

## An Exegetical Analysis of the Concept of Election in Ephesians 1:3-6

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**ABSTRACT:** An election is a formal group decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy is operated, while democracy itself is perceived as a process for strengthening of peace, boosting of foreign relations and attraction of citizens of other countries. This study therefore looked at an exegetical analysis of the concept of election in Ephesians 1:3-6. Paul brings the issue of election in Ephesians 1:3-6 and went further to say we are adopted children of God. Paul who sees himself as adopted Roman's citizen tries to explain what it means to be adopted by God through Jesus Christ, using election and to give God praise as a major reason for our election. This paper from Biblical point of view highlights election and tries to look at predestination at the same time.

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### I. INTRODUCTION:

Ephesians 1: 3 to 6 says <sup>3</sup>Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.<sup>4</sup> For he chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will – <sup>6</sup> to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the one He loves.<sup>1</sup>

The issue of Election in Ephesians 1:3-6 is very challenging and sometimes controversial. Paul here gave a very hard bone for theologians and Christians at large to crack. It has been debated in many quarters and still be debated. No wonder Peter himself wrote that Paul's letters contain some things that are hard to understand (2Peter 3:16). Paul also mentioned the issue of election in Romans 9:10-18. Ephesians 1:3-6 sound like a doxology. Calvin also has strong views of predestination in his doctrine of particularism. That God alone has the right to elect whom He chooses. In otherwise, salvation is not universal as in Luther's Theology – we are saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Though Paul also made reference to this; we are saved by grace (*sola gratia*) through faith, not by works that any should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9. But came back to the concept of election in 2:10 – which God prepared in advance for us to do. Paul's words concerning election and hardening are difficult to get a handle on because they do not perfectly square with human reason... Paul's "*magnum opus*" as to the Romans the question may have probably been asked, "*Cur alii, alii non?*" (*why some, not others?*).<sup>2</sup> The issue of election solely rest on God. He decides who to elect and whom not to elect.

V3 of Ephesians 1 gave us all the benefits to know God. He choose us, made us His children by adoption, our sins forgiven and God empowering us to please Him through His Holy Spirit and to enjoy His blessings through Jesus Christ.

V4, explained the concept of election that salvation is God's choice and not man. God decides who should worship Him, who should be saved, whose sins should be forgiven, who should make heaven, who should be who and who for His own pleasure. This therefore goes that salvation depend totally on God. He plans and executes the plans. We are chosen not because we deserved it. This should humble us. And all our boasting, self-righteousness or what have you must submit themselves at the feet of Jesus Christ. Since we did not contribute to our being elected. So, we should thank God for making us holy by forgiving us through Jesus Christ.

V5 tells us about predestination. The chambers super – mini dictionary says it's destine beforehand, preordain. "The English 'predestinate' comes from Latin praedestino, which the Vulgate uses to translate the Greek prohorizoas 'predestine' in Acts 4:28; Romans 8:29-30; and 'destine in Ephesians 1:5, 12; through as 'decree' in 1Corinthians 2:7... 'has foreordain' in all six place... prohorizo – only God as subject, expresses the thought of appointing a situation for a person, or a person for a situation, in advance."<sup>3</sup> The Dictionary of Theology says that predestination is God's foreknowledge.<sup>4</sup> Paul tries to explain how important our relationship with God is.

Paul who could also be said to be a Roman – his claim, tries to explain to us the adoption of child to have equal right as the biological child. So, God adopting us as His children is giving us or gave us equal right as His true children. So, He predestined us, which is of His own free will of granting us salvation; without man's contribution. So, God choose us through Jesus Christ even when we were still lost in sin. V6 shows the high love of God for us sinners through His giving His son to die for us. John 3:16 tells us this too; of the love of God for the world, that He gave us His only son. So, we need to praise Him for His grace on us which is freely given.

### **Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

I wrote at a point in this article the need to praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It should be noted that we are supposed to be condemned. We were lost in sin; we were once children of disobedient, controlled by the spirit of this world, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and by nature children of wrath - Ephesians 2. We lost our fellowship with Him (God) right from the Garden of Eden. But God alone drew us back to Himself by sending Jesus Christ to reconcile us back to God. What a privilege. But sinner condemned to die, given eternal life. This calls for us to humble ourselves and praise Him in the beauty of His holiness. He wants us to praise Him; He wants us to have fellowship with Him. We are not to fail in this. We must praise Him from the bottom of our hearts, in holiness as a people washed and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Our election is not complete not until we praise and worship Him. It's for His pleasure that we should adore His holy name in all generation. Praising and worshipping Him is one of the purposes of our election before the foundation of the world.

### **Election/Predestination**

The concept of election has resulted in heated debates in many quarters. Election comes in where there are more than one persons qualified or not qualified for a position. In the exegetical analysis of the concept of election in Ephesians 1:3-6, God is the one who elects – God chooses a people before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless.

So, do we actually understand completely the doctrine of election? Lots of theologians, preachers, church fathers and others have tried to explain it, just as I am doing here. We can only do our bit in the explanation on this doctrine. But the truth is that only our infinite God fully grasps this doctrine. Again, the truth still remain that believers are chosen by God before the foundation of the earth which cannot be denied.

“A decree of God affecting creatures may be either general or special. The general decree is that by which He has determined to show forth the glory of His power, wisdom, and goodness in the creation and preservation of all thing. The special decree, called predestination is that by which He has ordained that the glory of His grace, mercy, and justice shall be revealed in rational creatures, whether elect or reprobate.”<sup>5</sup>

Johannes Wollesbius also said that predestination affects both angels and human beings. That God determined to preserve some Angels original happiness, in Christ the head forever and to punish others eternally for abandoning their station of their own accord, in order to reveal the glory of His grace and justice. Then predestination of human beings means that, out of the human race which he created in His own image, but which fell into sin through its own act, God has determined to save some eternally through Christ, but to condemn the remainder eternally, leaving them in their own misery, in order to reveal the glory of His mercy and justice.<sup>6</sup>

To speak of election means to speak of God himself. Like I said before, the concept of doctrine of election is difficult to understand, but for some, it is a bitter pill to swallow. Calvinists believe God has chosen only certain individuals to be saved, based entirely on His sovereignty. By this, they mean that God does not take into consideration any future faith or response to His grace by the individual. Rather, He decides whom He will save completely independently of man's own will. Since mankind is allegedly incapable of responding to God's grace apart from God's choosing him, and infusing the revelation necessary to receive salvation, God has essentially condemned the majority of the human race to hell with absolutely no chance of salvation.

The election by God is not based on any standard or any merit of the elect whatsoever, but pine on *sola gratia* (freely of God's grace). E.g Jacob and Esau. Our salvation is 'apart from law,' apart from any doing on our part. Instead, all people have been 'justified freely by his grace' by a divine crediting of Christ's righteousness to our accounts. Christians receive the benefits of that gift through spirit – wrought faith.

### **Who chose?**

God chose us before we chose Him. “God's election was before the creation of the world. He did not choose us only after we chose Him. Ephesians 1:4”<sup>7</sup>

### **Whom did He chose? Two views:**

✓ Corporate Election. “What did God choose before the foundation of the world? The church. Not individuals, but the body of Christ. Individuals are not elected until they are believers in Christ.”<sup>8</sup> Another is

“Christ is the chosen one in and through whom in corporate solidarity with Him the church is elected to be God’s own. Not one is ever chosen on his own, that is, outside of Christ, or apart from incorporated into the church”.<sup>9</sup>

- ✓ Individual, Pretemporal election. Ryrie believes that “election emphasizes God’s choice of individual to salvation. When Paul uses the verb he uses it in the middle voice, indicating that God’s choices was made freely and for His own purposes (Ephesians 1:4). Election is unconditional and individual”.<sup>10</sup>

**When did He choose us?**

Not at salvation. Pretemporal, that is, “before the foundation or before the creation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4). ‘But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation’ 2Thessalonians 2:13.<sup>11</sup> He chose us even before we were born. Jeremiah 1:4-6; Matthew 24:22-31; Mark 13:20-27; Romans 1:7; 1Timothy 5:21; 2Timothy 2:10; Titus1:1; Ephesians 1:5,11; Romans 8:29-30.

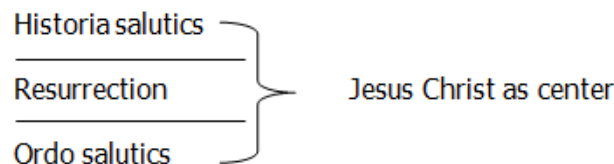
**Why did He choose?**

To produce holy living, “That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” Ephesians 1:4. Election will make us holy. Nothing under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit can make a Christian more holy than the thought that he is chosen.

“Shall I sin,” he says, “after God hath chosen me? Shall I transgress after such love? Shall I go astray after so much loving-kindness and tender mercy? Nay, my God; since thou hast chosen me, I will love thee, I will live to thee”.

**What are we to do?**

To please God all the times, witness to other elects and avoid being deceived ...praising God. We are to apply our salvation/redemption (soteriology). Always acknowledge that we are saved by another – God (hetero-soteric) and not Auto-soteric - Naturalism, self-salvation. Then be fully aware of Historia Salutis – Hebrews 9:26 ff, one for all accomplishment of salvation and the Ordo Salutis – salvation applied, ongoing application of salvation by the work of the Holy Spirit.



The resurrection which is the basic for Historia salutis is basis for Christian life, which influence or impart the Christian life positively; which is also the ordo salutis. So, no matter the debates, contradictions, theories and what have you, the concept of election is that we are elected by God. Thank God for letting me know all these.

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