew that He would not have a people for Himself at all, if they were left to themselves to choose to believe in Him or to receive the gift of salvation. And so in the Divine counsels in eternity past the Father purposed in Christ His Son to do all the work of redemption in and through Him. In Himself He not only purposed who would be saved, but also purposed that the application all of the blessings of salvation would most certainly come to them in His time of choice. He sent His only-begotten Son into this world to redeem a people for Himself. If you have been converted to Jesus Christ according to the sovereign choice and the powerful working of the Triune God, you are one of His elect.

1. Those who are chosen in Christ are chosen before the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1: 1-4 Acts 15: 13-18

2. The doctrine of election, of God’s choosing some to eternal life, is based on God’s eternal decrees; and more specifically, the transaction which took place in eternity past between the Father and the Son in the Eternal Covenant of Redemption.

The Westminster shorter catechism says that God’s decrees are His eternal purpose, according the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.” He executes these purposes and plans in the works of creation and His providence. Our 1689 Confession Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 states: “God hath decreed in Himself, from all eternity by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature; nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established, in which appears His wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing His decree.”

Thomas Brooks in his treatise on the Covenant of Redemption in the 5th Volume of his works says this on P. 331 – “If you ask me, What this covenant of redemption is? I answer in general, that a covenant is a mutual agreement between parties, upon articles or propositions on both sides, so that each party is tied and bound to perform his own conditions. This description holds the general nature of a covenant, and is common to all covenants, public and private, divine, or human. But, secondly and more particularly, I answer, the covenant of redemption is that federal transaction or mutual stipulation that was betwixt God and Christ from everlasting, for the accomplishment of the work of our redemption, by the mediation of Jesus Christ, to the eternal honor, and unspeakable praise, of the glorious grace of God. Or, if you please, take it in another form of words, thus: It is a compact, bargain, and agreement between God the Father and God the Son, designed mediator, concerning the conversion sanctification, and salvation of the elect, through the death, satisfaction, and obedience of Jesus Christ, which in due time was to be given to the Father.”

Isaiah 46: 8-11 Isaiah 42: 1-9 Isaiah 49: 1-11

3. The elect are predestined to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to God Himself.

W.G.T. Shedd says: “God’s decree of election respects man.” “Predestination is the Divine decree or purpose (*προθεσις*) so far as it relates to moral agents, (viz. angels and men) “The world of matter and irrational existence is more properly the object of the Divine decree, than of the Divine predestination.” “God decreed rather than predestinated the existence of the material universe.” “Again a decree relates to a thing or fact; predestination to a person.” “Sin is decreed; the sinner is predestinated.”

The choice of men who would be saved (the elect) is according to the pleasure of His will, not your will as a man or woman.

Our own 1689 London Baptist Confession says in Chapter 3, Paragraph 5 – “Those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel of good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto.”

Ephesians 1: 5 and 6 Matthew 11: 26 John 1: 12 and 13.

4. All of God’s elect were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God in respect to their salvation and all the means which would be used to accomplish their salvation.

Paragraph 6 of Chapter 3 of our Confession says: “As God hath appointed the elect unto eternal glory, so He hath, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto, wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed in Christ.

1st Peter 1: 2

5. It is God's election of these particular persons, in connection with the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, which forms the basis of God's conveying all the blessings of grace to them.

Romans 8: 28-30 1st Thessalonians 1: 1-5

6. Let's remember that all those who are chosen are chosen in Christ, and that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is called God's elect. Therefore we ought to glory in being called the elect of God, and we ought to be willing to endure all things for their sakes in our service to Christ.

1st Peter 2: 4 and 5. 2 Timothy 2: 8-10