

This book is a study on biblical election. It deals with God's sovereignty, the question of free will, and how they inter-relate. The Bible has thought provoking answers to these, as well as other intriguing questions.

# Did God Choose Me?

## A Study on Biblical Election

by Steven D. Rhodes

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The background of the cover is a photograph of a stone path made of irregular, light-colored stones. The path leads from the foreground into a hazy, mountainous landscape under a soft, golden light. The overall tone is warm and contemplative.

# Did God

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# CHOOSE ME?

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A STUDY ON BIBLICAL ELECTION



Steven D. Rhodes

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## Introduction

This study takes a look at what the Bible teaches on the subject of God choosing (electing) His believers. What does the Bible really say in the first place, and what are the implications of what it means to me as His follower? Many questions arise in this age-old discussion: do I exercise my will, or is everything predetermined? Do I have a “free” will? Is God truly sovereign? What does that sovereignty look like? Am I just a puppet with God pulling the strings? Can I truly love God if my will isn’t really “free”? What is God’s “foreknowledge” and how does that play out in my salvation? How much of a player am I really in my own salvation? These are difficult questions to be sure.

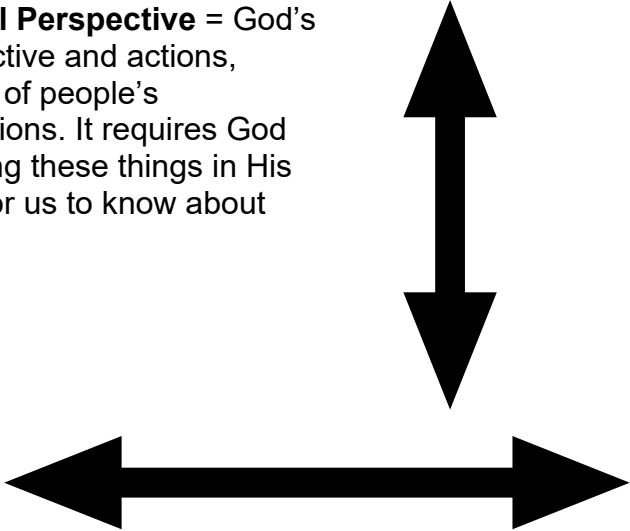
Our understanding of this subject will have far reaching implications on other major teachings of the Scriptures. We’ll look at several Bible doctrines that come into play. It’s important to first see what the Bible strictly says before we jump ahead and start making broad conclusions.

## **Perspectives**

We'll see in this study that God's Word approaches these issues from different perspectives, both from God's perspective, as well as mankind's.

Here is an illustration that helps me see how I view my experiences in life as opposed to how God views them. This is particularly helpful when considering the area of salvation.

**Vertical Perspective** = God's perspective and actions, outside of people's perceptions. It requires God revealing these things in His Word for us to know about them.



**Horizontal Perspective** = Mankind's perspectives and actions. The exercising of people's will and choices as they participate in life and relationships.



## Horizontal Perspective

First, let's examine the horizontal perspective. Where can we see this perspective dealt with in the scriptures?

Here we see the human responsibility for believing, as well as for *not* believing:

Matthew 21:32

"For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him."

John 3:18

"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

In these verses we see Jesus appealing to people's will and choice, expecting a response:

Mark 1:14-15

Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

John 1:7

He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him.

In these verses we see people responding using their minds, senses, and reasoning:

John 4:41-42

Many more believed because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."

John 14:29

"Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe."

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John 20:31

but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Here we clearly see the Philippian jailor making a choice and responding to the gospel (along with his family):

Acts 16:30-34

and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

We could examine many more passages that have multiple examples of these same kinds of appeals and responses. The people in these many examples

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clearly exercise their wills, make real choices, and are held responsible for those choices.

## The Gospel

In addition to this, we must be prepared to share the gospel message with people as the opportunity presents itself. God, through the apostle Paul, gave us a clear presentation of the necessary substance of the message:

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

When we share the message of Christ, we must make sure that we actually use the Word of God. The power is in the Word:

Isaiah 55:11

So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

We must be clear; people have a sin problem that brings consequences:

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Ezekiel 18:4

"Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die."

Jeremiah 17:9

"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?"

John 3:19

"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil."

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Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Even though we all are sinners, and thus all condemned, we have hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Who exactly does the Bible say Jesus Christ actually is?

We see that He is **with**, and **is**, the creator God:

John 1:1-3, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

We see Jesus Christ also became a man, as much of a physical person as you or me, yet sinless:

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Philippians 2:5-8

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Roughly 700 years before Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the Bible tells of what Jesus would accomplish for us:

Isaiah 53

Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him,



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nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due? His grave was assigned with wicked

men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.

Christ was our substitute, paying the price for our sin on the cross. He was also bodily resurrected victorious over death three days later. He provided the way to have a right relationship with God by satisfying the righteous demands of God's holiness. God's **grace** offered this relationship and eternal life to us. *Grace* is God's *favor* extended to us. By

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definition this grace is unmerited. God's method in applying this grace to each individual is through **faith**. *Faith* is the placing of a person's complete belief and trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross:

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

There is nothing we can do to earn or attract this relationship and eternal life from God:

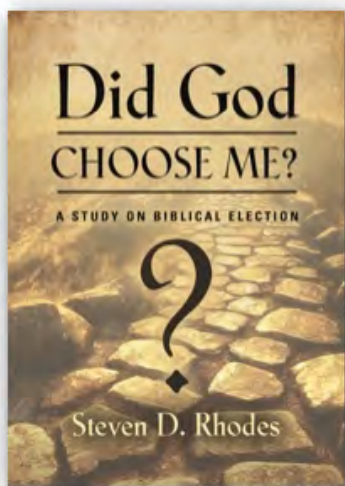
Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

To attempt to **add** to the work of Christ on the cross is to **deny** its sufficiency. Another way of putting it: to **add** anything to the sacrifice of Christ is to **reject** the sacrifice of Christ. Our salvation was obtained through the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.... plus nothing.

The question all of us must ask: where is my faith being placed today? Is the faith for my eternal destiny in myself? In my goodness? In my ability to save myself? Is it in a human leader? A church founder? A particular denomination?.... or is it securely in Jesus Christ alone?

It's easy for us to end the discussion of our choice and the exercising of our will at this point (the horizontal perspective). However, we must be thorough enough to honestly ask the question: is there any more to our choosing to believe the gospel than just this type of perspective? Does the Bible reveal any more of a "behind the scenes" look than we've seen so far? Does God have any kind of active part in our believing, or is it just solely up to us? It's time to look at this subject from God's viewpoint.



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