

Sovereign Election (Part 1)

The doctrine of sovereign election, when viewed in an improper perspective, may seem cold and unfeeling, depicting God as callous and arbitrary in His election of some and not others. Yet, this viewpoint fails in two significant ways. First, it assumes man deserves God's favor. Second, it does not recognize the extreme love demonstrated by God toward His Son and His elect. Election finds its root in God's love. This lesson explains that far from being a dictatorial, meaningless activity by an unfeeling God, sovereign election expresses the fullness of God's love for a sinful, unrepentant people unable to make the choice to love God for themselves.

I. God's Divine Choice

- a. God's divine choice to elect some for salvation originated with Him from eternity past for His own glory.
- b. John 1:12–13: Man's reception of the free call of the gospel occurs only as a result of the will of God.
 - i. The concept of birth in verse 13 refers to a spiritual birth, and it demonstrates the inactivity on the part of man, just like physical birth.
 - ii. Man does not suddenly will to choose God as Savior, but God exercises His will for the salvation of men who remain dead in their trespasses (Eph. 1:4; Rom. 9:16)

II. God's Loving Choice

- a. John 6:37–39: Sovereign election remains rooted in God's love for His Son and His elect, whom He determined to save from eternity past for an inheritance for His Son.
 - i. The word "all" in verse 37 refers to all the elect.
 - ii. The activity of giving precedes the coming of the Son.
 - iii. The Son cherishes and loves the gift given to Him by the Father: the elect.
- b. Verses testifying to sovereign election: Jeremiah 1:5; Romans 9:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:10

III. God's Previous Choice

- a. John 10: The flock of Christ belongs to Him long before the sheep come to Jesus by responding to His voice.
 - i. Only Jesus, the true Shepherd, possess the right to enter in through the door guarded by the gatekeeper (perhaps John the Baptist).
 - ii. The image of the sheepfold encompasses all people, not just the elect.
 - iii. When the sheep that God has given to Jesus hear His voice, they separate from the unelected and follow Him.
- b. Jesus calls each member of His flock by name.
 - i. Zacchaeus, Lazarus, and other instances demonstrate Jesus' personal call.
 - ii. The personal nature of sovereign election should arouse humility in the believer, for this destiny of salvation occurs without any personal volition or will.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Jeremiah 1:5; John 1:1–18; 6:37–39; 10:1–21; Romans 9:1–27; 11:36; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:10