

# The Doctrines of Grace

## Ephesians 1:3-10

### Ephesians 1:3-10 (NASB)

<sup>3</sup> “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,  
<sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love  
<sup>5</sup> He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,  
<sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.  
<sup>7</sup> In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace  
<sup>8</sup> which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight  
<sup>9</sup> He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him  
<sup>10</sup> with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him”

These are the so-called Five Points of Calvinism.

These are sometimes set forth in the form of an acrostic on the word “TULIP”, as follows:

**T** Total Depravity (i.e. Total Inability)

**U** Unconditional Election

**L** Limited Atonement (i.e. Particular Redemption)

**I** Irresistible Calling

**P** Perseverance of the Saints

## 2. UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Our **acceptance or rejection of total depravity** as a true Biblical statement of man’s condition by nature will largely determine our attitude towards the next point that came under review at the Synod of Dort.

Unconditional election is well set forth in the **Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689**, which we here quote as a convenient summary. It is also stated in almost identical terms in the **Westminster Confession and the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England** and all the major confessions. “Those of mankind who are predestinated unto life,” says the **Baptist Confession**, “God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a *condition* or cause moving Him thereunto.” [**Chapter 3, Article 5**].

The doctrine of unconditional election follows naturally from the doctrine of total depravity. If man is, indeed, dead and held captive, and blind etc., then the remedy for all these conditions must lie outside man himself [that is, with God]. We asked in the last lesson: “Can the dead raise themselves?” and the answer must inevitably be: **“of course not.”** If, however, some men and women *are* raised out of their spiritual death — **“born again”** as John’s Gospel puts it— and since they are unable to perform this work for themselves, then we must conclude that it was God who raised them.

On the other hand, as many men and women are not **“made alive”**, we must likewise conclude that that is because God has not raised them. If man is unable to save himself on account of the Fall in Adam being a *total fall*, and if God alone can save, and if *all* are not saved, then the conclusion must be that God has not chosen to save all.

This is no blind philosophy, but is **drawn from, built upon, supported by, and revealed in** the Scriptures of God. The subject is one that is as vast as the ocean itself; but we can do no more than quote just a few key verses and scriptures that act as chart and compass across these mighty seas.

**The story of the Bible is the story of unconditional election.**

It is strange that those who oppose themselves to this doctrine fail to recognize this. Some believers have difficulty in believing that God could pass by some and choose others, and yet they have no apparent difficulty in believing that God called Abraham out of heathen Ur of the Chaldees and left the others to their heathenism.

Why should God choose the nation of Israel as His **“peculiar people”**? There is no need to speculate, for **Deuteronomy 7:7-8** gives us the answer:

**Deuteronomy 7:7-8 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> **“The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples,**

<sup>8</sup> **but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”**

Why should God, completely disregarding the family laws of Israel, choose the younger son Jacob, in place of the elder Esau? Again, **“to the law and to the testimony.”**

**Romans 9:11-13 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> **“For though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,**

<sup>12</sup> **it was said to her, “THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.”**

<sup>13</sup> **Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.”**

What was the doctrine that Jesus preached in the synagogue at Nazareth but the doctrine of **unconditional election**?

**Luke 4:25-27 (NASB)**

<sup>25</sup> “**But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land;**

<sup>26</sup> **and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.”**

<sup>27</sup> “**And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”**

We know the outcome of our Lord’s preaching of that message:

**Luke 4:29 (NASB)**

<sup>29</sup> “**And they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.”**

Lack of space forbids a full account of God’s sovereign choice of His people; but the truth is clear:

**John 15:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> “**You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”**

**Romans 9:21 (NASB)**

<sup>21</sup> “**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?”**

**Romans 9:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> “**For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.”**

**Ephesians 1:4-5 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> “**Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love**

<sup>5</sup> **He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.”**

We grant that there is a “**kind of election**” that is held by many believers today.

Broadly speaking this is based on **Romans 8:29**:

**Romans 8:29 (NASB)**

<sup>29</sup> “**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.**”

The case runs something like this: God *foresaw* those who were going to accept Christ, and therefore He “**elect**ed” them to eternal life.

Against this view we point out that:

1. God’s foreknowledge is spoken of in connection **with a people** and not in connection **with any action which people** performed.

The Scripture reads: “*Whom he did foreknow*” etc. **Romans 8:29 (NASB)**

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Again God speaks thus through Amos: **Amos 3:2 (NASB)**

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<sup>2</sup> “**You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.**”

That is to say, irrespective of any **action, good** or **had, performed** by them, God “**knew**” them in the sense that He loved and chose them to be His own. It is thus that He foreknew His elect.

2. It will not do to say that God elected us because He saw something that we would do — that is, accept His Son.

We are not chosen because we perform such a holy work as “**accepting**” Christ, but we are chosen so that we might be able to “**accept**” Him.

**Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> “**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**”

3. Neither will it do to say that God foresaw those who would believe. **Acts 13:48** makes this abundantly clear:

**Acts 13:48 (NASB)-----**

<sup>48</sup> “**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.**”

Election is not on account of our believing, but our believing is on account of our being elected — “**appointed to eternal life.**”

4. Again, to say that we exercised faith in accepting Christ, and that God foresaw this faith, and, therefore, elected us, only drives us a step further back; for, where did we get the faith to exercise?

The Scriptures provide the answer: “**It is the gift of God, not of ourselves.**”

**Ephesians 2:8 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup>“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”**

Surely, instead of arguing against these things, we should be doing what the Holy Spirit through the apostle Peter commands us to do:

**2 Peter 1:10 (NASB)**

**<sup>10</sup>“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.”**