***Why Election Matters* by Antonio Coppola**

The doctrine of election states that God has sovereignly chosen those who will be saved in Christ. He’s done this not because of any goodness or foreseen faith in them, but purely because he loves them. This has to be one of the most misunderstood doctrines of the Christian faith. Many reject it as they think it makes God out to be unjust, others see it as a violation of our own free will, while there are those who see it as a secondary issue which risks unnecessary division in the church. This is a great pity, as this doctrine, correctly understood, should be a source of great comfort and encouragement to every Christian. Let’s see why election really does matter…

**Election is biblical** – From the Old Testament to the New Testament, the Bible consistently teaches election. There’s really no getting around this. In the OT, God sovereignly chose Israel out of all the nations of the world, not because of any merit within themselves (in actual fact it was despite themselves), but purely because he chose to set his love upon them (Dt 7:6-8). In the NT, Jesus says plainly, “You did not choose me, but I chose you…” (Jn 15:16). Paul writes in Ephesians 1:4 that God “chose us in him before the foundation of the world…” In fact almost every page of Scripture testifies to the truth of election! We therefore must take election very seriously as the Bible clearly teaches it.

**Election is the foundation of the gospel –** We cannot understand the gospel properly unless we affirm election. Because all of us have been born into sin, and therefore are dead in our sins and trespasses (Eph 2:1), it’s impossible for us to seek out God on our own (Rom 3:11). Our condition is so bad that God has to come down to us, soften our hard hearts and raise us from the dead by his Spirit, so that we can receive Christ.

We’re saved by receiving the gift of grace in Jesus Christ through faith – basically we’re saved by God’s work alone, not ours! (Eph 2:8-9). Every bit of our salvation has been achieved by God: God the Father chose us before creation (Eph 1:4), God the Son died on the cross for our sins, forgiving us and redeeming us (Eph 1:7) and God the Holy Spirit seals us, guaranteeing us the hope of eternal life (Eph 1:13-14). This is why we affirm that indeed “Salvation belongs to the Lord” (Jonah 2:9). There is nothing in us that contributed to our salvation – no good works or no foreseen faith. In other words, God didn’t look down the halls of time and see who would choose him. No, God chose us in Christ, simply because he chose to set his love upon us – nothing more and nothing less. That is true grace, the gospel – an undeserved gift from God!

**Election assures us of our salvation** – The great news for us if we’re in Christ is that we have absolute assurance that nothing can separate us from his love here on earth and that we will be raised with him on the Last Day to eternal life. Romans 8:30 says that, “those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” Because he’s chosen us and saved us in Christ, he’ll never let us go, despite our many failings, sins and doubts. If we belong to Christ, we can rest assured that we will be his for all eternity. This assurance gives us peace – we find true rest in Christ, not having to prove ourselves before God or strive to gain favour from him. In Christ, his favour, love, grace and peace are ours already. An obedient life that honours God only flows out of knowing we belong to Christ.

**Election gives us boldness to evangelise** – As God has already chosen those whom he wishes to save, this means that we can proclaim the gospel with confidence knowing that God will always achieve his purposes through it. In Acts 13:48 after Paul preached the gospel at Antioch, it says that, “as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.” Ultimately the pressure is off us to make converts. It’s God who saves! We are to be faithful in proclaiming the gospel and through this, God will effectively soften hearts to Christ, and those “appointed to eternal life” will get saved.

**Election humbles us** – Far from making us proud and arrogant, if we truly understand election, we remain humble. We’re humbled for we realise that we don’t deserve this incredible gift of grace in Christ, because we’re sinners. It’s in spite of ourselves that God has chosen to have mercy on us, saving us from his wrath that everyone deserves. Why has he saved us, but not others? Is God then unjust? Paul asks the same question in Romans 9:14. God’s answer is that, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” (Rom 9:15). He is God and does what he likes, and we will never understand all his purposes. We can only be eternally thankful to him and humbled before him, if we’ve received Christ, that he has chosen to have mercy upon us and set his love upon us.

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