

Chapter 19  
ELECTION/PREDESTINATION

1. The Lord escorts His elect in His grace  
The following summary taken from Bavinck's work, *Reformed Dogmatics*, offers a short description of how the Lord's grace over His faithful is kept in force by Him:
  - 1.1 The *Father* has chosen the faithful before the creation of the world (Eph. 1:4 also: 2 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:11 & 1 Pet. 1:2).
    - He ordained them to eternal life (Acts 13:48).
    - He conformed them to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29).
    - This election is unchangeable (Rom. 9:11 & Heb. 6:17) and:
      - In course of time it brings with it the calling (inter alia: Matt. 22:2-14; 1 Cor. 1:23-24 & Rom. 10:14<sup>17</sup>);
      - Justification (Ps. 103:12; Isa. 44:22 & Rom. 8:1-2<sup>& 32-33</sup>) and
      - Glorification (Rom. 8:39; Phil. 3:21 & Col. 3:4).
  - 1.2 *Christ*, in whom all the promises of God is yes and amen (1 Cor. 1:20),
    - He died for all those who the Father gave to Him (John 17:6 & 12),
    - So that He could give them eternal life
    - And not one of them will be lost (John 6:39 & 10:28).
  - 1.3 *The Holy Spirit* who regenerates them,
    - Stays with and in them (John 14:16; 1 Tim. 2:27 etc.); and
    - Seals them until the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).
  - 1.4 The covenant of grace is true and certain and:
    - was confirmed with an oath (Heb. 6:16-18 & 13:20);
    - Is as binding as the bond of matrimony (Eph. 5:31-32); and
    - is a testament (Heb. 9:17).
  - 1.5 On grounds of that covenant:
    - God calls His elect;
    - And writes His law in their hearts and there also establishes their awe for Him (Heb. 8:10 & 10:14 ff.);
    - And does not allow them to be tempted beyond what they are able to resist (1 Cor. 10:13);
    - But establishes and completes the good work which He started in them (1 Cor. 1:9 & Phil. 1:6); and
    - preserves them for the future in Christ, so that they may share in the heavenly inheritance (1 Thess. 5:23 & 1 Pet. 1:4-5).
  - 1.6 As a result of His intercession (mediation between the Father and us) Christ remains continuously active on our behalf, so that:
    - their faith may remain permanent (Luke 22:32);
    - they may remain protected from the evil in the world (John 17:11<sup>& 20</sup>);
    - they may be saved to the utmost (Heb. 7:25);
    - they may receive forgiveness of their sins (1 John 2:1); and
    - may one day be with Him each and everyone, to behold His glory (John 17:24).

- 1.7 The gifts of grace, which they receive in Christ, by the operation of by the Holy Spirit:
- are without repentance (Rom. 11:29); and
  - are mutually and inseparably bound and woven together.
  - The person called is also justified and glorified (Rom. 8:30).
  - The person received as a child of God, inherits eternal life (Rom. 8:17 & Gal. 4:7).
  - The person, who believes, immediately shares in eternal life (John 3:16).

- 1.8 That life, because it is eternal,
- cannot be lost;
  - is a life which is not addicted to sin (1 John 3:9); and
  - cannot die (John 11:25-26).

- 1.9 The course of God's concern with the chosen thus starts with their election by grace alone, and endures up to and including the time of the New Jerusalem. The perseverance of the faithful assures us that, by God's grace, none of the faithful will be lost along the way.

## 2. What is election?

- Because each one of us is defiled by the uncleanness of our sin and has by our sin obtained death, not one of us has any right to eternal life.
- This we deduce from amongst others, Romans 3:19: "... that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God ..." and Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death".
- This does not mean that everyone without distinction is destined to hell, and that there is no possibility of anyone seeing the inside of heaven. God's grace is incalculably great hence redemption is possible. Compare the following Scripture texts:
  - 1 John 4:9: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."
  - NB: 1 John 4:10: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."
- Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He has out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen from the whole human race, a certain number of persons to redemption in Jesus Christ, whom He from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect and the foundation of salvation. It is therefore important that we realise that all people are not saved unconditionally (CD 1:1 & 1:7; Eph. 1:4-6. NB: John 3:16: "... whosoever believeth in him should not perish ...")
- Summarised it has to do with:
  - Being lost in sin
  - Redemptive grace
  - Responsibility
- Jesus did not die for all people, if it were different, then hell would not have existed. On the other hand, all people do not go to hell, because then the merit of Christ's suffering and death would have been in vain. The conclusion is thus that God determines who will be in heaven and who will be in hell.

3. Man's position
- All people should go to hell, because the Lord said to Adam: "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Also read BC, Art. 16: "The entire human race has fallen into perdition and ruin" (1 Cor.15).
  - Compare the above with HC 1:14:10:a-c: God's wrath is kindled against inborn as well as actual sin. His righteous judgment demands that we deserve temporal and eternal punishment for our sin.
  - The Bible teaches that each one is damned who does not hold to everything in the book of the law, to do it. If someone then wishes to be just in himself, then he must, from birth to death, keep the law perfectly.
4. No injustice
- The Lord would thus do no one an injustice if He were to cast us all into hell. A logical deduction would then be that not a single person who will be in hell, has been treated unjustly by virtue of the fact that they are in hell.
  - It is a deed of love done to us, if we are plucked out of sin and damnation.
  - The Canons of Dort (CD 1:3) teach that the Word of God must be proclaimed and preached to all people, without distinction. The preaching of the Gospel has an effect of two kinds:
    - Some believe it.
    - Others reject it.
  - Those who believe are released and saved from God's wrath. Those who do not believe remain under God's wrath.  
 John 3:36: *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on."*
5. Predestination
- Ephesians 1:3-7 teaches that God chose us before the foundation of the world. That election was such that those who were chosen would be without blemish before Him in love.
  - Election is then also the predestination of God that in Jesus Christ, He adopted us as His children. This He does according to the good pleasure of his will.
6. False view
- The Remonstrants teach that that man can work for his salvation and can himself decide it. This view has many problems with the fact that the Bible itself uses the words election and predestination. It can therefore not be denied that there is predestination, if it is so called in the Bible.
  - The Remonstrants solve the matter as follows: According to them there would be a general and indefinite and a particular and definite election.
  - The general indefinite election is that God decided that all people who believe in Christ are, without distinction, the elect. The general election thus merely states the fact of which people could be saved.
  - The particular election has to do with the fact that, out of the many people who possibly could believe, the Lord chooses only those whom He comes to know to be true believers. This also happens because God can foresee the future and thus saw who would, in future, come to faith and who not.
  - This false doctrine proclaims that God does not determine faith. The eventual election is

thus only determined during the course of history.

## 7. Correction

- The above-mentioned position makes of election, as confessed in the Canons of Dort, a type of fatalism. It is not true that all people stand in a long line and the Lord then walks along that line and arbitrarily chooses some and rejects others. That is fatalism and we must be weary of it.
- It is for this reason that the above position claims that election is unfair: If someone is lucky then he is one of the elect, and then it would be unfair towards all the rest, because they also desired faith, but the Lord did not give them that chance.
- The mistake which is made with such an argument is that the following is not kept in mind:
  - God is powerful to such an extent that He's actions cannot be forced into human categories of what would be right and righteous. From the very outset, human beings' capacity for reasoning is darkened, because we argue from our sinful brokenness. Compare Romans 9, where God says that the thing formed cannot say to him that forms it what it wants to be.
  - Furthermore faith does not decide election. Election decides faith: Exactly because you are one of the elect, you believe. Then the argument about unfairness falls away, because all people sin and deserve hell. Those who believe receive more grace and grace is not a right, because that to which you have a right is no longer grace. Therefore: no one is cast into hell or sent to heaven from a neutral position.
- The relationship between election and faith comes to fore quite clearly in Romans 9 and Acts 13:48: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The faith of the heathens did therefore not originate from within themselves. It is foretold in the preceding council of God: It was ordained.
- Election has the following foundation:
  - God's wisdom  
God's wisdom is not that limited that people must first decided if they wish to accept Christ before He can finalise His election of them. Even before creation His wisdom decided who would be faithful and who not. In His long-sightedness God also saw that it is thus in history and with His omnipotence He ensured that everything is as He planned it — and He still ensures that it is so.
  - The immutability of God  
God always remains what He is and He never changes. He already declares as much in the Old Testament in Isaiah 41:4: "I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he" God thus does not decide to let someone into heaven if he dies today while he does good, but tomorrow, if he dies while he does evil that he is cast into hell. The decision was made before creation and is unchangeable like God Himself.
  - The omniscience of God  
He knows all things as He himself decided and determined all things. Absolutely nothing can pass Him by unnoticed.
  - The omnipotence of God  
In the omnipotence of God there is no arbitrariness. He bows to no one and He is put out of joint (disrupted) by no one. He is also not changed by anyone. For this reason God's election is also fixed and unchangeable.

## 8. Perseverance of the saints

- Even though election is decided and determined by God in advance, it is definitely also true that the faithful are obligated to fulfil their responsibilities with regards to their election. This is described in the fifth main point of the doctrine of the Canons of Dort.
- The elect must daily humble themselves before God because they sin daily — even in their best works. The faithful are also seduced by all manner of sinful things — thoughts and desires — and they then sin. But because God, in His grace made provision for it, they can repent and return to the way whenever they have fallen and cease with that sin.
- The faithful must then continue with perseverance to combat every wrong thing. It is then none other than the elect who can continue in this perseverance because God disposes it thus — CD V.