**Biblical Foundations – The Doctrine of Election and Reprobation (Pt.3)**

**When and why did God choose us? Are others not chosen?**

**Misunderstandings of the Doctrine of Election**:

1. **Election is not Fatalistic or Mechanistic**- Sometimes those who object to the doctrine of election say that it is ***“fatalism”*** or that it presents a ***“mechanistic system”*** for the universe. Two somewhat different objections are involved here. ***Fatalism*** is a system in which human choices and human decision do not really make any difference. In ***fatalism***, no matter what we do, things are going to turn out as they have been previously ordained (by an impersonal force called “fate”). Therefore, it is futile to attempt to influence the outcomes of events or the outcome of our lives by putting forth any effort or making any significant choices because these will not make any difference anyway. In a ***mechanistic system*** the picture is one of an impersonal universe in which the universe functions in a mechanical way so that human beings are more like machines or robots responding to external stimuli than genuine persons. Here also genuine human personality would be reduced to the level of a machine that simply functions in accordance with predetermined plans and in response to predetermined causes and influences.

By contrast to a fatalistic or mechanical view, the New Testament presents the entire outworking of our salvation as somewhat brought about by a ***personal*** God in relationship with ***personal*** creatures. (Ephesians 1:4-5) God’s act of election was neither impersonal nor mechanistic but was permeated with personal love for those whom he chose. When talking about our response to the gospel offer, Scripture continually views us not as mechanistic creatures or robots, but as ***genuine persons***, personal creatures who make ***willing choices*** to accept or reject the gospel. (Matthew 11:28, Revelation 22:17) These invitations and many others like them are addressed to genuine persons capable of hearing the invitation and responding to it by a decision of their wills. In contrast to the charge of fatalism, we also see a much different picture in the New Testament. Not only do we make willing choices as real persons, but these choices are also ***real choices*** because they do affect the course of events in the world. They affect our own lives and they affect the lives and destinies of others. (John 3:18) Our personal decisions to believe or not to believe in Christ have eternal consequences in our lives.

1. **Election IS NOT based on God’s Foreknowledge of our Faith**- Commonly people will agree that God predestines some to be saved, but they will say that he does this by looking into the future and seeing who will believe in Christ and who will not. If he sees a person is going to come to saving faith, then he will predestine that person to be saved, ***based on foreknowledge of that person’s faith.*** If he sees that a person will not come to saving faith, then he does not predestine that person to be saved. In this way, it is thought that the ultimate reason why some are saved and some are not lies ***within the people themselves,*** not within God. All that God does in his predestining work is give confirmation to the decision he knows people will make on their own. The verse people commonly use to support this view is Romans 8:29.

* **Foreknowledge of persons, not facts regarding the person.** This verse can hardly be used to demonstrate that God based his predestination on foreknowledge of ***the fact that a person would believe.*** The passage actually speaks of the fact that *God knew persons* ***(“those whom he foreknew”)****,* not that he knew some *fact about them,* such as the fact that they would believe. It is a personal, relational knowledge that is spoken of here: God, looking into the future, thought of certain people in a saving relationship to him, and in that sense he ***“knew them”*** long ago. This is the sense in which Paul speaks of God ***“knowing someone”***. (1 Corinthians 8:3, Galatians 4:9) When people know God in scripture, or when God knows them, it is personal knowledge that involves a saving relationship. Therefore, in Romans 8:29, ***“those whom he foreknew”*** is best understood to mean, ***“those whom he long ago thought of in a saving relationship to himself.”*** The verse actually says nothing about God foreknowing or foreseeing that certain people would believe, nor is that idea mentioned in any other text of Scripture.