

an edifice. Thus, all the blessings that God has lavished upon those who are in Messiah Yeshua flow from His eternal choosing of them before anything was created. In the eternity in which God alone existed, He determined to save a host of people from every tribe, family, and language group, and to bless them with every spiritual blessing in Messiah.

----- *Excursus: Divine Election* -----

The teaching or doctrine of Divine Election is often referred to in theological terms as “Unconditional Election.” This emphasizes that

God, before He created the physical universe, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam’s race to be the objects of His undeserved favor.<sup>1</sup>

Such divine election is “unconditional,” meaning that God’s choosing of those whom He would save eternally

was not based upon any foreseen act or response on the part of those chosen, but was based solely on His own good pleasure and sovereign will. Thus, election was not determined by, or conditioned upon, anything that men would do, but resulted entirely from God’s self-determined purpose.<sup>2</sup>

What is more, those who were not chosen for salvation were left to their own sinful ways and choices. God was not under any obligation to save any of Adam’s fallen race, so it is patently wrong for anyone to charge God with injustice for not choosing all to be saved. Paul made this point amply clear when he wrote:

You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?” On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much

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1 Steele, Thomas, and Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 2nd Ed. (P&R Pub., 2004), p. 27.

2 Ibid.

patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. (Rom 9:19–24)

In fact, the biblical teaching of God’s sovereign choosing of individuals as well as the nation of Israel, is found throughout the whole Bible. As noted above, God states regarding Abraham:

For I have chosen (literally “known”) him so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD....

כִּי יָדַעְתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יַצְוֶה אֶת־בְּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דְרָךְ יְהוָה  
(Gen 18:19a)

The same use of the verb “to know” to describe a bonded relationship is found in Ex 33:12, 17 of Moses.

Then Moses said to the LORD, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people!’ But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, ‘I have known you by name [יָדַעְתִּיךָ בְּשֵׁם], and you have also found favor in My sight.’ (Ex 33:12)

The LORD said to Moses, “I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name [יָדַעְתִּיךָ בְּשֵׁם].” (Ex 33:17)

Note also how the verb “to know” is used in connection with the Davidic covenant. For after God has revealed His covenant promises to him, David responds in humble thanksgiving by saying:

Again what more can David say to You? For You know Your servant [יָדַעְתָּ אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ], O Lord GOD! (2 Sam 7:20)

We likewise see the verb “to know” used on a national level in Amos 3:2, regarding Israel as God’s chosen, covenant nation.

You only have I chosen (literally “known”) of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.

רַק אֶתְכֶם יָדַעְתִּי מִכָּל מְשֻׁפָּחוֹת הָאָדָמָה עַל־כֵּן אֶפְקֹד עֲלֵיכֶם אֵת  
כָּל־עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם: (Amos 3:2)

The same usage of “to know someone” is found in Jeremiah’s prophecy of the New Covenant.

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (Jer 31:33–34)

When we read “for they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” this does not mean that they will know about God, but that they will walk in covenant obedience to Him as their rightful King and Savior.

Thus, in the language of the Tanach, “to know someone,” does not mean simply “to have knowledge about someone.” To “know someone” means to have a close, covenant relationship with that person. For example, when in Gen 4:1 we read that “Adam knew Eve his wife,” the result was “and she conceived.” From the opening chapters of the Bible, the verb “to know” (יָדָע, *yādaʿ*) when used in the sense “to know someone,” describes a close relationship in the context of a binding covenant. For Adam and Chavah, this was obviously the covenant of marriage.

This usage of the verb “to know” is well attested in the cultures of the Ancient Near East, and especially in the various ancient covenant texts which have been unearthed. Note one example from a Hittite treaty made between king Suppiluliumas (who refers to himself as “the Sun”) and his vassal Hugganas.

And you, Hugganas, know only the Sun regarding lordship: also my son (of) whom I, the Sun, say, “This one everyone should know...” you, Hugganas, know him! Moreover, (those) who are my sons, his brothers, (or) my brothers... know as brother and associate. Moreover, another lord...do not...know! The Sun (alone) know! ... Moreover, any other do not know!<sup>1</sup>

The primary reason why it is important to understand what the

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1 H. B. Huffman; S. B. Parker, “A Further Note on the Treaty Background of Hebrew יָדָע,” *BASOR*, 184 (1966), 36–38.

Bible means when it speaks of “knowing someone” is because in the matter of God’s unconditional election, represented in the Greek by ἐκλέγομαι/ἐκλέγω (*eklegomai/eklegō*), “to chose, select,” ἐκλεκτός (*eklektos*), “to be selected, chosen,” the Scriptures also describe those who are chosen as having been “foreknown” by God, utilizing the verb προγινώσκω (*proginōskō*), “to know in advance,” “to chose beforehand.”

Those who cannot accept the fact that God, before the world was created, chose those whom He would save, turn to the fact that God “foreknew,” i.e., understood to mean “saw in advance” those He would save, and they interpret this to mean that God looked ahead to see what choice people would make when confronted with the message of the Gospel. They then say that God’s election was based upon what He “knew in advance” regarding those who would “choose to receive Christ and those who would not.” But, as we have seen, there is a difference between “knowing something in advance” and “knowing someone in advance.” Notice the message of these texts which utilize the verb *proginōskō*, “to foreknow.”

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29)

God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? (Rom 11:2)

For He [Yeshua] was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1Pet 1:20–21)

Note that in all three of these texts, people, not actions or choices are foreknown. God foreknew believers in Yeshua, people of Israel, and Yeshua Himself. In each case, God’s act of foreknowing must be understood as foreordaining His sovereign will so that those who are foreknown have a preordained covenant with God. In the case of Yeshua Himself, this speaks of the eternal, divine plan between the Father, Son, and Spirit,<sup>1</sup> that Yeshua, the Lamb of God, would give Himself in

1 Referred to by the theological term “the Covenant of Redemption.” See Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vol. (Scribners, 1893), 2.359–62; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 2000), pp. 518–19.

His death and resurrection to procure eternal salvation for those chosen to be redeemed.

This is clearly taught by Paul in Romans 8:29–30.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom 8:28–30)

Notice the unbreakable and uninterrupted sequence of divine actions and their results: All those He foreknew He also predestined. All those He predestined, He also called. All those whom He called, these He justified, and all those He justified, these He glorified. I refer to this text as the unbreakable and uninterrupted “golden chain of salvation” because from the beginning (God foreknew them) to the end (God glorified them), no one is lost. The very fact that Paul lists the final step, “He also glorified,” in the past tense (aorist), shows that the final goal of glorification is just as certain as if it has already taken place because God has predestined it to be so.

Luke makes the same claim in Acts:

When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Ακούοντα δὲ τὰ ἔθνη ἔχαιρον καὶ ἐδόξαζον τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἐπίστευσαν ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον· (Acts 13:48)

If salvation of sinners rested entirely upon their individual choice to accept the offer of the Gospel, one would expect Luke to have written: “and as many as believed were appointed to eternal life.” But that, of course, is not what the inspired text states. They believed because they had already been appointed to eternal life.

The word “appointed” in Acts 13:48 translates the Greek participle *τεταγμένοι* (*tetagmenoi*), from the verb *τάσσω*, *tassō*, “to bring about an order of things by arranging; arrange, put in place,” “to order, fix, determine, appoint.”<sup>1</sup> Here the word “appointed” is in the perfect tense

1 BDAG, “τάσσω,” p. 991.

and thus carries the meaning of something that took place prior to the primary verb in the clause, i.e., before they “believed.” The point of this inspired text is clear: before they ever believed, they had been appointed to eternal life. Luke is describing the blessing of God’s gracious and sovereign election which always results in the elect inevitably accepting the Gospel, which results in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Yeshua Messiah (cf. Acts 20:20-21), that is, eternal life.

We can understand, then, after stating that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, why Paul puts God’s unconditional election first in the list of blessings at the beginning of his Epistle to the Ephesians. Commenting on this Calvin writes:

The foundation and first cause, both of our calling and of all the benefits which we receive from God, is here declared to be His eternal election. If the reason is asked, why God has called us to enjoy the gospel, why He daily bestows upon us so many blessings, why He opens to us the gate of heaven,—the answer will be constantly found in this principle, that *He hath chosen us before the foundation of the world.*<sup>1</sup>

----- End of the Excursus -----

...that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love. – Obviously, the primary purpose of our salvation is that God would be glorified. Paul states this in our verse as well as in verses 11 and 14. All that is done to accomplish the salvation of the elect has as its ultimate purpose to bring about “the praise of His glory.” And this is precisely why Paul states in our verse that God’s divine election has as its result that “we should holy and blameless before Him.” For when the lives of believers conform to the righteousness of God, this extols the love, the power, and the righteousness of God for accomplishing what only He could do, thus giving Him the glory that He alone deserves.

We see, then, that God’s divine election does not merely begin the process and carry the elect half-way. God’s eternal design does not simply bring a person to conversion; it brings him to perfection when mortal puts on immortality—when sin and death are no more. God’s predestined plan for all of the elect is that they should be holy and blameless before Him. This speaks of the final goal of which justification is the beginning and sanctification the on-going process of

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1 Calvin, *Ephesians*, pp. 197–98.

becoming more and more like Yeshua. By faith the believer is declared righteous (justified) in the eyes of God and through the work of the indwelling Spirit, the believer becomes more and more conformed to Messiah (sanctification) in thought, word, and actions.

This is what Peter means when he writes:

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; (2Pet 1:10)

How is it that we may be certain that we are called and chosen to eternal life? By growing in righteousness and persevering in the goal of becoming more and more like Yeshua. As believers, we were chosen, not because we were holy, but because God has given Himself that we should inevitably be holy and blameless before Him. Our becoming more and more set apart from the world and unto God is the inevitable fruit of our having been chosen by God to salvation.

...*in love*. – Paul uses the word ἀγάπη (*agapē*) here, a word he uses 75 times in his epistles, and 10 times in Ephesians. In contrasting *agapē* with ἔρως (*erōs*), a common word for “love” (primarily physical love) in Paul’s day but not found in the Apostolic Scriptures, Leon Morris shows the contrast between the two words:

*erōs* has two principal characteristics: it is a love of the worthy and it is a love that desires to possess. *Agapē* is in contrast at both points. On the contrary, it is a love given quite irrespective of merit, and it is a love that seeks to give.<sup>1</sup>

How then, are we to understand Paul’s meaning in adding “in love.” The first question is whether “in love” should attach to the phrase which precedes it or whether it should begin the first phrase of v. 5. Some take it to modify the verb “He chose” at the beginning of v. 4, thus, “He chose...in love,” i.e., that His sovereign election was motivated by His divine love. But if the words “in love” were meant to modify the verb “He chose,” we would expect them to be written closer together. That in the Greek they are separated by twelve intervening words would seem to work against this view.

A second view is that “in love” should be attached to what follows, yielding “In love He predestined us...” This is how the NASB trans-

1 Leon Morris, *Testaments of Love: A Study of Love in the Bible* (Eerdmans, 1981), p. 128.

lates it. But usually Paul puts such modifying phrases after the verb rather than before it, so this might tell against taking it this way.

A third, and perhaps the most natural reading is that the words “in love” describe the very sphere in which believers are sanctified. That is, “in love” describes God’s powerful love as manifested by His indwelling Spirit within the believer, as well as describing the love which the believer has for God as he or she grows to know and experience the abiding presence of God in their lives. As a result, they grow in their understanding and appreciation for all that God has done for them, increasing and deepening their love for Him. Here, once again, we see that God’s love for His chosen ones is that which changes them to love Him more and more, and thus to love one another, fulfilling the Torah of Messiah (Gal 6:2).

**5–6 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Yeshua Messiah to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**

Paul states that we who are believers in Yeshua have been predestined by God to be adopted as His own children through the work accomplished by Yeshua our Messiah. The Greek word translated by the English “predestined” is *προορίζω* (*prooridō*) which carries the sense of “decide beforehand, to predetermine.”<sup>1</sup> Paul uses this word five times in his epistles—twice in Ephesians (Rom 8:29–30; 1Cor 2:7; Eph 1:4, 11).

In this verse, Paul’s statement that God “predestined us to adoption as sons” is not something additional to what he has taught us in the previous verse with regard to God’s sovereign election. Rather, Paul uses the word “predestined” as further elucidation of what he means by the act of God’s election. For God, being perfect in all His ways, brings to pass by His providence that which He has decreed to take place. In other words, all things necessary to bring about the eternal salvation of the elect are predetermined by God in order that His purposes in and for the elect would surely come to pass.

Consider how the many events in an individual’s life take place in order to bring him or her to the knowledge of the Gospel and to the place where the “good news” of Yeshua is accepted. Each of these events, undoubtedly different for each individual, have been set into place by our all knowing, all powerful, and all loving Father.

1 BDAG, “*προορίζω*,” p. 873.