

Series: Calvinism-What Does the Bible Say?

Lesson: Becoming One of God's Elect – 1 Thessalonians 1

1. In **1 Thessalonians 1:4**, “election” means “selection.” If you are elected by God, you are selected or chosen by God. These people were chosen by God Almighty!
2. But what was the basis of God’s choice? There is a theological system called Calvinism. It explains election this way:
 - Unconditional Election – before the foundation of the world, according to the sovereign pleasure of His own will, God chose, from the whole human race, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ. Everyone else is damned eternally. Why is this? Calvinism says, it is simply God’s choice.
 - Can you imagine God creating billions of people who were totally depraved as far as swimming is concerned? God throws them all in the ocean and then decides to rescue a small fraction of them while leaving the rest of them to drown in eternal death. Then God declares that it is their fault they drowned.
 - “Those, therefore, whom God passes by, He reprobates, and that for no other cause but because He is pleased to exclude them from the inheritance which He predestines to His children...whose pleasure it is to inflict punishment...”
John Calvin
3. I encourage anyone who has been caught in the web of Calvin's twisted theological teachings to please consider carefully what the Bible says.
4. How did these Gentile, pagan, idolatrous Thessalonians become part of God’s elect? The Bible leaves us no doubt. The apostle Paul will explain. In verse 5, the word “*For...*” links it together with verse 4. It will explain how they became part of God’s elect.
 - I. **First, they heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. vs. 5**
 - A. What good news did Paul share with these people?
 - Paul preached the good news of Jesus. **Acts 17:1-3**
 - He reasoned with them. Why would you need to persuade and reason with somebody who was already elected before the foundation of the world as Calvin taught?
 - B. The Bible is clear – people cannot be saved, cannot believe, cannot become part of God’s elect until they **hear** the good news of Jesus (**Romans 10:13-14.**) The first step is they must hear.
 - This is why Paul was a man on a mission. He knew the gospel could save anybody, but first it had to be heard. **Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:21**
 - The gospel “...*is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.*”
 - II. **Second, they turned to the Lord. vs. 9**
 - A. For three weeks Paul reasoned with these people out of the Bible about Jesus Christ. Paul taught that there is no other way to be forgiven of your sins and be reconciled to a holy God.
 - Paul proclaimed, “Your idols are worthless and vain. Jesus alone is Lord.”

- These people had a choice they were faced with. Either turn to the Lord or hang on to their idolatrous belief system. They made a decision of the will to turn to the Lord.
- B. Scripture repeatedly depicts God as appealing to man's reason, conscience, and will in order to persuade him to repent and turn to the Lord. **Matthew 9:13; Acts 17:30**
- C. Calvinism teaches that God forces the elect to turn to Him and the non-elect cannot turn to the Lord. One Calvinist writes, "He **makes me**, who really did not love Jesus, want to love Him and believe in Him."
- This not only denies Scripture, it denies common logic. People can't be **made** to love or to change their minds without the willingness to do so. The willingness must come from the will that was already there, it can't be created out of thin air.
 - Any meaningful change of attitude or belief, the human will **must** be involved.
 - God has given to man the ability to make a genuine choice. He offers salvation to all without discrimination, but He cannot make people turn to Him, for that would violate their free will, destroying their ability to truly love and serve God.
 - Calvinism denies man's free will.
 - "...to deny God's foreknowledge is to deny His omniscience...But we must go further: not only...did His omniscient eye see Adam eating of the forbidden fruit, but He decreed beforehand that he should do so."
- Calvinist Arthur Pink**
- This is absolutely ludicrous – hundreds of times God tested the faith and obedience of individuals and nations. What is the point if they have no free will to make a genuine choice, and if God has already determined what they will and must do?
- D. These Thessalonians made a choice – they turned to God from idols.
- "From the third chapter of Genesis on, the Scriptures shout 'free will.' The whole volume talks about choices, the Book of Wisdom (Proverbs). Having a free will makes sense of God's free love... Suppose you met someone who...showed real love for you – going out of his way to do special things for you...telling you they loved you. Then you found out that they had no choice – they were programmed to 'be loving.' ...well, it would be a terrible disappointment. It would all seem so artificial, so meaningless, so empty. And it would be. Man was given a choice...Having this choice defined man as a human being: to eat or not to eat, to obey or disobey, to love or not to love. Man was not a robot. Man was able to love by his own free choice (without which love is not love)." **John R. Cross, *Delivered from the Power of Darkness***

III. Third, they received the Word of God by faith. vs. 6; cf. 2:13; Acts 17:4

- A. These people received Paul's message about Jesus Christ as the Word of God and exercised believing faith. **2:13**
- Calvinists teach, "Faith is a work."

- Scripture is clear – faith is **not** a work. It is the antithesis of work.
Romans 4:5, 16
 - Faith and works are contrasted in Scripture. **Romans 9:30-32**
- B. The elect are those who have been justified by God. **Romans 8:33**
- How does one get justified before God? Faith in Jesus Christ.
Romans 3:28, 5:1
 - Nobody is part of God’s elect until he chooses to place his faith in Jesus Christ.
- C. The Bible teaches that faith is an absolutely essential element in any relationship and transaction between God and man. **Hebrews 11:6; Matthew 9:29**
- When Jesus went into His own country, the Bible says, “*And he could there do no mighty work.*”
 - Why is it that Jesus could do no mighty work? Was it because of God’s sovereign plan? The Bible declares it was because of their unbelief.
Mark 6:1-6; Matthew 13:57-58
- D. Jesus repeatedly offered salvation to all who would believe and receive Him. **John 5:24, 7:37, 10:9, 11:26; Revelation 22:17** – What does “whosoever” mean?
- Webster’s Dictionary defines it as, “Whoever, whatever person: an emphatic form.”
 - There are no alternate meanings. It always means whoever or whatever person. It means everyone without exception. Calvin says the offer of **John 3:16** is effective only for a select few.
 - Calvinism redefines "whosoever" to mean "the elect," but there is no basis for this and they do not apply this meaning to the word on a consistent basis. They only apply it this way when it fits their doctrinal system.
- E. Obviously, this is unbiblical, and it contradicts the character of God that we see in the Scriptures. God is pictured as being merciful to all.
Romans 11:30-32
- God may refuse mercy and harden someone’s heart in response to their wickedness and unbelief, but never is God seen arbitrarily hardening someone in regards to salvation.
 - Nowhere in the Bible does it teach that God's love is limited to a select few. Surely it would be stated clearly somewhere so as to avoid confusion.
 - God’s choice of Jacob and rejection of Esau had to do with the promised seed line, not eternal salvation (it had to do with position, not salvation.) Jacob was given the **position** of the chosen seed, but this did not negate Esau's free will to choose whether or not to place his faith in God.
 - God hardened Pharaoh in his unbelief in regards to letting Israel go, not his eternal salvation.

In Conclusion:

1. The Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election is nowhere explained in the Scripture and is of human invention. Calvinists become obsessed with this and begin to read their doctrine of unconditional election into virtually every text. **Romans 9** is a perfect example.
 - The entire point of this passage is that God can harden unbelieving Israel for a time and pour out His grace and mercy on the Gentiles if it pleases Him.
 - And the very reason for this is found in the responses of Israel and the Gentiles (**9:30-33**), not an eternal decree.
 - The only eternal decree is that God would pour out His grace for a time on the Gentiles. **Ephesians 3:1-11**
 - Free will is clearly evidenced in all of this. **Romans 11:19-23**
 - **Romans 9** has nothing to do with God hardening individual's hearts in regards to His offer of salvation. It has to do with God hardening Israel nationally so that He might have mercy upon **all**. **Romans 10:12, 11:11-12, 31-32**
2. Our God is without partiality (**James 3:17**) and is no respecter of persons (**Acts 10:34**). We are all equally worthy of His condemnation and equally unworthy of His grace. God is pictured in the Bible as being merciful to all. **2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4**
 - Not one place in 1300 pages of Calvin's "Institutes" does he expound upon God's love for mankind or attempt to explain how a God who is love could take pleasure in damning billions of people whom He could have saved if He so desired.
3. God **does** love you and you **can** be one of God's elect.
 - Will you turn from your sin, in faith to God, and accept His Son Jesus Christ as your Savior?