

Freed From the Shopkeeper's Prison
Bible and Confessional Study on Election and Evangelism

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The post- 19th century Protestant view of missions is to seek out people who have never heard the Word of God and preach to them – to go to pagan places to find pagans to convert. In the past forty years, this idea has been expanded in the American Evangelical scene. Not only are we seeking to find people who have not heard the Word, but we are actively seeking to cater to their desires and assumptions. We wish to make the church a place that unbelievers are comfortable in.

As I have already narrated, I believe that this pastoral practice is based on an Arminian understanding of free will and an Arminian rejection of election. Every human being is a potential convert – who will convert if I am persuasive enough, or make them comfortable enough, or incluturate myself enough, or contextualize my message enough. The cornerstone of theology can be easily summed up: rejection of the Gospel can be minimized and acceptance of the Gospel maximized by the careful study and skill of the presenter of the Gospel.

So far, I have laid down one basic argument against this idea: the election of grace. Not everyone is a potential convert. My persuasiveness, machinations, plans, and so forth can neither snatch someone from the hand of Christ nor make God say on the last day, “What? Joe Schmo is here in heaven? But wait, he wasn't on my list – how did he get converted? Well! Nice work Curtis! I never saw that coming!”

I'm going to turn now to try to back up my assertions with a bit more analysis from the Scriptures and Confessions – and I will approach it from this direction. The problem among us Lutherans is that we know a lot of things but pretend like we don't, or don't think they really matter. We have separated what we believe from what we do. We are all of us sworn to the Lutheran Confessions – so I know that we all believe in the doctrine of election. But, I am contending, we also act like it doesn't matter. So since we all believe in this doctrine I'm only going to spend a small amount of time looking at the classic proof texts from the Scriptures and do the briefest possible review of the eleventh article of the Formula of Concord.

What I want to spend more time on, however, is the practice of Jesus and the Apostles. They also believed this doctrine, and they acted, I think, differently than we have been taught to act. In other words, the doctrine of election is a necessary and clear light when it comes to understanding evangelism – indeed, I think that we will see that this is the light by which Jesus and the Apostles and the Formulators acted.

Part I: Overview of Classic Biblical and Confessional Texts on Election

A. Classic Proof Texts for Election

Ephesians 1; Romans 9

B. Formula of Concord SD XI Election of Grace (numbers refer to paragraphs)

2. "Cannot be regarded as unprofitable or unnecessary, much less as offensive or harmful."
3. Therefore, no one should ignore or reject this teaching of the divine Word just because some have misused and misunderstood it.
4. There must be a distinction between God's Foreknowledge – *praescientia vel praevisio* – and eternal election. That God knows everything, good or bad, that is to happen. 6. "The foreknowledge of God sees and knows even the evil before it happens, but not in such a way as if it were God's gracious will that it take place." 7. "God's foreknowledge is not, however, the origin or cause of evil. Instead, the evil, perverted will of the devil and human beings is its origin and cause."
5. *Praedestinatio* - "does not apply to both the godly and the evil, but instead only to the children of God, who are chosen and predestined to eternal life, 'before the foundation of the world' was laid." 8. God's eternal election not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect but is also a cause [*causa est*||*eine Ursache*] of salvation and whatever pertains to it, on the basis of the gracious will and good pleasure of God in Christ Jesus. As this cause, it creates, effects, aids, and promotes our salvation. Our salvation is founded upon it, so that 'the gates of hell' may not have any power against this salvation.' . . . And again, 'As many as had been destined for eternal life became believers.'

A problem is then identified – not a problem with this doctrine, but a problem of fallen humanity psychology: 9 "No one should consider this eternal election or God's preordination to eternal life merely as the secret, inscrutable will or counsel of God, as if it had nothing more to it and nothing more to consider than that God perceived beforehand who and how many would be saved and who and how many would be damned. . . . 10 Such ideas could cause and strengthen either false security and impenitence, or faintheartedness and despair" . . . some might say "Since God has foreseen his elect to salvation. . . if then I am foreseen to salvation, it cannot harm me if I practice all kinds of sin."

Notice, this is the same set of questions set against Paul's doctrine of grace in Romans 6.

To this false delusion and [dangerous] thought we should oppose the following clear argument, which is sure and cannot fail, namely: Since all Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is to serve, not for [cherishing] security and impenitence, but for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, **2 Tim. 3:16**; also, since everything in God's Word has been prescribed to us, not that we should thereby be driven to despair, but that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope, **Rom. 15:4**, therefore it is without any doubt in no way the sound sense or right use of the doctrine concerning the eternal foreknowledge of God that either impenitence or despair should be occasioned or strengthened thereby.

13] Therefore, if we wish to think or speak correctly and profitably concerning eternal election, or the predestination and ordination of the children of God to eternal life, we should accustom ourselves not to speculate concerning the bare, secret, concealed, inscrutable foreknowledge

So speculation is tossed aside. The solid reality of election is not tossed aside, though, but rather strengthened in the following list.

“God has preordained the following. . .”

1. That the human race is truly redeemed and reconciled with God through Christ, who, by His faultless [innocency] obedience, suffering, and death, has merited for us the righteousness which avails before God, and eternal life.

16] 2. That such merit and benefits of Christ shall be presented, offered, and distributed to us through His Word and Sacraments.

17] 3. That by His Holy Ghost, through the Word, when it is preached, heard, and pondered, He will be efficacious and active in us, convert hearts to true repentance, and preserve them in the true faith.

18] 4. That He will justify all those who in true repentance receive Christ by a true faith, and will receive them into grace, the adoption of sons, and the inheritance of eternal life.

19] 5. That He will also sanctify in love those who are thus justified, as St. Paul says, [Eph. 1:4](#).

20] 6. That He also will protect them in their great weakness against the devil, the world, and the flesh, and rule and lead them in His ways, raise them again [place His hand beneath them], when they stumble, comfort them under the cross and in temptation, and preserve them [for life eternal].

21] 7. That He will also strengthen, increase, and support to the end the good work which He has begun in them, if they adhere to God's Word, pray diligently, abide in God's goodness [grace], and faithfully use the gifts received.

22] 8. That finally He will eternally save and glorify in life eternal those whom He has elected, called, and justified.

Now further points are cleared up – generally thoughts that seek to defang the radical nature of election:

And [indeed] in this His counsel, purpose, and ordination God has prepared salvation not only in general, but has in grace considered and chosen to salvation each and every person of the elect who are to be saved through Christ, also ordained that in the way just mentioned He will, by His grace, gifts, and efficacy,

bring them thereto [make them participants of eternal salvation], aid, promote, strengthen, and preserve them.

Again, this goes back to para. 8.

25. *by what signs are the elect recognized?*

Here various points of Calvinism are rejected:

28] Therefore, if we wish to consider our eternal election to salvation with profit, we must in every way hold sturdily and firmly to this, that, as the preaching of repentance, so also the promise of the Gospel is universalis (universal), that is, it pertains to all men, **Luke 24:47**. For this reason Christ has commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations. For God loved the world and gave His Son, **John 3:16**. Christ bore the sins of the world, **John 1:29**, gave His flesh for the life of the world, **John 6:51**; His blood is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, **1 John 1:7; 2:2**. Christ says: Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, **Matt. 11:28**. God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all, **Rom. 11:32**. The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, **2 Pet. 3:9**. The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him, **Rom. 10:12**. The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe, **Rom. 3:22**. This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life, **John 6:40**. Likewise it is Christ's command that to all in common to whom repentance is preached this promise of the Gospel also should be offered **Luke 24:47; Mark 16:15**.

Thus rejected are: Limited atonement, and a call devoid of intent on God's part.

The difference is that it is only the elect who will hear the Word. . . Thus we do not look for an inner secret knowledge of who is elect. Rather, there are outward signs:

For this reason also Christ causes the promise of the Gospel not only to be offered in general, but He seals it through the Sacraments which He attaches as seals of the promise, and thereby confirms it [the certainty of the promise of the Gospel] to every believer in particular.

39] There would also be overthrown and taken from us the foundation that the Holy Ghost wishes certainly to be present with the Word preached, heard, considered, and to be efficacious and operate through it. Therefore the meaning

is not at all the one referred to above, namely, that the elect are to be such [among the elect are to be numbered such] as even despise the Word of God, thrust it from them, blaspheme and persecute it, [Matt. 22:6](#); [Acts 13:46](#); or, when they hear it, harden their hearts, [Heb. 4:2. 7](#); resist the Holy Ghost, [Acts 7:51](#); without repentance persevere in sins, [Luke 14:18](#); do not truly believe in Christ, [Mark 16:16](#); only make [godliness] an outward show, [Matt. 7:22](#); [22:12](#); or seek other ways to righteousness and salvation outside of Christ, [Rom. 9:31. 40](#)]

Summary of Not God's Fault:

41. For few receive the Word and follow it; the greatest number despise the Word, and will not come to the wedding, [Matt. 22:3ff](#) The cause for this contempt for the Word is not God's foreknowledge [or predestination], but the perverse will of man, which rejects or perverts the means and instrument of the Holy Ghost, which God offers him through the call, and resists the Holy Ghost, who wishes to be efficacious, and works through the Word, as Christ says: How often would I have gathered you together, and ye would not!

Establishes the Gospel of Grace alone, everything that pertains to our conversion, etc.:

43. Thus far is the mystery of predestination revealed to us in God's Word, and if we abide thereby and cleave thereto, it is a very useful, salutary, consolatory doctrine; for it establishes very effectually the article that we are justified and saved without all works and merits of ours, purely out of grace alone, for Christ's sake. For before the time of the world, before we existed, yea, before the foundation of the world was laid, when, of course, we could do nothing good, we were according to God's purpose chosen by grace in Christ to salvation, [Rom. 9:11](#); [2 Tim. 1:9. 44](#)] Moreover, all opinionones (opinions) and erroneous doctrines concerning the powers of our natural will are thereby overthrown, because God in His counsel, before the time of the world, decided and ordained that He Himself, by the power of His Holy Ghost, would produce and work in us, through the Word, everything that pertains to our conversion. [45](#)] Thus this doctrine affords also the excellent, glorious consolation that God was so greatly concerned about the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian, and so faithfully purposed it [provided therefor] that before the foundation of the world was laid, He deliberated concerning it, and in His [secret] purpose ordained how He would bring me thereto [call and lead me to salvation], and preserve me therein. Also, that He wished to secure my salvation so well and certainly that, since through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh it could easily be lost from our hands, or through craft and might of the devil and the world be snatched and taken from us, He

ordained it in His eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and placed it for preservation in the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, from which no one can pluck us, [John 10:28. 46](#)] Hence Paul also says, [Rom. 8:28. 39](#): Because we have been called according to the purpose of God, who will separate us from the love of God in Christ?

Time and hour:

56] Thus without any doubt God also knows and has determined for every one the time and hour of his call and conversion [and when He will raise again one who has lapsed]. But since this has not been revealed to us, we have the command always to cling to the Word, and to commend the time and hour to God

KEY POINT:

Here is the key passage for understanding the difference between the outlook of the Confessors and the outlook we have absorbed from the Arminian American Church. When we look at a land without the Word of God we think, "Those poor people! They have not heard!" It is this notion that leads people to ask in Bible class, 'How can God damn somebody who has never heard?' The assumptions of the Arminian here are that 1) people have not heard the Word and that this is not their fault; 2) That Original Sin does not damn justly; 3) that people have free will to decide. A very different view of nations without the Word of God is revealed here in the Formula: it is a punishment from God on men who have rejected the Word and on their posterity:

57 Likewise, when we see that God gives His Word at one place [to one kingdom or realm], but not at another [to another nation]; removes it from one place [people], and allows it to remain at another; also, that one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is converted again, etc.,-in these and similar questions Paul [[Rom. 11:22ff](#)] **58**] fixes a certain limit to us how far we should go, namely, that in the one part we should recognize God's judgment [for He commands us to consider in those who perish the just judgment of God and the penalties of sins]. For they are well-deserved penalties of sins when God so punishes a land or nation for despising His Word that the punishment extends also to their posterity, as is to be seen in the Jews. And thereby [by the punishments] God in some lands and persons exhibits His severity to those that are His [in order to indicate] what we all would have well deserved, and would be worthy and worth, since we act wickedly in opposition to God's Word [are ungrateful for the revealed Word, and live unworthily of the Gospel] and often grieve the Holy Ghost sorely, in order that we may live in the fear of God, and acknowledge and praise God's goodness, to the exclusion of, and contrary to, our merit in and with us, to whom He gives His Word, and with whom He leaves it, and whom He does not harden and reject.

62, When we proceed thus far in this article, we remain on the right [safe and royal] way, as it is written [Hos. 13:9](#): Israel, that you have gone to ruin is your own fault; that you have been helped rests alone on my grace.

Then why are some damned?

63. However, as regards these things in this disputation which would soar too high and beyond these limits, we should, with Paul, place the finger upon our lips, and remember and say, [Rom. 9:20](#): O man, who art thou that repliest against God?

We should not despair and go after other means:

70. Therefore, whoever would be saved should not trouble or harass himself with thoughts concerning the secret counsel of God, as to whether he also is elected and ordained to eternal life, with which miserable Satan usually attacks and annoys godly hearts. But they should hear Christ [and look upon Him as the Book of Life in which is written the eternal election], who is the Book of Life and of God's eternal election of all of God's children to eternal life: He testifies to all men without distinction that it is God's will that all men should come to Him who labor and are heavy laden with sin, in order that He may give them rest and save them, [Matt. 11:28](#).

71] According to this doctrine of His they should abstain from their sins, repent, believe His promise, and entirely trust in Him; and since we cannot do this by ourselves, of our own powers, the Holy Ghost desires to work these things, namely, repentance and faith, in us through the Word and Sacraments

Whose fault is it when folks reject the Word?

Moreover, the declaration, [John 6:44](#), that no one can come to Christ except the Father draw him, is right and true. However, the Father will not do this without means, but has ordained for this purpose His Word and Sacraments as ordinary means and instruments; and it is the will neither of the Father nor of the Son that a man should not hear or should despise the preaching of His Word, and wait for the drawing of the Father without the Word and Sacraments. For the Father draws indeed by the power of His Holy Ghost, however, according to His usual order [the order decreed and instituted by Himself], by the hearing of His holy, divine Word, as with a net, by which the elect are plucked from the jaws of the devil. 77] Every poor sinner should therefore repair thereto [to holy preaching], hear it attentively, and not doubt the drawing of the Father. For the Holy Ghost will be with His Word in His power, and work by it; and that is the drawing of the Father.

78] But the reason why not all who hear it believe, and some are therefore condemned the more deeply [eternally to severer punishments], is not because

God had begrudged them their salvation; but it is their own fault, as they have heard the Word in such a manner as not to learn, but only to despise, blaspheme, and disgrace it, and have resisted the Holy Ghost, who through the Word wished to work in them, as was the case at the time of Christ with the Pharisees and their adherents.

Next several paragraphs again against Calvinism. Summary:

But that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, namely, that Pharaoh always sinned again and again, and became the more obdurate, the more he was admonished, that was a punishment of his antecedent sin and horrible tyranny, which in many and manifold ways he practised inhumanly and against the accusations of his heart towards the children of Israel. And since God caused His Word to be preached and His will to be proclaimed to him, and Pharaoh nevertheless wilfully reared up straightway against all admonitions and warnings, God withdrew His hand from him, and thus his heart became hardened and obdurate, and God executed His judgment upon him; for he was guilty of nothing else than hell-fire.

Summary of causa electionis:

88. Therefore it is false and wrong [conflicts with the Word of God] when it is taught that not alone the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ, but that also in us there is a cause of God's election, on account of which God has chosen us to eternal life. For not only before we had done anything good, but also before we were born, yea, even before the foundations of the world were laid, He elected us in Christ; and that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger; as it is written concerning this matter, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated, [Rom. 9:11ff.](#); [Gen. 25:23](#); [Mal. 1:2f.](#)

Part II: A Look at the Ministry of Jesus and the Apostles.

So there are your classic statements of the doctrine of election from both the Scriptures and the Confessions. But there is more, much more to say. Let us take a look at more Scriptures with a special focus on how the doctrine of election played into the ministries of Jesus and Paul. How did they do evangelism? What was their modus operandi?

A. Jesus, Election, and the Conduct of His Ministry.

The End Time Discourse

Also Parallel in Mark 13

Mat 24:22 And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Mat 24:23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it.

Mat 24:24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders,

so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

Mat 24:25 See, I have told you beforehand.

Mat 24:26 So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.

Mat 24:27 For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Mat 24:28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

Mat 24:29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Mat 24:30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Mat 24:31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The Parable of the Unjust Judge

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

Luk 18:2 He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man.

Luk 18:3 And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.'

Luk 18:4 For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man,

Luk 18:5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'"

Luk 18:6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says.

Luk 18:7 And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?

Luk 18:8 I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Who Comes to Jesus? Who Leaves Jesus?

John 6:43-69 Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me-- 46 not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." 52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread

the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." 59 Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. 60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" 61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65 And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." 66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. 67 So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

The Discourse and Prayer on the Night When He was Betrayed

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

John 17:1-26 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. 6 **"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.** 7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 **I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.** 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. 11 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 **I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.** 15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. 20 "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know

that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

How did Jesus tell his disciples to tailor the message or “contextualize” it? How were they to receive rejection?

Luke 10:1-22 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. 2 And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' 6 And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. 7 And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. 8 Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. 9 Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' 10 But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' 12 I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. 13 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. 16 "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me." 17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" 18 And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." 21 In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 22 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

To Whom Did Jesus Send His Minister? To Whom Did He Go?

Matthew 10:5-6 "These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Summary: Jesus never sought out pagans in pagan places; he never went looking for people who were not people of the Scriptures; he searched for the Lost Sheep of Israel.

Jesus never intentionally seeks out places and people who have not heard the Word, who are

pagans, Jesus specifically does not pray for any but the elect (though he weeps and laments over the damned who reject his Word), when outsiders (non-Israelites) hear of him and seek him out, he welcomes them into the Family of God, for the Children of Abraham are children of the promise, not the flesh. But, interestingly enough, he sees no need to cater the message to them, he does not even intentionally seek them out! Rather, the elect are drawn to Jesus somewhat mysteriously because the Word leaks out, people notice the difference and ask about it, news travels, the elect of every nation hear and they seek out Jesus: the Holy Spirit has drawn them by the Word. Jesus does not hang out at the pagan temples and amphitheatres waiting to ambush the worshippers and engage them in religious debate or proclamation.

Exceptions to the rule?

Samaritan Woman in John 4? She is a Half Jew, one who has the Books of Moses and *she comes to Him*.

The Greek proselytes? The God-fearing centurion? They already believe in the Word of Moses and again, they come to Jesus.

The only true pagan that Jesus preaches to in the Gospels is the Canannite woman - and again, she comes to Him (Matthew 15).

An Aside.

At this point we might consider a very interesting assumption we all tend to make. Whenever the doctrine of election comes up in Bible class, someone will inevitably say: but it's not fair. Think of all the people who have never heard the Gospel, never had a chance to believe! How could God damn them? There are several assumptions tied up in that question. First, that people somehow do not really deserve damnation – that is, a rejection of original sin. Second, that people have a free will that lets them “have a chance” to decide. And third, that there are people who have not heard, or have not heard innocently. But consider these two fascinating quotations – one from Paul and one from the Formula:

Romans 10:13-21 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. 18 But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." 19 But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." 20 Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." 21 But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

Consider also what Paul says about all nations in Romans 1 and 2.

SD FC XI 57 Likewise, when we see that God gives His Word at one place [to one kingdom or realm], but not at another [to another nation]; removes it from one place [people], and allows it to remain at another; also, that one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is

converted again, etc.,-in these and similar questions Paul [Rom. 11:22ff] 58] fixes a certain limit to us how far we should go, namely, that in the one part we should recognize God's judgment [for He commands us to consider in those who perish the just judgment of God and the penalties of sins]. For they are well-deserved penalties of sins when God so punishes a land or nation for despising His Word that the punishment extends also to their posterity, as is to be seen in the Jews. And thereby [by the punishments] God in some lands and persons exhibits His severity to those that are His [in order to indicate] what we all would have well deserved, and would be worthy and worth, since we act wickedly in opposition to God's Word [are ungrateful for the revealed Word, and live unworthily of the Gospel] and often grieve the Holy Ghost sorely, in order that we may live in the fear of God, and acknowledge and praise God's goodness, to the exclusion of, and contrary to, our merit in and with us, to whom He gives His Word, and with whom He leaves it, and whom He does not harden and reject.

And there is more of this in the Scriptures:

Romans 16:26: Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages **26** but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith — **27** to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Col 1:23 “if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

The idea of an unreached people is actually very problematic from a Biblical standpoint. Indeed, didn't Jesus say that the Gospel must be preached to all nations before the end and that the end will come when you don't know it? And didn't St. Paul expect the end in his life time? Well, then. . . it appears that no one has the excuse that they have not heard!

B. The ministry of the Apostles in Acts.

The Apostles in Acts

When the disciples go out preaching “to all nations” they follow the same method as Jesus in the Gospel. Their ministry is for the sake of the elect and they seek them where the elect are expected to be found: around the Word of God. They do not go out intentionally seeking pagans in pagan places. They do not hang out at pagan temples waiting to do “street evangelism.” They do not go door to door in pagan neighborhood sharing the Gospel. They go from Synagogue to Synagogue and the elect are drawn in from all nations.

Paul's Ministry for the Sake of the Elect

2Ti 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Tit 1:1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness,

So they start off by going where the elect are expected to be found: gathered around Word and Sacrament. God saw to this method with Pentecost. He gathered in Jews and proselytes of every tribe

and nation so that they might hear the Word of God in the temple. Then they went home. Then, when the disciples go out to preach, in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth – they never go into godless places. They go to synagogues to announce to believers in the Old Covenant that the New Covenant is here. But they never intentionally focus their ministry on pagan unbelievers. They do not cater or contextualize (which is Latin for “compromise”) their message to an unBiblical people.

But I can see that you do not believe me. So let's take a look at the books of Acts.

Acts 1-7. All the action is in Jerusalem and focused in and around the Temple.

Acts 8. Philip goes to Samaria – where Jesus had established believers in John 4. John and Peter then go to them to pray for the Holy Spirit. Then God drops off Philip to speak to the Ethiopian – a bit of Pentecost delayed, as it were.

Acts 9. Paul is called to go before Gentiles and Kings. He begins to fulfill his ministry by going to proclaim Jesus in Synagogues.

Acts 10 – a Gentile proselyte receives the Gospel.

Acts 11 – the Jewish party was talking only to Jews, but the Hellenists also speak to Gentile proselytes – note well – nobody has talked to pagans yet, let alone sought them out or contextualized the Gospel for them.

Acts 12 – Peter rescued, Herod dead.

Acts 13 – Paul and Barnabas sent out – they preach in Synagogues. In Salamis, after they preach in the synagogue, Paulus the pagan summons them asks them for an account. This is the first pagan in Acts - and he asks to hear the message. Paul and Barnabas did not seek him out, it was the other way round. Then in Perga, they preach in the synagogue. The next Sabbath, the whole city gathered at synagogue to hear – it was the talk of the town. The Jews who don't receive the Gospel toss them out, but the Gentile proselytes who had come receive it – well, “as many as were appointed to eternal life believed” v. 48.

Acts 14 – they enter the synagogue at Iconium. At Lystra, Paul heals a man who was listening to him speak. Where was he speaking? So far, we find him only speaking at synagogue or to individual rulers who demand testimony of him. In Lystra it is not mentioned where Paul was preaching, where? In Acts 16 we get a clue: if there were not enough Jews in a city they did not build a synagogue, but met in some place for prayer. Since Paul was preaching to the Jews at their place of prayer, some pagans get wind of the miracle, or even see it. Note well the text: they “saw what Paul had done” they did not hear him preaching because he wasn't preaching to them. More proof that Paul wasn't preaching to pagans: they call Paul and Barnabas gods. . . Paul and Barnabas then have to explain the very basics of the faith to the pagans: that there is only one God who created heaven and earth. It is therefore clear that Paul was not preaching to these crowds of pagans before he worked the miracle on this man. For if he had been speaking to them, how could he have started with any other topic besides: there is only one God? In Derbe likewise, we only get a summary of his preaching and no narration of how he went about it.

Acts 15 – Jerusalem Council.

Acts 16 – In Derbe and Lystra is where Paul met Timothy – a half Jew. This gives us a clear that there was indeed a synagogue in those places as we suspected above. The dream of the Macedonian man asking for help – when they get there what do they do? They remain many days – doing nothing – until on the “Sabbath we went outside the gate to the riverside where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.” Aha! No Synagogue without 10 men. So they meet together outside. Probably what happened in Lystra and how the pagans saw what happened and misunderstood.

In the Jail – Paul and Silas pray and sing hymns and the prisoners listen: but they do not preach to them! The pagan prisoners only overhear. Paul stops the man from killing himself. Then the man asks, “What must I do to be saved?” And *then* Paul speaks to him. “Be ready to give a reason for the hope you have within to those who ask!” This is the second pagan conversion – and like the first (Paulus) Paul did not seek him out, but only spoke to him when questioned.

Acts 17 – Thessalonica – they go to the synagogue. To Berea – they go to the synagogue. In Athens – Paul is grieved by all the idols *so he goes to the synagogue to talk with the “Jews and devout persons”*, and to the marketplaces with whomever is there. Who are these folks who are there? The Jews and devout persons. And how do we know? Because of the δέ at the start of v. 18 indicating a change in subject, “But, some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him.” Paul did not seek them out, they overheard and conversed (questioned) him as he sat in the marketplace working his trade and talking with Jews and God-fearing Greeks who came up to him. And then they take him to the Areopagus! He did not seek out a pagan audience, they overheard, asked, and then take him there. A few of these pagans believe at the end of chapter 17. Paul does not freak out that many more do not believe, he does not change his preaching to accommodate or contextualize it to them, he doesn't lose sleep that more don't believe, etc. [Also note – God has arranged time and places. This goes back to Romans 1, 2, and 10: they have heard by God's arrangement. No excuse. FC SD XI.57-58: Lack of the Word of God in a nation is a punishment from God, not a mistake.]

Acts 18 – He reasoned in Corinth in the synagogue trying to persuade Jews and (devout) Greeks. At Ephesus – he goes to the synagogue to reason with the Jews.

Acts 19 – some disciples found who only know John's baptism. He continues preaching in the synagogue, and when he is tossed out, they start a church and that is where Paul preaches. The Sons of Sceva use the name of Jesus in exorcism and the demons testify and people hear of Jesus and believe – again, not through Paul's seeking them out. And now, even though Paul has not sought out to preach to pagans at all in Ephesus or anywhere in Asia, the Word has done its trick, and many of the elect have been called from Paganism and its hurting the Artemis trade: the riot.

Acts 20 – Paul visits some of the churches and preaches on Sunday to them.

Acts 21 – In Jerusalem

Acts 22 – Speech to the rioting Jews. Does not preach to the Roman tribune who does not ask him.

Acts 23 – Paul breaks up the Sanhedrin. Escapes.

Acts 24 – Felix and Drusilla ask for catechesis and receive it.

Acts 25 & 26 – Paul called upon to testify before Agrippa.

Acts 27 – On the ship. Paul is treated kindly by the Roman officers and in turn gives them advice. But he never preaches to them. When he does speak to them, it is only to tell them that God has told them they won't die but crash the ship on an island. No preaching of the Gospel.

Acts 28 – On Malta – the snake bites him, the natives watch, he doesn't die, they think he's a god. And Paul never preaches to them. Paul does some healing – the people honor them, but no preaching is narrated. “He lived there two whole years. . . and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ.”

C. So what about All Things to All Men that I Might Save Some?

I hope by now we can see some more context to this often quoted, but misunderstood passage from Paul. Just as Romans 10 (how will they hear) is often misunderstood by stopping the quotation too soon (they have heard!), so also here

Depends on which syllable you put the emphasis. That I might save *some*. Parallel with 2 Tim 2:10: my ministry is for the sake *of the elect*. With all those uses of the verb *save* in the Scriptures – here, and I was saved by your prayers, and even Baptism now saves you – the verb is used in an instrumental sense. Christ saves us. That's the absolute. Baptism only saves by connecting to Christ. Prayers saves because of Him who hears (and remember: he hears and knows what you need even before you ask). Baptism is the means by which Christ comes – and Paul is the means by which the means by which Christ comes comes.

So read that again. He's not saying that by his efforts at least a few folks will be saved. He's saying that at least *I* might be the one to bring these gifts to *some*. This passage is specifically about the Gentile believer, Jewish believer divide. As we've just seen, Paul never sought out opportunities to seek pagans. He did not start coffee bars, or *tabernae* as the Romans called them, to draw in the pagans so that they might hear a message tailored to pagan ears. This is not what he meant by becoming all things to all men. He just meant that he lived according to Jewish cultural law among Jews and according to Greek cultural norms among Greeks. In other words: If you live in NE, prepare to root for the Huskers.

C. When People Leave, or don't believe the Word

This theology – that God has his elect, and that God works through his Word when and where he pleases, causes a very different outlook in regard to “failure.” What if you preach and nobody listens? What if everybody leaves? In our day and age, you will probably be told to get better at preaching, get snazzier music, or follow some other fad. But how do Jesus and Paul react to “failure”?

John 6 again.

I Jn 2:18-19, “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”

And again Acts 13:48.

Aside: Elect Angels

1Ti 5:21 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

SUMMARY AND TRANSITION TO NEXT HOUR

So your ministry is to the elect. Where are they? In the pews, in the hospital beds, on the list of the baptized. The Word itself will get out and draw in the rest of the elect. Really. Christians will be Christians, people will wonder and ask, they will give the reason for the hope they have within, and the elect will believe it and come to the Church. God has got things under control. So the question is not what draws in Americans or people in my neighborhood or seekers or unbelievers – the question is how to care for and how to draw the elect. Your target audience is not a bunch of pagans or Americans, but rather the elect. And God draws them in, not you and your skills and wits. And he draws them in by his Word, not promises of cars being raffled off or by tips for successful living.

One last scene will sum up the difference between the NT's picture of outreach and ours. Saint Polycarp was old enough to have known the apostles. And boy does he have their style. Imagine the scene. You are arrested for preaching Christ. You are drawn before a whole crowd of pagans in the amphetheatre. What an opportunity for witness! What a chance to give a sermon, to reach out to the lost! Let's listen in on what happens when Polycarp is brought into the arena.

The Martyrdom of Polycarp, chapter 9

But as Polycarp entered into the stadium, a voice came to him from heaven; 'Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man.' And no one saw the speaker, but those of our people who were present heard the voice. And at length, when he was brought up, there was a great tumult, for they heard that Polycarp had been apprehended. When then he was brought before him, the proconsul enquired whether he were the man. And on his confessing that he was, he tried to persuade him to a denial saying, 'Have respect to thine age,' and other things in accordance therewith, as it is their wont to say; 'Swear by the genius of Caesar; repent and say, Away with the atheists.' Then Polycarp with solemn countenance looked upon the whole multitude of lawless heathen that were in the stadium, and waved his hand to them; and groaning and looking up to heaven he said, 'Away with the atheists.' But when the magistrate pressed him hard and said, 'Swear the oath, and I will release thee; revile the Christ,' Polycarp said, 'Fourscore and six years have I been His servant, and He hath done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?' [Chapter 10] But on his persisting again and saying, 'Swear by the genius of Caesar,' he answered, 'If thou supposest vainly that I will swear by the genius of Caesar, as thou sayest, and feignest that thou art ignorant who I am, hear thou plainly, I am a Christian. But if thou wouldest learn the doctrine of Christianity, assign a day and give me a hearing.' The proconsul said; 'Prevail upon the people.' But Polycarp said; 'As for thyself, I should have held thee worthy of discourse; for we have been taught to render, as is meet, to princes and authorities appointed by God such honor as does us no harm; but as for these, I do not hold them worthy, that I should defend myself before them.'