

Canons of Dort – 1st Head., Art:6-11 – Opening the Doctrine of Election

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: As a background to the doctrine of election, the first 5 articles of the Canons teach that all men from the fall of Adam and Eve have been inherently sinful and under the just condemnation of God, that election was grounded upon the love of God, not on any good in man, and that God reveals his love (his election) through his Word. Today we will open up of the doctrine of election.

Our headings are: God applies election over time. God elected you out of pure grace and for his pleasure. God elected all his children with the same election.

Our goals are: That seeing the richness of God's love in electing you, that you rejoice in your election and that you will endeavor努力to be used by him to call the elect into God's kingdom.

God Applies Election Over Time

Article 6: God's Eternal Decree: The fact that some receive from God the gift of faith within time, and that others do not, stems from God's eternal decree. 源于上帝的永恒的法令 “Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things known from long ago.” In accordance with this decree God graciously softens the hearts, however hard, of the chosen ones and inclines them to believe, but by just judgment God leaves in their wickedness and hardness of heart those who have not been chosen. And in this especially is disclosed to us God's act—unfathomable上帝的行为，深不可测， and as merciful as it is just—of distinguishing between people equally lost. This is the well known decision of election and reprobation revealed in God's Word. The wicked, impure, and unstable distort this decree to their own ruin他们自身的毁灭, but it provides holy and godly souls with comfort beyond words.

1. God eternally decreed before the world began whom he would elect to eternal salvation in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1: 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined命中注定us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will...

You were not saved by election. You were elected to be saved.

2. Then God softened the heart of the elect and gives them faith at different points in their lives in order to work the effects of their election.

It does not matter how hard the hearts of the sinner are, as long as they are elect, God is able, and indeed does soften them – when he is ready. Sometimes he softens the heart of sinners quickly, sometimes he takes longer. Sometimes he does so when they are old, sometimes when they are young. Sometimes he does so when they are sick or when they are well. Sometimes he even softens their heart just before they die.

So be patient when you take the Gospel to someone who does not immediately believe. Be faithful and wait for God.

3. God decreed from all eternity to leave alone the hearts of the ones he does not elect in their wickedness and hardness.

This is called the doctrine of reprobation. Reprobation is God decreeing to leave some wicked to their own desires and not give them eternal life. He does not give them eternal life because that is his choice to give his gift to whomever he wishes. It is also true that he does not give them eternal life because they neither desire it nor ask for it.

Romans 9: 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind一个庸俗的头脑, to do those things which are not fitting;

The phrase “he hardens,” simply means that God left some to their own devices. And when man is left to his own devices, he becomes hardened against God. God did not go into their hearts and harden them. God does not sin!

This doctrine of reprobation is difficult to accept, but God is just even as he is merciful. You must not brush God's truth aside because you don't like it. Those who accept this doctrine of reprobation find joy. How? They know that salvation is in Christ who shed his blood for the complete remission of all your sins.

4. How do you respond knowing these things?

You respond with singing and praising God. Of course you can't fully praise God for your election because you cannot fully grasp the greatness of your election and because you want to take some credit for believing. But the credit must be at the feet of the Savior. So sing of the greatness of his electing power! Sing of his electing love.

On the contrary, if you reject this doctrine you are wicked, impure, and a distorter of truth who will bring ruin on yourself. You will bring ruin on yourself because you rob God of his glory. No one robs God of his glory and escapes.

God elected you out of pure grace and for his pleasure

Article 7: Election: Election is God's unchangeable purpose by which God did the following: Before the foundation of the world, by **sheer grace** 纯粹的恩典, according to the **free good pleasure** of God's will, God chose in Christ to salvation a **definite number of particular people** out of the entire human race, which had fallen by its own fault from its original innocence into sin and ruin. Those **chosen were neither better nor more deserving than the others**, but lay with them in the common misery, **God did this in Christ**, whom God also appointed from eternity to be the mediator, the head of all those chosen, and the foundation of their salvation. And so God decreed to give to Christ those chosen for salvation, and to call and draw them effectively into Christ's fellowship **through the Word and Spirit**, that is to grant them true **faith, to justify them, to sanctify them, and finally, after powerfully preserving them in the fellowship of God's Son, to glorify them**. God did all this in order to demonstrate God's mercy, to the praise of the riches of God's glorious grace. As Scripture says, "God chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." And elsewhere, "Those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified."

1. God elected condemned sinners, out of grace, to give some eternal life. In other words, since it was from "grace" – which is an unearned gift - he didn't have to elect anyone, but he did. **Those chosen were not better or more deserving than Adolph Hitler or Pol Pot or Idi Amin, for example.**

Deuteronomy 7:7 "The **LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people**, for you were the least of all peoples; 8 "but **because the LORD loves you**, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage..."

God doesn't like some people because of the color of their skin. In history, at times most Christians were people of color and in North Africa and the Middle East, while some whites were even cannibals. Now more whites are Christians. God shows no preference to skin color.

2. God elected a definite number from eternity because of his good pleasure.

Article 10: Election Based on God's Good Pleasure: But the cause of this undeserved election is exclusively the **good pleasure of God**. This does not involve God's choosing certain human qualities or actions from among all those possible as a condition of salvation, but rather involves God's adopting certain particular persons from among the common mass of sinners as God's own possession. As Scripture says, "Even before they had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's purpose of election might continue, not by works but by his call)* she (Rebecca) was told, 'The elder shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau.'" Also, "... as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers."

Ephesians 1:5, makes it clear that you were chosen – elected –for the pleasure of God. **Do you see how this conflicts with the way people live today?** Pursuing one's pleasure, instead of the pleasure of God, is the order of the day. Now, don't misunderstand. God is not against pleasure. He gives you many pleasures in this life. But the point is that everything you ultimately do must be done for the glory of God. (1Cor 10:31). So when you enjoy a fine meal, don't feel guilty. Rather, use the strength from it to thank God and to work for God. You were elected to live for Christ.

3. God graciously gave you faith to receive what Christ did for you. That faith came through his Word and Spirit. **(God is not averse to using means!)** And his Word and Spirit continue to work in you and prepare you for eternity in heaven.

1Peter 1:18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish 污点和 without spot. **20 He indeed was foreordained 注定 before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you** 21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

(So those who think that believing in election negates the preaching of the Word of God are mistaken about how election actually works.) Preaching the Gospel is the start. And once that process of salvation starts, it goes to the end. The predestined are called. The called are justified. The justified are glorified. (Romans 8). And it is all through Jesus Christ.

4. Since election was based on God's grace in which he gives man faith to believe, then election cannot be based on God foreseeing your faith. He has to give you faith first. That is election! Further, if someone cannot come to faith unless God draws him – implying some force - then God would have to determine whom **he** would draw to come to him. That is election! So to argue for election based on foreseen faith logically make no sense.

Article 9: Election Not Based on Foreseen Faith: This same election took place, **not on the basis of foreseen faith, of the obedience of faith**, of holiness, or of any other good quality and disposition, as though it were based on a prerequisite cause or condition in the person to be chosen, but rather for the purpose of faith, of the obedience of faith, of holiness, and so on. Accordingly, election is the source of every saving good. Faith, holiness, and the other saving gifts, and at last eternal life itself, flow forth from election as its fruits and effects. As the Apostle says, "just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be (not because we were) holy and blameless before him in love."

Philippians 2: 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 **for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**

Since your election has nothing to do with your goodness but God's goodness, **you will be more grateful for your election and use the means God gives you to work out his election in salvation:** Read your Bible and pray every day.

God elected all his children with the same election

Article 8: A Single Decree of Election: This **election is not of many kinds**, but one and the same for all who are saved in the Old and the New Testament. For Scripture declares that there is a single good pleasure, purpose, and plan of God's will, by which God chose us from eternity both to grace and to glory, both to salvation and to the way of salvation, which God prepared in advance for us to walk in.

1. Election between the Old and New Testament Christians is the same. Election between Jews and Gentiles is the same.

There is no other way one can be saved but through the election of God and by redemption of Jesus Christ.

So how can you answer those who say that Old Testament believers were chosen and saved in a different way?

Ephesians 2&3 express that unity of salvation between Jews and Gentiles. Read that to them. Further, Apostle Paul showed in Romans 11 that all believers, old and new, are children of Abraham...and saved by Jesus. What unity!

Romans 11:22 Therefore consider the **goodness and severity of God** 神的仁慈和严厉: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. **Otherwise you also will be cut off.** 23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, **will be grafted in**, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, **who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?**

And look at the Apostle speaking of unity in the same house...Christ's house...for OT and NT believers.

Hebrews 3:1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2 who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all **His house.** 3 For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house.

"House" here means household – family – Christ's family. And didn't Jesus rebuke Nicodemus because as a leader of Israel he did not know how one was saved?

2. Election is unchangeable. God does not use Magic Erasers. He does not change. He does not contradict his nature! He cannot lose a single one he has elected.

Article 11: Election Unchangeable: **Just as God is most wise, unchangeable**, all-knowing, and almighty, so the election made by God can neither be suspended nor altered, revoked, or annulled; neither can God's chosen ones be cast off, nor their number reduced.

3. Now what is the application of the doctrine – that your election was exclusively in Jesus Christ?

This **humbles you.** You could do nothing for your salvation, but what wondrous love to sinners such as we that God displays.

It **reminds you how special you are.** It doesn't matter what kind of broken family you might have come from, you belong to God and he has brought you into his church. All other peoples will be lost, but not you.

Conclusion:

God elected his chosen ones from eternity and saved his people at different points in their lives. God elected you out of pure grace, not because he foresaw you would choose him. God elected man with one kind of election, whether Jew or Gentile, and he did this through Jesus Christ.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: What a blessed hope this is for the Christian! God chose you. He needed to choose you because you could not and would not choose God. Now your election in Jesus Christ demands humility in your soul. Your election demands sincerity in your worship and praise. Your election demands announcement of God's love to the world. Your election, and considering that you are a child of the King, demands a careful sober walk as a Christian.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, know that you will be condemned if you refuse to accept man's salvation in Jesus Christ. I plead with you to call on the Lord and ask him to give you eternal life, for he says: Whoever calls on the Lord will be saved.