

God's Pleasure in Election

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[0:00] Well, this morning we come to the fifth chapter of John Piper's book, The Pleasures of God. And this chapter is entitled, The Pleasure of God in Election. And it's the premise of this book that one of the best ways that we can come to know anyone, but specifically how we can come to know God better is if we can find out what He delights in.

But even more than that, I think where this book is driving us to is more than just an objective knowledge of God so that we understand, yes, God likes this and God delights in that, but we want to be able to join Him in His delights.

Because really that is what every friendship, every relationship is centered around, is the things that we enjoy and that we delight together in.

And so as we see all these delights that God has in different aspects, we want to bring our hearts in line with His heart. Because if we can be delighting in the same things that He is delighting in, then our friendship with God, our relationship with God, has an opportunity to grow and it will grow as we come together and as we think with God of how wonderful these different things are.

And so, try to get past just the objective and dive into what we have in common with God.

[1:36] And that's His delight in His name and His creation and His Son. And today we're going to be talking about election. Well, we have three major points this morning.

And the first one is this, that it's good for us to think about election. It's good for us to think about election. The doctrine of election is a controversial one.

Some people would say it's better not to talk about it at all. Well, many pastors out there believe it, but because it would cause controversy, they skip over it in the preaching or they don't talk about it very clearly.

And what we want to do here today is say that, you know what, it's good for us to have it out in the open to talk about election. Some people think it's sort of like religion and politics in the office.

It's just better left alone. And they would ask, well, wouldn't it be better to talk about some things that all Christians agree on? Well, the problem with that is you're going to have a really hard time finding one topic that all Christians agree on.

[2:53] And especially as you look through the history of the church, we have to shop in the market of controversy because everything has been controversial at one point or another.

And really the bottom line is the doctrine of election is too good to pass up. It's too nourishing for us as Christians. We need it too much to skip over it because some people find it controversial.

They don't like it. So the doctrine of election is good for us. And I just want to have basically three stories. I want to talk about George Mueller and what he found and Charles Spurgeon and what he found.

And then I'm going to ask you guys, what have you found to be good? How has thinking and coming to know the doctrine of election, the doctrine of grace, the doctrines of grace been good for you?

Well, you've heard of George Mueller. He built the orphanages in England and he was very famous for never asking for anything. He prayed for everything. And lots of people know that about him.

[4:00] He was a man of prayer. But they don't really understand the doctrine that upheld that life of faith. And it was the solid doctrines of experiential Calvinism, of Calvinism.

And it was coming to understand those doctrines that set him on a life-changing path. It decided a lot of what he would do and how he would think. And so listen to his autobiography, his account of what happened to him in 1829.

At this time, he's 24 years old. And he writes this. Before this period, I had been much opposed to the doctrines of election, particular redemption, and final persevering grace.

[5:17] As to the effect which my belief in these doctrines had on me, I am constrained to state for God's glory that though I am still exceedingly weak and by no means so dead to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life as I might be, as I ought to be, yet by the grace of God I have walked more closely with Him since that period.

And his Christian life took on more stability, more maturity. Well, Charles Spurgeon found the same thing to be true.

He grew up in one day. And it happened like this. This is probably one of the best first sentences that you're ever going to hear here. One weeknight, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher's sermon, for I did not believe it.

And the truth flashed across my mind in a moment. I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him. I prayed, thought I.

I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all. And that He was the author of my faith.

[7:45] So you see how Spurgeon argued with himself as a 16-year-old, not listening to a sermon because he doesn't believe what the guy is saying, and saying, well, how did I become a Christian?

God opened my heart. God was at the bottom of it all. And he said, that evening, not listening to the sermon, he grew from a babe to a man.

Well, that's Mueller's story. Mueller found stability. Spurgeon found maturity by believing these things. And now let me ask you, and this could be, I want to, I really do want to hear what you people say.

How so? Well, okay, I came across the church when God was calling the church to the church to the church. The church was calling the church to the church to the church.

And I thought, God, show me the news and show me the news for this purpose. And I said, I don't know why you show me the news because I have all the news that you know the news and that's my heart the whole way and that's my view and the news.

[10:10] I'd love to hear. Amen. Amen.

[illegible]

And he sees that they're going to believe. And so before time, he chooses them. We're not going to go into that issue. We didn't have time.

But we're just going to simply look at a few passages from Deuteronomy and from Romans that shows that God delights. The election that God delights in is unconditional election.

So turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 7. And we're going to read verses 6 through 8. So the first two passages, we're talking about God's choice of Israel.

[21 : 18] And that is a picture of God's choice for the church, for all of his people that he saves. Deuteronomy chapter 7, verse 6.

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples. For you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

So verse 7 says, The Lord chose Israel out of all the peoples of the earth. And that raises a question that he answers. The question is, why did God choose them?

And in verse 8, there's an answer. It's a negative answer. Why didn't God choose them?

[22 : 31] What was not the reason behind it? Look at it there. Verse 7, sorry. Right.

He didn't choose them because they were more numerous. But, you were the fewest of all the peoples. So, it wasn't because of that.

Now, in the middle, or in verse, in the verse 8, Moses gives two positive reasons. And the first one, you see there.

You have reason number one, but it was because the Lord loved you. Because the Lord loved you. That should make you pause and think for a second.

What was the question again? The question is, why did the Lord love you and choose you? And the answer is, the Lord loved you. So, the Lord loved you because He loved you.

[23 : 37] He loved you because He loved you. Well, what is that? Well, that's free, sovereign, unconditional election.

God loves His people, not because of anything in them, but because He loves them. And, He loves us because He loves us.

Ephesians said it, in love, He predestined us. And naturally, we want more. And we say, but, but, you know, there has to be some reason that He would have chosen us.

I mean, you can't, you can't boil it down, you can't, that statement, He loved us because He loved us, that, that isn't good enough. Why did He love us? And, the, the Bible, that's the answer the Bible gives.

Because, at, when you boil it all down, what Moses is saying is, it doesn't boil down, His choice doesn't boil down to something in Israel.

[24 : 41] It boils down to something in God's own heart. He loves us because He loved us. And why did He love us? I think it was Mickey said, I don't know why.

We don't know why. But that is His free choice to love us. And then, but someone will say, well, if you look at the next reason, obviously, God wasn't completely free to choose because He, He had to fulfill His oath to Abraham.

He chose them because of the oath that I swore to you, He swore to your forefathers. So, is God's choice somehow bound? I don't think so.

Let me ask you, why not? So, there's this thing. God has to fulfill His oath to Abraham. Why doesn't that take away God's freedom in choosing Israel?

Does that make sense? Why is God still free? Think about that. That's very good.

[25 : 53] Yeah. He didn't have to make any oath with Abraham. So, He's not bound by anything in Abraham. Remember, Abraham was worshiping idols across the river when God took Him out of Ur.

And, secondly, God never had to choose this particular group of Israelites, this particular children of Abraham to fulfill His oath to Abraham.

There was Ishmael and there was Esau and there were other children and God didn't choose them. And, furthermore, remember on Mount Sinai, God said, God was angry with him and He told Moses, I'm going to destroy this people and start over with you.

And, if that would have happened, God still would have been faithful to Abraham. And, so, God is totally free in election.

He's totally free in election. He loves us because He loves us. Now, turn over to chapter 10 and look at verse 14. verse 14 and 15.

[27:09] To the Lord your God belongs the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the Lord set His affection on your forefathers and loved them. And here, literally, it's, yet the Lord loved your fathers to love them.

And He chose you their descendants above all the nations as it is today. Now, this passage is interesting because of the contrast between verse 14 and verse 15.

You see at the beginning of verse 15, it's that word, yet. Yet. So, to the Lord belongs the heavens. And yet, the Lord set His affection on your forefathers and loved them.

So, Moses is saying, well, what is Moses saying? He's saying, I didn't choose you, Israel, because you were the only one I had. I didn't choose Israel because, well, that was the only people that belonged to me.

He's saying, I own heaven and I own earth. I own all the peoples in the earth. It wasn't like my choice was determined because there was only one for me to pick and so I picked them.

[28:21] He said, I own it all. And yet, above all the other nations, I chose you. And so, the same thing is true for us. When God chose us, it wasn't like we were the only ones He had to choose from.

We weren't the only ones. It's only because of His free, sovereign love that He chose us. He loved to love us. And then, let's turn to Romans chapter 9.

And in this passage, Paul makes it crystal clear that election is unconditional. We need to put this in context.

And the context is verse 6. It's not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. And so, in Romans 9, Paul is imagining someone saying, okay, Israel has rejected Jesus.

And if they've rejected Jesus, doesn't that mean that all of God's promises to Israel, all of His word to Israel has failed? And Paul answers and says, it's not that way.

[29:45] Because, all who are Israel are not Israel. All who are descended from Israel are not Israel. And in the next verses, he's going to tell you that it's not physical Israel that receives the promises of God.

It's the Israel that God chooses. And so, let's look at verse 10. Not only that, but Rebecca's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac.

Yet before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose and election might stand, not by works, but by Him who calls, she was told, the older will serve the younger.

Just as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. So here's Jacob and Esau. So here's Jacob and Esau. They have the same father.

They have the same mother. They're twins. And in order that God's purpose and election might stand, not by works, but by Him who calls, she was told that the older will serve the younger.

[30:55] So what made the difference between Jacob and Esau? It isn't by works, but it's by Him who calls.

So God's purpose is the only reason you were chosen and someone else wasn't. It was unconditional election before they had done anything good or bad.

But isn't that unfair? Isn't that unfair? And that's what someone objects.

Verse 14. What shall we say then? Is God unjust? Not at all. For He says to Moses, I have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

Therefore, or it does not therefore depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. So God's election of sinners is a free choice, is a sovereign act, and it doesn't begin in man's works or man's desires or man's effort.

[32:00] He chose to love us because He loved us. And it didn't begin with me believing before I had done anything, good or bad. He set His love on me.

And so, it is that kind of unconditional election that the Bible talks about and it's that kind of unconditional election that God delights in.

And that leads us to the third point. Why does God delight in election? Why does He love this system, this way that He's decided to do things? Why does He love that it boils down to Him and not to us? Why does He love to love us? There's a number of answers.

And the first is that it confounds man's pride, like some of you said, and it confounds man's man-centered expectations.

[33:00] It confounds man's pride and his man-centered expectations. So, on Tuesday, we just had an election. And let me ask you, what kind of people were chosen?

And, I'm not saying, tell me liars and frauds and things like that. I'm saying, on the whole, what do all these people have in common?

Republican or Democrat? What do they all have in common? Most of them. Almost all of them. They're politicians.

Okay. What about them? Why did we choose them? There's some kind of charisma or leadership ability.

What else? There's some character. There's hopefully a character. You know what?

[33:59] They're all fairly well-spoken. You know? I don't think anyone got up there and spoke and they were stammering and muttering and you couldn't hear them and everyone's like, oh, I'll choose that one.

No, they were well-spoken. They were intelligent. They, you know, were accomplished. They were even wealthy. They were good-looking.

And like it or not, that's how our world works. That's how people are chosen.

You're wealthy. You're good-looking. You're accomplished. You're intelligent. There you go. We'll choose you. And we choose people who have reasons to be proud.

And we choose folks who will hopefully amount to something. But when God chooses who He's going to save, it works just the opposite.

[34:57] And thankfully, it does. The Corinthian church had too much of the world in them. The Corinthian church had their eyes set on these people, on the wealthy, on the people that had something good to be said about them.

And they're rich. They're powerful. And they're in love with these people. And Paul says, are you out of your mind? Brothers, think of what you were when you were called.

Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many were influential. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not. That's us. Things that are not. So that no one may boast before Him.

Why does God choose who He chooses? Well, He wants to shame people. He wants to bring down man's pride. And just think about how much boasting God has to put up with every day.

[36:16] And so, human pride, it reeks. There's no justification for it. And yet, we put it on, the first thing that we do in the morning, we put on our pride. And it stinks.

It's the most appalling, wretched pile of garbage in the universe. And every one of us has it. And it just goes up before God's nose all day long. We're always boasting and preening and showing our accomplishments.

But then when God swoops in and He says, that's not how it's going to be in my kingdom. He takes the foolish and the weak and the nothings and He chooses them to make them into something.

And when He does that, man's pride is thrown down. And all of man's expectations about who's important, who's the good people, it's thrown down.

And God alone gets the glory. And this ties into what we talked about last time, last week, that God loves and delights in His name. And He chooses people who will make Him a name, who will make Him famous.

[37:20] And so in election, God makes a name for Himself while humbling the pride of men. And He loves to do that. The second reason, why does God delight in election? Because it glorifies His grace.

It glorifies His grace. Why are you saved and your sister isn't? Why are you saved and your neighbor isn't?

Well, trace it back and you see that it all goes back to God's grace. The only reason you're saved is because God had mercy on you.

Therefore, it does not depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy, Romans 9 said. In love, He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with His pleasure and will to the praise of His glorious grace.

And so, God's unconditional election of wretched sinners magnifies His grace. And so, when you're standing in Jesus Christ and you're forgiven and you've been adopted and you ask yourself, how can this be?

[38:41] How did I get here? Well, the answer is, well, I didn't deserve this. I did nothing to deserve it, but God chose me.

I was dead in my transgression and sins, and He chose me and loved me and saved me.

Everything I have is because of His grace. And so, God loves when men sing amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

When we sing that with a heart that is humble before Him and that is exalting in His grace, He takes delight in that. So, instead of the garbage pile of pride coming up before Him, you have this humble sacrifice of praise.

And He loves to bring that about. And that's how, that's what election does. And third and finally, this is for your comfort. God delights in unconditional election because it opens us up.

It opens our hearts as believers to experience His personal love for us. Now, many people think that God, they think, they only think of God's love in terms of, well, He offers and He waits.

[40:08] He offers salvation, now He waits for sinners. But, the Bible says that He goes out and He calls people and He brings them. He accomplishes something and He takes us for Himself.

He takes us for Himself. And so, God does have this general love for humanity that the Bible talks about. But God has a special love for His people.

And He loves each of His people with electing, choosing, taking, love. And He takes us for Himself and that kind of love, it makes all the difference.

It's the difference between telling my wife, you know what, hon, I love everyone in this room and therefore that means I love you. And telling her, you know what, I love you in a way that I don't love anyone else in this room.

They don't have anything. You're the special one. You're the treasure. treasure. And when God does that, He chooses us.

[41:17] He doesn't do it glumly. He doesn't take it. He doesn't elect us sadly, you know, like I have to choose this person. It is like a husband choosing a wife.

And when a husband chooses a wife, he chooses a treasure for himself. And no one ever is sad about taking a treasure. And God is not sad about making us His treasure.

He does it with all of His heart. He does it with all of the enthusiasm and delight and joy that God has. And He has it for you as a believer. And that's how He feels towards you every day.

Of every minute, of every day, He loves you with a personal love. Not just a general love. He loves you and rejoices over you with singing.

And that kind of love feels different. It feels magnificent. And when you see that and when you feel that in your life, that changes everything.

[42:23] When your heart is there, when you're seeing that, you know what, God loved me, He chose me, He gave Himself up for me, when that, it becomes personal. Well, then you begin to live differently.

You begin to have joy and peace like never before. And that's why God loves unconditional election. Because it wins our hearts to Him.

When we see that, we're His. We belong to Him now because He's won us. His love has taken us. And so we gladly give ourselves to Him.

And so brothers and sisters, God didn't choose you because you were something. He chose you because He loved you.

And He loved you when all He could see in you was sin and death. And He chose you with great delight. And so He loved to love you. And so we should love and delight in Him in return.

[43:23] Because that's what His electing love is for, to win our hearts to Him. So let's go and do that. We're dismissed. We're dismissed.