

Election and Particular Redemption

There are so many misconceptions of the Gospel truths of election and particular (or definite) redemption. These misconceptions are fostered mainly by natural prejudices and misunderstandings concerning what the Bible teaches about these blessed doctrines of grace. The goal of this article, if God be pleased to use it, is to remove the prejudices against election and particular redemption and to show the Scriptural reality of both. In most cases natural prejudices have been reinforced by perversions of these truths from the enemies of the truth. Also, natural prejudices have been reinforced by others who claim to believe these doctrines but who, because of ignorance, confuse and mistake the real issues involved in God's revelation of these truths. God uses His truth to eliminate ignorance, confusion, and darkness. This happens in initial conversion when a sinner is enlightened by God's Gospel to see the truth that all of the conditions or requirements for salvation have been fully met by Christ alone. It is also a continual process in believers whereby we are continually learning and "í casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The truths of God's election of a people and Christ's effectual, definite, redeeming work on their behalf are Gospel issues that are vital to the salvation of sinners. They are not simply matters of theological debate and higher knowledge. These precious God-honoring, Christ-exalting truths have to do with God's way of saving sinners. Upon what ground will a holy and just God receive sinners into His fellowship? What actually satisfies God's justice and gains God's favor for that sinner? The answers to these questions will be settled as all eternal issues are. They are settled by the standard of God's glory revealed in Christ.

God's grace revealed (1) in election and (2) in Christ's effectual, definite redeeming work, as He by Himself accomplished salvation for God's elect, are both necessary for the plain, simple preaching of God's Gospel. These doctrines are vital components of true salvation knowledge of the Gospel, not things to be added later only for the mature Christian. They are not doctrines hidden in obscure Scriptures that can only be interpreted by well-learned theologians. These truths are necessary to the doctrines that reveal how God can be just and justify the ungodly. They identify the Christ whom God the Father sent to save a people. They distinguish the true Christ from all counterfeits. They remove all grounds of boasting on the sinner's part. They show how God is absolutely sovereign in salvation, how Christ is the only effectual Savior, and how man by nature is a totally depraved sinner in need of free, sovereign grace,

not a mere savability or a mere possibility of being saved if he will meet certain conditions.

Another important thing to understand at the outset is that these great doctrines do not shut any sinner out of the kingdom of heaven. They are not revealed to discourage sinners from believing God's testimony, nor to encourage any sinner to be fatalistic concerning his future state. On the contrary, all of the blessed and gracious invitations, all commandments for sinners to seek the Lord and find salvation, are based upon the perfections of God's redemptive character and Christ's mediatorial glory revealed in the doctrines of election and particular redemption (Isaiah 45:20-25; 46:9-13; I Cor. 15:1-4). We can see this if we have a proper, Scriptural definition of each.

WHAT IS ELECTION?

Read the following:

John 6:37 - All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 - 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:

Election is the blessed fact that God the Father, before the foundation of the world, from the very beginning, chose a particular number of guilty sinners out of Adam's fallen race AND conditioned all of their salvation upon God the Son.

Ephesians 1:3-4 - Blessed <be> the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly <places> in Christ: {4} 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:

Nothing in any individual sinner, real or foreseen, nothing outside of God Himself, influenced God's choice of sinners unto salvation. God justifies the ungodly, and all whom God elected unto salvation are and were, before conversion, "í by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:1-4). A born again sinner cannot boast in anything he has done to make him to differ. He knows his character and conduct falls way short of God's holy standard and merits nothing from God. He knows that because of his own selfish pride, self-love, and self-righteousness, he would have never chosen God, unless God had chosen him.

The reason God chose one sinner and not another is known only to God. God has clearly revealed that all who hear the Gospel should believe on Christ, seeing all the conditions for the salvation of sinners to have been fully met by Christ alone. All who hear the Gospel are warranted and commanded to believe the Gospel. All who hear the Gospel are forbidden to believe anything else. The unbelief of many, even the majority, will not make God's promise ineffectual. God's elect in each successive generation will hear and believe God's Gospel. They shall be made willing to be saved based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ps. 110:3). The "day of His (God's) power" is when the elect of God hear and believe the certainty of salvation in the Person and work of Christ as revealed in the Gospel. They are brought to see that they are justified by the blood of Christ, solely based upon the imputation of His righteousness. God freely invites, encourages, and commands all who hear the Gospel, whosoever will, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. How could the doctrine of election shut any sinner out of heaven when God Himself commands all who hear the Gospel to believe? Sinners shut themselves out by denying God's election of grace and insisting that salvation, or some part of it, be conditioned on the sinner.

WHAT IS DEFINITE OR PARTICULAR REDEMPTION? Read the following:

Isaiah 53:10-12 - {10} Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put <him> to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see <his> seed, he shall prolong <his> days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. {11} He shall see of the travail of his soul, <and> shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. {12} Therefore will I divide him <a portion> with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

John 10:11,14-16,26 - {11} I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. {14} I am the good shepherd, and know my <sheep>, and am known of mine. {15} As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. {16} And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, <and> one shepherd. {26} But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

Acts 20:28 - Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Matthew 1:21 - And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Romans 5:19 - For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Hebrews 10:10-14 - {10} By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once <for all>. {11} And every priest standeth ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: {12} But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; {13} From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. {14} For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Particular redemption is the blessed fact that God the Son became incarnate in order to satisfy all the conditions of the salvation of God's elect and, thereby, merit for them all grace here and all glory hereafter. Christ's finished work, His bloody sacrifice of His sinless humanity upon the altar of His infinite Deity, was the culmination of His whole work of redemption. This included His incarnation, obedience, and death, as the Representative and Substitute for sinners. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:6-8). Christ's entire satisfaction, the merit of His whole work of mediation, is called the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. This is the only ground of salvation, and it is revealed in the Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). Specifically, Christ's righteousness is the entire merit of His whole work of redemption. It was brought in and established by the obedience unto death which Christ Himself accomplished as a Substitute for His people. Christ's righteousness alone demands the whole salvation of every sinner whom He represented (God's elect).

Christ, the Great High Priest of God's elect, by virtue of His righteousness (the satisfying merit of His redeeming work), insures that in time, in each successive generation, each and every one of God's elect will believe on Christ by the blood-bought gift of faith that He merited for them. Christ's righteousness demands these blessings for all those for whom Christ lived and died. This is honoring to God and consistent with His holy law and justice. God's Word clearly reveals an inseparable connection between Christ's death and the full, free, eternal salvation of all whom He represented in His obedience and death (Isa. 53:5, 10-12; Rom. 5:18b, 19b; John 6:37; 10:15-16). Christ did not die to make sinners savable if they would meet certain conditions. That would be salvation by works, not grace. He did not die for all sinners without exception so as to make their salvation conditioned upon their believing. He died to save His people from their sins and thereby, insuring that they would believe and repent.

As stated before, these truths do not shut sinners out of the kingdom of heaven. First, we must understand that God declares He will save the very chief of sinners based solely upon the imputed righteousness of Christ. God forbids every sinner to seek salvation based upon anything else (Rom. 9:30-32). This righteousness is revealed in the Gospel, and God commissions all His preachers to preach His Gospel to all sinners without exception (Mark 16:15). God's preachers are to "beseech," implore lost sinners to be reconciled to God on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone (2 Cor. 5:19-21). The sinner's warrant from God is not to seek to find out whether or not God elected him or Christ died for him personally. The sinner's warrant from God is to believe and repent. All whom God elected, all for whom Christ died, will believe and repent. No sinner has any excuse, and the only thing that keeps sinners from believing and repenting is self-righteousness, self-love, and religious pride.

Everything stated in the Scriptures concerning God's electing grace and Christ's particular redemption is stated to be an encouragement for sinners to believe God's Gospel of grace, of salvation conditioned on Christ alone, and to repent from thinking that anything other than Christ's righteousness could recommend us unto God. Consider the following Scriptural terms and phrases: the blood of Christ, His redemption, the body of His flesh through death, Christ crucified, the cross, the blood of His cross, the sacrifice of Himself, and His offering. All these, as well as others, are equivalent terms that refer to the righteousness of Christ, the merit of His entire work of redemption. Many different terms are used to show the infinite value and all-sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ as the only ground of salvation. Even the work of God the Holy Spirit IN the sinner is the fruit and effect of Christ's righteousness. All grace within, including faith, repentance, Godly fear, humility, and love, are all the results of what Christ has merited for His people. None of these things form any part of the cause or ground of salvation. Christ must have all the preeminence.

Again, we must be clear on this issue. God's elect in each successive generation are saved based solely upon the merits of Christ's obedience and death. God commands, invites, and encourages, both with His threats and His promises, all who hear the Gospel to freely receive Christ and His righteousness for salvation. God forbids sinners to come for salvation based on anything else. God commands all who hear the Gospel to repent of ever seeking salvation based on anything else. This is the responsibility of sinners, even as sinful creatures. Sinners are responsible to receive God's truth and reject Satan's lies.

The certain salvation of God's elect does not remove anyone's responsibility. It is the greatest encouragement for all to seek salvation God's way through Christ. God has engaged every attribute of His character to insure the salvation of His elect. God removes every obstacle and provides all the means necessary for their salvation. He

made them one with His Son in the view of His law and justice. Each office that He entrusted to His Son, along with the duties of each office, insures the certainty of their salvation. God conditioned all of their salvation upon Christ, and Christ satisfied all the conditions as their Mediator and Surety. **THEY SHALL BE SAVED** (Matt. 1:21; John 10:14-16; Heb. 1:3; 10:10,14).

It is this certainty of salvation conditioned on Christ alone that fully warrants and encourages any sinner to believe God's Gospel of grace. Further, God tells us plainly that if we insist on and continue attempting to keep any commandment or seek to avoid any sin aimed at saving ourselves, keeping ourselves saved, making ourselves holy and fit, or recommending ourselves unto God, we will perish in our sins. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3:20). God justifies the ungodly based on the imputed righteousness of Christ without the deeds of the law. God keeps His elect saved based on that same righteousness without the deeds of the law. And God brings them to final glory based on that same righteousness without the deeds of the law. This certainty of salvation in Christ is what motivates God's people to obedience and love from a spirit of adoption and grace as opposed to legalism and bondage.

The doctrines of election and definite (or particular) redemption, then, are never revealed to exclude or frighten sinners. They are revealed to confirm the certainty of God's purpose to glorify Himself in the salvation of sinners and to remove any doubt concerning God's faithfulness to fulfill His promise (Rom. 3:3-4; 9:6-8). This certainty, taken from a consideration of God's character, is the strongest encouragement and warrant for all without exception to trust that God is just and faithful to save sinners based on the imputed righteousness of Christ.

All this has some awesome implications when we consider that most professing Christians are either ignorant or simply deny the doctrines of election and particular redemption. Most professing Christians believe that salvation is conditioned on man's will, not God's, and that Christ's death, His redeeming work, is universal. Most have never considered the far-reaching implications of this. First, if Christ's death is universal, in and of itself, it cannot be effectual to any of its objects. What good will it do any sinner to believe that Christ is his personal savior when he must of necessity also believe that Christ's death, in and of itself, has no real saving value at all. Universal notions of His death set forth that Christ's death did no more for sinners in heaven than it attempted to do for sinners in hell. The sinner, then, makes the real difference between heaven and hell. The only value this puts on Christ's death is that which the sinner gives it by the addition of his faith and/or repentance, perseverance, and obedience. It all depends on which denomination one belongs to determine what it takes.

Most professing Christians actually make their own faith, not Christ, to be their savior. In reality, their faith is a testimony that Christ's obedience, sufferings, and death, His blood and righteousness, have no power to keep any sinner out of hell or to put any sinner in heaven. It is their faith, not Christ Himself, which appeases God's wrath and gains God's favor as they set it along side of Christ. Faith, then, not Christ's blood, ratifies the blessed covenant of grace. Faith, not Christ's righteousness, is their ground of salvation. We must see these implications of such heresy. We must see that this kind of faith is not of God, because it denies God's grace in Christ.

No one would doubt that God would be just and faithful to save a person who has kept God's law perfectly. No one would doubt God's faithfulness and justice to save a sinner who personally has suffered all the punishment due unto all his sins. In either case no one would doubt that God would save such a person based upon that person's satisfaction to law and justice. We know, according to law and justice, that sin deserves and demands punishment and righteousness deserves and demands blessedness. God must do righteously! We by nature have this sense of right and wrong. We see God as a righteous Judge. Why would those who believe in universal redemption deny this basic honor to God by affirming that their christ satisfied justice for all without exception while insisting that God will not save all based solely upon Christ's satisfaction? Universal notions of God's purpose to save and of Christ's redeeming work of necessity gender unto a belief that Christ Himself, along with all His mediatorial offices and duties, have no real value on their own merit nor any real power to deliver any sinner from everlasting torment. According to such universal notions, Christ held each of His mediatorial offices and performed every duty for multitudes who finally perish in hell. Those who hold such a view must admit that all that Christ is and did has no value on its own merit. A universal notion of God's purpose to save and of Christ's death shuts every sinner out of the kingdom of god because such notions dishonor every attribute of God's redemptive character and they cast shame and reproach upon Christ's Person, offices, and work of redemption.

A common objection used to defend such God-dishonoring notions has to do with the Gospel command to believe. Someone objects, "But sinners must believe or be damned." It is true that sinners must believe. This is not the issue. The issue is this ó What or in Whom must sinners believe? No sinner is commanded by God to believe anything that dishonors God and devalues Christ's Person and work. Therefore, no sinner is commanded to believe in a universal redemption. In fact, God forbids sinners to believe such heresy. God-given faith believes that Christ's death, His redemptive work, is effectual and definite. True faith in Christ believes that His death alone makes the difference between heaven and hell. The faith of God's elect excludes all occasions for the sinner to boast in anything other than the righteousness of Christ (Gal. 6:14). Genuine, God-given faith sees that faith itself does not make the

difference between saved and lost. By God's grace, justified sinners come to rest in Christ alone!

Another objection has to do with the frequently cited Scriptural phrase, "Whoever will." But the issue is not simply "whoever will." The issue is "whoever will" what? This is always qualified in Scripture by a command from God. For example:

Mark 8:34 - And when he had called the people <unto him> with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Revelation 22:17 - And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Neither of these verses say, "Whoever will believe what he wants to believe," or "Whoever will think what he wants to think." Each "whoever will" is qualified by a command that is directly related to the Gospel. In Mark 8:34 it has to do with following Christ and denying self. This is faith in Christ and repentance from former idolatry and dead works. It is a trust that Christ's Person and redeeming work is sufficient in and of itself to appease God's wrath and gain God's favor. The "water of life" in Revelation 22:17 is eternal life conditioned on the merits of Christ alone. All of this has to do with God's election of grace and Christ's particular, definite work of redemption. The promise is that whoever will come to God pleading the imputed righteousness of Christ as the only ground of salvation shall be saved. Those who come believing universal notions of redemption are expecting salvation based on something other than the righteousness of Christ. By nature they will not come to God in a way that is honoring to God in Christ. But whoever comes God's way shall be saved. They are God's elect who come believing all of salvation's conditions or requirements have been fully met by Christ alone.

Another issue in this matter of election and particular (or definite) redemption is the honor of Christ. The Bible tells us "that all <men> should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him" (John 5:23). All without exception are commanded to honor Christ as they honor the Father. It is impossible to honor the Father apart from honoring the Son. This speaks of God's covenant, redemptive character. How do we honor the Father? We honor the Father only as we know and recognize Him to be both a just God and a Savior based on the merits of Christ's obedience and death. If we do not honor Christ as Mediator and Surety, we attribute lack of wisdom to the Father who appointed and sent Him. If we honor Christ as Mediator and Surety, we attribute unto

the Father all the qualities of character He has engaged in our salvation conditioned on Christ. The redemptive glory of the Father is revealed only in Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).

Apart from a salvation knowledge of Christ and His righteousness as the only ground of salvation all without exception are idolaters with no fear of God before their eyes. Until we see that Christ's righteousness alone demands the salvation of every sinner for whom He died, according to God's law and justice, we cannot honor the Father or the Son. This is why universal notions of God's purpose to save and of Christ's redeeming work actually shut sinners out of the kingdom of God. Again, such notions dishonor every attribute of God's redemptive character and cast shame and reproach upon Christ's Person and work.

One of the major obstacles in the way of sinners seeing the truths and the implications mentioned herein is that universal notions of Christ's death are widely held among those who name the name of Christ. And this kind of false doctrine is so appealing to our natural way of thinking. But despite these obstacles, consider the implications of how a universal view of Christ's death would mean that He actually redeemed no one, only that he made sinners savable if they meet certain conditions. This is works salvation. Read the Bible with the following basic truths in mind:

1. God's foremost design in the salvation of sinners is to reveal and honor every attribute of His redemptive character.
2. God's unlimited power and faithfulness are actively engaged to save His elect by removing every obstacle and providing every means necessary for their salvation.
3. God's love and grace is revealed in the appointment of His Son to be their Mediator, Substitute, Representative, and Surety, to satisfy all the conditions of their salvation.
4. Christ, by His obedience unto death, did satisfy the conditions, not as a private person, but as the Substitute of a people, God's elect.

How can we say that any whom God loves, that any for whom Christ died could finally perish when He satisfied all the conditions of their salvation? Seek to understand the love and faithfulness of Christ as He performed every duty that every one of His offices demanded in order to satisfy all conditions of the salvation of His sheep. Seek to understand how that Christ's righteousness imputed enables God to be just and holy when He freely justifies sinners. Be assured that sinners are fully warranted and commanded to believe God's Gospel of grace of salvation conditioned on Christ alone. If any sinner is excluded, it is because he has excluded himself by unbelief. If sinners insist on denying the blessed doctrines of election and

definite redemption, they of necessity insist on denying the true character of God and the mediatorial work of Christ.

God's preachers desire that sinners be saved, and they have every warrant to tell lost sinners who believe God's Gospel that they shall be saved. But God's preachers have no warrant from God to tell lost sinners indiscriminately that God loves them and that Christ died for them. This would be the equivalent of telling all men indiscriminately that their salvation is sure and certain even if they refuse God's Gospel. No sinner has any valid reason to believe that Christ died for him personally until he believes God's Gospel of grace and repents from dead works. This is the first evidence that God has elected a sinner and that Christ died for that sinner. So, God's preachers are commanded to preach the Gospel indiscriminately. They are commanded to tell lost sinners that God chose a people and that Christ died for them. They are commanded to tell lost sinners that Christ's death, His righteousness, is the only ground upon which God will save any sinner, and that God will save sinners who come to Him pleading Christ's righteousness alone. Until sinners, by the Spirit of God, come to value the death of Christ as that which secures the salvation of all for whom He died, it will do them no good to tell them that Christ died for them. Until they see that Christ's death alone obtains eternal blessedness, they will always vainly seek after something else in order to be found in God's favor.

Again, the issue is not simply a matter of disagreements over nonessential doctrine or trying to prove one's own point of view or doctrinal position. We hear so much from those who accuse God's preachers of seeking to convert people to "Calvinism," or to "their own point of view." This is just a way to divert attention away from the vital issue. Are these doctrines truths revealed by God, truths that glorify Him, exalt Christ, and exclude all ground of boasting in sinners? They are Gospel truths, and they reveal to us the only ground upon which a holy God can be just and justify the ungodly. When we consider that the worst thing a sinner can do is to come before God expecting salvation based on anything other than (or in addition to) the imputed righteousness of Christ, or to speak peace to themselves and others apart from this one ground, we ought to see the doctrines of election and particular redemption as essential truths for salvation. These doctrines should encourage all sinners who hear the Gospel to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and rest in Him alone. Thank God for His marvelous, sovereign grace!