

(A Good Foundation) 3. Election and Justification

Zac Poonen:

God's election of His children and His justifying them are two glorious truths that the New Testament teaches us.

Election

The Bible says that God elected us to be His children according to his foreknowledge (1 Peter 1:1, 2). This means that He knew from all eternity past those who were going to be His children.

The Bible also says that God chose us in Christ "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). Long before Adam was even created, God knew each of us by name as His children, and our names were there in "the book of life" (Revelation 13:8).

These are facts that should give us tremendous security.

The Bible says that the foundation of God on which we stand has a twofold seal. On the God-ward side, it reads, "The Lord knows those who are His." On the man-ward side, it reads, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness" (2 Timothy 2:19).

God knew His children from before the foundation of the world. But WE know that we are His children only when we actually repent and turn to Him. Our finite minds cannot grasp how God elects His children and yet gives man freedom to choose Him or not. These are like two parallel lines that don't seem to meet in our understanding. But as the mathematical definition of parallel lines is, they meet at infinity - in the infinite mind of God.

Someone has expressed it like this: As you walked along the road of life, you found an open door one day, with these words written over it, "Whoever repents and believes in Christ may enter in here and obtain eternal life." You entered in. On looking back, you saw written over the very door through which you had just entered, the words "You were chosen by God in Christ, before the foundation of the world."

Justification

Forgiveness of our sins takes away the guilt of the past. But that doesn't make us perfectly holy. And so, we still can't stand before a perfectly holy God. And so God had to do something more for us.

He had to justify us!

Justification means that God has put the perfect righteousness of Christ to our credit. The result is that our standing before God is now as perfect as Christ's! That's an astounding fact! And it's true! It's like millions of rupees being put into a bank account in the name of a beggar - money that he didn't earn or deserve, but that has been given to him as a free gift.

To be justified is to be accepted by God just as if we had never sinned in our whole life and just as if we were perfectly righteous in our life at present.

God's Word says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand" (Romans 5:2). Now we can come boldly into God's presence without any fear or hesitation at any time. God Himself has opened the way for that.

In the garden of Eden, as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they felt guilty and ashamed and covered themselves with fig-leaves. God took away their fig-leaves, killed an animal and clothed them with its skin.

Those fig-leaves are a picture of our own good works. Like fig-leaves, our good works cannot cover our nakedness before God; for the Bible says that even our best works are like filthy rags in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6).

That slain animal was a picture of Christ put to death for our sins. The skin was a picture of the perfect righteousness of Christ given to cover us (Genesis 3:7, 21).

Justification is a free gift of God. No man can be justified before God on the basis of his own works. One extreme of error therefore is to say, "Let us seek to be righteous in order to be justified by God."

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There is however an opposite extreme of error too. And that is to say, "If we are elected and justified, then it doesn't matter even if we sin now." Those who take sin lightly, because they think that God has elected and justified them, would thereby prove that they are not among God's elect at all. (Compare Romans 4:5 with James 2:24).

Once we are sure that we have been elected and justified, Satan's accusations will lose their effect on us. For if "God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Never again in our life need we feel that we are condemned or rejected by God.

"Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the One Who justifies" (Romans 8:33). Hallelujah!

Such is the good news of the gospel! It is not surprising then that Satan has kept many believers from knowing that they have been elected and justified by God.