

The Doctrine of Divine Election

The first thing we must do as we study the doctrine of Divine election is to define the terms which we are using. To do so we must consult both a dictionary of the English language and the Word of God. The first to give us the meaning of the word so that we are not in the dark concerning the meaning and usage of the word. The second to determine the particular manner(s) in which the Scriptures use the word. Only by so doing can we begin to understand the Biblical truth concerning this much disputed topic.

Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of The English Language defines election as follows:

“The act of choosing; choice; the act of selecting one or more from others. Hence appropriately,

1. The act of choosing a person to fill an office or employment, by any manifestation of preference, as by ballot, uplifted hands or viva voce; as the election of a king, of a president, or a mayor.

Corruption in elections is the great enemy of freedom.

2. Choice; voluntary preference; free will; liberty to act or not. It is at his election to accept or refuse.

3. Power of choosing or selecting.

4. Discernment; discrimination; distinction.

To use men with much difference and election is good.

5. In theology, divine choice; predetermination of God, by which persons are distinguished as objects of mercy, become subjects of grace, are sanctified and prepared for heaven.

There is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Rom.11.

6. The public choice of officers.

7. The day of a public choice of officers.

8. Those who are elected.

The election hath obtained it. Rom.11.”

We can quickly tell that the basic meaning of election is the act of choosing, or a choice, of one or more from among others. The rest of the article from *Webster's 1828* gives us specific examples of the usage of the word.

We must also define the word “choice” if we are to accurately understand this issue. “**CHOICE**, n.

1. The act of choosing; the voluntary act of selecting or separating from two or more things that which is preferred; or the determination of the mind in preferring one thing to another; election.

Ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my moth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. Acts 15.

2. The power of choosing; option.

Where there is force, there can be no choice.

Of these alternatives we have our own choice.

3. Care in selecting; judgment or skill in distinguishing what is to be preferred, and in giving a preference.

I imagine Caesars apothegms were collected with judgment and choice.

4. The thing chosen; that which is approved and selected in preference to others; selection.

Nor let thy conquests only be her choice.

5. The best part of any thing; that which is preferable, and properly the object of choice.

In the choice of our sepulchers bury thy dead. Gen. 23.

6. The act of electing to office by vote; election.

To make choice of, to choose; to select; to separate and take in preference.

CHOICE, a.

1. Worthy of being preferred; select; precious; very valuable.

My choicest hours of life are lost.

My revenue is better than choice silver. Prov. 8.

2. Holding dear; preserving or using with care, as valuable; frugal; as, to be choice of time or of advantages.

3. Selecting with care, and due attention to preference; as, to be choice of ones company.”

Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of The English Language

We can quickly tell, now, that choice is the act of electing something/someone based upon a preference. For something/someone to be choice they much be considered to be of value. While there are those who declare that no contingencies enter into Divine election, we must differ with them on this issue. The very meaning of the word “choice” speaks of preference as being the basis of choice. We know of no choice that is made without that which is chosen being chosen because of something about it that was preferred by the one doing the choosing.

The Biblical Usage of The Words Chose, Chosen, Choose, Choice, Elect, Election

The Scriptures use the above words in a consistent manner. The manner in which they are used demonstrate to us that the choice (or chosen, elect) ones in the Scriptures were the ones who were preferred by God.

“There came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore: but they knew not that evil was near them.” (Judg 20:34) KJV

“When Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind, he chose out of all the choice of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians.” (1 Chron 19:10) KJV

“The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.” (Ps 78:31)KJV

“Moab is spoiled, and gone up out of her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.” (Jer 48:15) KJV
“The last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.” (Matt 20:16) KJV

All of the above references speak of those chosen/choice ones as being ones who are preferred above others. They are valuable.

The Chosen Ones of God

Who are the chosen ones of God? First and foremost is Christ. *“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” (Isa 42:1) KJV* Matt 12:14-21 tells us that this verse speaks of Jesus. Peter also refers to Isaiah, referencing Isa 28:16 and speaks of Jesus saying, *“To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.” (1 Peter 2:4-6) KJV*

The next group of chosen ones is Israel. *“Because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt.” (Deut 4:37) KJV* *“Thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” (Deut 7:60) KJV* *“The LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.” (Deut 10:15) KJV* In one particular place, though he did not use any word such as “choice”, “chose”, etc., Moses spoke to Israel to remind them of the status as God's chosen people. *“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” (Ex 19:5,6) KJV* The reason that we know this verse speaks of Israel being God's chosen is because Peter later used the verse to remind the church of the fact that they were blessed with grace and were part of the plan and work of God.

The next group of chosen ones we find is the church. *“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (1 Peter 2:9) KJV* Peter uses this verse to compare the church (the Israel of God, see Gal 6:16) and Israel, thus reminding the church of their blessed state. We also read, *“The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.” (1 Peter 5:13) KJV* Then, when Jesus returns in power and glory with the armies of heaven, the bride of Christ (Rev 19:1-14) which is the church (Eph 5:25-33), we learn

that *“they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.” (Rev 17:14) KJV*

Finally, we read of the elect angels (See 1Tim 5:21).

In all of this we can see that election is primarily a corporate thing. That is, the elect are elect due to being part of a body of chosen ones.

The Basis of Election

What is the basis of election? If the elect are elect because they are numbered with a certain group, how do people come to be numbered among the elect? That is the question that plagues so many today. Does God arbitrarily choose those who are his elect/choice? We have already seen that to be elect, or choice, speaks of preference above others. We know that there is normally a reason for one's preferring one above another. What reason does God have for preferring some above others? These are the questions to which we must find the answers.

First of all, it would be well that we consider what does *not* cause someone to be a part of the elect. While being a descendant of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob caused one to be a part of the chosen nation of Israel, one's genealogy will not make him part of those who are the chosen of God. God's Word says, *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:11-13) KJV* No, man is not chosen because of his pedigree, his willing himself to be born again, nor human effort. Election and the results thereof are the work of God. Neither does one's character and station in life bring about election. *“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 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. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” (1 Cor 1:26-31) KJV* God's way of working is to accomplish His will and purpose in a manner that will demonstrate that He is the one who is great and not man. Man will never have reason to boast before God. Thus, God chooses those who are often considered the least likely to be called, saved, and used of God. Neither has God chosen men based upon their good works. *“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.” (Rom 9:11) KJV* We see that election is not due to one's character, bloodline, or works. It is all of God.

Election is of the grace of God. *“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.” (Rom 11:5,6) KJV* God chooses men apart from any merit on their part. God works in the hearts and lives of men gratuitously and not because man does something to earn God's kindness. Election is the free gift of the God of all grace. There is only one reason for this, and that is the reason that God intends to get all the glory for what He does. God, by His grace, elects, calls, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies unworthy sinners that we might glorify Him and enjoy Him forever.

Having understood that election is of God and His grace, we must ask another question: “Where does faith fit into this picture?” Some consider faith to be a work of man (though not a work of exactly the same sort as keeping the law) and not considered by God when He chooses men. Is this so? The answer is, “No, it is not so.” In fact, faith goes hand-in-hand with grace. The Word of God tells us that salvation is of faith so that it might be freely given to us by God. *“It is of faith, that it might be by*

grace.” (Rom 4:16) KJV Faith, like grace, is antithetical to works. “To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (Rom 4:4,5) KJV The only way we can consider faith a work is when we read a conversation that Jesus had when he was asked, “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” (John 6:28,29) KJV Even in this passage He is not speaking of faith as meritorious, but as the way by which men must seek to get the true bread from Heaven (See John 6:27). We can safely conclude that we do not have to rule faith out of the picture when it comes to the basis of Divine election.

Finally, people are chosen on the basis of their association with the chosen group. In particular, the children of Israel were God's chosen because they were in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's family. “The LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.” (Deut 10:15) KJV In like manner “He hath chosen us in him 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, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” (Eph 1:4-6) KJV God chose us before the world began due to our association with Christ, His chosen One. How do we get “in Christ?” If we are chosen in Christ, that is the important question. “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal 3:26,27) KJV It is by faith that we are in Christ. So, faith is very closely connected with the basis of our election. In fact, James said, “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” (James 2:5) KJV God did indeed choose men due to the fact that they would in the future believe in Him. In fact, God foreknew those who would be believers and chose them because of that. “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom 8:29) KJV “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 Peter 1:1,2) KJV

Why does God choose those who believe? The answer is very simple; it is to bring praise, glory, and honor to the name of the LORD. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 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: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” (Eph 1:3-6) KJV “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:8-10) KJV What a glorious truth that God sent His Son who gave His life, rose from the dead, and considers those who believe in Him to be His special, precious, purchased possession; His chosen ones!