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The Doctrine of Election

By Dr. John A. King

Definite Redemption or Limited Atonement

John 10:14-15

14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Atonement is the work of God in Christ on the cross whereby he canceled the debt of our sin, appeased God's holy wrath (Rom 1:18) against us, and won for us all the benefits of salvation.

The death of Christ was necessary because God would not be a just God if He swept our sins under the rug.

Salvation is a divine work. It is designed and ordained by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit.

Now there is a difference between what I believe the Bible teaches as the plan of God, and the way it has been presented to most of us in the American and Australian Church.

The difference between them is not primarily one of emphasis, but of content.

- One proclaims a God who saves;
- the other speaks of a God who enables man to save himself and holds that Christ's death guaranteed salvation for every member of the human race, past, present, and future.
- One view presents the three great acts of the Holy Trinity for the recovering of lost mankind - election by the Father, redemption by the Son, calling by the Spirit- as directed towards the same persons, and as securing their salvation infallibly. All inherited and guaranteed to being by God.
- The other view says that man's salvation is not secured by any of their actions by God. In other words, election, redemption and calling are all up to man to decide.

Now think this through... that means taking this to the full extend. It is possible that no person ever got saved, which means that Christ's death was not redemptive, but futile because no one chose to follow him and evangelize.

To me that portrays God as ineffectual and powerless – not sovereign and omnipotent.

The two theologies or points of view thus see salvation in quite different terms.

Again: One makes salvation depend on the work of God, the other on a work of man.

James Packer says:

"Christ's death did not ensure the salvation of anyone, for it did not secure the gift of faith to anyone; what it did was rather to create a possibility of salvation for everyone if they believe."

Christ did not die in this sense for everyone. The proof of that, as Scripture and experience unite to teach us, is that not all are saved.

Therefore the atonement of Christ was clearly limited or unlimited. There is no alternative. No in-between.

Scripture must be the guide in choosing between these possibilities.

Scripture speaks of God as having chosen for salvation a great number of our fallen race and having sent Christ into the world to save them (John 6:37-40; 10:27-29; 11:51-52; Rom. 8:28-39; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Pet. 1:20).

Christ is regularly said to have died for particular groups or persons, with the clear implication that his death secured their salvation (John 10:15-18, 27-29; Rom. 5:8-10; 8:32; Gal. 2:20, 3:13-14; 4:4-5; 1 John 4:9-10; Rev. 1:4-6; 5:9-10).

In summary:

The elect hear Christ's offer, and through hearing it are effectually called by the Holy Spirit. Both the invitation and the effectual calling flow from Christ's sin-bearing death. Those who reject the offer of Christ do so of their own free will (i.e., because they choose to, Matt. 2:1-7; John 3:18), so that their final perishing is their own fault. Those who receive Christ learn to thank him for the cross as the centerpiece of God's plan of sovereign saving grace.

Election of the Saints

Ephesians 1:4-5

4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

Romans 9:15

15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

Or another name for it could be – God's Sovereign Choice.

The whole issue of election centers around God's ability and right to save who He wants to.

This is something He does, not something we choose to do.

Election refers to God's choosing whom to save. It is unconditional in that there is no condition man must meet before God chooses to save him. Man is dead in trespasses and sins. So there is no condition he can meet before God chooses to save him from his deadness.

Election: Through grace, God chose salvation in Christ for those whom He knew would accept Him.

The word elect is a verb (an action word) it means "to select, or choose out."

Before creation, God knew that man would fall.

And God put a plan in motion to preserve a remnant of humanity.

And God selected out of the human race, those whom He would redeem and then bring to faith and justify them and ultimately seeing them glorified in and through Jesus.

In other words, God knew His creation had the potential to make dumb choices, so He made a plan to save them. God owes sinners no mercy of any kind. The only thing we are owed, as a result of Adams original or initial sin, is wrath (God's anger at sin) and the subsequent eternal condemnation and damnation. (Rom 1:18)

- Let's talk about this concept of a remnant or God choosing a few and not many.

- People often say "that doesn't sound right." "That doesn't sound fair" "God would never do that!"

-In fact God did that all the way through the Bible.

- He Chose Abraham to start a single nation. He chose a single people to be His. Not everyone.

- Before that He chose Able over Cain.

- He chose Noah and his family and let the rest of the world drown.

This divine and sovereign election is an expression of free and sovereign grace. In other words, you didn't know about it, you didn't earn it, you didn't choose it, God choose you.

It starts with God and ends with God.

Acts 13:48 reports how the Gentiles responded to the preaching of the gospel in Antioch of Pisidia. "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

Ordained: Meant/designed/certain

Notice, it does not say that as many believed but those that were ordained to eternal life. The prior election of God is the reason some believed while others did not.

But that is just the Apostles, Jesus wouldn't say anything like that! Jesus loves everyone. Jesus died for everyone! That's not what Jesus would do.

Jesus says to the Jews in John 10:26, "You do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep."

He does not say, "You are not my sheep because you do not believe."

Being a sheep is something God decides for us before we believe.

It is the basis and enablement of our belief.

We believe because we are God's chosen sheep, not vice versa. (See John 8:47; 18:37.)

What about John 3:16?

Ok. Let's deal with this now.

1) John 3:16 is NOT, I repeat NOT, a stand alone verse. But it is part of a teaching that starts with Christ outlining the way to Salvation and the process of Salvation to Nicodemus John3:1-21, it is a teaching on the kingdom that is some 21 verses long.

Let me summarize:

Nicodemus says: You are from God, you must be.

Jesus says: You can not know the kingdom of God unless you are Born Again – Jesus introduces the concept of regeneration for the first time.

Nicodemus says: this is a physical impossibility.

Jesus responds: This is a spiritual occurrence, not a fleshly one.

Jesus is introducing, I believe, the doctrine of justification by faith.

Nicodemus says: I don't understand how you can know this and I don't. I am a teacher of the law and I have never heard of such a thing.

Jesus responds: Again this is a heavenly issue, not a fleshly one. You are looking at it from an earthly perception, not a heavenly perception.

Now we are at verse 13 and things change.

Jesus moves from teaching doctrine to prophesying, the things to come. He's introducing concepts that these people have never heard before.

And at this point He introduces the concepts of:

Election of the Saints (v16)

The Sovereignty of God concerning the elect (v16/v17)

Eternal judgment for the non-elect (v17)

The Sovereignty of God concern the reprobate (v18)

Repentance from Dead works (v21)

Irresistible Grace

This scripture is far more than a fridge magnet.

So no you can not look at John 3:16 and say....but God loves everyone the same.

This passage clearly tells us He does not.

Salvation is for the elect. Verses 16, 17, and 18 are about Jesus dying to save us from the wrath of God.

Now I know you will sit there and give me mental assent on the topic and go home and freak out, so take out your pens and underline in your Bible the following:

V3 - unless one is born again

V5 - unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

V18 - He who believes in Him

Make the following comments in your margin:

Concerning verse 17: God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world. Why? Because IT WAS ALREADY condemned.

“That’s not true. God doesn’t condemn us.” We were already condemned by our sins.

Concerning verse 16: The word that is translated world from the Greek – KOSMOS – has at least seven clearly defined different meanings in the New Testament. It is used as earth, universe, world system, human race, humanity minus believers, gentiles, and believers only.

From Gill’s commentary:

The Persic version reads "men": but not every man in the world is here meant, or all the individuals of human nature; for all are not the objects of God's special love, which is here designed, as appears from the instance and evidence of it, the gift of his Son: nor is Christ God's gift to every one; for to whomsoever he gives his Son, he gives all things freely with him; which is not the case of every man.

So the issue isn't the translation of the word 'world', the issue is us trying to justify our theology. You cannot take a single scripture out of context of the Word and justify a point of view.

R. C. Sproul says:

Ample evidence indicates that the term world in the New Testament often refers to neither the entire globe nor to all persons living on earth. For example, we read this in Luke: it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered" (Luke 2:1). We know this census did not include the inhabitants of China or South America, so "all the world" does not refer to all people in the entire world. The usage of world in this manner is widespread in Scripture.

To be sure, Christ's propitiation on the cross is unlimited in its sufficiency or value. In this sense Christ makes an atonement for the whole world. But the efficacy of this atonement does not apply to the whole world, nor does its ultimate design.

The atonement's ultimate purpose is found in the ultimate purpose or will of God. This purpose or design does not include the entire human race. If it did, the entire human race would surely be redeemed.

Non-rational argument

Where people go sideways with concepts like this is that they start to bring emotional arguments into it like "it is not fair" "God wouldn't treat people like that." When the Bible clearly states He can, will, does.

Probably what they mean is that it doesn't seem just to them. It does seem just, in terms of their view of justice, for God to choose some and not others.

God is under no obligation to save anyone. If he chooses to save some, it in no way obligates Him to save the rest.

God has mercy upon whom he shall have mercy.
So let's get our terms straight.

Often when we deal the whole issue of election we get terms and concepts confused.

Justice: righteousness, even-handedness, fairness

Non-justice: everything outside of justice

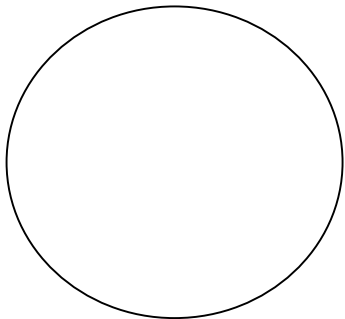
Injustice: unfair or unjust treatment

Mercy: kindness and forgiveness shown to an offender

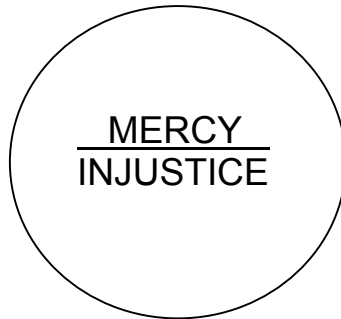
Mercy is not justice.

But neither is it injustice. It is non-justice.

JUSTICE



NON-JUSTICE



Injustice is a bad form of Non-justice.

Mercy is a good form of non-justice.

God never performs an injustice because He is incapable of being bad, however God reserves the right of clemency. God's mercy is voluntary. He is obligated to be merciful. Yet He reserves the right to have mercy upon whom He will have mercy.

What we do know is, first, had we not been chosen for life we would not be believers now (for only the elect are brought to faith).

Second, that as elect believers we may rely on God to finish in us the good work that he started (1 Cor. 1:8-9; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18).

Thirdly, we don't know who else has been elected, so we need to tell all men everywhere the good news of Salvation paid for us by Jesus Christ , so they too can believe.

Election is like some great big family secret. We must spend our lives asking and seek out those who would also come to the saving grace of Christ Jesus

We do not know who else He has chosen among those who do not yet believe, nor why it was His good pleasure to choose us in particular.

So it should be an issue of great praise and thanksgiving.

True Assurance can be contrasted to False Assurance:

True Assurance	False Assurance
Genuine humility	Spiritual pride
Diligence in holiness	Slothful indulgence and excess
Honest self-examination	Avoids accurate evaluation
Desire for intimate fellowship with God	Indifferent in relationship to fellowship with god

The controversy with this doctrine – the reprobate and Christ specific or Purposeful Atonement or again Definite Redemption

Reprobate

Reprobate: degenerate, rascal, no-gooder

Romans 9:14-24

14 What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. 19 You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" 20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the

same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— 24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

In other words, the fact that not everyone gets elected should make those of us who are grateful.

Reprobation is the name given to God's eternal decision regarding those sinners whom He has not chosen for life, the non-elect. His decision is in essence a decision not to change them, not to call them, as the elect are destined to be called and changed.

It is a decision by God to leave them to sin as in their hearts they already want to do, and finally to judge them as they deserve for what they have done.

When in particular instances God gives them over to their sins (i.e., removes restraints on their doing the disobedient things they desire), this is itself the beginning of judgment. It is called "hardening" (Rom. 9:18; 11:25; cf. Ps. 81:12; Rom. 1:24, 26, 28), and it inevitably leads to greater guilt.

Basically, this doctrine teaches that not everyone gets to go to heaven and not everyone has a chance – only the elect. And people have a problem with that.

Not everyone is elected.

Not everyone has a chance.

And on those of us who know we have been saved, this fact should weigh heavy....we have been chosen and we need to live worthy of it.

Reprobation is a biblical reality (Rom. 9:14-24; 1 Pet. 2:8), but not one that bears directly on Christian behavior.

The reprobates are faceless so far as Christians are concerned, and it is not for us to try to identify them. We should view all persons that we meet as possibly being numbered among the elect.

I know that I was judged by many as reprobate at a different time in my life. I know I was judged as beyond salvation. How? They told me after the fact...we never thought that John King would ever become a Christian. They judged me one way, God elected me another.

I was judged by God as elect – that is the wonder of it all. What others discounted and discarded God choose as precious in His sight.

The doctrine of election, like many things has been twisted by man to make controversy, when in fact it is and should be a point of tremendous comfort and wonder.

When you think about it you should marvel at how great the grace that has saved us is.

It should move us to humility, confidence, joy, praise, faithfulness, and holiness in response to the fact that out of the current 6.6 billion people alive today, you have been elected by God as His representative on planet earth.

We don't know who is going to make it to the wedding feast – who is going to accept the invitation. So we need to invite everyone we can and believe that they all will come!

Your Assurance of Salvation, your Assurance of your Election should be the greatest motivation and driving force behind your passion for Christ.

Because you know you don't deserve it, you know it is a pure act of mercy, you know you want to do everything you can so that others might experience the joy and freedom you have.