

## DIVINE ELECTION -- WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Scripture readings: Romans 9:6-24 and other passages.

Intro: There is no question but that the doctrine of divine election is taught in Scripture.

Yet it is one doctrine which many reject, or explain away, because they are not able to understand it.

For all who are so inclined, read Rom. 9:20a. Note: It was the denial of this doctrine which caused many in the early Church to reject God's future purpose for Israel. This basically is why we have Romans 9-11. And this is basically why there are so many who are Arminian in the belief about salvation. The doctrine of election is never popular where people think that they can lose their salvation.

For all who are so inclined, read Rom. 9:20a.

Tonight we want to learn just what it means and then see how that meaning is related to other great doctrines in the Word of God.

### I. BY DEFINITION.

Here we are concerned with several words: election, calling, choosing, purpose, foreordination, predestination, and foreknowledge. RELATED TO THE WHOLE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

However, the basic idea in election is that of a picking out, a selection, a choosing -- some from among many. And this selecting is done by God!

When was this choice made?

It certainly is before birth. Cf. Rom. 9:11 (read vv. 8-13).

But note such passages as Eph. 1:3, 4; 2 Tim. 1:8-11.

Therefore, this means that God has chosen us for salvation before there was a world, before there was sin. It is a choice made in eternity past!

Note an equally difficult thing for us to understand: Rev. 13:8. (Some versions translate it as referring to the writing taking place "from the foundation of the world." The NASB takes it one way; the NIV the other. But both are equally difficult for us to understand.)

As I mentioned the last time I spoke on this doctrine, we must not reject this doctrine because we do not understand it. That is what others do with the Gospel, or with the coming

of the Lord. We must approach the Word always in faith.

BUT WE SHOULD ALSO RECOGNIZE THE OTHER SIDE OF THE QUESTION. There should be nothing about the doctrine of salvation which should keep us from preaching the Gospel to every creature. It is in this same passage in Romans where Paul speaks so strongly about election that we have that great Gospel verse,

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

It was our Lord who said the words in John 3:16.

The book of the Revelation of our Lord closes with these words in the last chapter,

"And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17b).

So, let us not deny either. Both are taught in the Word. They seem to be irreconcilable to us, but that is where we have to trust God and to recognize that God knows some things which we do not know.

Now we want to see how this doctrine of election affects other great truths which we have in the Word of God. This will help us to understand more about what it means.

II. IT PLACES THE EMPHASIS IN SALVATION WHERE IT SHOULD BE: ON GOD.

Cf. Eph. 1:3, 4.

III. IT MEANS THAT GOD IS WORKING ACCORDING TO A PLAN -- AN ETERNAL PLAN.

Since eternal has to do with the future as much as with the past, note the two following Scriptures:

- 1) 2 Tim. 1:9 -- past.
- 2) Rom. 8:28-30 -- past and future.

This helps us to see that even the coming of Christ into the world was not something which had to be planned after man sinned, but something which was already planned before God created man.

God is never taken by surprise!

IV. IT PROVES THAT HUMAN WORKS ARE NOT A PART OF SALVATION.

Cf. 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 9:11.

This means that this doctrine applies to Esau as much as to

Jacob. It was not Esau's badness any more than it was Jacob's goodness.

So the doctrine of election fits right in with the doctrine of salvation.

V. IT SUPPORTS THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL SECURITY.

Again let me say, wherever men preach that salvation can be lost, you do not find any preaching of this doctrine. Election and security go together.

Cf. Rom. 8:28-30.

VI. IT SHOWS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOD IN SPITE OF THE SINFULNESS OF MAN.

This even applies with regard to Christ. Cf. Acts 2:22-24. Also note the way in which the future purpose of God is spoken of as already accomplished, so certain is it that it will be. Cf. Rom. 8:28-30.

VII. IT ENCOURAGES PRAYER.

Cf. 1 Thess. 1:2-4.

Concl: This is only a small part of a truth so vast that it defies full explanation even by those of us who know the Lord.

And yet it is in the Word.

And being in the Word we must believe it.

As we believe it, two things happen:

- 1) It begins to bring blessing into our lives (as we saw in the preceding message on this great theme).
- 2) It begins to unfold before us a great appreciation and understanding of other truths related to it -- especially as they have to do with salvation.

Perhaps now we can understand a little better why Paul concludes Romans 9-11 as he does:

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." Cf. Rom. 11:33-36.