

WHO WILL BE SAVED?
or THE DOCTRINE OF UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Pastor L. Dwight Custis

Please take your Bibles and turn to 2 Timothy chapter 2. I am not going to give an exposition of this passage, but I am concerned especially about the tenth verse, the last verse of our Scripture reading:

Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. I will come back to that verse later on, but I want you to see that the Apostle Paul was concerned about reaching the elect. And that was the reason that he was willing to suffer opposition and persecution, as he said, "even unto bonds." He was writing as a prisoner of Rome when he wrote this last epistle, 2 Timothy. And it was, of course, an imprisonment from which he was never released.

For the past several weeks we have been considering together the glorious attributes of God. And we have done this in anticipation of what we are doing now--looking into the Word of God to learn more about those doctrines that are called the doctrines of grace. Now the first of these doctrines is the doctrine of total depravity, the teaching of Scripture that man is totally depraved by sin. This is true of all men. Man is spiritually dead, blinded to the truth, an enemy to God, and held in absolute bondage because of his sin. And consequently he is unable and unwilling to save himself, lacking even the desire for salvation. That was the subject of the message last Sunday.

The second of these doctrines we are considering this morning, the doctrine of election. God has chosen certain sinners for salvation, not based upon any merit of man because, if you read what the Word of God has to say about man, there is no merit in the heart of any man. Even Isaiah said long ago that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of God. Nor is this election based upon God's ability to foreknow who would believe. Some feel that this is the Biblical doctrine of election--that God looked down through time, as of course He could do, and that He simply made His choice on the basis of what He knew we would do. If that were the case, then you see we are the ones who are determining our destiny. That is not what the Word of God teaches. Our election is based solely on the will of God and His love for those whom He sovereignly has chosen. And this is why we call it unconditional election. There is no condition in the heart of man or in what man is able to do which merits salvation. There is nothing Page 2
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of that nature that prompts God to choose those who are saved.

Today we want to think together about unconditional election. When we relate this to the truth that we saw last Sunday we realize that if God had not taken the initiative in our salvation, there would be no salvation. Man does not know that he needs to be saved. I have never seen any evidence in Scripture that any man ever asked God to provide a way of salvation. When men hear the Gospel, they do not want it. Thus, man's only hope for salvation is in the possibility that God will undertake that work. And He has, in all of its entirety, from start to finish.

Now man has a will. There is no question about that. You decided that you were going to come here to church this morning, and you made a lot of other decisions before you came to church. But with respect to the things of God, man does not have a free will. Man's will is in bondage to sin, in bondage to his old nature, in bondage to Satan, in bondage to the influences of the world. So it is impossible for any man to set himself free. Only God can liberate us from our sin.

But let me make another point clear as we approach this great truth. When God was faced with the question of salvation (if I may speak of it in that way), He would have been perfectly righteous if He had decided not to do anything about the salvation of sinners. If the whole world had been doomed forever to hell, nobody would ever have been able to bring a charge against the righteousness of God. He was not under any obligation to any man. And we want to be sure that we understand this: God is no man's debtor.

Now let me add to that statement this one which I have mentioned to some of you before: If God had chosen to save everybody, if God had chosen to save all men, then He also had that right. He had the right to let men go their way and receive the just deserts of their sin. Or He had the right to save everybody--if this had been His will. In the eternal councils of the Godhead this was one option that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, had. And They would have been perfectly right in doing it. But we can thank God, and praise Him eternally, that He has chosen to do what He has done. Now this is where it is very difficult for us in our thinking to accept what we find in the Word of God. Instead of determining that nobody would be saved, or that everybody would be saved, He has determined that some would be saved, but that others would receive the just consequences of their sins for all eternity. You see, the Bible does not speak of just a single predestination, but of a double predestination. Men are either appointed to salvation, or they are appointed to eternal death. So it follows that if a person is not of the elect, then he is under divine condemnation eternally. This is the way that God has determined that salvation should be.

Now let me give you some verses to support what I am saying.

In 1 Peter 2:8 Peter wrote concerning those who did not believe. The Lord Jesus Christ was to them "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient." And then listen to this expression--these are Peter's words: "whereunto also they were appointed." That is, they stumbled at Christ, they stumbled at the Word, they were disobedient to the Gospel, because they were appointed to this.

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In Romans 9 when the Apostle Paul anticipated the objections that people were going to raise against the Gospel, he said in verse 18 that the Lord "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." But then he went on to say this in Romans 9:19-24:

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

And here is Paul's answer:

Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that

formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath (notice) fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, (and notice) which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

And then we could add to this what Jude wrote (and please notice that I am quoting three of the writers of the New Testament: Peter, and Paul, and now Jude)--in the book of Jude, verses 3 and 4:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, (now notice) who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

So you see, these three passages of Scripture speak of a double predestination --two kinds of predestination.

I certainly admit that this is a hard doctrine. But, hard or not, it is important for us to see that this is the teaching of Scripture.

I. THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE

Now I want to read quite a bit of Scripture to you this morning because these are not truths that we normally hear. The best way to convince you that these are truths of Scripture is to read them from the Word of God itself. So let me take just a few minutes to read some of these passages and show you, if you have not noticed these passages before, that this is the Word of God. And if you have noticed them before, and believe them, why you will rejoice to see them again.

The first is Ephesians 1:3-6:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (now notice) according as he hath chosen us in him (in Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (not our will, but His will), to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

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And then in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5, and verse 9:

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

He has appointed us to obtain salvation.

2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 13 and 14:

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the

truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The book of Acts, chapter 13, and verse 48:

And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

The Apostle Paul saw the outworking of this wonderful truth of election in the very people who responded to the message of salvation.

And then back in Romans chapter 9, beginning with verse 6, where Paul was discussing the fact that there have been many people of Israel who have not been saved. And it looked at the outset like there was a failure on God's part to accomplish what He sought to accomplish. This is what he said beginning with verse 6 of Romans 9:

Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

This is Romans 9:6-13.

And then in the eleventh chapter of the book of Romans, notice these words:

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works:

otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel

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hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway (Rom. 11:1-10).

In First Corinthians, the first chapter, you have another reference to the fact that we are chosen of

God. In the twenty-sixth verse the Apostle Paul wrote:

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen . . .

You see, God does not take what He can get, but He takes what He wants. But to continue:

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

And then look at the first two verses of 1 Peter, chapter 1, and you will find that the Apostle Peter addressed the saints in this way:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied (1 Pet. 1:1, 2).

And then one other passage, 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, in verses 2 through 4 you have these words:

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

How did he know their election? By their work of faith, and their labor of love, and their patience of hope.

This is what the Word of God teaches. And you see that it includes many passages of Scripture. And there are others that I could read to you. The Scriptures teach that God has chosen those who are being saved.

Now let me point out just a few things about this election.

II. THE TIME OF OUR ELECTION

If you noticed carefully the reading of the above verses, you will have seen that the time of our election was before the foundation of the world! Paul said this in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 4: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the
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foundation of the world." When he wrote to the Thessalonians (I read 2 Thessalonians 2:13 to you a moment ago), there he said that "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." And in 2 Timothy 1:9, which I did not read to you, he said (speaking of God), "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." So you see, God determined who was going to be saved before the foundation of the world. Therefore, it is an eternal predestination because it originated in eternity past.

III. THE PURPOSES OF DIVINE ELECTION

What is the purpose of election? I want to approach this from two points of view because, obviously, God has a purpose for His people in election, and God has a purpose for Himself in electing His people to be saved. First of all, as election relates to man. Let me mention three purposes that election has with reference to man.

First and foremost, the object of election is that we might be saved. God has chosen us to salvation, the Apostle Paul said. See this in 1 Thessalonians 2:13. And then you will see, too, that in Ephesians 1 when he listed the blessings that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ which are the result of our being chosen by God, all of them have to do with our salvation. And yet it is very disturbing to me, and I am sure to many of you, to find many of our well-known Bible teachers denying that election has anything to do with salvation. I read to you a moment ago, "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9). He has saved us. He has chosen us unto salvation. This is the only reason that anybody is saved--because God has taken the initiative.

But there is a second purpose that God has for His chosen ones. In choosing us for salvation, God has chosen us in order that we might be holy. You see, He has chosen us not only to redeem us initially, but to see the whole work of salvation carried out.

Many of you have heard me say, and perhaps have heard others say, that salvation is not just a single event, but salvation has to do with the past, the present, and the future. As far as the past is concerned, many of us can say that we were saved. As far as the present is concerned, we are being saved. But, as far as the future is concerned, we can say that we will be saved. We have been justified, we are being sanctified, we are going to be glorified. The present tense of our salvation has to do with our sanctification--that we should be holy. So in redeeming us God never intended that we should remain the same; He has ordained that we should become a holy people. You see this in Ephesians 1:4: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." You see this in Romans 8:28 and 29: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." One of the ways that you can recognize the elect of God is that they are becoming more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what it means to be holy.

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But then there is this third thing: We are elected unto salvation that we might praise God and worship Him for all that He has done for us in Christ.

You see this in Ephesians 1. The Apostle Paul began this wonderful passage on salvation in which he dealt with the doctrine of election by saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." You see, it is a word of praise.

In writing to the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 Paul said, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation . . ." So, if you are saved through the sovereign grace of God, you have a lot to be thankful for--that God has appointed you for salvation, that He has chosen you to make you holy, to make you like His

Son. And obviously He has done this that all of the praise and glory for your salvation might be given to Him.

Now, in that same connection, when we talk about what election means to God, if we are to praise Him for it, then obviously it is for His glory. Three times in Ephesians 1 we find a statement which teaches this. See verse 6: "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." And then farther down in the passage, in verse 12, he said this: "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." And then he said in verse 14, ". . . unto the praise of his glory." Three times in this one chapter Paul said that salvation has been designed so that it is to the praise of God's glory.

So we can be sure that we are on the right track if the truth that we proclaim regarding salvation humbles man and glorifies the Saviour. This certainly is what we find when we turn to the Word of God.

Another thing that our election means is that God is working all things out according to His eternal plan and purpose.

When we look at the work of the Lord today and we see people being saved here and there, it looks like a rather haphazard thing that is going on. And that is especially so with much of the preaching that we hear today. We are taught to believe that God can only do what men will let Him do, and that the reason that God is not saving everybody is simply because man is standing his ground, defying an omnipotent and sovereign God!

Now that is amazing, is it not, that a puny creature like man could keep God from doing what He intends to do? If we have this idea, we certainly have not gotten it from the Word of God. The Scriptures teach that God is working all things out in accordance with His will. He is carrying out His purpose in every detail. Perhaps one reason that our faith in God is not stronger when things go wrong in our lives is because we have been erroneously taught about salvation that man can stand against God. So it is very natural for us to carry this over into our daily trials and say, "Well, if man can stand against God in salvation, then perhaps there are other circumstances in my life over which God has no control." Consequently, we go down in defeat because we fail to see that God is sovereign in everything, that He is always working out His purposes, that there is nobody who can resist God. This is a truth that we need to see and understand as we come to the Word of God.

I want to declare to you on the authority of the Word of God: Do not worry about God accomplishing what He intends to do. Everything in the universe is entirely on schedule with God. He is a sovereign God. He is an omnipotent God. And He moves upon the hearts of men to accomplish His will.

Now that should lead us to see that election is designed to show His mighty power. You see, we have a world of people in every generation who are born in sin, people who are naturally sinners, people who do not want God. It can be said of every generation, as I have mentioned repeatedly, "There is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11b). Man is not only a sinner, but he is a rebel against God; he is dead in trespasses and sins.

You talk about a hopeless situation! The very fact that anybody is saved shows the mighty power of God and the infinite riches of His wonderful mercy.

There is so much more that I could say about that, but let me conclude by saying just a word about this doctrine as it relates to evangelism and missions.

IV. THE PLACE OF ELECTION IN EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

I have heard a number of times in the last three years that I no longer believe in missions, and no longer believe in evangelism. I would like to set the record straight: I believe in missions and I believe in evangelism as much, or more, than I ever have. And I want you to see that the doctrine of election is one of the greatest doctrines in Scripture to give us hope for effective witnessing for Christ. If it were not for the sovereignty of God, and if it were not for these doctrines of grace, missions and evangelism would be the most hopeless work on the face of the earth.

The people who come to understand these truths experience a greater burden to see people saved because they know that God has people that He most certainly intends to save. Did belief in the doctrine of election keep Charles Haddon Spurgeon from preaching the Gospel? Read his sermons and you will find over and over again that he touched upon this wonderful doctrine. And yet, during his ministry, it is said that he baptized more than fifteen thousand people who came to the knowledge of Christ under his ministry. He preached and believed the doctrine of election. George Whitefield, one of the greatest evangelists that the world has ever seen, was one who believed solidly in the truth of divine election. But the classic illustration, apart from all that the Lord had to say on this particular subject, were those statements that the Apostle Paul made.

In Romans 9, 10, and 11 the Apostle Paul got into this great subject of election as he was dealing with the purpose of God with respect to the nation Israel. He did not say, as many people say, "Well, if you believe in election, if you believe that God has determined what He is going to do, then there is nothing for us to do. We can simply fold our arms and go to sleep; He does not need us! Let God do what He wants to do." But listen to what the Apostle Paul said. And I am sure that there is not a person in this room who can say what the Apostle Paul said concerning his burden to see people coming to Jesus Christ. He said this in connection with the doctrine of election. This is what he said: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost"--which means that what he was saying was not just so many words coming out of his mouth, but it was Doctrines of Grace -- #8

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the real expression of his heart--"that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." This is the first thing that he said.

If you had ever met the Apostle Paul during his ministry, you would find that this was the burden of burdens that rested upon his heart--a tremendous burden to see people brought to the knowledge of Christ! And yet he was a man who believed in election, a man who believed in the purpose of God, a man who believed that God had appointed certain people for salvation. This is the man who says, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." But this is not all he said. He said this (and this is where I am sure that we cannot follow him): "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom.9:1, 2).

Now I hope I am not overstating the case (and I do not think I am), but I believe that the Apostle Paul knew more about this doctrine of election than perhaps anybody who has ever lived on the face of the earth, with the one exception of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that people were going to be saved when the Gospel was preached. He knew that God had appointed certain people to salvation. And yet the burden for their salvation was so heavy upon his heart that he said in effect, "I am willing to give up everything that I have in Jesus Christ and let Jesus Christ send me to hell if only he will save my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

Does the doctrine of election make you throw out evangelism, make you unconcerned about the

salvation of people, say that missions is unimportant? Is that what the doctrine of election does? NEVER. The doctrine of election will bring you--and I do not understand how this is--but understanding the doctrine of election will bring you under the the greatest burden to see people saved that you have ever experienced in your life.

Now let us go back to a passage that I read to you earlier in my message:
2 Timothy 2:10.

None of us has had the difficulty in preaching the Gospel that the Apostle Paul had. I have been in the ministry for a long time. But I have never been in jail for preaching the Gospel. I have never even been threatened with jail for the preaching of the Gospel. Nobody has ever thrown a rock at me. I have certainly experienced opposition in preaching the Gospel, but I have never gone through anything like the Apostle Paul did. The day may come in this country when it will cost us something along that line to preach the Gospel. I trust that it will never come to that, but it may. But why would the Apostle Paul endure such fierce opposition? Here is the answer:

Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

You see, the Apostle Paul was preaching a message of salvation to people who did not want to hear it, to a world that had rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Gospel. But he knew that God had a purpose and a plan, that He had people which He intended to reach. And so he was willing to go through all of this, he was willing even to give up his own salvation if necessary, in order that the elect might be brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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This is our hope in proclaiming the Gospel. We proclaim the Gospel, not only because God has commanded us to preach the Gospel to every creature, but because we know that God has ordained that it is through the preaching of the Word of God that He is going to work upon the hearts of His elect people, and draw them to Himself. Isaiah wrote long ago, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

Let us believe that, as we go out into the world, God is going to bring us providentially into contact with people whom He intends to save. Perhaps there is somebody here this morning without Christ. If so, I trust that you can see the hand of God in bringing you here. He brought you that you might hear the Gospel and be saved. God has commanded all men everywhere to repent. Let me tell you that there is only one Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is only through His death on the cross that He has provided salvation for sinners. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). The Lord has promised that all that come to Him shall be saved. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).