

Question: How can I overcome my lack of assurance and struggle over the issue of election?

Answer: First of all, I want you to have every confidence that you ARE a child of God. The Apostle John writes, “But as many as received Him [Jesus], to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12). This verse, along with over 150 others, teaches belief as the sole condition for salvation. Therefore, since you have believed in Jesus and his work on the cross, you can be fully assured that you will spend eternity with Him (e.g. Luke 10:20; John 13:10; Rom 8:31-39; 2 Pet 1:1; 1 John 2:12-14, 25; 5:13).

Second, your eternal Father will NEVER reject you. The Bible assures us through multiple promises that God’s love for us is unconditional and eternal. Just reflect on the following verses:

- “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one” (John 10:27-30).
- “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:37-40).
- “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38-39).
- “This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim 2:11-13).
- “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Heb 13:5b).

In these five passages, God’s Word teaches us several important truths: (1) If we have believed in Jesus, we have eternal life and nothing or no one can snatch us out of Jesus’ hand or God’s hand. (2) Jesus will not cast out any believer because it is God’s express will that He not lose one single believer. (3) There is nothing in this entire world that can separate us from God’s love. (4) Even if we deny Christ or are unfaithful to Him, God will still love us and remain faithful to us.

Third, God’s love for you is GREAT! David writes, “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him for He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust” (Ps 103:8-14). God has a heart of compassion for us that is incomprehensible. Where our earthly fathers have failed, God has succeeded. God’s love for us makes that of the best earthly father seem like hate (Luke 11:13; Eph 3:18-20).

Fourth, God's great love for you led Him to FORE-LOVE you. Paul writes, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29-30). The Bible teaches the profound truth that God foreknew you. The word "foreknow" means to love beforehand. For reasons known only to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God chose you (and many others) to believe in Christ. Romans 9:6-23 teaches that God chose us regardless of our own merit. He did this so that no one could ever boast and salvation might be "to the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:3-14).

Please notice the verse that follows Romans 8:29: "Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." Romans 8:30 shares a concept that has been called "The Unbreakable Chain." In this verse, all four verbs are accomplished facts (see the past tense endings). Therefore, as far as God is concerned, we are already glorified. This insight should comfort our souls and bring great confidence to our Christian lives.

Fifth, the goal of election is to GLORIFY. The doctrine of election ensures that man cannot boast in his/her salvation. If salvation is wholly God's sovereign work, man is the beneficiary, not the cause. This means that no person has been, or ever will be, saved as a result of sincerity, desire, or righteousness. God chooses individuals and sovereignly calls them to Himself. It is then man's responsibility to merely believe. It is only through simple belief so that salvation cannot be considered a work (Rom 4:5). If baptism, church membership, public confession, or any other work were necessary, salvation would not be by faith alone. Therefore, man could contribute something to the salvation process. Yet the Scriptures make it clear that salvation is by God's grace through faith (e.g. Luke 18:13-14; John 3:16; Rom 4:5; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

Sixth, the purpose of election is to COMFORT believers. One need not be thinking or worrying about election or accepting that God loves you and would choose you. I can confidently say that God never intended for a person to wrestle with this issue. I will go so far as to say that God does not want us to worry about election. Rather, if a person has placed his/her faith in Christ, they are "elect." The simple truth is, biblical writers use the doctrine of election as a way to comfort believers who are being persecuted and experiencing other trials (e.g. 1 Pet 1:2).

The story is told of a man who had always wrestled with the concept of election. As he walked through the pearly gates of heaven, he noticed a banner above his head that read, "Whosoever will may come" (Rev 22:17). After walking past the banner, the man turned back only to notice the words on the other side, which read, "chosen before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4).

Finally, there are many difficult passages in the Scriptures. I will be the first to acknowledge this truth. That's why I have so diligently studied these difficult passages (2 Tim 2:15). You referred to Matthew 7:21. Indeed, that is a verse that is frequently used to strike fear regarding assurance, of many legitimate believers. Here is my response to this passage:

We must note that Jesus is NOT talking about believers. The context makes this clear. Jesus is speaking about false prophets (see verse 15ff). These false prophets are not believers; they are unbelievers who do religious works. Yet, as we have already seen, works have nothing to do with salvation. The only "work" that we are responsible for, as it pertains to salvation, is simple belief. When asked the question, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:28-29). The reason that these false prophets will not be admitted into heaven is because they trusted in their works and not in Jesus.