

Election, Predestination, and God's Choosing

Some interlocking thoughts to consider on these words and concepts that show up regularly in Scripture.

1. God is all-good, all-powerful, and all-loving.
2. God is not a contingent being so God does whatever God pleases.
3. If God elected to do everything as you think God should, then you'd be God, and God would have to answer to you.
4. Anything having to do with time (the past, present, and future) is necessarily anthropomorphic ("attributing human characteristics to God"). God is not bound by space or time—there is no past, present, or future with God. Thus, words like "foreknowledge" and "chose" are necessary accommodations to help us better understand God. They are our way of putting God in our terms.
5. Our understanding of "salvation" is awkwardly dualistic; usually about heaven and hell. We have Plato's dualism to thank for this phenomenon. Thus, "salvation" (*sozo*- save, rescue) becomes about "getting into heaven," rather than about being rescued from death to life—a rescue in this life for this life, which will then blossom into abundant life ("life that is very life"). Because of our dualistic way of thinking, we think of "predestined" as more about the "destination," (where we are going), whereas we should think about it more like "destiny" (what we are called to do).
6. We should understand, then, that when language of "election" and "choosing" shows up in Scripture, it is almost always about responsibility, NOT privilege. We are chosen for the responsibility of loving our neighbors in Christ. We are elected to the responsibility of serving our friends and co-workers in Christ. As a non-aside-aside, politics in America (and the shenanigans in the House of Representatives last week), in their current form, are an anti-example of biblical election. Politicians assume they are elected to the privilege of being in the governing or ruling class rather than being called to serve. Being "called to serve" shows up on the campaign trail in stump speeches, but rarely in office!
7. Those elected to serve aren't called because they are good, right, and blameless. Augustine wrote: "Called saints are not called because they are holy. Rather, they are made holy because they are called."
8. If you are present today in this room, in a church that loves Jesus and preaches the Gospel, then you should assume: Yes, indeed, I'm called by God to love others, chosen for the responsibility of bearing God's name in the world, and elected to the service of my friends, neighbors, and co-workers.