

# Systematic Theology: Election

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I never tire of saying that it's a privilege to open God's word together, especially on Tuesday evening. I appreciate so much how faithful you all are to be with us and count it a privilege week by week to study God's word together with you and we are in the middle of returning to our study of systematic theology tonight. We've studied the authority of Scripture, we've studied the attributes of God, and now we are looking at the works of God which we started last week when we considered the doctrine of the divine decrees and we said as we studied the divine decrees, that God ordained before the beginning of time everything that would ever happen. And so we looked at that in some detail and I invite you to look for the cds or the messages online if you weren't able to see those. We don't have time to review any of that here this evening.

As you think about that great and massive, broad, deep, high and wide doctrine of the divine decrees, if you give it a moment's reflection you realize that there is something very important that is embedded in that doctrine and we could express it this way with the question: how do the divine decrees relate to the destiny of the souls of men? If God determined beforehand everything that would ever happen, how does that relate to the fact that some men go to heaven and some men go to hell? How are we to understand that? And that leads us into this evening's discussion on the doctrine of election which falls under the greater doctrine, you could say, of the doctrine of predestination. So tonight's study is on election, next week we will study the counterpart of that doctrine which is the doctrine of reprobation and we'll save that for next week.

But Louis Berkhof defines predestination in this way. We like to define our terms; that helps clarity so very much. Berkhof defines predestination as the plan or the purpose of God respecting his moral creatures. What is the plan of God as it pertains to his moral creatures. Predestination, then, is a subset of the divine decrees as it relates to the souls of men. And we just repeat for emphasis this simple statement: since God ordained everything that would ever happen, that means that he also preordained the eternal destiny of his moral creatures.

Now, as we come to this doctrine, we realize that we are dealing with something that is very very vast, very significant, very awesome, you might say, and awesome not in the cheap way that that word is used by today's standards, something that is great and mighty and majestic. And as we deal with these matters of the purpose of God before time began

and as we deal with matters that pertain to the eternal destiny of souls and the issues of heaven and hell, there is something that we should state up front and that is that we should approach this with a great sense of deference to God and a great sense of reverence toward God. These are great and lofty themes. These are things that belong to God and to God alone and we study them in order to treat God's word seriously to see what he has said about it, but to realize that we are dealing in a realm where, you could say colloquially speaking, this is an area where angels fear to tread. So let us put aside our prejudices, let us put aside our sense of standing in judgment of the purposes or the decrees of God, and simply approach this with a sense of awe and reverence and fear as we deal with such weighty matters from God's word, and that's the spirit with which we want to approach this study tonight of divine election.

The simple matter is that some people will be saved to enjoy heaven forever and some people will be punished eternally for their sin. Jesus said that the way is narrow that leads to life and few are those who find it; the way that leads to destruction is broad and many are those who find it. So even in the words of Christ, you see a statement that Christ knowing these things in advance, knowing them in his earthly life, makes a plain and open and unambiguous statement that there are some that find the way to life and some that go the way of destruction and we just need to come to grips with that.

In two weeks, tonight and next week, we are considering predestination as it pertains to human beings in two ways: election and reprobation. What about the divine decrees as they relate to the ultimate salvation of souls. Well, I think Scripture gives us a very clear and helpful way to frame our thinking about these things. The key to it really comes down to this in my judgment: it depends on whether you are going to start from a God-centered perspective on these issues or whether you are going to start from a man-centered perspective on these issues. And from a man-centered perspective, man in his pride and sense of entitlement might think that everyone is entitled to salvation or at least to a chance to salvation, as though the preeminence of man imposes an obligation on God to deal with all men in exactly the same way. Well, that's a very bad way to approach thought and life and, certainly, a horrific way to approach theology, theology, of course, being the study of God. No, as we study theology, we start with God and we start with God's perspective on things.

So to frame this consideration of the doctrine of election, I think it's helpful to remember a most basic principle and that is this, if you would turn to Psalm 3:8 with me. Psalm 3:8, we're going to just approach from a most basic principle. Psalm 3:8 says that,

8 Salvation belongs to the LORD; Your blessing be upon Your people!

You might remember that Jonah when he was praying from the belly of the great fish said these same words, "Salvation belongs to the LORD," and we must understand something very basic here. When we are talking about the gift of eternal life, when we are talking about salvation from sin, when we are talking about what a great gift of God in Jesus Christ, we need to remember something very basic: salvation belongs to God and that means that it is God's prerogative to do with it as he wishes. Man comes in a humble state

before him, we come as beggars, we come as those having no claim on God, having forfeited every claim on him through our sin, and so salvation belongs to God and it is his to do with as he sees fit.

You would object vociferously if somebody came to you and said, "I understand that you have X amount of money in the bank. Here's what I think you should do with your money. I think you should give it to every person equally. You should divide it all up equally and give it to every person that lives in the town and give it all to them equally." Well, what would you say to that? You would say, "Excuse me! That belongs to me! That's not for you to decide, it's not for you to tell me what to do with that which belongs to me!" You would never let anyone speak to you that way. You'd say, "You're a nut! You need to leave!" Well, in a far greater and a far more holy and a far more majestic way, that is the proper way for us to think about God's gift of salvation. It belongs to him and so we approach it not with a sense of entitlement, but we approach it with a sense of reverence.

Stated differently, salvation, we said, belongs to the Lord, you could state it differently: salvation is the gift of God. Salvation is the gift which belongs to God. Look at the Gospel of John 4, if you would. And again, we're just framing our thinking here. As I was having a conversation with someone recently, it is just so very important for us to approach the process of thinking properly and to start with first principles. Rather than starting with the details, we always need to go back to first principles and to let those first principles inform all of the details. If God is sovereign, if God is the Creator and the Maker of heavens and earth, if all things derive their existence from him, if salvation is that which belongs to the Lord, then and only then can we begin to have a proper perspective in bowing before the freedom of God to do what he wishes with that which belongs to him. Only then can we begin to think about this rightly.

In John 4:10, Jesus speaking to the Samaritan woman said to her,

If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.

Jesus is speaking to her about salvation and he refers to it as the gift of God, something that you must ask for, something not that you are entitled to.

In Ephesians 2:8, in that very familiar passage, look at Ephesians 2 with me just to have those words and we're going to end up in Ephesians anyway. In Ephesians 2:8, to remind you of that which you know so well, speaking about salvation, the Apostle Paul writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said this, he said, it is

by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

And in Romans 6:23 it says,

the free gift of God is eternal life.

So we realize and we come to these things with those perspectives in mind and we say this, we say this in a desire to vindicate God, to honor God, and to give him the position that is rightfully his in our thinking: God is the Creator and God is the Savior, and therefore God has the prerogative as Creator to give what is his to whom he wishes. We must recall that as we study this doctrine of election. God has the prerogative to give what is his to whomever he wishes. If God had determined in his mind that once mankind fell no one would be saved, he would have been perfectly right and just to do that. We forfeited all claim in Adam. When Adam fell, we forfeited all claim on God. And not only is that something positional in Adam as our representative and as the head of our race, beloved, let's remember in humility that we ourselves individually have forfeited any claim on God through our own sin. And so as a result of this, we come with humility and we recognize that God and God alone has the prerogative to do with the gift of salvation that which pleases him and so the question isn't what should God do, measured by human standards, but rather what has God revealed about the way that he handles his gift.

With that introduction in mind, we turn now to our primary text tonight, Ephesians 1:3. If you would turn there, and I'll read through verse 6. Ephesians 1:3 through 6 where the Apostle Paul says,

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 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 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

This is a cornerstone text for the biblical doctrine of election. And let me just point out a couple of things to you here as we look at this text. First of all, look at the simple things of grammar: subject, verb and direct object; who is doing the acting and who is on the receiving end of the action. In verse 4, "He chose us in Him." God is the subject. He did the choosing and who were the objects of his choice? It was us. You cannot flip that as Arminians want to do and say that we chose God. That is a complete reversal of language. It is a violation of every principle of human communication. It is a violation of the clarity of the text. You cannot do that. In the same way in verse 5, subject, verb, direct object, "He predestined us." And if you look also there at the end of verse 5, it was "according to His will." His will, not the will of man.

So let's just define election in this way: election is God's – this is using the definition from Berkhof – election is God's eternal purpose to save some of the human race from sin in and by Jesus Christ. Election is God's eternal purpose to save some of the human race from sin in and by Jesus Christ. What I want to do tonight is just give you three aspects of

the doctrine of election and then draw out at the end four consequences that it has for your Christian life.

First of all, we want to see this from the text, we want to see, first of all: the praise for election. The praise for election and this gives me an opportunity to reinforce something that I said just a few minutes ago, the whole spirit in which you approach this doctrine. You know, I have, I truly have no use for contentious debates about election with anyone, and I realize that when you get into theological discussions, that sometimes there is more heat than light, that these things will make people angry, that they will react against them, and the temptation for those of us that hold to the biblical truth of the matter is to feel the sense of burning rising up within you and wanting to meet force with force in the way that you apply an argument and to meet anger with anger. Beloved, these things should not be and I just politely excuse myself from those kinds of angry discussions when they come up because this is not the way that such sacred truth should be handled. It should not be handled in a spirit of contention. It should not be handled with a sense of pride and trying to justify our own position. As we saw earlier, it should be handled with a sense of great humility and deference and here as Paul opens up, he sees that this doctrine of election should be discussed in a spirit of praise, in a spirit of worship, and only that is an appropriate spirit with which to discuss these things at all.

Look at how Paul opens it up in verse 3. He is praising God from the beginning in verse 3 when he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." The opening theme, the frame in which all of this discussion of election takes place, the whole context of it is, "God, I bless your name. I worship you for what you have done. I ascribe goodness, honor and glory to you." And then Paul goes and unfolds the reason that he's praising God in the verses that follow.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," that is the praise for election. That is the spirit in which these things must be discussed. In sheer kindness, in a sheer act of grace and mercy, in unfathomable love and goodness, God has given to his people, those who have been redeemed in Christ, he has given us every spiritual blessing. Those of us who are spiritually bankrupt by nature, those of us who have sinned against him in word, thought and deed, those of us that were conceived in iniquity, born in iniquity, and without anyone teaching us how to do so, brought forth the fruit of sin from our earliest days as an infant, on sinful, depraved creatures like that, like you and me, God has bestowed every spiritual blessing in Christ. He has elected us to salvation. He has adopted us into his family. He has redeemed us from sin. He has bought us out of the slave market of sin at the cost of the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit who is a down payment that the greater things of salvation are still to come. He has promised us eternal glory where we will see our Lord Jesus Christ face-to-face and we will be with him in perfect bliss forever and ever with the redeemed of all ages.

When you remember things like that bestowed on an unworthy one like you, you step back and have no desire for contention in your heart, no desire to argue anything on a

human level. When these things are rightly in place in your mind, it provokes and promotes worship in your heart. "O God, I thank you that before time began you chose me for salvation. I thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ and his shed blood 2,000 years ago. I thank you for the work of your Holy Spirit who opened my eyes and opened my heart to believe the things of the Gospel. I thank you that the Spirit of God indwells me. I thank you that you have given the Scriptures as a sure inerrant guide to your truth. I thank you for the fellowship of the saints within a local body of the church of Jesus Christ. I thank you for all the human earthly blessings you have given. I thank you for the promise that you will keep me all the way to the end and that no one can pluck me out of your hand according to the words of my Savior in John 10. Father, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you!" This is the only right way for us to think about these things. So with a spirit of humility and gratitude, we look at these things and we praise God for his electing choice.

Look at verse 4 with me, Ephesians 1. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as," in accordance with this fact, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." Beloved, God chose you before the beginning of time if you're in Christ. God chose you – realize the wonder of this – God chose you before you had done anything good or bad. God out of a sheer act of his grace and kindness toward you, determined that it would please himself in order to show eternal kindness to you and he chose you so that you would be the recipient of his blessing forever and ever, amen. These are great and wonderful truths. Prior to creation, God had settled his purpose to bless you forever. Before you were conceived in your mother's womb, God according to his eternal decree, had determined that you would be with him forever. There has never been a time in the created order where the certain outcome of your soul as a Christian was ever in doubt. God determined it beforehand and the outworking of time was simply a partial manifestation to make sure that his purpose for you would be accomplished, to which we draw back, we step back and bow low and say, "God, I worship you for that. What kind of order of magnitude of blessing is that? And you chose me for that? O God!" No wonder Paul burst into praise. No wonder that the opening verse of Ephesians after the greeting is just a burst of fireworks of praise. No wonder. This is magnificent truth.

So we praise God for the doctrine of election. We praise him, more specifically, for electing us, for choosing us, for appointing us, for predestining us to glory so that it would never be in doubt. And as I'll probably mention later on and, beloved, recognizing that God was so intent, his purpose was so sure for the goodness of your soul, that he would never leave it up to you. You know, I mean, we can't carry things across the room without dropping them, do you think that you could carry the weight of your eternal soul and somehow manage to secure its blessing when you can't keep a coffee cup from falling to the floor? Out on the thought. God was so intent that he determined it by his purpose and he took the responsibility to ensure your well-being on himself rather than leaving it up to you. That's how good and great our God is. You know, and if you think about it even from a human perspective, those of you that are parents, you desire the well-being of your children. When they are infants and young toddlers walking around, busy streets around, you would never leave it up to them to make their own choices. You

understand that they are not capable of making good choices so you exercise your superior power and wisdom to ensure their blessing and protection. Well, how much greater the purpose of God to secure our blessing and not leave it to us.

Now, that's the praise for election. Let's move on to our second point here this evening and talk about the proof of election. The proof of election, and sometimes for those that have been raised in Arminian churches, it's surprising to them, it's hard to believe when they see it for the first time just how much the doctrine of unconditional election is woven into the very fabric of God's word. They have been so conditioned to see it from a particular distorted perspective that the plain language on so many texts is easily missed by them.

Well, let's look beyond Ephesians 1 to verify what we're talking about here tonight. Look over at John 15, if you would. John 15, and as you're turning there, we just realize corporately, we thank God again not only for the privilege of election but just for being in a place where we can peacefully study these things together in a shared common bond in Christ. Lord, we do not take for granted the privilege of studying your word together in a safe environment like this and we thank you for the privilege that it is.

Jesus said to the disciples in John 15:16, he said,

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.

Again, subject, verb and direct object. Jesus said, "You did not choose Me but I chose you." And in verse 19 he goes on and he says,

19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

Christ tells the disciples, "You didn't choose Me, I chose you."

Now, if you look over in the book of Acts 13, and all we're doing here is we're just looking at some cross reference passages to see that this is not an isolated instance in God's word. As you're turning to Acts 13, remember that the whole Old Testament is premised on an election of God. He chose Israel out from among the other nations. He didn't choose all the nations, he chose Israel. He chose Jacob, not Esau. You cannot understand the Bible if you deny the doctrine of election.

In Acts 13:48, you see Paul turning the Gospel to the Gentiles and he says in verse 47,

47 For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth.'

That they would announce the good news throughout all of the world, and in verse 48 it says this,

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.

They had been appointed to eternal life before the beginning of time and now it's playing out in time. The choice of God was coming to fruition as they heard the Gospel and believed and entered into that salvation that God had prepared for them before the foundation of the world.

Look further at the writings of Paul in 2 Thessalonians, please. 2 Thessalonians, after Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. 1 Thessalonians, you come to 2 Thessalonians in chapter 2, verse 13, there is an entire five point discussion of the doctrine of salvation in this single verse and the verse that follows. 2 Thessalonians 13, Paul says,

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. 14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul says, "God chose you from the beginning for salvation. He chose you so that you would gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." So at the beginning, he chose you with the ultimate outcome that you would receive the glory of Christ, that you would gain it, that you would enter into it. And in between, what did God do? He called you through our Gospel so that you would believe. These are great and lofty themes. The human tongue is not sufficient, it's not adequate except by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to speak of these things.

What man among us, what man anywhere in the world is intrinsically worthy to speak of such lofty things as these? Yet God has made them known in his word. He intends for us to teach them but we are mindful of what the Apostle Paul said as he spoke about preaching the Gospel, "Who is adequate for these things?" Inadequate in and of himself he said, "But our adequacy comes from God." God makes us adequate to speak of these things by his grace, by the indwelling Spirit, by the inerrant word. But on our own to speak of these lofty things, no. No way. This is too great. This is too high. This is too lofty. To look at the depths of the depravity of man, the guilt that is attached to men for their sin and rebellion against God and to realize that God, despite that, God for his own purposes, God because it pleased him, chose some among those fallen men to belong to him to receive salvation in Christ, to have eternal glory.

What can you say to that? This is great. This is high. This is lofty. This is majestic. And when you see it from that perspective, my friends, that's when you begin to understand



that these things should not be discussed in a spirit of a prideful argument, and that these great truths of God would simply become subservient to an end that someone could win an argument and get the upper hand versus another man in an angry discussion. That's not right. This is not the way for these things to be handled. These things are to be handled with reverence and with humility and with a spirit of worship. That's what we're trying to do here this evening.

2 Thessalonians 13, turn now to 2 Timothy 1:8-9. 2 Timothy 1:8,

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

Paul says it was according to his purpose and his grace, not by our works, not by anything that we did. He said it wasn't that and it could not have been that because as fallen sinful creatures, we had nothing to offer to God. Paul says, "No, according to His own purpose and grace, it was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."

Now, beloved, let's make something really clear here as I start to divert from my notes here with what I'm about to say. There comes a point when these things start to sink in on you and you start to absorb them and receive them and embrace them, there is a change that takes place. Whereas before at one time, you might have accused God of unfairness in election, "Why can't everybody be saved or why doesn't everybody, you know, how can God choose some and not others?" You know, and when a person is thinking that way, they haven't come to a right understanding of biblical doctrine at all. They haven't been humbled by it. They haven't seen what Scripture says with power yet. When you come to understand it, when you come to embrace it, there is this reaction that says, "God, why me? Why would you choose me?" And the truth of the matter is, beloved, that there is no answer in you that would answer that question. There was nothing in you that caused God to choose you, but that's not to say that God didn't have a reason, that God didn't have a purpose, but it was a purpose that was within himself. It was that which pleased God. It pleased God to choose you. That's the answer to the question. Why did God choose you? Because it pleased him to do so. It was not because there was anything in you that made him prefer you as opposed to someone else. So there are vast eternal reasons for God's electing purposes, why he chooses some and not chooses others. There are vast, infinite, deep reasons for that but they are not revealed to us. They are contained within the mind and eternal counsel and purpose of God and that's why he did it. It's because it pleased him. Paul says, "according to His own purpose," God made the choices that he made. So we bow low.

And what can we say to these things as we summarize this proof of election? Well, going back to our starting premise, salvation belongs to the Lord, salvation is the gift of God, he chose us, well, all of that leads us to this conclusion, is that God initiated salvation, not

us, not man. It would never be that way. It could never be that way. Do you know why it could never be that way? Scripture teaches it from the other direction as well.

Look over at Romans 3. It could never be this way, the way that we were the initiator of salvation. That could not possibly be true. Everyone who says that is declaring a lie against the truth of God. It couldn't be that way. Why? Because Scripture makes it so clear in Romans 3:10,

There is none righteous, not even one; 11 there is none who understands,  
there is none who seeks for God.

Did you hear that? There is none who seeks for God.

12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none  
who does good, there is not even one.

There is no one who seeks for God. Why? Because they are dead in sin. Because they are a spiritual corpse and a spiritual corpse does nothing. We are dead in trespasses and sin until God does a work on our heart.

The Apostle Paul later in Romans 8 says,

the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject  
itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who  
are in the flesh cannot please God.

And yet in light of these verses, Arminians will say, "Man has the power to choose and it's up to man to choose when the Gospel is presented to him." Are you kidding me? From what spiritual ability is he going to make a choice that results in his eternal blessing when his mind is hostile to God, he is dead in sin, he cannot please God and he is not seeking God? And you're going to take somebody like that and say, "Yes, there's the one. A man like that will choose rightly for Christ." This is a perversion of theology of the highest order. This is a denial of plain statements of Scripture. Why? Simply to preserve and protect the pride of man and make man the captain of his own soul, make him the master of his own destiny, "It's up to me." Scripture doesn't teach that. Scripture says that God ordained beforehand those who would come to Christ. And then as it works out in time among sinners, he brings the power of the Holy Spirit to bear one by one on individual hearts to open their minds to Christ and to believe in him. You see, beloved, when you understand the teaching of Scripture on the doctrine of election, it makes you understand that you believed in God, oh yes, you believed, but you were believing in response to and as the outworking of his prior choice because he is sovereign and we are not. Election was based on the purpose of God and his choice was rooted in what pleased him, not on any distinction among men.

Now, let's deal with a couple of objections to this teaching. Some people say, "That's unfair to those who have no chance!" so to speak. Well, let's go back and remember our

first principle here: salvation belongs to the Lord. No one is entitled to it. No one has a claim on it. You can't take a ticket and say, "God, you owe me a chance." Not only that: all men are corrupt; all men are sinful; all men are sinners; all men have rebelled against God. You want fairness? You want justice? Think twice before you talk that way because justice would require for all men to be judged. Justice alone would foreclose and shut off salvation to all men because all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. No, man has no claim. Man has no demand. He has no right to salvation because it is God's. It belongs to him. It is his gift. And once we get that through our prideful heads, then a lot of other things start to make sense. As long as a man objects to that and kicks against that, much of the Scripture is going to be closed off to his understanding.

No, justice would require for all men to be judged. Beloved, listen closely: the fact that God saves any is a testimony to great grace; that he saves many, testifies to abundant grace; and that he saved you, should bring you to worship. "And, God," whatever else your attitude about this as a believer in Christ should be this, "God, whatever else you have done with the rest of humanity, I realize that you chose me and brought me to Christ and for that I give you my exclusive worship, devotion and praise. And God, whatever you do with everybody else, I'll leave it up to you. I realize that you have dealt well with me and therefore with the Apostle Paul I say, 'Blessed be the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ.'" That's right. We bow in honor of him. We refuse to join with those who would make accusations against God of injustice, who would twist Scripture to make it say something that it doesn't in order to protect the pride of men. We want nothing to do with that group. We don't participate with that. No, we come in loving humility and submission to our great God and say, "God, in light of my sin, it had to be your choice because I never would have chosen you on my own. Scripture says that it was your choice. Here I am enjoying the benefits of salvation knowing that they are a mere down payment on greater glory to come. O God, thank you. Worship, honor and praise, all glory be to you, Lord, and none to me."

Thirdly, let's talk for a moment about the power of election. The power of election, and we can go through this a little bit quickly because we've been making the same point all the way around. The power of election. Whose power determined election, was it yours or was it God's?

Go back to Ephesians 1:4. Now, here I am going to repeat myself. I get ahead of myself in my notes, and that's all right. Ephesians 1:4 says, "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." Subject and direct object. God is the actor, "chose us," we are the recipients of the action. Beloved, understand this, and speaking to those of you who are here in Christ tonight and I would own you all as brothers and sisters in Christ, and what I want you to see from God's word is this: is that the privileged position that you have as a child of God's family, to know God as your Father, Christ as your brother, the Holy Spirit as your indwelling guide, to realize that you have a brother in heaven – I love to say this again and again and again – you have a brother in heaven representing you before the holy throne of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not ashamed to call you brethren. To realize that is so precious and to realize that you have such a great status

with God, well, just to understand this, that that great status came from the power of the choice of God, not of yourself.

To reverse that, well, let me put it this way. When you recognize that, when you recognize that God chose you and did the work and this is the result of his plan and purpose from the beginning of time, from before time began, it's his eternal purpose for you in Christ, when you recognize that, it fills your heart with gratitude, it humbles you, and it brings you to worship, as we were just saying. To reverse that and to say that the ultimate choice in salvation was yours, is to reverse the whole process, it is to fire a cannonball at the building of praise and make it all collapse in unrecognizable rubble. If God chose you, you owe praise to God. If you chose God and the determining choice was yours rather than God, then you have reason to boast. "I did something that other men did not. I had wisdom. I saw it. I made the choice." And you knock God off of the throne in order to install yourself as the one worthy of praise, at least vis-à-vis other men. It makes me sick to talk about that even to refute it. It is foreign to my insides to even say such things but you have to say it sometimes to refute it.

Now many would say, perhaps more would say, that God chose us because – watch this – because he kind of put on his binoculars, as it were, and he looked down the corridors of time and he saw who would choose Christ and based on that he confirmed their choice in election. So he looked down, God didn't know, talking in eternity, "I don't know who's going to be saved. Let me see, let me look down the corridors of time and I see Tom and Jerry and other cartoon characters." That wasn't in my notes but those are just the names that came to mind. He saw different people and he saw that they would choose Christ and therefore having seen that, he comes back and he confirms their choice in election and then everything gets off to a start.

Well, what do we say about that? Well, two things. First of all, remember that election is rooted in the will of God, not in the will of man. Look at Ephesians 1:5. You should still be in Ephesians. Look at verse 5, beloved. Again, the language on this is so clear. This is really not difficult if you just let Scripture speak for itself. Verse 5, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will." It is his will that determined predestination, not the will of man in the future. John 1:12 and 13 would have confirmed that. Not the will of man.

But, beloved, there is something else that you need to understand. As soon you start to monkey with the sovereignty of God in election, it takes you places that you should never want to go. Think about what that view is saying, that common view that God looked down the corridors of time and he saw who would choose him and he based election on that. Do you realize what that position is saying? Do you realize what it is denying? It is denying the eternal omniscience of God, that's what it's denying. It's saying that God didn't know who would believe and so because he was in this position of ignorance, he had to look down time in order to gain information that he did not have and once he gained that information, he came back and made his electing choice. No, that denies a fundamental attribute of God. It is a denial of his omniscience, at least logically speaking. It's saying God didn't know something and therefore he had to look for information in

order to add to it. Beloved, that is a denial of the very things that we spoke about when we spoke about God's omniscience. It's a denial that God knows all things and has eternally known all things.

No, no. Listen, they would, those who hold this view, they would deny the omniscience of God simply to protect the pride of man? What kind of distorted thinking is that? Out on the suggestion. It dishonors the preeminence of God by making man the real initiator. And not only that, it assumes that a man in sin, a man dead in sin, could rightly choose his eternal destiny and God responds to a sinner who has no capacity for choice to choose him, assumes that God responded to man's choice. Where is the sovereignty and omniscience of God in that? When you understand it rightly, you realize it's shameful to talk that way, let alone to teach it to others and say this is who God is and this is who you are. This turns it all upside down. No. No, the power of election belonged to God. It was according to the kind intention of his will, not according to the wisdom and will of man.

Well, how should this impact us as we start to wrap this up? I'll give you four things. How should this impact you? First of all, it should impact your sanctity. Your sanctity. God chose you in order to make you holy and blameless. Look at verse 4 of Ephesians 1 again. Ephesians 1:4, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him." That there would be a growing sanctification in this life, an eternal perfection, glorification in the life to come. When you recognize that God chose you, a holy and righteous God graciously and in love chose you for salvation, it makes you want to purify your life. It makes you want to live in a manner that glorifies and is worthy of this God who chose you. This deals the deathblow to a love for sin. Salvation transforms you now and leads you to eternal glory and when you realize it came from God, you just want to give yourself over to him.

Secondly, it informs your priority. It informs your sanctity in life, it informs your priority in life. Just to state it simply like this: God has been gracious to you, eternally, wonderfully gracious in ways that go far beyond all that you could ask or think. We're going to walk streets of transparent gold with the redeemed of all the ages. We're going to be reunited with our loved ones in Christ, joined together around the throne worshipping Christ and casting our crowns at his feet in a great culmination of the salvation that we already enjoy in this life.

God has graciously chosen you for that, beloved, and the great sovereign God who is your Creator, is also your Redeemer, and therefore to worship him, to serve him, is your life priority. Nothing else matters by comparison. To understand that God chose you, helps you to pursue a sanctity of life and it gives you a priority in life of worship that nothing else matters. This is why men could voluntarily and gladly spill their blood for the name of Christ, because this great electing love, this great redeeming love from Christ, this great salvation, has a preeminent claim on your priority in life. This calls us to our highest affection. The preeminent devotion and priority of our heart and life is to worship and to give ourselves to this God who chose us in Christ and anything that would be in opposition to that, is put away in principle. It is put away as that which is unworthy of our God.

So sin becomes unworthy of our God and we reject it and we repent and we fight against it. Why? Because our sanctity deserves it. We preserve a sanctity of life in response to this. And when our dearest and closest human relationships present us with a choice, "You either will love me and be with me or you can have Christ, but you can't have me," we say, "Oh, beloved, my friend, my parent, my sibling," whatever it is, "I am so sorry to hear you say that but I cannot leave the one who chose me before the foundation of the world. I would have a relationship with you even on a human level but if you will not have that because I am identified with Christ, then you are free to go. I will not leave Christ. You threaten my life, you say, 'Deny Christ or we'll cut your head off,' take my neck. Take my neck." Why? Why can we say that? Because we cannot deny this God who chose us before the foundation of the world in Christ. This is determinative.

Our sanctity, our priority, thirdly, our security, your security, those of you that are in Christ. Listen, if God chose you before the foundation of the world, if Christ shed his perfect, sinless, righteous blood on the cross at Calvary to secure your redemption, if the Holy Spirit indwells you, all of this in perfect harmony, all of God's purposes among the three persons of the Trinity working in perfect harmony together, God chose you and if God chose you before the beginning of time, beloved, don't you think that he will keep you in time and keep you until and after death? If God chose you before the foundation of the world, his purpose is going to carry out until you are safely home. This ensures the outcome of your salvation. God would not reverse his choice because your obedience is imperfect. God would not undo salvation. Scripture knows nothing of the kind. There is no language of God reversing election due to the imperfection of your obedience. God chose you apart from your merit. Christ saved you despite your demerit. And understand that this means that God intends to keep you all the way to the end.

Fourthly and finally: your humility. Your sanctity, your priority, your security and your humility. God chose you. You did not deserve that. You did not earn that therefore we cast aside all of our pride, we come low and eager to the throne to worship this electing and saving God. We do not boast in his presence as if we were somehow better than another. We realize that his electing choice was premised in his own intention, his own will, his own love, his own purpose, and we are simply the recipients, beloved, mark it well, we are the recipients of undeserved and amazing grace.

*Father, set these things deep in our heart and let us respond as a way that would be an appropriate response to these things. You chose us, we did not choose you. We love because you first loved us. And God, with humbled hearts elevated by these lofty themes, we give you our praise and worship this evening as we close. In the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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