  
*Introducing Our Faith*  
*The Living God*  
  
 Week 6  
 God's Electing Grace and Our Free Will  
  
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*Overview of this week*  
  

- ❖ Sampling scripture
- ❖ What do we mean by "election?"
- ❖ God's grace
- ❖ Our free will
- ❖ An introduction to time
- ❖ Where we go wrong with this doctrine
  - > Predestination & God's foreknowledge?
- ❖ How do we apply these doctrines in our discipleship?

  
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*Sampling Scripture*  
  

- ❖ God's providence
  - > Genesis 50:7-26; Psalm 139:1-18; Isaiah 45:1-19; John 15:1-17; Matthew 6:25-33; 2 Cor 4:11-18; 1 Peter 1:3-9
- ❖ God's grace – He chooses!
  - > Isaiah 44:1-2; Psalm 78:67-71; Genesis 12:1-3; Ephesians 1:3-6; Romans 8:29-30,33; 9:9-18
- ❖ Our free will – We choose!
  - > Genesis 3:9-10; Joshua 24:15; Matt 23:37; John 1:12; 2 Peter 3:9; John 3:16; Rev 22:17;
- ❖ A key, and often misread, verse – Ephesians 2:8-9
  - > "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast."
    - "this" (neuter in the Greek) refers to the gift of salvation, not to "faith" (feminine in the Greek)

  
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## Election?

- ❖ The “elect” are God’s chosen
- ❖ Equivalent statements
  - God chose Israel = the Israelites were God’s elect
- ❖ God himself is the object of election
  - God chooses others to be in communion
  - God chooses to be God for the world; God chooses to be Emmanuel, God with us!
  - Jesus is the Elect of God! Jesus is also the Rejected!
- ❖ We can better see the glory and goodness of God’s election by looking at Jesus – the concrete expression of God’s free love.
- ❖ The goal of election is about the creation of God’s people, not, initially, individual salvation.
  - We are saved, individually, because we are part of God’s people – those who place their faith and trust in Jesus.

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## God’s Grace

- ❖ God is the initiator
  - God chose Abraham; God chose Jacob; God chose Israel; God chooses us!
- ❖ God’s gift of our salvation, our eternal relationship with God, is free – it is not earned or merited. God owes us nothing.
  - Israel did not earn nor deserve their deliverance from Egypt. We do not earn nor deserve a loving relationship with God.
- ❖ God’s gift is a gift made out of love.
  - The relational God

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## Our Free Will

- ❖ Our decision to put our trust in God – to return God’s love -- is freely made. It must be! Love is only love when it is freely given.
- ❖ But we need to be modest when thinking about what that freedom means.
  - How free are you? Are you capable of doing anything at any moment? Every action you take results from a pre-existing preference.
  - What happens in this world or life without a cause? Our world seems very “deterministic.” Enough so, that many philosophers hold that our freedom is an illusion. The Bible holds otherwise.
- ❖ The biblical view is that however you define freedom or liberty, we are free enough to be morally responsible for our choices!

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## The Trickiness of Time

- ❖ Time seems very commonsensical to us – but it isn't.
  - It seems nearly impossible to define. Physicists and philosophers have as much trouble as you and I.
- ❖ Time is created. It is some sort of thing; not just a concept.
- ❖ Time is relative.
  - High speeds and strong gravity slow it down.
    - Yes . . . Time passes more slowly on the space shuttle than at mission control center!
    - Time slows as you get close to a black hole.
- ❖ Many of the toughest parts of the doctrine of election revolve around our understanding of time!
  - *Predestination* and *foreknowledge*
- ❖ For C.S. Lewis, God "lives" in an eternal now, with no before or after.

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## Where we go wrong

- ❖ Do we choose God or does he choose us?
  - *This is a false either/or choice!!*
- ❖ The consequences of over-emphasizing God's choosing
  - You end up with a God who arbitrarily chooses some for heaven and others for hell! Basically, you end up with a monster that bears no resemblance to Jesus! This is why so many people are repulsed by some ways of thinking about predestination.
- ❖ The consequences of over-emphasizing our choosing
  - You end up thinking that you made the right choice because you are spiritually superior. You end up losing God as the great-covenant keeper, whose promises WILL be kept. You end up with a God who is bound by time, who might not have his way.

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## What this means for disciples of Jesus

- ❖ We praise God for his sovereignty and the gift of his grace. Others must see in us the gracious work of new creation that God has worked in us.
  - Ogden Nash wrote of the peculiar claim of election  
**"How odd of God  
 To choose the Jews"**
- ❖ We accept the responsibility of choosing the true God, including the real work of becoming better disciples.
- ❖ We avoid being pushed into false either-or choices! Perhaps our emphases ought to reflect our spiritual needs.
  - Many Americans need little reminder of their free will and empowerment. Instead, they need to be taught of God's sovereignty and the importance of being cheerful receivers!

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