



## Formula of Concord Session Nine: Election and Predestination

- Does God choose us to be saved? Does that mean He chose others to be condemned?
- If God has predestined his elect, doesn't that make our own decisions and actions meaningless?
- At first glance, is this a very important distinction/argument? Why or why not?

### Election and Predestination: Status

*No public disagreement has arisen among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession about this article. But since election is a comforting article – if treated properly – and to prevent offensive disputes about it in the future, it is also explained in this writing. (Ep XI.1, p.496)*

### Election and Predestination: Affirmative and Negative Statements

*To begin with, the distinction between God's foreknowledge and His eternal predestination ought to be kept accurately.*

*God's foreknowledge is nothing else than this: God knows all things before they happen... This foreknowledge extends over the godly and the wicked alike. But it is not the cause of evil or of sin. In other words, it is not what causes people to do wrong (which originally arises from the devil and mankind's wicked, perverse will). Nor does it cause their ruin, for which they themselves are responsible. (Ep XI.1-4, p.498)*

- **Read and discuss:** Psalm 139:16; Isaiah 37:28; Matthew 10:29; Psalm 5:4; Hosea 13:9

*Predestination, or God's eternal election, covers only the godly, beloved children of God. It is a cause of their salvation, which He also provides. He plans what belongs to it as well. Our salvation is founded so firmly on it that the gates of hell cannot overcome it.*

*It is not to be investigated in God's secret counsel. It is to be sought in God's word, where it is revealed.*

*God's Word leads us to Christ, who is the Book of Life, in whom all are written and elected who are to be saved in eternity. (Ep XI.4-6, p.498)*

- **Read and discuss:** John 10:27-30, Acts 13:48

*The Scriptures teach this doctrine only to direct us to the word, to encourage repentance and godliness, and to strengthen faith and assure us of our salvation (SD XI.12 p.604)*

- **Read and discuss:** John 15:3; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 3:36



*We should not reach conclusions about our election to eternal life based on reason or God's Law. That would lead us either into a reckless, loose, Epicurean life or into despair. It would stir up destructive thoughts in people's hearts. For they cannot, as long as they follow their reason, keep themselves from thinking, "If God has elected me to salvation, I cannot be condemned, no matter what I do." And again, "If I am not elected to eternal life, it doesn't matter what good I do; it is all in vain anyway." (Ep. XI.9 p.498)*

- **Consider:** this danger has been addressed in regards to what other doctrines/disputes?

*If we want to think about our eternal election to salvation helpfully, we must in every way hold strongly and firmly to this truth: just as the preaching of repentance is universal, so also the promise of the Gospel is universal, that is, it belongs to all people. [see Scriptures listed on page 606].*

*It is not as though God said: "Outwardly, through the Word, I indeed call all of you to My kingdom, everyone to whom I give my Word. However, in My heart I do not mean this for everyone, but only for a few. For it is My will that most of those whom I call through the Word shall not be enlightened or converted. Instead, they shall be and remain damned, even though I explain Myself differently to them through the Word, in the call." For this would be to assign contradictory wills to God." (SD XI.28,34 p.606-7)*

*The reason why not all who hear the Word believe, and some are therefore deeply condemned, is not because God had begrudged them their salvation. It is their own fault. They have heard the Word in such a way as not to lean, but only to despise, blaspheme, and disgrace it. (SD XI.78 p.613)*

- **Read and discuss:** Matthew 22:1-14

*If we abide by this teaching and cling to it, it is a very useful, saving, consoling teaching.*

*[1] It establishes very effectively the article that we are justified and saved without any works and merits of ours, purely out of grace alone, for Christ's sake. Before the time of the world, before we existed, yes, even before the foundation of the world was laid – when, of course, we could do nothing good – we were chosen by grace in Christ to salvation, according to God's purpose...*

*[2] This doctrine also provides the excellent, glorious consolation that God was greatly concerned about the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian...*

*[3] This doctrine provides glorious consolation under the cross and amid temptations. In other words, God in his counsel, before the time of the world, determined and decreed that He would assist us in all distresses...*

*[4] This article provides a glorious testimony that God's Church will exist and abide in opposition to all the gates of hell. (SD XI.43-50 p.608-9)*

- **Read and discuss:** Romans 8:28-30