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The idea that God does what He wants, and that what He does is true and right because He does it, is foundational to the understanding of everything in Scripture, including the doctrine of election.

In the broad sense, election refers to the fact that God chooses (or elects) to do everything that He does in whatever way He best sees fit. When He acts, He does so only because He willfully and independently chooses to act. According to His own nature, predetermined plan, and good pleasure, He decides to do whatever He desires, without pressure or constraint from any outside influence.

The Bible makes this point repeatedly. In the very act of creation, God created precisely what He wanted to create in the way He wanted to create it (cf. Gen. 1:31). And ever since the creation, He has sovereignly prescribed or permitted everything in human history, in order that He might accomplish the redemptive plan which He had previously designed (cf. Is. 25:1; 46:10; 55:11; Rom. 9:17; Eph. 3:8–11).

In the Old Testament, He chose a nation for Himself. Out of all the nations in the world, He selected Israel (Deut 7:6; 14:2; Psalm 105:43; 135:4). He chose them, not because they were better or more desirable than any other people, but simply because He decided to choose them. In the words of Richard Wolf, “How odd of God to choose the Jews.” It may not have rhymed as well, but the same would have been true of any other people God might have selected. God chooses whomever He chooses, for reasons that are wholly His.

The nation of Israel was not the only recipient in Scripture of God’s electing choice. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is called Christ, “My Chosen One” (Luke 9:35). The holy angels also are “chosen angels” (1 Tim. 5:21). And New Testament believers are those who were “chosen of God” (Col. 3:12; cf. 1 Cor. 1:27; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1; 2:9; 5:13; Rev. 17:14), meaning that the church is a community of those who were chosen, or “elect” (Eph. 1:4).

When Jesus told His disciples, “You did not choose Me but I chose you” (John 15:16), He was underscoring this very truth. And the New Testament reiterates it in passage after passage. Acts 13:48 describes salvation in these words, “As many as have been appointed to eternal life believed.”

Ephesians 1:4–6 notes that, God “chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” In his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul reminds his readers that he knew God’s choice of them (1 Thess. 1:4), and that he was thankful for them “because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation” (2 Thess. 2:13). The Word of God is clear: believers are those whom God chose for salvation from before the beginning.

Even the foreknowledge to which Peter refers should not be confused with simple foresight as some would teach—contending that God, in eternity past, looked down the halls of history to see who would respond to His call and then elected the redeemed on the basis of their response. Such an explanation makes God’s decision subject to man’s decision, and gives man a level of sovereignty that belongs only to God. It makes God the One who is passively chosen, rather than the One who actively chooses. And it also misunderstands the way in which Peter uses the term “foreknowledge.” In 1 Peter 1:20 the apostle uses the verb form of that very word, *prognosis* in the Greek, to refer to Christ. In that case, the concept of “foreknowledge” certainly includes the idea of a deliberate choice. It is reasonable, then, to conclude that the same is true when Peter applies *prognosis* to believers in other places (cf. 1 Pet. 1:2).

The ninth chapter of Romans also reiterates the elective purposes of God. There, in reference to His saving love for Jacob (and Jacob’s descendants) as opposed to Esau (and Esau’s lineage), God’s electing prerogative is clearly displayed. God chose Jacob over Esau, not on the basis of anything Jacob or Esau had done, but according to His own free and uninfluenced sovereign purpose. To those who might protest, “That is unfair!” Paul simply responds by asking, “Who are you, O man, who answers back to God?” (v. 20).

Many more Scriptures could be added to this survey. Yet as straightforward as the Word of God is, people continually have difficulty accepting the doctrine of election. The reason, again, is that they allow their preconceived notions of how God should act (based on a human definition of fairness) to override the truth of His sovereignty as laid out in the Scriptures.

Frankly, the only reason to believe in election is because it is found explicitly in God’s Word. No man and no committee of men originated this doctrine. It is like the doctrine of eternal punishment, in that it conflicts with the dictates of the carnal mind. It is repugnant to the sentiments of the unregenerate heart. And like the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the miraculous birth of our Savior, the truth of election, because it has been revealed by God, must be embraced with simple and unquestioning faith. If you have a Bible and you believe it, you have no other option but to accept what it teaches.

The Word of God presents God as the controller and disposer of all creatures (Dan. 4:35; Is. 45:7; Lam. 3:38), the Most High (Psalm 47:2; 83:18), the ruler of heaven and earth (Gen. 14:19; Is. 37:16),

the One against whom none can stand (2 Chron. 20:6; Job 41:10; Is. 43:13). He is the Almighty who works all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11; cf. Is. 14:27; Rev. 19:6), and the heavenly Potter who shapes men according to His own good pleasure (Rom. 9:18–22). In short, He is the decider and determiner of every man's destiny, and the controller of every detail in each individual's life (Prov. 16:9; 19:21; 21:1; cf. Ex. 3:21–22; 14:8; Ezra 1:1; Dan. 1:9; Jas. 4:15)—which is really just another way of saying, "He is God."

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