

What If Election Is True?

“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.”

II Thessalonians 2:13

Introduction:

1. The Lord has impressed upon me the unspeakable glory and value of His sovereign choice in salvation.
2. For your spiritual meditation on this most wonderful of subjects, I would recommend Romans 9, “Unconditional Salvation,” “The Five Phases,” “Adoption,” and “The Book of Life.”
3. The title of this sermon is formed by a question to provoke astonishment at election’s incredible nature.
4. Both Thessalonian epistles dealt much with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Man of Sin, but not in that order – II Thess 2:1-5 (I Thess 1:9-10; 2:19; 4:13-18; 5:1-11,23; II Thess 1:7-10; 2:1-8; 3:5).

I. The CHOICE OF ELECTION

- A. The disjunctive conjunction “but” shows the great contrast between elect and reprobate.
 1. Paul taught the satanic power of the evil one to deceive the perishing (2:8-12).
 2. These are the vessels of wrath left in their perishing condition (Rom 9:18-22).
 3. The gospel cannot help them at all (I Cor 1:18,21-24; II Cor 2:14-17; 4:3-7).
 4. Man does not have the will or desire to receive truth (John 8:38-47; Luk 16:31).
- B. The adversative relationship between these two groups is based on God’s choice.
 1. The disjunctive “but” is explained by the subordinating conjunction “because.”
 2. Salvation is based on a choice – God’s choice – contrary to popular religious opinion and the entertainment of fables that dominates in America’s churches.
 3. For it is His own will that dominates the salvation of sinners (Rom 9:15-24; John 1:13; 3:8; 5:21; 6:38-39; Ephesians 1:5,9,11; James 1:18).
 4. What is the end of sinners? Flaming fire forever (1:8-9)! What a difference for the elect! No wonder there is so much singing in heaven to the glory of God!

II. The THANKSGIVING OF ELECTION

- A. The “we” of the epistle was stated in the opening – Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus (1:1).
- B. Election creates bondage – a perpetual constraint to be thankful to God for His choice.
 1. Let us not be merely thankful for this unspeakable gift – let us truly give thanks.
 2. Observe the duration of thanksgiving for this incredible choice – alway!
 3. In another place Paul called our salvation an unspeakable gift, for it is truly a blessing beyond human comprehension and expression (II Cor 9:15; I Cor 2:9)!
 4. We should have a heart willing to burst with praise as Paul did (Rom 11:33-36)!
 5. Paul described this bondage as a constraining force in his life (II Cor 5:14-15).

III. The CHOOSER OF ELECTION

- A. Thanks should be given to God, Who is the Elector of election, not to man in any sense.
- B. There is no room for any glory to be given to man whatsoever (I Corinthians 1:26-31).
 1. The will involved in this great choice was God’s will (Rom 9:15-16; John 1:13).
 2. There is only one Soul Winner in heaven – Jesus Christ (Re 5:1-14). Believe it!
 3. Redemption of men’s souls is precious and ceaseth forever (Ps 49:8; Jn 19:30).
 4. The only justified thinking is that which trusts in God’s mercy (Luke 18:9-14).
 5. “But God be thanked!” is the great message of the Bible (Rom 6:17; Gal 1:15; Luke 10:21; I Corinthians 1:30; Acts 11:18; Psalm 110:3; Philippians 2:13).

IV. The EVIDENCE OF ELECTION

- A. The “you” of the epistle was stated in the opening – church of the Thessalonians (1:1).
- B. Election has evidence – and Paul had witnessed enough to know they were elect of God.
 - 1. Peter taught plainly our calling and election could be made sure (II Peter 1:5-10).
 - 2. Election can generally be known for one’s self and for others by Bible conduct.
 - 3. It is not the mere talkers who receive eternal life, but the walkers (Psalm 15:1-5; 24:3-6; Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:9; James 2:14-26).
 - 4. Paul knew they were God’s elect by their obedience to the gospel (I Thess 1:2-4,6-10; 2:13-14; 3:6-8; 4:9-10; II Thess 1:3-4; 3:4).
 - 5. Paul knew that his fellowlabourers were written in the Book of Life (Phil 4:3).

V. The LOVE OF ELECTION

- A. “Brethren beloved of the Lord” is the description of God’s elect, as they are called here.
- B. Though we were sinners at war with Him, He chose to set His love upon us in election.
 - 1. God cannot and does not love sinners (Psalm 5:5; 10:3; 11:5; Habakkuk 1:13).
 - 2. Reject this saying as vain heresy: “God hates the sin, but loves the sinner.”
 - 3. God is holy, and He can only love holy objects (I John 1:5; I Peter 1:16).
 - 4. He will tell workers of iniquity He never knew them – affectionately (Mat 7:23).
 - 5. We were chosen to be holy and without blame before Him **in love** (Eph 1:4).
 - 6. He made us acceptable to Himself and worthy objects of His love (Eph 1:6).
 - 7. We love Him, because He first loved us (I John 4:10,19; Jeremiah 31:3).
 - 8. The order of God’s eternal counsel was election, then love, not the reverse.
 - 9. God commended – praised or exalted – His love toward the elect by sending Christ to die for them while they were sinners and enemies (Rom 5:6-11).
 - 10. “Beloved of the Lord” is an incredible blessing of His great choice (Rom 9:15).

VI. The TIMING OF ELECTION

- A. “From the beginning” is the prepositional phrase modifying God’s choice in election.
 - 1. Before you were born, God had set in motion His eternal plan for your glory.
 - 2. In His eternal purpose and plan, there has never been a moment of doubt.
- B. This time description is further explained in other cross-references to God’s election.
 - 1. It is described as “before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4; I Peter 1:20).
 - 2. It is described as “before the world began” (II Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2).
 - 3. It is described as “from the foundation of the world” (Rev 17:8; Matt 25:34).
 - 4. It is described as “from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18; Eph 3:9).

VII. The SALVATION OF ELECTION

- A. We know there are at least five phases of our salvation from sin to heaven for us to remember (II Timothy 1:9; I Timothy 1:15; Titus 3:5; I Timothy 4:16; Romans 13:11).
 - 1. “Sanctification of the Spirit” is regeneration – the vital phase (Tit 3:5; John 3:5).
 - 2. “Belief of the truth” is conversion – the practical phase (Lu 22:32; Jas 5:19-20).
- B. The salvation here is contextually from the man of sin and his satanic delusion and lies (2:8-12) and the eternal torment waiting all the rebellious (1:8-9).
 - 1. Paul divided between eternal glory and gospel salvation by “with” (II Tim 2:10).
 - 2. Belief of the truth is included here against the man of sin’s lies (Rom 8:29-30).
 - 3. Yet the full scope of salvation is also seen by the “glory of Jesus Christ” (2:14).
 - 4. The man of sin is obviously and easily Rome’s popes, as we have proven before.
 - 5. Good ministers of Jesus Christ preach against Roman Catholicism (I Tim 4:1-6).

VIII. The RESULT OF ELECTION

- A. Election – the choice of God – is to bring to pass certain events for the elect’s sakes.
- B. The two great benefits in our text are sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth.
 - 1. Sanctification of the Spirit is regeneration of our souls (Titus 3:5; John 3:5,8).
 - 2. Belief of the truth is a consequential blessing of our regeneration (John 3:3; Acts 13:48; II Timothy 1:10).
 - 3. These two are joined here as the means of deliverance from the man of sin.
 - 4. Then they are directed to stand fast and hold to apostolic traditions to be further preserved from the man of sin and his deceptive religion.

IX. The GOSPEL OF ELECTION

- A. God’s choice from the beginning included their hearing and believing the gospel.
 - 1. “Whereunto” is a subordinating conjunction, teaching how they heard the truth.
 - 2. It is not teaching how they were sanctified by the Spirit, for that is without truth.
- B. The gospel includes a call to believe and obey, which only the elect can possibly hear.
 - 1. The preaching of the gospel is only foolishness to reprobates (I Cor 1:18,22-24).
 - 2. The Thessalonians, by grace, had responded beautifully to it (I Thess 1:9-10).
- C. Belief of the truth requires the hearing of the truth, which was preached by these three.
 - 1. Paul taught the obvious necessity of preaching and hearing (Romans 10:14-15).
 - 2. The Spirit works alone in regeneration, but uses preaching in believing the truth.
 - 3. The call of the gospel is to belief of the truth, not sanctification of the Spirit.
 - 4. Sanctification of the Spirit is a prerequisite to belief of the truth and the gospel.

X. The GLORY OF ELECTION

- A. Election, sanctification, and belief of the truth lead to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 1. “To the obtaining” is explaining our salvation, not only believing the gospel.
 - 2. Believing the truth is contextually necessary regarding the man of sin, but it is not the main thrust of God’s eternal choice of some sinners to eternal glory.
- B. The definition of this glory of Jesus Christ is important to fully understand our text.
 - 1. It cannot be the same glory Jesus possesses, for He is more glorious as the Only Begotten Son, the One Mediator, the Firstborn, the Blessed and Only Potentate, the Great High Priest, the Word of God, and King of kings and Lord of lords.
 - 2. As incarnate Emmanuel, He has no peer or superior in heaven or in earth in glory, but God Himself (I Corinthians 15:27-28; Ephesians 1:20-23).
 - 3. He is such by nature and exaltation that He receives the preeminence (Col 1:18).
 - 4. Yet as sons of God, we are His brethren and inherit God with Him (Rom 8:17).
 - a. We are joint-heirs with Christ, so we obtain His glorious inheritance.
 - b. As mutual heirs of God Himself, we also participate in this great glory.
 - 5. In the redemptive plan, He is the Firstborn among many brethren (Ro 8:29-30).
 - 6. It is the glorious liberty of the Sons of God, for which the whole creation is still groaning in pain waiting for our manifestation (Romans 8:15-23). Glory!
 - 7. It is participation with Jesus Christ in His glory and honor (Hebrews 2:9-13).
 - 8. It is the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He has it, gives it, and reserves it.
 - 9. God’s salvation of sinners is to display and give glory (I Cor 2:7; Romans 9:23).
 - 10. Election’s object was to make us glorious with His glory (I Cor 2:7; Rom 9:23).
 - 11. Jesus prayed for His glory to be given and shown to the elect (John 17:20-23).
 - 12. We have already been glorified in His certain plan of salvation (Rom 8:29-39).
 - 13. It is glorious adoption unto an eternal inheritance reserved for us (I Peter 1:3-12; 5:10; Eph 1:18; II Tim 2:10; Romans 8:18,23; II Cor 4:17; Romans 5:2).

14. We should also be growing into His glory, even by the Spirit (II Cor 3:17-18).
15. Is this too much to believe? The Lord knew it would be (I Corinthians 2:9)!
16. There will be a future resurrection of glorified bodies (I Corinthians 15:43).

XI. The DUTY OF ELECTION

- A. “Therefore” is that great rhetorical word of conclusion and application of truth taught.
- B. In consequence of our election to salvation and obtaining Christ’s glory, we should ...
 1. Stand fast, without wavering, in spite of persecution, false teaching, etc.
 2. Hold the traditions, without regard for innovations, compromise, or popularity.
 3. Whether it is by apostolic preaching or written epistles, this is your duty.
 4. We know the essential components of Paul’s spoken word by inspired Scripture.
 5. We believe in traditions – apostolic traditions! But we reject all others!
 6. If this is not followed, then the deceitful lies of Satan will get even the elect.

Conclusion:

1. Is there a better conclusion than 2:16-17, with its love, everlasting consolation, good hope, and grace?
2. What can possibly hinder us from being comforted and encouraged toward every good word and work?
3. Though beginning the chapter with their fear of coming events, here is wonderful hope and consolation.
4. Are you suffering under a load of guilt and seeking righteousness before God, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, turn from your idols to serve the living and true God, and make your calling and election sure.
5. What if election is true? We are bound to give thanks, stand fast, and be faithful to the Scriptures. And we can do all this easily with great joy, comfort, and hope. May God our glorious Father and Jesus Christ our glorious Saviour be praised!