

Predestination and Election

Most Catholics and modern day Evangelicals do not believe that God from eternity has chosen certain people for salvation. They tend to interpret all those verses that refer to election in the light that God knew before the creation of the world who would decide to accept Christ as savior. Certainly, God did foreknow who would be the recipients of salvation before the foundations of the world were laid, but the point is not that he reacted to our future choosing. The whole point of the many verses in the Bible that speak about election is to direct the focus away from actions of our own doing.

The modern evangelical movement seems uncomfortable with the whole idea. They never mention it freely like the writers in the new testament. Usually it just crops up in a passage they are reading or studying and then they make an effort to explain it away. The fact that their beliefs never lead them to freely make statements like the ones made in the new testament is evidence that their theology is not correct.

The purpose of their explanation of election seems to be to deflect the blame for the hardness of the human heart away from God and place the blame on man's refusal to choose Christ. Also, in a culture where equality and freedom of choice is paramount, it is more appealing to emphasize that choice is the differentiating factor of the saved from the lost.

However, besides the obvious disastrous effect of making us look to ourselves for salvation, this method doesn't really clear God from the charges of favoring some people over others, anyway. Certainly the great masses of people who have lived have not had equal access to the message of the promises of God. Many of the people who lived at the time of Israel had to be destroyed by God for their depravity, but they were not given nearly the exposure to the promises of God that we enjoy. If I had been born in to those kingdoms, would I have been any different than them? I don't think so.

Even today, the deck is stacked heavily in favor of being born into certain families, and certain nations as far as exposure to the gospel. The fact is that the goal of justifying God's actions by our reason is not going to be achieved anyway.

Also, I am concerned with the attitude that this emphasis upon choice and the Christian life for assurance of salvation has upon our dealings with our fellow man. Christians who see the world as a level playing field with those who have decided for Christ as fellow believers and those who are refusing to decide for him as the lost cannot but lead over time to a feeling of superiority over those who are not believers. How much better to approach people in the light of the cross of forgiveness, realizing that God could be calling any person we encounter to Himself. Our fellowship with other Christians is not that they, like us, have made the decision to follow Christ, but they, like us have discovered that need we are all needy sinners. When I read about the terrible things some people in the Bible did and the punishments they received from God, I have the feeling that I could see myself doing those same things if God had not been gracious enough to place me in circumstances that spared me displaying that behavior.

Traditional Reformed church believers accept the teachings of election and predestination. However, they use it as a starting point for their theology and build a system of theology upon it. To Lutherans, the cross is central. The writers of the Bible teach election, but its purpose is to reinforce the teaching that salvation is not of our own choice or doing. There we leave it, but apply it to the way we approach others. We really can't judge who might have faith in the cross. The message of the cross is widespread, and we don't know who might have faith, even a weak faith. The message of the cross is certainly present in the Catholic and Orthodox churches, unfortunately even more than in many or most modern evangelical churches.

The great emphasis upon the Christian life as the basis for salvation today had lead many believers to put far too much emphasis upon miraculous signs as proof that God is on their side. They speak with absolute certainty that rare coincidences are God's miraculous interventions into their lives. For instance, if they unexpectedly come into some money at a time when they desperately need it, it is stated that God directly intervened. That may be true, or it may not be. Whether God directly intervened or whether we are receiving the blessing of God through the normal processes of this world (which He created) in which coincidences regularly happen, we should be thankful to Him either way. However, God's direct intervention is stated with certainty by many modern evangelicals because they are basing so much of their assurance upon their personal relationship with Christ instead of upon the cross that they need this as a sign that God is pleased with their present course. Of course this can lead to self-pride and the feeling that every action they decide upon is concurrent with God's wishes.

Also, it is condescending to Catholics, Mormons, Moslems, and others to say that miracles that helped them as a result of praying to Mary, or other religious leaders are not real, but our miracles are real because of our personal relationship with Christ. Placing the main emphasis upon the cross, adding the teaching of God's choice (and not our choice) will create far less resistance to the message of the church in the long run.

Let those who oppose the church oppose it because they cannot see their depravity and dismiss the idea of forgiveness. Don't let others oppose it because we have a spiritual pride with is in conflict with their natural pride.

[Home:](#)