

# *The Election of God*

## *Genesis 25*

In Genesis 25 Abraham dies. He is one of the most important men of the Bible (mentioned 70 times in NT alone). He is not perfect, but he is a man of faith (15:6). In this chapter we see the passing of the torch to Isaac. We also see the dawn of the next generation of the Promise in the birth of Jacob. The circumstances of this birth reveal God's elect way of fulfilling His plans in life.

### **The Vitality of Abraham**

**Genesis 25:1-4 - Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah. <sup>2</sup> And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. <sup>3</sup> Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. <sup>4</sup> And the sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.**

Abraham was vibrant and strong all the years of his life as evidenced by his remarriage at 140 years old and fathering six more children (25:1-4).

### **The Specialness of Isaac**

**Genesis 25:5-6 - <sup>5</sup> And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. <sup>6</sup> But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.**

“And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac.” (25:5). He held nothing back. He recognized the special position of Isaac in God's Promise. Abraham did make allowances for his other children by giving them gifts (25:6).

### **The Righteous Death of Abraham**

**Genesis 25:7-11 - <sup>7</sup> This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. <sup>8</sup> Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. <sup>9</sup> And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, <sup>10</sup> the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife. <sup>11</sup> And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi.**

Abraham died at the ripe old age of 175 (25:7). Even in his death Abraham was used by the Lord. His death was the means of God bringing Isaac and Ishmael together again as both were involved in his funeral (25:8-11).

What is also interesting is that Isaac chose Beer Lahai Roi to dwell in. it was here that God heard Hagar (16:14) and it was here that Isaac had been meditating in prayer awaiting the arrival of his bride (24:62). This was a place know for God answering prayer.

### **The Genealogy of Ishmael**

**Genesis 25:12-18 - <sup>12</sup> Now this *is* the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s maidservant, bore to Abraham. <sup>13</sup> And these *were* the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, <sup>14</sup> Mishma, Dumah, Massa, <sup>15</sup> Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. <sup>16</sup> These *were* the sons of Ishmael and these *were* their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations. <sup>17</sup> These *were* the years of the life of Ishmael: one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people. <sup>18</sup> (They dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur, which *is* east of Egypt as you go toward Assyria.) He died in the presence of all his brethren.**

God promised to bless Abraham as a father of many nations (17:4) and Ishmael and this genealogy is evidence of the beginning of that blessing. That Ishmael was “gathered to his people” like Abraham may indicate he died and was accepted by God like Abraham was (25:8). Ishmael “died in the present of all his brethren” implies his family was around him when he died and that it is likely that they were a close knit family unit.

### **The Genealogy of Isaac Begins**

**Genesis 25:19-21 - <sup>19</sup> This *is* the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham’s son. Abraham begot Isaac. <sup>20</sup> Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. <sup>21</sup> Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she *was* barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.**

In verses 12 to 18 we have the genealogy of Ishmael. The phrase “gathered to his people” is a phrase also used in respect to Abraham and may imply Ishmael was found worthy to stand among believers in heaven.

Genesis 25:19 begins a discussion of the genealogy of Isaac. It starts by mentioning that Isaac “pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren” (25:21). Praying for your spouse is a good thing whether the context is a trial or not. In this case Isaac and Rebekah must have become concerned about an heir to continue the line of Promise. Barrenness is a helpless and frustrating condition to be in. In the culture of the Bible barrenness was often associated with the judgment of God. But this is not always the case as the parents of John the Baptist experienced this situation and were still described as “righteous” (Luke 1:6-7). The Lord was stretching and

building the faith of Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac did what any man of faith would do in such a situation, he “pleaded with the LORD.” This is in stark contrast with what his parents had done (compare Genesis 16). Perhaps they had taught him about the futility and lasting consequences that accompany a fleshly response to difficult situations. The LORD answered Isaac’s prayerful plea and Rebekah conceived.

### **The Election of God**

**Genesis 25:22-34 - <sup>22</sup> But the children struggled together within her; and she said, “If all is well, why *am I like this?*” So she went to inquire of the LORD. <sup>23</sup> And the LORD said to her: “Two nations *are* in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; *One* people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger.” <sup>24</sup> So when her days were fulfilled *for her* to give birth, indeed *there were* twins in her womb. <sup>25</sup> And the first came out red. *He was* like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. <sup>26</sup> Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau’s heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac *was* sixty years old when she bore them. <sup>27</sup> So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. <sup>28</sup> And Isaac loved Esau because he ate *of his* game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. <sup>29</sup> Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he *was* weary. <sup>30</sup> And Esau said to Jacob, “Please feed me with that same red *stew*, for I *am* weary.” Therefore his name was called Edom. <sup>31</sup> But Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright as of this day.” <sup>32</sup> And Esau said, “Look, I *am* about to die; so what *is* this birthright to me?” <sup>33</sup> Then Jacob said, “Swear to me as of this day.” So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. <sup>34</sup> And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised *his* birthright.**

Not only did God answer Isaac’s prayer, but he did exceedingly abundantly more than he asked (cf. Ephesians 3:20). Rebekah was pregnant with twins! But the pregnancy was a difficult one where the two children within Rebekah “struggled together within her” (25:22). This condition moved Rebekah to prayerfully seek counsel from the LORD. This shows us that Isaac (25:19-21) and Rebekah were a praying couple. Prayer in a marriage strengthens it. This is an important aspect of Isaac and Rebekah’s relationship and shows us their strong faith in God.

When Rebekah asks the LORD, “If all is well, why am I like this?” the LORD tells her:

- **Genesis 25:23 - <sup>23</sup> And the LORD said to her: “Two nations *are* in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; *One* people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger.”**

The first thing we see here is that God had a plan for the two unborn children inside Rebekah and because of that *they had a right to life*. God has a plan for every person and that plan begins from the start of life in the womb (e.g. Jeremiah 1:5; Luke, 1:41; Galatians 1:15).

But secondly the birth of these two children who would be named Jacob and Esau demonstrates the *election of God*. The doctrine of God’s election is an awesome, encouraging and comforting

teaching of the Bible. What do these remaining verses of Genesis 25 teach us about God's election and what else do we know about God's election from the Bible?

**First, God's election is based on His sovereignty and foreknowledge (25:23).** When we look at verse 23 we see God's sovereignty in that he states clearly there are "two nations" and "two peoples" in the womb of Rebekah. God is proclaiming according to His sovereign will that the two children will be *significant*. He also demonstrates His sovereign will by stating, "One shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger." This was culturally significant in that the "older" or first born child always held a position of supremacy in this culture. Saying the Older would serve the younger was reversing cultural mores. God in His sovereignty has the authority to overrule cultural mores.

Furthermore, God's prophetic statements to Rebekah demonstrate the basis of God's sovereign will. The basis of God's sovereign determinations is His *foreknowledge*. God knows all things. God is unable to learn because He knows all. Read what a few verses tell us about the *omniscience* of God:

- **Isaiah 42:9 - Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them."**
- **Isaiah 46:9-10 - <sup>9</sup> Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, <sup>10</sup> Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'**

These verses show us God is not limited by time. God knows the outcome of things *before* they happen because from His perspective of timelessness. He sees events as a whole, beginning to end. That is foreknowledge. Because He is not limited by time, He sees the what will happen before it happens and is able therefore, to make His sovereign decisions based on His foreknowledge.

One way of illustrating God's foreknowledge is to picture how a parade is viewed. When we view a parade we usually find a nice advantageous spot and watch each float and band pass by. We watch these go by one at a time. When God watches a parade it's as though he is watching it from the top of a building looking down on the parade so that He can see *the entire parade from beginning to end*. Now think of that parade as representative of the way we view life. We view life one circumstance at a time. We may be able to review history, but we can't look ahead in time. God on the other hand looks at history as a whole. He sees the end from the beginning. That position enables God to exert His will in a perfect way. When God looks at a person He sees their entire life, birth and death and in between, and so He is able to elect people to fulfill His will on the basis of His perfect, complete foreknowledge.

Interestingly God's revelation is delivered to us from His vantage point of foreknowledge. The Bible reveals the final outcome of world events. That should be tremendously encouraging to us. God has never been mistaken in His plans. God has never had to correct Himself. God never says, "Oops!" The Bible gives us a picture of redemptive history from God's perspective. That is a tremendous blessing.

The birth of Jacob and Esau demonstrates the sovereignty and foreknowledge of God (25:23). God is not capricious, but He has a plan. We see the wisdom of God's sovereign decision at the end of the chapter when Esau, the man of the flesh, sells his birthright (cf. Deuteronomy 21:17; 1 Chronicles 5:1-2) for a cup of soup (cf. also Hebrews 12:16). God saw the character or lack thereof of Esau and therefore was able to proclaim that the younger Jacob (though he would be carnal at first) would ultimately rule over the spiritually weaker Esau. God's decisions may not seem right at first, but He knows how things will turn out in the end. Another example of this is the apostle Paul. In the New Testament God chose the apostle Paul from the womb (Galatians 1:15) even though for a period of his life Paul would be a vicious persecutor of the followers of Jesus (Acts 9). God is able to choose rightly based on His advantageous position of foreknowledge.

***Second, God's election pertains to service (25:23).*** The prophetic word of God states, "**The older shall serve the younger.**" These words express the position the two brothers will have in God's plans. Jacob will hold a superior position of Promise in God's plans. Esau may succeed and attain influence and power *in this world*, but in God's plans he will serve his younger brother. *God elects people to serve Him.* Jesus was referred to as elected by God to be God's delight and to bring justice to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:1). Jesus is elected by God as the cornerstone of saving faith (1 Peter 2:6). Angels are elected by God to serve Him (1 Timothy 5:21). Israel was elected to be an instrument of God to reveal Himself to a lost world (Exodus 19:6; Micah 4:2-3; Zechariah 2:10-13). Jesus chose disciples to serve Him (Luke 6:13; John 15:16; Acts 9:15).

This is tremendously encouraging because it speaks to us about purpose in life. God has a plan for Israel and in her darkest times the plan of God instilled hope in God's people (Jeremiah 29:11-14). God has a plan for each of His followers to fulfill (Ephesians 2:10). The purpose of God for His people should give us hope too. God's greatest plan is to conform us to the likeness of Jesus (Romans 8:29). God is able to bring good from any situation in that He can use it to reveal Himself and conform us to the likeness of Jesus (Romans 8:28).

***Third, God's election is right (25:24-34).*** We don't have to look far to see that God knew what He was doing when He chose Jacob over Esau to fulfill His Promise. Esau may have been more loved by his earthly father because he was a good hunter and Jacob was only a "mild man" (25:27-28). But in the heart of Jacob there was a stew brewing (25:29). And when Esau came in from the field Jacob made a deal with Esau to sell his birthright for what amounted to a bowl of that stew. This demonstrates the carnality and disrespect for responsibility that Esau had. God foresaw this and based His sovereign election on this information.

***What was the significance of the birthright?*** The *birthright* was the legal and cultural right given to the first-born male child to receive:

- **Seniority – Genesis 43:33**
- **Double portion of the inheritance – Deuteronomy 21:15-17**
- **Place of royal succession – 2 Chronicles 21:3**

God at times overrules the natural legal or cultural birthright as He sees through His foreknowledge (Isaiah 42:9; 46:9-10; Romans 8:29) a more suitable person through whom

succession of the messianic line or leadership would be accomplished (Genesis 25:23; Romans 9:1-13). When we look at the instances where the birthright changed hands we see the wisdom of God's election in action: Esau sold his for a bowl of soup (Genesis 25:29-34; Hebrew 12:16); Jacob would respond to God (Genesis 27:6-46; 32); Reuben was punished for defiling his father's bed (Genesis 49:3-4; 1 Chronicles 5:1-2); Judah would be the messianic line (Genesis 49:8-10; Manasseh (Genesis 48:14-20); David over his brother (1 Samuel 16); Adonijah was a usurper (1 Kings 2:13-25); Solomon was the wisest of all (1 Chronicles 28:5-71; 6-8). 1

The person with the birthright was considered the spiritual head of the family. They would exercise priestly rights or lead spiritually. The person with the birthright was considered the "Satan-bruisee"(Genesis 3:15). And the person with the birthright was in direct line of the Abrahamic promise (Genesis 12:3). <sup>2</sup> Esau gave little value and showed little interest in being the spiritual head of the family, the "Satan-bruisee, or heir of Abraham's Promise. Apparently he placed little value on such a position. God knew this. As we follow Jacob's life we will see a great deal of carnality, but through it all Jacob has a relationship with God. God knows Jacob's potential and chose him accordingly.

Later Esau goes out of his way to marry two women that were a source of grief to his parents (Genesis 26:34). He was tricked out of his blessing (Genesis 27:1-40). He grew to hate his brother Jacob (Genesis 27:41-45). He does later reconcile with Jacob (Genesis 33:1-17). He does join Jacob in burying his father (Genesis 35:29). But elsewhere in scripture we are told that Esau may have felt sorry for himself and his losses, but he never truly repented before the Lord (Hebrews 12:16-17). His descendants were the Edomites, perennial enemies of Israel (Jeremiah 49:7-8). The prophet Obadiah prophesied that the descendants of Esau would be stubble (Obadiah 18). God foresaw all of this and chose accordingly.

Did Esau turn out the way he did because he was not chosen by God? Or did Esau turn out the way he did because he was carnal and self-centered and God, foreseeing this, did not choose him? If we adopt the first position, we eliminate Esau's responsibility for his sin because he could not help but turn out the way he did because God *did not* choose him. It is more likely that God foresaw the kind of man Esau was and the kind of man Jacob would ultimately become, and God elected or chose Jacob to be heir of the Promise.

God sees our potential and chooses us accordingly. Are you serving the Lord? You ought to be. God has a plan that is just right for you. Start serving right where you are and see what God unfolds for you.

### **Election and Salvation**

Is there a connection between the election of God and the salvation of God? Yes there is. But the connection is not always properly interpreted. From the start we should say that there are some things about God and His ways that our puny minds just cannot grasp. There are secret things

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1 Thomas Nelson, Inc., *Nelson's topical Bible index [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995.

<sup>2</sup> C.I. Scofield, *The New Scofield Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1989) p. 40, Genesis 25:31 note.

that belong to God alone (Deuteronomy 29:29). But there are things about election and salvation that we can discern from a balanced examination of God's word.

Does God elect or choose some people to be saved and others to be damned to hell? There are some who interpret the sovereignty and election of God in a way that would eliminate the will of man in salvation. They attribute human decision to a work that adds to the gracious provision of salvation from God. All we can say about such a stance is that it does not appear to jive with what the clear teaching of scripture offers. There is a thing called *the perpescuity of scripture*. This is a fancy way of referring to the fact that *the scripture speaks clearly on the central doctrinal issues of God*. With that in mind, let's look at election and salvation.

**God is God.** God is God and He certainly has the right to do whatever He chooses to do. But He will not lie or contradict Himself (Hebrews 6:18). This is especially the case when it comes to God and His word. God will not contradict His word. The God of the Bible is not like the capricious Allah of the Koran who can abrogate portions of his word when it pleases him. Having said that, viewing election and salvation in a way that sees God determining salvation *apart from any decision or response from people* would seem to create some contradictions in what God has revealed in His word. If human beings are merely following a preset predetermined series of life events, if they have no capability to choose or exert a will, then their existence degenerates to that of a mere robot. God did not create humanity as robots.

**God desires that all people be saved.** God has expressed His desire in His word that all people be saved. This is expressed in the following verses:

- **Luke 19:10 - <sup>10</sup> for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."**
- **1 Timothy 2:3-4 - <sup>3</sup> For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**
- **2 Peter 3:8-9 - <sup>8</sup> But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**

The Bible testifies to God's love of "the world" (John 1:29; 3:16-17; Romans 5:8). He loves the world so much that He sent His only Son Jesus into the world to make a way for those lost in sin to be redeemed from the curse of sin and the eternal death it produces (Romans 6:23). But how does God go about this salvation?

**No one can come to God unless He draws him (John 6:44).** God's grace makes human decision and exertion of the will possible. That is why decision is not a work that adds to salvation. But God does require decision. God does incorporate *receiving by faith* the salvation He offers freely in His Son Jesus Christ. Regeneration, salvation takes place at the point that a person bows in faith before God and receives the salvation offered at the cross of Christ. The person who receives the gift of salvation can take no credit for that gift of salvation. A gift is not earned, it is merely received (Romans 4:1-8).

***It is not the will of God to bypass the will of man.*** Wherever the context of the Bible presents a circumstance involving *decision* God reveals the reality that He created humanity with a will, the capability to make a choice. God's sovereign plan includes human will. The Bible is filled with opportunities for people to choose. The word "whoever" is often used to describe decision and occurs 255 times in the Bible. The word "choose" occurs 39 times in the Bible. "Choice" occurs 31 times in the Bible. The phrase "come to me" occurs 44 times in the Bible. The word "decision" occurs 12 times in the Bible. Joshua called out God's people saying to them, "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15). And the gospel is not something God forces on people; it is something God offers freely to be received by faith (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; Romans 10:9-10). God foreknows every decision or choice a person will make, but that does not mean that God eliminates the human capacity to decide or make a willful decision.

Here is an important point. If God incorporates and makes allowance for the *free will decision* of humanity in His elect plan of salvation, then for people to reject God's gracious offer *does not diminish God in any way*. Some contend that for humanity to be able to reject God's gracious offer of salvation means God is shown as impotent in some way. That is not the case though. It simply means that humanity chooses to remain in their sin. What makes this a sinful choice is that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of their sin and need of a Savior (John 16:8-11). The Holy Spirit makes their dark sinful predicament clear to the sinner. And the Spirit clearly reveals the gracious saving way out God offers *in Christ*. When the sinner rejects that awesome gracious offer, then God is just to condemn them to an eternity in hell (Psalm 7:11; Galatians 6:7-8; Revelation 21:7-8; 22:14-15).

***God is big enough, sovereign enough, to incorporate human free will in His elect plan of salvation.*** Then what if any, is the relationship between God's election and salvation? God is big enough, sovereign enough, to incorporate human free will in His elect plan of salvation. Ephesians 1:4 says the following:

- **Ephesians 1:4 - <sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,**

The context of this verse is a discussion by Paul of the blessings we have in Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). The words associated with the election of God in this verse are "**just as He chose us.**" This tells us that God's election or choice is involved in salvation. But how is God's will and human will related here? The answer is found, I believe, in the words, "in Him." Let's look at the other words in this first before we get to "in Him."

God chose "**us,**" that is those who are "saints" and "faithful in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1). God chose us "**before the foundation of the world.**" That means a decision was made by God *before* the world or we who inhabit the world existed. This decision of God involves a sovereign purpose. God from the very beginning has a purpose for all of His people. What is that purpose? The purpose of God for you and me and all His people is, "**that we should be holy and without**

**blame before him in love, . . . .”** God’s predetermined purpose is that we would live holy lives (Romans 8:29; Colossians 3:12; 2 Timothy 2:4; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:10).

That holy life is defined in terms of being **“in love.”** To live a holy life means to live in love (Romans 13:10). The holy life God speaks of in His word is to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as you love yourself (Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28).

But how can we do that? Do we live holy lives in our own strength? Doesn’t sin prevent us from doing that? Is there a way for us to live a holy life before God? The answer is yes. And it has to do with the relationship between God’s election and His salvation. Let me explain.

Our answer begins with defining what **“in Him”** means. First we know by the context that **“Him”** refers to Jesus. But what does **“in Him”** mean? Do we pop off the top of Jesus head and step inside of Him? No, that’s ridiculous. The phrase **“in Him”** occurs 94 times in the New Testament. The phrase **“in Christ”** occurs 87 times in the New Testament. (**“In Jesus”** occurs 10 times and **“in Jesus Christ”** occurs five times in the New Testament.) The apostle Paul uses the phrase **“in Him”** twenty five (25) times in his inspired writings. The General Epistles (Hebrews through Revelation) have another 25 occurrences of this phrase. What does the phrase **“in Him”** or its other forms mean? This phrase refers to a *relationship with Him – Jesus*.

Now this is important because it helps us understand the basis of God’s choosing or electing people. From the very beginning God made a sovereign decision that His people His elect would be those who *have a relationship with Jesus*. Later in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians he is inspired to refer to, **“. . . the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Ephesians 3:11). Now what eternal purpose did God accomplish in Jesus? Salvation! All humanity was hopelessly lost in sin. But God graciously provided a way to be saved from sin through faith in Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:4-5). Paul was inspired to explain it in the following way:

- **Ephesians 2:1-10 - And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, <sup>3</sup> among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. <sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are**

**His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**

God's sovereign plan of salvation is rooted in His rich mercy and love (Ephesians 2:4). He offered a gracious way out of the deadness of sin (Ephesians 2:5). All of this is provided "in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7). We are "**created in Christ Jesus**" (2:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17). And we can enter into this saving relationship simply by trusting in Jesus' completed work on the cross for us (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus is the way to remove the sin in us that separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23). Jesus is "the door" (John 10:7, 9), He is the way the truth and the life and no one can come to the Father except by Him (John 14:6).

So what does this all tell us about the relationship between God's election and His salvation? It is doubtful if finite minds, especially in this fallen state, will ever completely understand the sovereign election of God. But God has revealed certain things about election that we can grasp. Bible teacher Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel states the following about God's election:

Some think God is unfair in His sovereign election, but if you're not a Christian and wonder why God hasn't chosen you; ask Jesus Christ into your life and see if God has chosen you. Jesus told his disciples that they didn't choose Him, but He chose them. The minute you receive Jesus Christ into your life, you discover the glorious truth that God chose you. No one that has come to God through Jesus Christ has been turned away.

Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37). If you say you don't want to come to Christ and would rather get by on your own merits, then I would have to say that you weren't chosen. You're in a bad way, but don't blame God. All you have to do is surrender to Jesus Christ and you will find that you've been chosen in Him. So, in a strange mystical way, I've been chosen by God and yet my choice is also mystically involved. There is a human responsibility side to it. We are called but we must respond and yet I can't respond unless the Spirit works within me.<sup>3</sup>

God's word reveals He elects us "in Christ" or "in Him" in that those who are God's sovereign elected people are "in Him," or in a saving relationship with Jesus. Are you one of God's elect? Why not respond in faith to the gospel offer of God? No one who has ever chosen God has ever been turned away by God. Jesus said in the word of God, "**All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.**" (John 6:37).

Are you searching for meaning and purpose in life? God has a plan for you. He calls you to be one of His elect. Trust and see what He will do with your life. You'll never be the same.

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<sup>3</sup> *Word for Today* audiotape #7014 Genesis 25-26 by Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa California, P.O. Box 8000, Costa Mesa, CA 92628