

The Doctrine of Salvation (Part 1) – Various Scriptures

Eph 1:3-6; We're starting a new series this weekend, called Blessed Assurance; A series about salvation

And the purpose, is not only to inform you and edify you, but to solidify your convictions; To remove any shadow of doubt as to your *standing* before God
And when you get right down to it, to help you *reach all the riches of full assurance* like Paul says in Col 2

And to do that, we're going to start with an overview of the *doctrine* of salvation – identifying key concepts, highlighting key issues, and defining key terms
In fact, that's where I want to start – with a definition of salvation

Salvation is deliverance from sin and its consequences, through belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus

Deliverance that is, from the *bondage* of sin in our lives; And the *power* of sin in our lives; And the *consequences* of sin in our lives
Especially the punishment of being separated from God, in the torment of hell, forever and ever; Salvation is deliverance from all that

And it comes about, by believing that Jesus was God in the flesh, and that he died in your place for your sins, and then rose again so you could too
And if you've been a part of our church for any length of time, you know that well

What you may not know, is that the Bible speaks of **12 Aspects of Salvation**
12 things that happened, happen, or will happen in connection with your deliverance
And we're going to spend the rest of our time focusing on just the first

1. Election – God's choosing of people to be saved

That's the first and most fundamental aspect of our salvation; Most crucial for your assurance; But it's also the most difficult aspect to grasp; And even harder to accept
But it's thoroughly biblical, and I'm going to show it to you in 6 different passages

Starting with **1 Thess 1:4-5**; Paul is speaking to the believers in Thessalonica, and says "I thank God for you" . . .

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you [elected you], [5] because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

B/c of their response to the Good News, Paul knew they had been chosen – chosen to be saved; Elected*****

➤ And then there's Eph 1:3-6 – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, [4] even as he chose us in him [chose us to be in relationship with Jesus] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love [5] he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ [i.e. he decided/determined beforehand that we should be his], according to the purpose of his will, [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved [in Christ].*

That's the election of God – choosing some people to be saved, and determining that they will *indeed* be saved . . .

• Before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:3-6)

Before we were ever born, God chose us, and made a decision to save us
Before time began, he determined that we would be a part of his family
That's the 2nd passage; And a key one for sure

➤ The 3rd, just like it, is **Rom 8:28-29** – *We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. [29] For those whom he foreknew [those whom he thought of in a saving relationship with himself, before they were ever born] he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son [determined that they would indeed would be saved], in order that he [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brothers.* That he'd be the first in a large family of God

And it's important to note that foreknew doesn't mean "knew about", or knew that we'd make a *decision* for Christ – it doesn't say that, or mean that
The word means knew in a personal and saving sense, ahead of time

Once again, that's election; Before the foundation of the world . . .

• We were foreknown and predestined (Rom 8:28-29)

Known by God as one of his children, one of his own – before he ever brought us into existence; And foreordained, predestined, to follow Jesus; To be like him
3 passages, that very clearly say, we are elected unto salvation

➤ And if those don't convince you, here are some more; **Acts 13:48** says . . .
And when the Gentiles heard this [that salvation was for them], they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. It's another way of saying we were elected; We were foreknown . . .

• And appointed to receive eternal life (Acts 13:48)

With all its blessings and glory and privileges; The implication being, that if we're appointed, *we will believe*

As many as were appointed to eternal life, believed; Period

That's the predestination of election; God determines it; He chooses us, and determines that we will put our faith and trust in him (**Summary**)

➤ One example of which, is God's choosing of Jacob over Esau; Before they were ever born, or had done anything good or bad
Saying in Rom 9:13 – *"Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated"*
Why? Why did God choose *one* to be the recipient of his love and blessing, but not the other? *In order that God's purpose of election might continue*(11); That's what it says
God chose Jacob, and rejected Esau, to fulfill his decision of electing one and not the other, before the foundation of the world

Which brings Paul to the conclusion in **Rom 9:16**, that – *It [salvation] depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy.*

IOW God elects us to be saved . . .

• Apart from any merit of our own (Rom 9:16)

That's the point Paul's making; God chooses us to be saved, and only chooses some, based on the mercy and purpose of his *will*, and his will alone

We have nothing to do with it, either way (**Summary**)

And if that bothers you, like it did me, I want you to see **Rom 9:19-24** for yourself
B/c Paul anticipates that very reaction in us, and addresses it

➤ After laying out a few examples of God's election in the previous verses, and ending in v18 with – *So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills*; He says in v19 . . .

[19] *You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? [Why does God still hold us responsible for our sin and sinfulness, if our salvation is out of our hands? If we have no choice in the matter?] For who can resist his will?” [Who can be saved if God hasn't elected them? Nobody]*

[20] *But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? [To object as if you know better] Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” [21] Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? [He does, the potter has that right; And so does God, over us, his clay]*

[22] *What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction [those who aren't elected unto salvation; What if he has prepared and endured them?], [23] in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—[24] even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?*

God chooses only *some* for salvation . . .

- **To magnify his glory (Rom 9:19-24)**

That's the thrust of v22-23; And his answer to the question – “Why?”; God does all this, electing some and not others – *in order to make known the riches of his glory* (23a)
In order to reveal and magnify his infinite greatness, and goodness, and grace, and mercy; His glory; In addition to his desire to make known his wrath for sin

He chooses some and not others, to make his wrath plain; And show his power to bring judgment; And his forethought to do all this in the first place

And his patience in carrying it out; And his grace to include people from *every* tribe, tongue, and nation

God chooses only *some* for salvation, to magnify his *glory* in those ways

➤ And whether that's satisfying to you or not, indicates the extent to which you've *submitted* yourself to God and his Word; It does
And the extent to which you realize your *place* before him
And if you're thrashing about in opposition, the question remains . . .
Who are you, O man, to answer back to God? To object to his ways, when he made you in the first place?
Better to *accept* his way, as an expression of your *trust*; An expression that his ways are *better* than yours, even if you don't completely understand them (**Summary**)

That's election – God's choosing of some to be saved, out of love, b/c not a one of us deserves it; Make sure you keep that in mind

➤ Now, that often raises some questions (**4 Questions**); Which literally fills books these days; But I've narrowed them down to 4, and the first is this . . .

Do we really have a choice in the matter?

If God determines our salvation by choosing us before we're ever born, do we really have a choice in the matter? And the answer is yes
B/c that's the implication of *countless* Scriptures

Like **Mt 23:37**, where Jesus says – “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!*” Implying that they chose, of their own free will, to deny his desire

And in again, in **John 5:39-40**, Jesus says – *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, [40] yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.*

Implying once again, that they had a choice, and exercised it*****

And that doesn't even touch the 2500 *commandments* in the NT, implying that we have a choice to make in obeying them

So yes, even though we're elected, we really do have a choice in the matter

➤ Which then begs the question . . .

How can our choice be real if God predestines it?

And the answer is, I don't know; It's a theological black box; Scripture doesn't tell us
It doesn't *explain* how God's sovereignty and our freedom can co-exist and be real at the same time; It just says that they are, and do; They *are* real, and they do co-exist

But if it helps, you might think of it this way; If God chooses you to be saved, his grace will woo you in such a way, that it will be irresistible

In which case, you will *choose to respond* of your own free will

It would be like you offering somebody \$100 Million, and being dead set on them taking it; Would it really be much of a choice for them? Not at all

But they still have to take it

And the same is true of those who are chosen by God; They receive his grace through a real choice of their own . . .

Even though God has foreordained that it happen, by making it a no-brainer

That's the best I can do, to reconcile the clearly *explicit* Scriptures about God's sovereignty, and the overwhelmingly *implicit* ones about our choice

Go much further than that, and you'll drive yourself crazy; Better to trust that God's got it, however it works, and move on

➤ Third . . .

How can God want all people to be saved, but only choose some?

You might be familiar with **1 Tim 2:4**, which says that God *desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*

And **2 Pet 3:9** that says – God doesn't wish *that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance*

How do you reconcile that with election – that he chooses some and not others for salvation, if he desires that all be saved?

And the answer I think, is two-fold*****

(A) Not all want to be saved, and God only chooses those who do

IOW he honors the freedom he's given us, and works in *concert* with our will, instead of against it

Like that old children's song – "He does not compel us to go 'gainst our will, he just makes us willing to go"

And when we do, when we receive his Son as Lord and Savior, we show that we're chosen; And that God's will is supreme

(B) Second, though God *desires* all to be saved, he only chooses some b/c that's what most magnifies his glory; Taking us right back to Rom 9

Election most magnifies the totality of his attributes

Like his justice, in addition to his love; And his holiness, in addition to his grace

If he saved everyone, his grace and love would be magnified, but not so much his justice and holiness

But if he saved some and condemned others – both his love *and* justice would be seen;

His grace *and* holiness; Especially so b/c of the contrast

The contrast of choosing some who *don't* deserve it, while showing his wrath to the rest

That's my feeble attempt at reconciling the mind of God on this question

But in the end, I throw up my hands just like Paul (**Rom 11:33**); And say . . .

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable [how unknowable] his ways!

➤ And last . . .

Does it really matter whether we preach or not?

If election is true, if God has already decided, and his grace and will are really irresistible – is outreach necessary? Does missions matter? Do we really need to witness?

And once again, the answer is yes; B/c Jesus *told* us to be his witnesses; And Paul said we're Christ's *ambassadors*; And the prophets and apostles themselves, preached

On top of which, **Rom 10:17** says – *Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ* [the gospel]

And how are they to hear without someone preaching? Paul asks (Rom 10:16) How are they to hear without someone witnessing, and testifying?

So yes, even with election, it matters that we bear witness to God's goodness and greatness; It's the means he uses to save the elect (**Summary**)

That's the best I can do in 4 questions and 40 minutes, to explain and untangle, the unexplainable; The mind of God

And it's the first aspect of our salvation, that should give you great joy and blessed assurance; B/c if you believe, he *chose* you; And *his* decision, is final

Pray – We're overwhelmed with the thought that you had us in mind before you even made the world; And though we don't fully understand it, we're so thankful; Thankful

that you've saved us; And thankful that you've chosen us; We worship you for it, and indeed, stand in awe of your glory

So receive our tithes and offerings now as an expression of that – blessing both the gift and the giver