

Ephesians 1:4-5
The doctrine of election

1. Preamble
 - a. This morning we are going back to last week's text, to spend more time on an important topic.
2. Prayer
 - a. Please join me in prayer...
3. Introduction
 - a. Imagine this scenario...
 - i. It is Wednesday afternoon.
 - ii. You are walking on the beach in Coeur d Alene with friends.
 - iii. Duane Hagodone stops you and says, you don't know me, but I know you. A long time ago I chose to bless you.
 - iv. Duane Haddodone is a media tycoon who lives in Coeur Dalene, but he has exotic mansions all over the world.
 - v. I'm going to give you 800 million dollars.
 - vi. I'm also going to give you all my mansions, all my cars, and all my yachts.
 - vii. This stranger has chosen to bless you...
 - viii. How would you respond??? With great rejoicing.
 - b. This brings us to our passage... Ephesians 1:4-5 (part 2). I want to make one point from this text...
 - c. **Prop- the doctrine of election is cause for great rejoicing.** To help us understand this, we are going to look at four aspects of election this morning.
 - i. Election's nature
 - ii. Election's timing
 - iii. Election's questions
 - iv. Election's purpose

1. Election's nature

- a. **Ephesians 1:3–5 (ESV) — 3** 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 before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **5** he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

- b. **Ephesians 1:11 (ESV) — 11** In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,
- c. Exposition
- i. In verse 4 Paul writes, “even as he chose us in him”
 - ii. In verse 5 Paul writes, “he (the father) predestined us for adoption...”
 - iii. In verse 11 Paul writes, “having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,”
 - iv. According to Paul, God the father chose us or predestined us to experience the blessings of salvation.
 - v. The word group for election (elect, election, choose, predestined, etc...) occurs **38** times in the NT to refer to God the Father electing or choosing someone to be saved.
 - vi. Here are some examples...
 1. Rom 8:28-30 ESV (29) For those whom he foreknew he also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (30) And those whom he **predestined** he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
 2. Rom 9:11-12 ESV though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad--in order that God's purpose of **election** might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls-- (12) she was told, "The older will serve the younger."
 3. See also Act 13:48, Rom 11:7, Eph 1:12, 1 Thes. 1:4-5, 2 Thes. 2:13, 1 Pe 1:1, Rev 13:7-8, Joh 6:38-44, Joh 10:25-29
 - vii. It is not hard to figure out what these words mean.
 1. The word “chose” in the Greek means chose...
 2. The word “elect” in the Greek means to elect...
 - viii. Technically speaking- predestination is a broader term that includes both election and reprobation.
- d. So far, I have said nothing controversial.
- i. Every Christian believes in election and predestination.
 - ii. Both words appear numerous times in the Bible.
 - iii. The question is this, why does God choose certain people and pass over others?
 - iv. This brings us to the second point.

e. *First, election's nature*

2. Election's timing

a. When did God elect us?

b. **Ephesians 1:4 (ESV)** — 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him....

c. Paul writes that God elected us or choose us before the foundation of the world. In other words, God the father chose certain people to be his adopted sons before time began. Why did God choose certain people?

d. Historically, this question has been answered in one of two ways.

- i. Conditional election (Arminian)
- ii. Unconditional election (Reformed)

e. Conditional election.

- i. Explain view- (corridors of time)

1. First problem- If election was conditioned on us choosing Christ, we would never be elect because we would never choose him.

a. **Eph 2:1-3** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins (2) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- (3) among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

b. **Romans 3:10–12 (ESV)** — 10 as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

c. **John 3:3,5** “unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God”

d. **Rom 8:7-8** For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. (8) Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

e. **1Co 2:14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

f. **2Co 4:3-4** (3) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. (4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

g. If election was conditioned on our response, we would not never be elect because we would never respond.

2. Second problem- the Bible does not teach that God chose us because we chose him, it teaches the exact opposite.

a. **Rom 9:11-16** **ESV** **though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad--in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls--** (12) she was told, "The older will serve the younger." (13) As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." (14) What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! (15) For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." (16) **So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.**

b. See also Romans 11:5-6, and 2Ti 1:9

3. Third problem- If God chose us because we chose him, who is really choosing whom?

a. Commenting on the conditional election view, one scholar writes,

i. **"One problem is that an election like that is not really election. In such a reconstruction God does not preordain an individual to anything; the individual actually ordains himself."** (Boice)

b. Ultimately, we are responsible for being saved.

c. If this was the case, Paul's exhortation to praise would make no sense in Ephesians 1.

i. "Praise the father since we chose him....???"

4. *We have looked at conditional election...*

f. Unconditional election

- i. This view argues from Eph 2, Col 2, and Rom 3 that we are dead in our sins, therefore we would never choose God.
- ii. Therefore, election is unconditional.
 - 1. God does not choose me because he sees anything good in me, like a good decision to follow him.
 - 2. So then why did God choose me? God chose you and me because he is a God of love.
 - 3. He chose us because of his sovereign good pleasure, that's it!!!
 - 4. This is what the Bible clearly teaches...

g. Illustrating the Two views

- i. Drowning man illustration
 - 1. You are in the Puget sound, there is a terrible storm.
 - 2. You have gone overboard...
 - 3. You are about to drown...
 - 4. Jesus shows up...

h. This probably raises lots of questions... I get it... this brings us to the 3rd point.

- i. Election's nature*
- ii. Election's timing*

3. Election's questions

a. Unconditional election raises lots of great questions...

b. How is unconditional election fair?

- i. In other words, it does not seem fair that God passes over some and elects others.
 - 1. I understand this objection...
 - 2. But, this is the very objection that Paul anticipated his opponents would make.
 - 3. I don't want to be one of Paul's opponents...
 - 4. I want to be on Paul's side.

ii. Rom 9:14-21 ESV What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! (15) For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." (16) **So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.** (17) For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." (18) **So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.** (19) You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" (20) **But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? 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?

1. Paul anticipates the very objection that so many people make in verse 14. And he answers by saying, who are you to talk back to God!!!
2. By the way, the conditional view of election, also known as the Arminian view, never gets the objection- "that is not fair". But Paul's view always gets this objection.
3. If you explain your view of election and someone says- "that seems fair", it is probably not the Biblical view.
4. By the way what is fair? No one deserves be chosen by God. The fact that some get chosen and others don't is not unfairness or injustice, it is mercy.
5. The Bible never says that God is fair, but it says that He is just and righteous.

iii. Illustration about us running away from heaven

c. What about free will?

- i. Doesn't the Bible teach that we have free will? That depends on how one defines free will.
- ii. All theologians agree that human beings make real decisions with real consequences and we are not aware of our decisions being constrained by someone or something else.
- iii. But our wills are constrained by our natures.
- iv. What do I mean? In one sense, the unsaved person is free to choose God, but they never will because their nature will not let them. In other words, their wills are bound to their natures.
 1. *Carnivore (meat eaters)*
 2. *Herbivore (plant eaters)*
- v. We can only choose things according our nature and before conversion our natures will not let us choose God because we don't like God and we are dead to the things of God.
- vi. Our wills are enslaved to our natures.
 1. Luther called this the bondage of the will.
 2. Edwards called this the freedom of the will.
- vii. But I choose God at summer camp, or in college, or when I was 13???
 1. You chose God because he first chose you.

2. Here is where the real mystery lies.
3. You must choose God, but you can't choose God until he chooses you first.
4. He chooses you, regenerates your heart, and then gives you the ability to freely chose him.

d. Doesn't God want everyone to be saved?

i. 1Ti 2:3-4 ESV This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, (4) who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- ii. Both camps agree that everyone is not saved.
- iii. Both camps believe that God desires something more than everyone being saved.
- iv. The Arminians say that God desires human freedom more than the desire for everyone to be save and the Calvinist say that God desires his glory more than everyone being saved.
- v. Both groups agree that God desires something more than everyone to be saved.

e. If election is true why evangelize anybody?

- i. Bottom line... because God tells us to.
- ii. God foreordains the means and the ends.

iii. 2Ti 2:8-10 ESV Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, (9) for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! (10) Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

iv. The fishpond illustration

v. *How is this practical??? This leads us to the last point.*

f. We have

- i. Election's nature*
- ii. Election's timing*
- iii. Election's questions*

4. Election's purpose

- a. What is the purpose of election???
- b. Election reveals the love of God!**

i. Ephesians 1:3–5 (ESV) — 3 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 before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **5** he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

1. Election needs to function for us the way it functioned for Paul.
2. In Ephesians 1 God is simply saying, “I loved you before the world began, I loved you before you loved me, and not because of anything you did. So, don’t doubt my love for you.”

ii. Illustration

1. A few years ago, we had some teen-age neighbors that loved to drive their tricked-out sports cars really fast up and down the street.
2. Our boys were learning how to ride their bikes in this dangerous environment.
3. I constantly told my sons to look both ways before they speed down the driveway into the street often out of control.
4. Imagine that I see one of my sons throw on his helmet, jump on his bike, and start pedaling very fast down the driveway.
5. At the same time, I see a car simultaneously flying down the street.
6. Then imagine that I jump off the front porch, run down the driveway, and yank my son off the bike.
7. Then imagine that two seconds later the bike collides with the front of the car and is smashed to smitherings...
8. This is the doctrine of election!
9. In this imaginary scenario, my son was not looking to be saved but I chose to save him because I loved him.

iii. Election reveals God’s love to sinners

1. This is cause for praise...

c. Election promotes holiness

i. Ephesians 1:4 (ESV) — 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

- ii.** Why did God choose you? He chose you to be holy and blameless (last week’s sermon-positional and practical holiness).
- iii.** If someone thinks, “I’m elect, I’m going to heaven, I can do whatever I want!!!” They don’t understand election. Holiness of life is evidence of election to salvation.

d. Election assures that God gets all the glory in salvation

i. Eph 1:4-6 ESV even as he chose us in him 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, according to the purpose of his will, (6) **to the praise of his glorious grace**, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

e. I'm not a Christian how do I know if I'm elect?

i. Listen to the words of Jesus.

1. Mat 11:28-30 ESV Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

ii. If you turn from sin and trust in Jesus, you will be numbered among the elect.

iii. There is great mystery here...

iv. Preach the gospel here...

5. Conclusion-

a. *Election's nature*

b. *Election's timing*

c. *Election's questions*

d. *Election's purpose*

e. *I would like to let the scriptures have the last word this morning...*

f. **Ephesians 1:3–6 (ESV) — 3** 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 before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **5** he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.