

# WHOSE CHOICE IS IT?

By Don Fortner

"The decision is yours . . . Now it is all up to you . . . God has done all He can to save, the rest is up to you ... You must choose Christ for yourself . . . You must make the final decision." How often we have all heard statements like those from the pulpit. I want to raise a question regarding this matter of eternal salvation: WHOSE CHOICE IS IT? Our Lord Jesus Christ has answered the question very plainly; "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16).

Divine election is a very humbling, and at the same time it is a very encouraging and blessed doctrine of inspiration. It is humbling to know that we would never have chosen Christ. Our wants were so many, our hearts were so hard, that we would never have sought the Lord. Yet, it is exceedingly comforting to hear our Savior say, "I have chosen you." Our Lord Jesus Christ loved us long before we ever loved Him. He loved us even when we were dead in sin. Had He not loved us, we would never have loved Him. Had He not chosen us, we would never have chosen Him.

Language could not be clearer. Our Savior tells us that man, by nature, will never choose Christ. It is true, in one sense, that every believer chooses Christ. This is the result, however, not the cause, of Christ's choosing him.

The natural ear is so deaf that it cannot hear. The natural eye is so blind that it cannot see. The natural heart is so hard that it cannot feel. Man sees no beauty in Christ. He feels no need of Christ. He has no desire for Christ. Only after God by almighty grace opens the blind eye, unstops the deaf ear, quickens the dead heart, and gives strength to the withered hand is the sinner made willing to seek Christ and given the strength of faith to embrace Him.

This is what I am driving at: ALL WHO BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN TIME WERE CHOSEN BY GOD IN ETERNAL LOVE; AND THAT CHOICE OF THEM SECURES THEIR FAITH AND HOLINESS IN CHRIST.

## WHAT DOES THE TERM ELECTION MEAN?

Accurate statements on this doctrine are essential. No doctrine in the Bible has suffered so much damage from the erroneous views of its foes and the inaccurate statements of its friends. Election may be defined this way; God has been pleased from all eternity to choose certain men and women, whom He has determined to save by the righteousness and shed blood of Christ. None are finally saved except those whom He has chosen. Therefore, the Word of God calls His people "the elect." And the choice, or the appointment of them to eternal life, is called "the election of God."

All those whom God was pleased to choose in eternity were redeemed by Christ at Calvary. All who were chosen and redeemed are (in due season) called to salvation and eternal life by the Holy Spirit. He convinces them of sin. He leads them to Christ. He works repentance and faith in them. He keeps them by His grace from falling entirely away. He brings them all safely to eternal glory.

In short, election is the first link in the chain of salvation, of which eternal glory is the end. All who are redeemed, justified, called, born again, and brought to faith in Christ are elect. The primary and original cause of the saint's being what he is, is God's eternal election.

## DOES THE BIBLE TEACH THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION?

This is our whole authority. It does not really matter whether the Reformers and the Puritans taught it. It does not really matter whether Gill and Spurgeon taught it. It does not even matter whether the Baptist and the Presbyterian Creeds teach it. Does the Word of God teach this doctrine? If so, we must embrace it. If not, we must reject it and refuse to hear those who teach it. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). (I have selected only a few passages from the sacred Volume which teach this doctrine. There are multitudes of others. You may easily search them out in your concordance.)

The Arminians boast of preaching to men, "Ye must be born again." In this they are correct. The necessity of the new birth ought to be loudly proclaimed. However, they decry those who preach divine election, saying that it is an insignificant doctrine, taught only in a few isolated verses. They do not point out that in the Bible "Ye must be born again" is found only once. "Election," though, is mentioned fifty-one times in the New Testament alone. Surely, it must be of some importance.

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught election (Matt. 11:20-26, 24:22,31; Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Luke 18:7; John 17:8-9). The early churches heard the message of election (Acts 13:48). The Apostle Peter spoke of election without hesitation (I Peter 1:2; II Peter 1:10). The Apostle John spoke of the "elect lady" and the "elect sister." The Apostle Paul felt that the doctrine of election needed thorough and frequent exposition (Rom. 8:29,30,33; 9:13-14; Eph. 1:4; II Thess. 2:13-14; II Tim. 1:9). The plain fact is, you cannot turn to any book of the New Testament without being confronted with the doctrine of divine election. Surely those who claim to be preachers of the Word of God ought to follow the examples of the apostles and our Lord. They should proclaim this doctrine.

## WHAT DOES THE WORD OF GOD TEACH ABOUT ELECTION?

God's election of men to salvation is gracious and free, absolute and sovereign. It is an unconditional act of sovereign mercy. He did not choose us because he foresaw that we would repent and believe on Christ. Our repentance and faith is the result of God's election, not the cause of it (John 10:16,26; 15:16; Acts 13:48). God's election is personal: He chose not a mass of nameless faces,

but individual sinners, calling them his sons and daughters. This election of grace is also eternal and immutable (Eph. 1:4). When the triune Godhead existed alone in glorious self-sufficiency, we were chosen in covenant mercy. God chose us because of His eternal love and sovereign pleasure, simply because He would be gracious. We were chosen in Christ Jesus.

Behold God's strange choice! He chose not the noble, but the common. He chose not the wise, but the foolish. He chose not the righteous, but the wicked. He chose us. "that no flesh should glory in His presence . . . that according as it is written. He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. 1:29,31). Let all who are born again confess. "By the grace of God. I am what I am" (I Cor. 15:10). Let us sing of electing love:

" 'TIS not that I did choose Thee,  
For, Lord, that could not be,  
This heart would still refuse Thee.  
But Thou hast chosen me.

My heart owns none before Thee:  
For Thy rich grace I thirst:  
This knowing, if I love Thee,  
Thou must have loved me first."

Josiah Condor

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH of DANVILLE

2734 Old Stanford Road  
Danville, KY 40422

# WHOSE CHOICE IS IT?

By Don Fortner