



DOCTRINE OF DIVINE ELECTION

Romans 8 makes a monumental and very clear statement to that regard. when in Romans 8 the apostle Paul writes, "For whom he foreknew, he predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son." That is, all whom God predestined will become conformed to the image of his Son in eternal glory. And thus "whom he predestined he called, and whom he called he justified, and whom he justified these he also glorified." And so, we said that the great undergirding foundational truth that secures our future is God's decree in eternity past. It is the fact that we are chosen for final salvation that makes our salvation secure.

Doctrine of Divine Election

Part 1

The doctrine of election is a disturbing doctrine for many people. It is portrayed and presented that way, as if somehow it calls into question the goodness of God, the grace of God. In fact, there are literally shocking statements made about this doctrine by prominent evangelicals. For example, the well-known Tim LaHaye, who is a part of the Left Behind series and many other books, and Tim says, “To suggest that the merciful, long-suffering, gracious and loving God of the Bible would invent a dreadful doctrine like this – predestination - which would have us believe it is an act of grace to select certain people for heaven and by exclusion others for hell comes perilously close to blasphemy.” These are statements that these gentlemen have put in print.

Arno Froese from another ministry writes, “The flawed theology of preselection - ” he calls it “ - is an attempt to eliminate man’s capacity to exercise his free will, which reduces God’s sovereign love to an act of a mere dictator.”

Another pastor, author and radio teacher says, “This doctrine makes our heavenly Father look like the worst of despots.”

Another, a president of Texas Holiness University says, “This doctrine is the most unreasonable, incongruous, self-contradictory, man-belittling, and God-dishonoring scheme of theology that ever appeared in Christian thought. No one can accept its contradictory, mutually exclusive propositions without intellectual self-debasement. It holds up a self-centered, selfish, heartless, remorseless tyrant for God and bids us worship him.”

A Calvary Chapel pastor writes, “Five-point Calvinism - ” which of course would include the doctrine of election, “ - makes God a monster who eternally tortures innocent children. It removes the hope of consolation from the gospel. It limits the atoning work of Christ. It resists evangelism. It stirs up argumentation and division, and promotes a small, angry judgmental God rather than the large-hearted God of the Bible.”

Another says, “To say that God sovereignly chooses who will be saved is the most twisted thing I have ever read that makes God a monster, no better than a pagan idol.”

Another website from theological students in Canada says, “This doctrine makes God a diabolical monster and reduces man, who was created in the image of God, to a mere robot.”

And Dave Hunt, who many of you know, who has written so many helpful books says, “This doctrine’s misrepresentation of God has caused many to turn away from the God of the Bible as from a monster.”

Now the operative word in all of this seems to be “monster.” That somehow this doctrine of election turns God into a monster. Now, these are rather severe statements about this doctrine, but they represent a large portion of the evangelical world. And we’re not talking about the illiterate. We’re not talking about those who only have a limited knowledge. We’re talking about people who are leaders of ministry, pastors, and writers. And yet, this doctrine is taught in scripture.

The pervasive notion of these skeptics and critics of this doctrine is that somehow election is unfair. Somehow it is unjust. But first of all, we want to make it very clear that God is not to be measured by our understanding of what is just. We have to be the first to admit that our understanding of virtually everything is somehow warped and twisted and affected by our own sinfulness.

In Psalm 50:21, God said, “you thought that I was altogether like you.” And certainly he is not. In Isaiah 55:8, “ ‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord, ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’ ” And there is the key. God has ways and thoughts that are to us incomprehensible, unresolvable, inscrutable.

There is a great benediction in the 11th chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans, in which he says this, verses 33 to 36. “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became his counselor?” Who could know how God thinks?

Who could be so bold as to tell God how he ought to think? “For from him and through him and to him are all things, to him be the glory forever. Amen.”

It is an essential understanding of God that he is holy, that his nature is holy, that he is infinitely and perfectly just, that he is morally flawless and perfect, that he is perfection. Everything in him and of him and for him and from him and by him is perfect. And so whatever he says is just is what justice is.

What is the rule of God’s justice? What is the principle of God’s justice? What is behind his judgments? What is behind it is his own free will and absolutely nothing else. God makes determinations based upon nothing but his own free will. And whatever it is that he wills is by definition just because he is just. It is just because he wills it. It is not because he sees that it is just that he wills it, it is that he wills it and then it becomes just.

William Perkins, a Puritan, said, “We must not think that God does a thing because it’s good and right, but rather the thing is good and right because God does it.” The Creator owes nothing to the creature who cannot understand his ways, cannot understand his mind, cannot be his counselor. And anyway, how could God ever be called “unjust” for choosing to save some, because there are none who deserve to be saved?

Salvation never has been a matter of fairness. And yet that’s what people say. “That’s not fair. That’s not fair.” But I don’t think you want fair, do you? Election is rooted in pure grace. He is most gracious and it seems that he is most gracious to those to whom grace seems most undeserved. There are not many mighty, there are not many noble. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, and that’s a good place to begin, 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

I didn’t intend to begin here, but while I was sitting there singing, this passage jumped into my mind. And in 1 Corinthians 1:26, we read this. “For consider your calling - ” that is your divine calling to salvation, the effectual saving call of God. “Consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not that he might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God.”

When God does his choosing, when he is gracious to whom he will be gracious and merciful to whom he will be merciful, it seems as if his grace stoops to the most undeserving of all so that no one could boast. Verse 30 says, “But by his doing, you are in Christ Jesus.” If you’re in Christ Jesus, it’s by God’s doing, not yours. “By his doing Christ has become to us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that just as it is written, let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

When we come to the people who believe the message in the New Testament, they are the poor and the outcast, and the ignoble, and the weak, and the harlots, and the prostitutes, and the tax collectors. And God passes by the mighty, and the noble, and the religious, and the educated most often. There are few. Salvation is not a matter of justice, it is a matter of pure grace. And God has chosen to give that grace to those to whom it might seem most unfair.

But we cannot be wrestling with these things intellectually as if there is going to be some answer in our reason. We must come to the Word of God and we must look at what the scripture says to reveal the truth of this doctrine. We must not let this doctrine become the victim of our corrupted sinful minds and our self-centered and proud reasonings.

And so, like every other biblical truth, we simply open the Bible and submit ourselves to what it says. And because it’s painful doesn’t change anything. Hell is a very painful doctrine, that doesn’t change anything. And while it may be hard for us to grasp this, it may be to our feeble and sin-stained minds less than what we might think is fair, we set all of that aside and submit ourselves to the Word of God.

Now, some people think that this doctrine of election is somehow alien to God and somehow alien to his purposes in the world. But that certainly is not true. It’s not as if somehow the doctrine of election sort of jumped up out of the New Testament, never having appeared in the Old Testament. After all, clearly out of all the people in the world, God chose Israel. Out of all the people in the world, God chose Abraham and removed him from Ur of the Chaldees, and made him the father of a great nation. That’s why Israel is called, Psalm 105:43, “his chosen ones.” Psalm 135:4 says, “For the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself.”

Deuteronomy 7:6 and 14:2 says, “The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth.” And God said it wasn’t because you were better than any other people, it wasn’t because you were more attractive than any other people. God said it is because I of my own free will predetermined to set my love upon you and for no other reason. Israel, mine elect. God calls them.

You come into the New Testament, and you have the same kind of language. The church is called “the elect, the chosen.” And this is not some isolated term in reference to the church. It’s repeated. In Matthew chapter 24, in that Olivet Discourse where our Lord is talking about the second coming, he says, “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved but for the sake of the elect.” Elect. There it is a substantive, there it is a noun, there it is a term that describes believers, they are “the elect, the called out.” It means “the chosen, the selected,” for the sake of the elect.

Two verses later in verse 24, “False christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.” They’re not called “believers,” they’re not called “Christians.” They’re called “the elect.” And in verse 31, “he will send forth his angels - ” when the Lord comes, when he appears in the sky coming on the clouds with great power and glory, “ - he will send his angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together his elect.” His elect. Elect by him. That is a designation for the people of God.

In Luke 18:6, the Lord says, “Hear what the unrighteous judge said, ‘Now shall not God bring about justice for his elect who cry to him day and night?’ ” Again, believers are called “his elect, chosen, selected.”

In Romans 8 - back to this marvelous epistle of Romans and 8:33. Those of us who are saved, those of us who are believers in the family of God who have been redeemed, regenerated, reconciled, we now belong to God. We have been declared righteous. The righteousness of God has been imputed to us through faith in Christ. And verse 33 then says, “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect?” God is the one who justifies, and if God declares that we are righteous before him, no one can successfully bring an accusation against his elect. Again, the church is called “the elect.” In each case of the last two passages, God’s elect, his elect. It’s not that we elected, it’s that he elected. In Colossians 3:12. “And

so - ” Paul writes “ - as those who have been chosen by God.” As those who have been chosen by God. Literally, “the elect of God.”

Believers, then, are people whom God has chosen to belong to him. And in the Old Testament, admittedly, it was a nation of people on the earth, a temporal people. And in the New Testament, the elect is a spiritual people. The New Testament is just filled with this inescapable teaching. In John chapter 15 - and we have to cover the ground to establish the clarity and the breadth of this designation - but in John 15:16, Jesus says to the disciples, “You did not choose me, but I chose you.”

I don't know how it could be said any clearer than that. “You did not choose me, but I chose you.” In the 17th chapter of John's gospel and verse 9 - and we'll come back to this concept later, but in 17:9 we read this. Jesus in this great high-priestly prayer, this is in the Holy of Holies of the Trinity where the Son communes with the Father. And he says, “I ask on their behalf - ” he's praying for his own “ - I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom thou hast given me - ” listen to this “ - for they are thine.” They are Thine. They belong to you, you chose them, you gave them to me.

In the 13th chapter of the book of Acts, again the language is unambiguous. In Acts 13:48, for those who resist this doctrine, here's a verse very hard to swallow. Paul and Barnabas were preaching, and it says in verse 48, “When the Gentiles heard this - ” heard the message about salvation “ - they began rejoicing and glorifying the Word of the Lord - ” and listen to this “ - and as many as had been appointed to eternal life - ” did what? “ - believed.” As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Go back to the 9th chapter of Romans. This passage, again, strong and unmistakable, Romans chapter 9. And you could actually start with the twins in verse 11, Jacob and Esau. “The twins, though they were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad in order that God's purpose, according to his choice might stand, not because of works - ” how could they do any works? They weren't born. “But because of him who calls it was said to her - ” that is to Rebecca, the mother of the twins “ - ‘the older will serve the younger,’... ‘Jacob I love, Esau I hated.’ ”

Wow. Before they were ever born, before they had ever done anything good or bad, only because of God's purpose according to his choice - he is the one who calls - he determined the older would serve the younger. Jacob he loved, Esau he hated. you say, "Boy, that's pretty clear." Absolutely clear. God made that choice before they were ever born.

In verse 14 we sort of identify with, don't we? "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there?" This doesn't seem fair. He says, "May it never be," *in genoito* in the Greek. No, no, no. It's unthinkable. This is nothing new for God, to make this kind of choice between two. This is nothing new, for he says to Moses way back in Exodus 33, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

So it doesn't depend on the man who wills, or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. That is to say, God's choice does not depend upon the will of the man, but on God. And verse 18 says, "So then he has mercy on whom he desires and he hardens whom he desires." Inescapable, absolutely inescapable.

In Romans 11:5, as we continue to survey the literature, in Romans 11:5 we read this. He's just been talking about Elijah the prophet who thought that he was the only one left, and God says, "I've kept to myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." You're not alone. There are seven thousand faithful. And then verse 5 says, "In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant - " listen to this, a remnant of believing Jews, in the present when Paul is writing this " - according to God's gracious - " what? " - choice." According to God's gracious choice.

In 1 Peter 1:1. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ - " 1 Peter 1:1 " - to those who reside as aliens - " sure, because they're believers and therefore they're aliens in the world, " - that are scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia - " listen to this " - who are chosen." Who are chosen.

As you read through the epistles of the New Testament, which means you're basically starting after the book of Acts with the book of Romans, as you go through all the epistles all the way to the book of Revelation, every time you see the word "call" or "called," it refers to God's effectual electing sovereign choice to call someone to salvation. The called are those

who are effectively called, not just a general call such as in the gospel statement, “Many are called but few are chosen.” Whenever the call is identified in the epistles, it is an effectual call. 1 Corinthians 1:9. “God is faithful through whom you were called into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” We are the chosen, and the predestined, and therefore the called.

In Ephesians chapter 1 we continue. In Ephesians 1:3. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.” How is this so? How is it that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ? Verse 4, “Just as he chose us in him - ” that is in Christ “ - before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him.” There it is. He chose us before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him at the end when we’re glorified. Verse 5. “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself - ” listen to this “ - according to the kind intention of his will to the praise of the glory of his grace which he freely bestowed on us in the beloved.”

All that language there says we are chosen, we are chosen for final holiness and blamelessness. In love, we were predestined to be adopted as sons through Christ. All of this because of the kind intention of God’s own uninfluenced free will, so that in the end all the praise and glory goes to him for his grace freely bestowed on us.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Paul writes to the Thessalonian church and listen to how he identifies them, “Knowing, brethren,” and how does he know? Well verse 3. “I’ve seen your work of faith, I’ve seen your labor of love, I’ve seen the steadfastness of your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father and knowing, brethren - ” by all of that “ - beloved of God, his choice of you.” You’re the chosen. You’re the elect. It’s evident from your life.

And one other text, 2 Thessalonians 2:13. 2 Thessalonians 2:13. And Paul again says to the Thessalonians, “We should always give thanks to God for you.” You don’t thank the person for being smart enough to come to Jesus, you thank God. “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.”

There wouldn't be any capability for a person to be sanctified, and sanctification begins at the point of salvation, separated from sin. There wouldn't be any hope of sanctification or any hope of faith in the truth unless God had chosen you from the beginning for salvation. And because he chose you, verse 14 says, "It was for this - " this sanctification, this faith in the truth that " - he called you through our gospel so that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." And all this language is consistent. "He chose you before the foundation of the world that you should be like Christ." "He chose you that you should be blameless and holy." "He chose you that you should be ultimately in the presence of his glory." "He chose you that you would gain the very glory of the Lord Jesus Christ." "He chose you that you would bear his image in heaven."

He chose you in the past, he called you a powerful effectual call that awakened you from the dead and granted you clear understanding of the gospel in the gift of saving faith.

Now, there's no way that you can conclude from that that this is an ambiguous idea, right? This is not in doubt in the Bible. And I've often said - because I've answered this question myriad times in my life. I have discussed it. I have debated it. I have done so privately and even publicly. And I have often said, if you believe the Bible, you believe in predestination. If you believe the Bible, you believe in God choosing who would be saved. If you believe the Bible, you believe that God determined who would be saved and determined that that salvation would reach its final conclusion when they are glorified in heaven. If you believe the Bible, you believe that God effectually calls those that he chooses and grants them faith. And yet with all that clarity, people still resist this doctrine.

Look at Romans 9. And I want you to know how God handles this. This is so good. Go back to where we dropped out in verse 18, talking about Jacob and Esau and how God had determined that before they were ever born. And then in verse 19, the imaginary opponent which helps Paul kind of argue with himself and continue to clarify his teaching.

His imaginary opponent says, "You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault, for who resists his will?' " I mean, if this is all cut and dried, right, if this is all determined by divine choice before anybody's ever born, if this is God being merciful to whom he will be merciful and having compassion on whom he will have compassion, if this is not about the man who wills or the man who runs, if this is all about God, then how can he find fault with anybody?

How can you blame me if I don't believe? How am I supposed to resist his sovereign and eternal will?

That's a fairly reasonable response, wouldn't you think? And this is the bone that people always choke on in the doctrine of election. And Paul anticipated it. You're going to say, "That's not fair because then you can't condemn me to hell. You can't find fault with me. How am I going to resist his will?" Verse 20 gives an amazing response, "Who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" Shut your mouth. That doesn't clarify anything. Who do you think you are? Are you accusing God of unjust punishment of sinners? Are you accusing God of unjust condemnation? Are you accusing God of evil? You better close your mouth before you say anything else.

And the illustration is amazing. "The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this, will it?' " When a potter makes a pot, the pot doesn't talk. The pot doesn't say, "Well, I don't want to be this shape, make me another shape. This isn't fair. I like to be like this pot, or that pot, the other pot." Verse 21. "Doesn't the potter have a right over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?" That is amazing.

Don't you dare question God. God's the potter, you're the clay. The clay is so far beneath the potter. It is inanimate dirt. It has no right to even entertain the idea of speaking to the potter. And as vast as the gulf is between the pot and the potter, even more vast is the gulf between you and God. The potter, verse 21, doesn't he have a right over the clay to make it the way he wants to make it?

And then verse 22, really very, very powerful. "What if - " or we could say it " - so what if God wants to demonstrate his wrath and to make his power known and so he endures with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?" So what if God wants to demonstrate his wrath? Doesn't he have a right to demonstrate his wrath? Isn't that part of his glory? Can't he put his wrath on display? He is God. Can't God make his power known in his judgment, in his wrath, in his condemnation?

Yes he can. But please notice how verse 22 ends. It flips into passive verbs. It never says God created vessels prepared for destruction, that's double predestination, and the Bible

doesn't teach that. It says he "endured with much patience vessels of wrath - " passive " - prepared for destruction." Not that he prepared for destruction. God doesn't go down the list of humans to come and say, "Okay, you go to heaven, and you go to hell, and you three go to hell, and you go to heaven, and you ten go to hell, you go to heaven."

The Bible doesn't teach that. The Bible teaches that all men are on their way to hell. And God chose to rescue some and he endured the others who are headed that way not because of something God did, not because of a decree that God made individually for them, but because they continue in their sins and are fully guilty. God has every right to demonstrate his wrath, and he is as much glorified in his wrath as he is in his mercy.

And verse 23 says, "He will make known the riches of his glory on vessels of mercy." And here the verbs are active. He makes the vessels of mercy, he endures those that are fitted for destruction. God is active in redemption. He is passive in reprobation.

In Revelation 19 we are told the Lord God reigns. You know, we hear that and we think about a song, you know, "The Lord God reigns, the Lord reigns." I don't know if we even know what we're talking about when we say that. What does it mean? It means he makes every decision that's ever been made, essentially, about everything. He reigns. As the Most High, he rules in the armies of heaven and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What are you doing?" He works all things after the counsel of his own will.

He's the heavenly potter who takes hold of our fallen humanity like a lump of clay, and out of it he fashions us into vessels of honor and he endures those who fashion themselves into vessels of dishonor. He is the decider and determiner of every person's destiny, and the controller of every detail of every individual's life. Which is only another way of saying God is God. And I'll tell you what is really repugnant to me is some kind of an idea that God is constantly being trumped by Satan. That's blasphemy.

But this doctrine of election is not easy to accept. Some of you are feeling a little pain in your mind right now. This doctrine hurts a little. In fact, if I can make you feel a bit better, it is so painful that the only reason anybody believes in it is because it's in the Bible. We just wouldn't make it up. No man, no number of men, no committee would ever come up with this. We would never come up with a doctrine of eternal hell, either, because these are things

that conflict with the dictates of the carnal mind. They're repugnant to the sentiments of the carnal heart.

Look, I don't understand the Trinity, that doesn't mean it's not true. I can't comprehend the Trinity. I don't know what it means to be three persons and yet one. I can't comprehend the virgin birth. That's incomprehensible. I can't comprehend the character of Christ, his nature. There are so many things I can't understand. There are so many things that are incomprehensible to me, but I believe them because they're revealed in scripture. And I don't even mind some tension here. I don't even mind the fact that the Bible also says, "Whosoever will," the Bible also says that, "Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said you will not come to me that you might have life."

You say, "Well what is all that?" That's simply saying that anybody will come can come and anybody who does come will be received. You say, "How does that work together with election?" I don't know. But aren't you comforted in the fact that I don't know, because if my mind was like God's mind, that would be horrific.

There's so many things that I don't know. If I ask you a very simple question. If I say to you, "Who wrote the book of Romans?" What are you going to say? You can't even say that, can you? You see, I heard some feeble, "Paul." And then you're all of a sudden holding it up because you know that's not the complete answer, right? You say, "Well, the Holy Spirit wrote it." Well, was it Paul or the Holy Spirit? Well, it was both of them. Well, what does that mean? Paul wrote a verse, the Holy Spirit wrote a verse, Paul wrote a verse, the Holy Spirit wrote a verse? How do we understand that?

You say, "Is every word out of the mind of Paul? Every word out of the vocabulary or Paul? Every word out of his heart?" Absolutely. But also, every word came from the Holy Spirit. How can that be? That is an incomprehensible and inscrutable to me.

I can ask you another question since you did so well on that one. Was Jesus God or man? Yes. The right answer is yes. But how could you be 100 percent God and 100 percent man? You can't be 200 percent of something? How can you be all man and all God? That is beyond our comprehension. When we say 100 percent of something, that's it. But if you're

fully man, then you can't be fully God. If you're fully God you can't be fully man, and yet he was. I mean, it just goes on and on like this.

If I ask you another simple question. Who lives your Christian life, what are you going to say? Come on, you've got to do this every day. Who lives your Christian life? You say, "I do." Really. Really, you do? You say, "No, I don't." You say, "It's Christ who does it." So we going to blame it all on him? I mean, we can't give you the credit and we can't give him the blame, so we've got a problem here.

You know, there was the pietists who said, "I will beat my body and discipline myself and I will live my Christian life." And then there were the quietists, you know, like the Quakers who said, "Let go and let God." And they just went into passive mode, you know. And the Keswick movement came out of that, and the crucified life, and all these kind of strange quietistic views. Who is it living your Christian life?

You say, "Well if there's anything wrong, it's me, anything right, it's him." And they say it's a mystery that's inconceivable. The Apostle Paul said this about that, he said, "I am crucified with Christ - " Galatians 2:20 " - nevertheless I live, yet not I." See, he didn't know either. You have a - John Murray said many years ago that in every major doctrine of the Bible there is an apparent paradox. There is an unresolved paradox that is transcendent. And this means God is God and the fact that there are so many of those in the scripture means the scripture was not written by men. I know editors, they fix things like that.

So because we believe that Jesus is God doesn't mean we don't believe he's man. Because we believe that he was born of a human mother does not mean we don't believe he was born of God. Because we must persevere in our faith doesn't mean we aren't secure. Because the Bible was written by human authors doesn't mean we don't believe it wasn't written by the Holy Spirit.

Because we have to discipline ourselves to live the Christian life doesn't mean we don't believe that it's not Christ in us. And because we believe in the doctrine of election doesn't mean we don't believe in human responsibility. These are apparent paradoxes we can't resolve. But, the danger is, you destroy the truth and come up with some rationalistic middle ground. That's dangerous.

So, the unmistakable teaching of scripture is the doctrine of election. Even the foreknowledge Peter talks about - 1 Peter 1 - foreknowledge, chosen according to the foreknowledge of God, look at that for just a minute. I'll finish this here and we'll pick the rest of it up next Sunday night. But in 1 Peter 1:1, he says that we are chosen, "who are chosen." And then in verse 2, "According to the foreknowledge of God." They say, "Oh, that's it. That's the key right there. According to the foreknowledge of God." And immediately they'll say, "What does that mean? That means that God knows what you're going to do, right? Before you do it, foreknowledge."

And God, way back in eternity past, because he knows everything that's going to happen looked down the annals of history and said, "Ah, I see what's going to happen, that Jim Pugh, he's going to be born into that Christian family and uh-huh, he's going to hear the gospel and he's going to believe the gospel so I'm going to choose him." You think that's strange? That's what most Christians believe. That's what most Christians believe and teach.

But this is like foresight, about what people will do. Now the problem with this is how are these dead sinners going to resurrect themselves to do this unaided by God? You answer that question. How are those who are totally depraved, totally blind, totally dead going to come to the place where they make the decision for salvation? How they going to do that?

Can't do it. "Can the leopard change his spots? Can the Ethiopian change his skin? Neither can you do good who are evil." How is that going to happen? If God just looks down and sees who's going to make the decision, then his election is not based on his own free will, it's based on their merit, right? It's based on their merit. The good guys are going to choose me and so I'm going to choose them.

This has nothing to do with all those verses we read, absolutely nothing to do with them. And by the way, it says, "We are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God." But I want you to look at verse 20 - verse 19 - what's the last word in verse 19? What is it? "Christ." Okay. "Christ - " now watch this one, "Christ, for he was foreknown before the foundation of the world." Oh, we've got a problem. If foreknowledge means that God looks ahead and sees what's going to happen in verse 2, then being foreknown must mean the same thing in verse 20, right?

So does that mean that God looked down history and said, “Oh look at that. Christ is going to give his life. Well, if he’s going to do that, I’ll make him the Savior.” I mean, obviously foreknowledge can’t mean that because Jesus said he came not to do his own will but the will of his Father. That’s why he is called Christ, mine elect.

You say, “Well, what does foreknowledge mean?” It’s prognosis, prognosis. We get the word “prognosis” from it, used in medical terms. It is a predetermined choice. It is a predetermined choice. Christ was foreknown. That is, he was known by God in the intimate sense as the Savior, the Redeemer before the foundation of the world. It’s talking about the intimate kind of knowing. Like it says in the Old Testament, “Israel only have I known.” Does that mean the Jews are the only people God knows about? No, it’s the kind of knowing that you have in Genesis. Cain knew his wife and she bore a son. That doesn’t mean he knew her name. It doesn’t mean he knew who she was. It means he had an intimate relationship with her and out of it came a son.

Jesus said this in John 10, “My sheep hear my voice and I know them.” He’s talking about an intimate love relationship. The shock was that Mary was pregnant and Joseph had never known her. We talk about that even today. We use the expression carnal knowledge, meaning a sexual union, an intimate knowledge. What you have here in foreknowledge is a predetermined intimacy. Just as the Father had a predetermined relationship with the Son that would bring him to be the sacrifice for sin to shed his precious blood as a lamb unblemished and spotless, so the Father had a predetermined relationship with those whom he chose. Foreknowledge is a deliberate choice.

One other passage seals that case. Acts 2:23, and I’ll close with this, promise. This is a lot to cover. Acts 2:23. This ends all discussion, if there is any left, on the subject of foreknowledge. Peter gets up in verse 22 and he preaches, “Jesus, the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs, which God performed through him in your midst. This man - ” verse 23, this Jesus “ - delivered up - ” they thought they had crucified him, they thought it was their plan. No, no. “ - this man delivered up by the predetermined plan and - ” what’s the next phrase? “ - foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put him to death.”

You're guilty. You're culpable. You did it. You did it with your own will. But God had predetermined it would be done. It was set in his predetermined plan and foreknowledge. That is to predetermine, to foreknow, is not simply to have information about what's going to happen, but to predetermine it. So we understand, then, that the Bible is very clear on the doctrine of election.

That raises the compelling question about why God did this. And that question is going to be answered next Sunday night in what I believe is the most compelling, the most powerful, the most sweeping understanding of redemption that is possible to know. And I think if you're with us next Sunday night, your mind will not only be satisfied, but your soul will be satisfied, and out of it will come a greater joy in your salvation than you've ever known.