

**“What it means to be Reformed”; Session # 20 – “Sola Gratia – God’s Choice of Nations”, Prepared for the Adult Sunday School class
On December 14th, 2014, by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

Read Romans 9: 6-15 – “And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, ‘The older shall serve the younger.’ “As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.’ “For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’”

My 5th point concerning the doctrine of Election was this:

5. God’s choice in election is not based upon anything good or bad in those whom He has foreknown.

A. The Bible teaches us that God saves His elect one at a time. And He does not necessarily choose to save all within a family. (Although sometimes in the book of Acts we find whole households of people who trusted in Christ at the same time. We will speak of this later.) Jacob and Esau were both sinful young men; both were totally depraved. God did not choose to save Jacob because he was an upright young man, or because he was a better person by nature than Esau.

We should also see from these verses that Jacob was not chosen because of foreseen faith that he would exercise. Before his conversion he was a very tricky and deceitful man. His name Jacob meant “Supplanter”, or “deceitful”. He stole his brother Esau’s birthright by cunningly taking advantage of his brother’s hunger. (Genesis 25: 29-34) He stole his brother Esau’s blessing by going along with his mother’s sneaking plan to trick Isaac into thinking that he was Esau, bringing him food, whereupon Isaac did give Jacob his special spiritual blessing even though he had not intended it. (Genesis 27: 1-29) I hope that you can see, and that you are convinced, that Jacob was not chosen because God foresaw some good thing in him that he would do to merit his salvation. God had to take 20 years of Jacob’s life to straighten out his heart, after his conversion in order that he could learn the right way to go about living righteously. (Genesis 28-33)

Thus, we see that God’s choosing of any person to set His love upon them, and to save them, does not take place on the basis of their having done anything good or bad. It is simply that God is showing mercy where He wills to do so, and for reasons that we do not understand; reasons which relate to His own purpose which is to glorify Himself in the salvation of some; and to glorify Himself in the demonstration of His justice in others. His purpose according to election will stand.

A paraphrase of verses 10-13: “When Rebecca had conceived by Isaac, the children having been conceived by her had not done anything good or evil; in order that the purpose of God according to election might stand (that salvation was not by their works in any respect, but rather that it comes from God who first chooses them, and then He effectually calls that person to salvation), God said to Rebecca, “The older son shall serve the younger.” And this distinction which God made between these two persons, Jacob and Esau, in His choosing one, Jacob, and

His rejecting the other, Esau, in this case extended even to their descendants and what God would make of them as nations. Just as it is written in the book of Malachi, chapter 1, verse 2 – “I have loved you,” says the Lord.” “Yet you say, ‘In what way have You loved us?’ “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” says the Lord.” “Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountain and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.”

B. Election is solely based upon God’s purpose, which is, to show mercy on certain individuals and even certain nations.

Genesis 26: 21-23 Malachi 1: 1-5

Let us understand that the purpose of God according to election starts before a person is born. God creates all things and all people for His purpose. He forms each and every person who has ever lived, according to His good pleasure; physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Let’s look at God’s choice of Jeremiah, from the womb, to be saved and to become a prophet to the nations:

Jeremiah 1: 4-12

But in His wisdom and according to His eternal purpose, He has not chosen to save all men. Even though all are sinners, all will not be saved. Could God have saved all men? Undoubtedly He has the power to do so. But this would not have brought glory to Him in regard to the greatness of His attributes in relation to the purposes of His redeeming a people. Those whom He has chosen are saved to the praise of His glorious mercy and grace. Those whom He passed by and does not choose to eternal life perish forever because of their sins. Their eternal destruction they have brought upon themselves, and God’s bringing them under His eternal justice in punishing them eternally will be to the praise of His glorious justice. Psalm 76: 1-12

We want to look first at His merciful choice to save many people who were undeserving unworthy sinners. And after that we will look at the doctrine of reprobation which is His passing by the others whom He did not elect, bringing them to judgment on account of their sins.

We need to see that God’s purpose in election is to save a multitude of people whom no man can number.

Revelation 7: 9-12

C. God is also able to save many people at a certain and particular time period of His choosing.

We should see here that God’s purpose in election included the election of the nation of Israel, and not the nation of people which descended from Esau; those who became the Edomites. In New Testament, New Covenant times, God has, through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile making them one new man in His Church.

Ephesians 2: 14-16

And He has established each individual believer in Himself as being part of “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that we might proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1st Peter 2: 9 and 10

D. We also find that God is able to save whole households of people at the same time if it is His purpose to do so.

Acts 11: 13-15 Acts 16: 31-34

E. God is able to save nations according to His sovereign will and purpose, as well.

Just because these individual and family conversions have been God’s regular way of doing things over the course of this Church age thus far, it does not mean that God has not purposed in electing love to save much larger numbers yet, in accordance with His eternal purpose, in His electing whole nations in relation to their receiving the gospel of His Son, so that Christ’s kingdom will someday triumph in the earth. It is evident from many passages of Scripture that eventually God will call the Jews as a nation, as an ethnic people, to Himself.

Romans 11: 25-29

This is not dispensationalism. Rather, it is the extension of His electing work to a greater level of saving many people, and even to the extent of a majority of whole nation groups, so that they will be generally seen as Christian nations in the latter times of this present dispensation.

F. The pouring out of God’s Spirit, to give success to the preaching of the gospel, will someday result in the conversion of nations to Christ. Even though many Christians do not presently believe this, they should carefully study the following passages and ask themselves whether any of these great things have yet come to pass in the history of the Church.

Psalm 72: 8-11 Isaiah 2: 1-4 Isaiah 19: 18-25 Isaiah 26: 1-3 Isaiah 59: 20 – 60: 12

Zechariah 2: 10-13 Zechariah 8: 20-23 Ezekiel 37: 1- 14 Ezekiel 39: 21-29

Commenting on Isaiah 19: 21, Joseph Benson says in his commentary – “But though this prophecy concerning Egypt might have its first accomplishment in the deliverance of the Egyptians from the Persian yoke by Alexander the Great, and in that knowledge of the true God, and of his revealed will, which many of the Egyptians received under the government of the Ptolemies, through their intercourse with the Jews, and the translation of the Jewish Scriptures into the Greek language; yet, doubtless, this prediction has a further and higher aspect, as commentators in general have understood it, and refers to that spiritual redemption and salvation which the Egyptians, among many other ignorant and idolatrous Gentiles, were to receive, and actually did receive, by the coming of Christ, the great and only Saviour of lost mankind, and by the publication of his gospel to them. This appears still more evidently from the verses which follow. But the full and final accomplishment of this, as well as of many other important prophecies, shall not take place till Mohammedanism and idolatry shall be completely overthrown, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

Joseph Sutcliffe says in his commentary on Isaiah 19: 21 – “Isaiah saw that Egypt would be a sanctuary for the Jews who should escape the sword of the Chaldees: and at one time

the number of the refugees was so great that “five cities did literally speak the language of Canaan.” Alexander the great was a savior to them, and the Ptolemies were their patrons. God blesses the nation that receives his exiled people. This prophecy may however have a reference to the future conversion of Egypt to the Christian faith.”

Charles Spurgeon says on Isaiah 19: 21 – “This is a very remarkable prophecy. Attempts have been made to explain it, as if it were already fulfilled. I believe all such attempts to be utter failures. This promise stands on record, to be fulfilled at some future day. In those bright days for which some of us are looking, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, so the waters cover the sea, then shall this word to Egypt be verified; yea, and God shall be glorified both by Egypt and Assyria, as well as in the land of Israel. This ought to be an encouragement to carry on missionary operations with great vigor. Here is a distinct promise for Assyria and for Egypt. Let not the missionary be afraid, even if for thousands of years to come there should be little apparent success to the preaching of the gospel. If the Lord should tarry another six thousand years, ay, sixty thousand years—and he may—we are still to go on working, and still to go on laboring, looking for his coming, and expecting it, but not relaxing our efforts because he pleases to delay it, for the Lord has sworn that all flesh shall know his glory, and you may depend upon it, there is no spot of earth that shall be left to be Satan's dominion. It shall be conquered for Christ, and in truth he shall "see of the travail of his soul, and he shall be satisfied.”

The Savoy Confession of 1658 says this in its 26th Chapter, Paragraph 5 –

“As the Lord in his care and love towards his Church, hath in his infinite wise providence exercised it with great variety in all ages, for the good of them that love him, and his own glory; so according to his promise, we expect that in the latter days, antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear Son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged, and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable and glorious condition than they have enjoyed.”