



Evangelism and election: Is there an answer to the challenges?

Pieter Verster
Emeritus Professor of Missiology, and Research Associate
University of the Free State, South Africa
Email: versterp@ufs.ac.za

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.1046>

Abstract

It is always a challenge to review the relation between evangelism and election. Biblical views are essential. Important exponents of evangelism such as Bosch, Bevans and Schroeder, Christopher Wright, and Kirk are presented, but also the challenging view of Tutu. Especially Bosch's comprehensive view of evangelism is important. He explains that evangelism is not presenting the gospel to those in need to hear it again after rejecting it, but presenting the gospel of salvation to all. Calvin's view on election is always extremely important because of his views on election and rejection. He explains his view that God elects in freedom in Christ because He is the living God and that He has the right to reject those who are not in Christ because of their sins. Ephesians 1 and Romans 9 call for intensive scrutiny in this regard. Election is always *in* Christ, and one should emphasise the mercy and love of God. Evangelism and election go together, for both proclaim the glory of God in his love. The call to come and convert to God in evangelism is essential for the church. Election and evangelism are about the love of God in Christ, the crucified and resurrected one. Therefore, the missional church should always proclaim new life in Christ in the future in God's mercy and love. Election and evangelism are not mutually exclusive but call for radically honouring the living God in his total redemption of humankind.

Keywords: Evangelism, election, hermeneutics, perspective, salvation in Christ

Introduction

It has always been an intensive question whether the view of eternal election by God rejects any personal decisions by people to commit their lives to God. Therefore, the value of evangelism in mission is also challenged. One should discuss the relations between evangelism and election. Evangelism has to do with the call to conversion in Christ. Election means that God elected those who are saved even before they have converted to Him. A biblical encounter with the way in which election is explained is necessary. It is also valuable to explain how God elects and what the meaning of the cross is in this regard. One should also engage the implications of evangelism in mission and the relation to free will in human beings. The relation between evangelism and mission is also important.

Methodology and research questions

The methodology in this article is to, first, engage literature on evangelism and election. Essential pericopes in the New Testament are then engaged. Exegetically and hermeneutically, the reformational view of Sacra Scripture *sui ipsius interpret est* is put forward. Scripture is its one



interpreter. Difficult pericopes are evaluated in light of clearer pericopes. The way to engage the texts is, first, to refer to the structure of the pericope; secondly, to refer to the important agents in the texts (Van Wolde, 1989); to regard the speech act implications of the pericope (Grice, 1989), and to examine possible narratological implications (Tolmie, 1999). Finally, conclusions on the relation between evangelism and election are suggested, and the theological implications are explained. The main research question is: If one takes eternal election seriously, is evangelism necessary and possible? What should be the way to engage evangelism in light of eternal election? What will be the solution to the different views on evangelism and eternal election? How should one enter into evangelism in light of the election?

Evangelism and mission

One should first explain the most essential aspects of evangelism, in order to establish the relation to mission and the implication of the eternal election in this regard. The implications of evangelism are regarded here from a protestant approach although Roman Catholic and Orthodox views are also taken into account. Bosch (1991:410ff) clearly explains the important aspects of evangelism. He explains, in a very definite way, how evangelism should be understood and that it is not possible to view evangelism in such a way as to regard it only as when evangelism has to do with bringing people, who already heard the Gospel and who have fallen, back to God. Evangelism is viewed as the essence of mission. Mission is wider than evangelism and more comprehensive (Bosch 1991:410). Therefore, he wants to explain the full understanding of evangelism and refers to many different aspects of evangelism. Bosch (1991:410-420) explains eighteen different aspects of evangelism.

- Mission is wider than evangelism.
- Evangelism should not be equated with mission.
- Evangelism may be viewed as an essential “dimension of the total activity of the church”.
- Evangelism involves witnessing to what God has done, is doing, and will do.
- Evangelism does aim at a response.
- Evangelism is always invitation.
- One who evangelises is a witness not a judge.
- Even though one ought to be modest about the character’s effectiveness for one’s witness, evangelism remains an indispensable ministry.
- Evangelism is only possible when the community being evangelised – the church – is a radiant manifestation of Christian faith and exhibits an attractive lifestyle.
- Evangelism offers people salvation as a present gift and, with it, assurance of eternal bliss.
- Evangelism is not proselytism.
- Evangelism is not the same as church extension.
- To distinguish between evangelism and membership recruitment is not to suggest that they are disconnected.
- In evangelism only “people can be addressed and only people can respond”.
- Authentic evangelism is always contextual.
- Because of this, evangelism cannot be divorced from the preaching and practising of justice.
- Evangelism is not the mechanism to hasten the return of Christ, as some suggest.
- Evangelism is not only verbal proclamation.

Bosch writes (1991:420):



In awareness of the essentially preliminary nature of our evangelistic ministry, yet at the same time conscious of the inescapable necessity to be involved in this ministry, we may, then, summarize evangelism as that dimension and activity of the church's mission which, by word and deed and in the light of particular conditions and a particular context, offers every person and community, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenge[d] to a radical reorientation of their lives, a reorientation which involves such things as deliverance from slavery to the world and its powers; embracing Christ as Savior and Lord; becoming a living member of his community, the church; being enlisted into his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth; and being committed to God's purpose of placing all things under the rule of Christ.

Secondly, Bevans and Schroeder (2006:286) also explain some very important constants in context that have implications for our understanding of both mission and evangelism. They refer to the history of the different Christian movements, and to the implications thereof. They explain that mission has much to do with the participation in the mission of the triune God. The *missio Dei* is, therefore, very important in the six constants of mission (Bevans & Schroeder, 2006:295). It is also very important that mission is a proclamation of Jesus Christ as universal Saviour (Bevans & Schroeder, 2006:323).

Bevans and Schroeder (2006:325) refer to evangelical documents, especially the Lausanne Covenant, to explain that they explicitly mention that evangelism has to do with the proclamation of Jesus as Lord and the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, the evangelical movement in his documents explains that mission is very urgent, and that Christ is the only Saviour.

Bevans and Schroeder (2006:340) explain that Catholic, Orthodox and evangelic Christians, and Protestant churches always understand the riches of the Trinitarian relation with the living God and that it has to do with proclaiming God's total rule over the world, and has to be understood as the radical implication of salvation. Bevans and Schroeder (2006:346) write:

The great advantage of this trend of missionary theology is to be found in its power to motivate Christians to undertake explicit evangelizing and cross-cultural missionary work. It is no accident that a majority of mission-orientated congregations and cross-cultural missionaries are Christians who belong to Evangelical or Pentecostal churches – and that these are the churches which are growing most rapidly today.

They, however, warn against the perspective that these churches are too strict and do not understand the glory of God in the religious life of those to whom they confess Christ as the only Saviour (Bevans & Schroeder 2006:347). In that sense, sometimes it can only become the status quo that is proclaimed.

Christopher Wright (2006:71) explains that the living God is the God of mission who makes himself known in Israel and in Christ. He confronts idolatry. Very important to him in this regard is that God is electing people so that they can be chosen for a blessing for all. Wright (2006:324) explains the scope of God's missional covenant, to which one must always turn to see that God is the God of the covenant, and that He calls people to him to live according to the covenant. He also refers to the new covenant that came about (Wright 2006:350). It was a new covenant of the people of different people from those who rejected the covenant of old and that there is prophetic hope in the new covenant, because it is a covenantal "yes" in Christ (Wright 2006:352).



Wright (2006:353) writes:

So for Jesus and the writers of the New Testament, the covenant was just as crucial to the way they thought of God's purpose for Israel as the certainty that Israel's God was the only living and true God and that Israel was God's elect. So, whether explicitly mentioned or not, we find covenantal realities in all the great fulfilment themes. And especially we find it in the extension of covenant membership to the nations, which was the underlying purpose of the missionary work of the church.

Therefore, mission has to do with the extension of God's glory to the nations through the covenant and through the covenant work of Christ. Therefore, mission is accomplished as climax of the covenant (Wright 2006:355).

Kirk (1999:38ff.) explains that mission has to do with the way of Jesus Christ. Jesus is extremely important to understand how mission should be understood; Jesus' public life and how he lived and what he did, his relationships with all the other people. He is deeply interested in the people on the margins of life, and he explains how they can be saved, and how they can be helped. Kirk (1999:55) writes:

In these and many other ways still to be explored, God's people express their faith in Jesus the Messiah. They will not be deluded into thinking that, even counting on the immense power of God (Luke 24:49), they will be able to mend the world. Rather, they are to show by the testimony of word and action that God has *not* left a disordered world to its own devices, to reap the consequences of its obstinate decision to turn its back on his gift of life. He is still concerned to service and repair a broken-down version of the world, showing that even the partial restoration to life can be like; though eventually a new model will be needed. He is fulfilling his purpose through the consecrated hands and minds of those who know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Kirk (1999:57) explains that evangelism is very important for this; the good news should be proclaimed. There is concern about evangelism. Some people wonder about the implications of evangelism, and others wonder whether it is still relevant and should still be communicated. Kirk (1999:60-62) emphasizes that it has to do with communication of the Gospel, that Jesus is Lord and that the good news has to be spread to all people. There should be radical actions towards the Gospel. The great peace of the Gospel should be proclaimed. He also elucidates that the message of salvation should also be proclaimed. That the good news comes forward, and the essence of the good news of Jesus as Lord as his salvation should be proclaimed so that the life that he gives, should be understood. The end of evangelism will come when all people raise their eyes and see the glory of God.

Kirk (1999:72) writes:

Evangelism is, then, a therapeutic task. The messengers of the Gospel are those who, by carefully listening to and experiencing both its message and the life in the world, are able to diagnose human predicament and prescribe the cure. Healing, however, can only take place once a person has properly heard the "bad news" – that the problem of sin cannot be remedied by human medicine or education, self-discipline or even the quest for spirituality; an aspirin is no cure for a cancerous growth.



A different perspective comes from Tutu (2011:3ff) who understands the relation of evangelism to justice, in the sense that everything must be related to justice. Therefore, he rejects the notion that one must proclaim that Christ is the only Lord to convert others, because mission and evangelism must not be regarded as the conversion of others to their faith. For him, God is not a Christian, but God is the God of all, and all can come to God. Evangelism and missionary work have always been regarded as in relation to justice and that everything has to do with justice. He also wants to proclaim that commitment to justice is true mission.

Tutu (2011:15) writes:

God rejoices that his human creatures, irrespective of race, culture, gender, or religious faith, are making exhilarating advances in science, art, music, ethics, philosophy, and law, apprehending with increasing ability the truth, the beauty, the goodness that emanate from him. And we should also join in the divine exaltation, rejoicing that there have been wonderful people such as Socrates, Aristotle, Herodotus, Hippocrates, Confucius, and others. Isn't it obvious that Christians do not have a monopoly on virtue, on intellectual capacity, on atheistic knowledge? And wonderfully, it does not matter ... What evidence do we have that Christians are better? Isn't it the evidence overwhelming in the opposite direction?

For Tutu (2011:16ff), it is clear that one must not regard salvation as only in Christ. One has to accept that God is also working in other religions. What is then the essence of evangelism and mission? It is to do justice and we all have to work together for justice, and, in that sense, a group of people and communities can work together for justice and that must be emphasised.

One has to explain the main essence of evangelism. Although Bosch's view is important, one must warn that it may become too general. In this regard, Kirk's view is helpful because he emphasises the call to radical commitment to Jesus Christ as Saviour. Therefore, one must find Tutu's view unacceptable. It seems totally generous, but it does not take into account that faith in Jesus is needed for salvation. One cannot extend salvation to all without limiting the faith in Jesus. Evangelism is then the call to all to believe in Jesus for total redemption and salvation, to come to Jesus who died on the cross for all, but who also calls one to conversions in Him. This means that one has to put all trust in Him and be regenerated for a new life in Him so as to love one's neighbour. Faith is the true gift of salvation.

The relation between evangelism and election

Regarding evangelism and election, it is important to turn to Calvin. Although, in his explanation of election, Calvin does not explicitly refer to evangelism, he clearly states that evangelism's purpose is to save people from the anger of God and from their own endeavours to become righteous by faith (Calvin 111, X1:1-4). Faith must be communicated to all. It is very clear that Calvin believes that no-one is saved through the law and that the commandments are not the way to be saved. One is saved by grace alone, and the justification is done by God in His grace, because we are becoming God's people through faith. God gives us the justification through our faith but that is not a faith that comes from ourselves. That faith comes from God; God gives us the faith. We are children of God through the grace of God, and that is without any justification from our side. Calvin refers to Romans 3:24. It is through faith in God that we are justified, and that justification is through the wonder of the Word of God that proclaims that Christ is Lord and by coming to Christ and believing in Him. The relation between faith and the Gospel is very clear.



It is not through work or through the law, but through faith and living in a relation with the living God. Love is the fulfilment of the law.

We are not saved through love or through the works of love, but we are saved through God because, in the most holy people, there are still vestiges (Calvin 111. X1.17) of wrongdoing and we are not totally holy. We have to live through faith in God. Through justification by God, we also have to experience new life and live according to the law of God through faith in love. The justification is not built on love, but love is built on the justification. When we are justified by faith, we also have the wonders of living with God. That leads to relation, a living relation with God and atonement with God in Christ who gave himself for our justification. This is clear from Calvin's perspective and not from Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox views. Calvin's view is that election in Christ and not good works leads to salvation.

The anger of God is on all who keep on sinning (111.X1.21), because, if we do sin, the anger of God is upon us, and because there is a separation between God and us, because of sin, we are the enemies of God, until we are justified by faith through Christ. This happens because God justifies us by no longer looking at us in sin (2 Cor. 5:19-21). We are only saved through Christ who came to us. We are saved by God through the judgement of God, and not through the judgement of people (Calvin 111.X11.1). We cannot in any way be justified by the works, because in the most holy there are still vestiges of evil. Therefore, there is no place for our own glory in the justification. We have no right to glorify in ourselves because we are justified by God (Calvin 111.X11.2). Our only justification is Jesus Christ. Therefore, we have to go to Jesus; we have to flee to Jesus to be justified by Him. We have to look into ourselves and see that we are blind and sinful. We have to humiliate ourselves before God.

In the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisees, Jesus explains that we have to accept that we are sinners before God, and that we are saved only because of the justification of Christ (Calvin 111.X11.7 13).

We must remember that God remains unblemished in this whole justification. We have peace with God when we are justified by Him. We have to yield ourselves to him. We have to follow God in the justification because we are saved by God. It is impossible to be full of conceit in good works, because only God gives us the possibility to do good works. This means that Calvin was committed to election. This election is election by faith, and that is election in God's freedom to elect, as to be in a new relation with Him. It is election of faith, because God elected us to be in before Him and to be free in Him. Therefore, Christian freedom is so important (Calvin 111.X1X.1-5). He makes it very clear that people are saved through the grace of God. The question that arises now is: if this is the case, is it in any way useful to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people on the outside, so as to bring them into a new relation with God.

If God chooses those who believe in Him through faith and grace, is there any way in which we can still proclaim the Word of God in evangelism to those who must be saved. We must not understand Calvin in a deterministic way, as if there was a computer printout before time that only played in time and that we are saved by grace alone. Calvin explains a dynamic aspect of the salvation. He makes it very clear that the election is from God and that we are saved by the glory of God and through the grace in Jesus Christ who saved us. Calvin (111.XX1V 17) engages the whole question as that God is unjust when He saves some and rejects others. We are totally before God without any value from ourselves. We are in sin, and we are saved by the grace of God alone. The salvation is not for all (Romans 11:32). We cannot discuss Romans 9:20 with God; we have to accept it in grace alone.



White (2006:31) opines that Calvin made five different mistakes. Most importantly, God arbitrarily choose some and damned others, created for a specific reason. White (2006:50) concludes:

Yes, God is sovereign, but he is not capricious. Romans 9 does not teach that God saves some and damns others willy-nilly ... God saves those who respond to his gift with faith. There is no room for human boasting, because even the faith to respond to God's grace comes from God ... And just as there is no room for human boasting when the gift is received, so there is no room for blaming God when the gift is rejected.

However, Jewett (1985:12) opines that, although this is not the cornerstone of Calvin's theology, it is fundamental to it. Predestination is God's eternal counsel, some are saved and others are chosen for eternal death: 'The salvation of the elect reveals the depth of God's mercy, the condemnation of the reprobate reveals the severity of his justice.'

The issue of election and predestination is important. If God chose, even before creation, those who will believe, what is the place of evangelism and has it any meaning? Should we simply accept that God is like a watchmaker who lets salvation run in time for eternity.

Exegetical and hermeneutical evaluation

One must engage two relevant pericopes, namely Ephesians 1:3-14 and Romans 9:6-29.

Ephesians 1:3-14

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.⁴
For he chose us in him before the creation of the world
to be holy and blameless in his sight.
In love ⁵he^[a] predestined us for adoption to sonship^[a]
through Jesus Christ,
in accordance with his pleasure and will—⁶
to the praise of his glorious grace,
which he has freely given us in the One he loves.⁷

In him we have redemption through his blood,
the forgiveness of sins,
in accordance with the riches of God's grace⁸
that he lavished on us.

With all wisdom and understanding,⁹he^[a] made known to us the mystery of his will
according to his good pleasure,
which he purposed in Christ,¹⁰
to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment—
to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

¹¹In him we were also chosen,^[a]
having been predestined
according to the plan of him
who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,¹²
in order that we,
who were the first to put our hope in Christ,
might be for the praise of his glory.¹³
And you also were included in Christ
when you heard the message of truth,
the gospel of your salvation.



When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴
who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's
possession—
to the praise of his glory.

The structure of this pericope builds up to the exclamation that the glory of God should be acknowledged. The structure emphasises that God is to be honoured. In the centre of the structure is Christ. Election is then in Christ. The agents are then Christ and God and the elected. The elected are sealed by the Holy Spirit. In the election, it is very clear that God's glory is emphasised by way of the flouting of Grice's maxim of economy. The predestination is radically linked to Christ. The election is in Christ. One should never separate the election from Christ. This has implications for the relation between election and evangelism

Lincoln (1990:42) writes:

This is a choice which, because it was made before the foundation of the world, provides assurance that salvation is not dependent on temporal contingencies. It is also a choice which has as its goal the formation of a people characterized by holiness and love. God is to be blessed because in his choice of a people he predestined them for an intimate relationship with himself as his sons and daughters and because in his beloved Son he has highly favored them with his grace.

In agreement with Lincoln, it is clear that election and grace go together.

Coutts (1957:120) emphasises that the redemption is in Christ. Capes (1996:21) confirms this:

The blessings, which Paul enumerated in the verses following, are bestowed by God "in Christ". For Paul, this means at least two things. First, in an instrumental sense Christ is the one through whom God has acted to redeem the world. Second, in an incorporative sense Christ is the place where believers are located; through baptism they have identified with the crucified and risen Jesus and have entered a vital union with him. The redemption and the benefits of this vital union constitute the "spiritual blessings" Paul had in mind.

Hann (1986:296) writes:

A more satisfactory approach to election is found in the earlier Reformed confessions. One example is the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566, which quotes Eph 1:4 and firmly connects election not to God's decrees nor to reprobation but to Christ: "God has elected us, not directly, but in Christ, and on account of Christ ... Let Christ, therefore, be the looking glass, in whom we may contemplate our predestination" (chap. 9).

Keathley (1979:487) explains that the election has nothing to do with merit:

... our salvation is totally the sovereign act of a seeking God is always asserted. The affirmation here as elsewhere in the writings of Paul (e.g., Rom. 8:29), it should be noted, is the statement of one speaking as a recipient of that grace and not as a systematic theologian.

Rambiart-Kwaśniewska (2020:214) shows that it is God who, in the fullness of time, elects. Crawford (2000:90) explains that there are no preconditions to election, such merit from the person. Simmons (1996:42-43) writes: 'There is no room for pride or snobbery on the part of God's elect, for we are God's elect because of our relationship to Christ.' Newman (1996:237), however, rejects Universalism, but explains: 'What our passage does affirm is that God's



sovereign purposes work in paradoxical conjunction with human freedom: Divine election/predestination and human response are only as incompatible as are the cross and resurrection of Jesus.'

Peterson (1991:55) refers to the fact that the elect are sealed by God. Grider (1987:59) wants to view predestination as temporal predestination and not as eternal decisions. Flowers (1929:58-59) writes:

Here Paul shows how all the goods of the Christian life are the gift of God. It is the grace of God loving us before the foundation of the world that he regards as the spring and source of all the blessings of the saints. It is through no faithfulness of ours, through no loyalty to God, through no particular love for Him.

Trinidad (1950:1-2) agrees that the plan of God is radically in Jesus. Roach (2008:140) refers to Augustine who understood election as God's free gift. God's unmerited grace is essential: 'When God gives some sinners what they deserve, he is just. Yet God is likewise just when he forgives sinners out of his mercy.'

Romans 9:6-29

⁶It is not as though God's word had failed.

For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.⁷

Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children.

On the contrary,

"It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."^[b]

⁸In other words,

it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children,
but it is the children of the promise

who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.⁹

For this was how the promise was stated:

"At the appointed time I will return,
and Sarah will have a son."^[c]

¹⁰Not only that,

but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac.

¹¹Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—
in order that God's purpose in election might stand:

¹²not by works but by him who calls—

she was told,

"The older will serve the younger."^[d]

¹³Just as it is written:

"Jacob I loved,
but Esau I hated."^[e]

¹⁴What then shall we say?

Is God unjust?

Not at all!¹⁵

For he says to Moses,

"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,
and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."^[f]

¹⁶It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

¹⁷For Scripture says to Pharaoh:

"I raised you up for this very purpose,
that I might display my power in you
and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."^[g]

¹⁸Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy,
and he hardens whom he wants to harden.



¹⁹One of you will say to me:

\ “Then why does God still blame us?
For who is able to resist his will?”

²⁰But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God?

“Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it,
‘Why did you make me like this?’”

[²¹Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery
for special purposes and some for common use?

²²What if God, although choosing to show his wrath
and make his power known,

bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—
prepared for destruction?

²³What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he
prepared in advance for glory—

²⁴even us, whom he also called,
not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

²⁵As he says in Hosea:

“I will call them ‘my people’
who are not my people;
and I will call her ‘my loved one’
who is not my loved one.”^[i]

²⁶and,

“In the very place where it was said to them,
‘You are not my people,’
there they will be called ‘children of the living God.’”^[i]

²⁷Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

“Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea,
only the remnant will be saved.

²⁸For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality.”^[k]

²⁹It is just as Isaiah said previously:

“Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants,
we would have become like Sodom,
we would have been like Gomorrah.”^[l]

The structure of this pericope is built on the reference to the Old Testament and God’s dealing with those people. It also refers to passages in the Old Testament to enhance the argument. A juxtaposition is achieved by mentioning God’s grace and God’s wrath. The way one should respond to that is explained in the structure. The agents are clearly demarcated, namely God the Israelites of old, Pharaoh, and the elected. The argument is strongly developed to show that God is just in his election. Grice’s maxim of economy is flouted because of the repetitive argument that God is just. Although not a narrative text, it is clear that the ideology of the pericope can be read as narrative of God’s justice. Beale (1984:152) writes: ‘Hence, Paul is arguing in Rom 9:17 that God’s justice/righteousness (sedeq) is shown and consists in his acting for his name’s sake or glory, i.e., acting unconditionally according to his intrinsic nature.’ Ryliškytė (2019:92)) emphasises God’s mercy and writes (2019:98): ‘In summary, contemporary scholars view Romans 9-11 as the theological heart of the letter. Ample references to divine mercy—both explicit and implicit, especially through allusions to the broader context of scriptural quotations—allow for conceiving of mercy as God’s saving righteousness manifested in Christ.’ (see also Venema 2015:8).

Dunn (1988:549-550) writes:

The word of God was always in terms of election, of God’s purpose fulfilled through his free choice, never in terms of the natural kinship of blood ties,



never in terms of a community characterized and bounded by particular ritual acts (works of the law). The word of God has not failed (as the success of the gospel shows); it is Israel according to the flesh who have failed. By emphasizing God's selection of Jacob afresh ("Jacob I loved"), the Malachi proof text repeats and confirms the character of God's covenant through Jacob, as a relationship given and maintained by God's free choice. But it also introduces a further element: the choice of Jacob was also a choice against Esau. This negative corollary to the election of Isaac and Jacob was always implicit in vv 7–12, but now Paul deliberately brings it to the fore to introduce the transition to the next phase of the argument.

Some opine that God elects the church. Schreiner (2006:386) refers to the church corporately but that election applies to the individual believer. Rakocy (2010:42-44), however, warns against a church of empowerment: Even though this is not the exact picture of the example of biblical Israel, since the ethnic premise does not play any role in the Church, despite all this it is replaced by belonging to a certain community with a particular relationship with God.

Jewett (1985:117) summarises some very important issues. He explains that election should be regarded corporately. The election of the people of God as Israel and the church is extremely important. Often these corporate aspects are not considered. Jewett (1985:117) writes: 'This is unfortunate, since the corporate aspect of the doctrine implies that the universal strand of biblical revelation is best understood as a promise that a new humanity is to be created through Israel and the church. From this corporate perspective, the doctrine of election does not stand in contradiction to the universal strand of revelation, because election itself is ultimately concerned with a universal community, the people of God.'

Evangelism and election

Election is never deterministic. Election is never a computer printout that rolls out in history. Election must be regarded in light of God's mercy and love. This is active love. Faith is an active response to God's love. One can never understand the fullness of the glory of God in election. It is always *in* Christ. Never must election be separated from Christ and his deed of love on the cross. Election is both personal and communal. They must not be separated. What about the rejected people? This has to do with the depths of sin. God does not want to reject people, but he saved those *in* Christ and passes by those whom He does not elect. The judgment is not on God, but on people. All must always be viewed in light of the mercy and love of God for the fallen humanity.

Evangelism is a call from God to come to God in Christ. It is an urgent persuasion of people to accept Christ as Saviour. The essence is to show God's mercy and love. In that sense, it is also linked to elections, as it always concerns God's glory. Confessing Christ in evangelism, the call must go out to all. The church as the missional church must enter into a relationship with humanity to help all people live new lives. Evangelism and election have to do with a new life before God. Looking to the future, evangelism must be about a new eschatological world.

God's glory is the essence of evangelism and election. One cannot regard the one without the other. They belong together in Christ's death on the cross. He is the crucified and resurrected one. To proclaim Christ is to proclaim his love. From this perspective, election has a new meaning.



Conclusion

One has to engage different views on evangelism and election, in order to come to a new understanding thereof. Essentially, evangelism and election belong together and should not be separated. God's glory must always be the most essential task of the church in this world. This is achieved by honouring Him as the God of love. This is possible, even when one accepts that election challenges one's view of God's mercy and love. One must view this from the perspective of God who entered in Christ into the realm of sinful human beings. Then one can glorify God in all. Election means that God does not turn his back on humans in their human condition. God calls humans to Him in his love. He does not leave them in their sins. Committed in Christ to humans, God elects them so as to save many. This is wonderful and glorious. Without the election no-one would be saved. Election, however also empowers people to be responsible beings. In Christ they are called to conversion. Evangelism is therefore always essential. The living church should always engage all people in evangelism to call all from darkness to God's wonderful and eternal light, believing that God who elects will save those in Christ whom He calls to Him. Honouring God, the church confesses that evangelism and election belong together. In this regard it not necessary at all to challenge God's love. His love is clear in election and evangelism.

References

- Beale, G.K. (1984). An exegetical and theological consideration of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in Exodus 4-14 and Romans 9, *Trinity Journal*, 5(2), 129–154. Available at: <https://search-ebshost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0000948950&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 8 August 2022).
- Bevans, S.B. & Schroeder, R.P. (2006). *Constants in context: A theology of mission for today*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Bosch, D.J. (1991). *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*, New York: Orbis Books.
- Capes, D.B. (1996). Interpreting Ephesians 1-3: 'God's People in the Mystery of His Will', *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, 39(1), 20–31. Available at: <https://search-ebshost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001015636&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 11 November 2022).
- Calvin. *Instituție Calvyn*, J. s.j. *Instituție of onderwijzing in de Christelike godsdienst. Deel 1*. Vertaal deur A. Sizoo. 3^{de} druk. Delft: W.D. Meinema.
- . s.j. *Instituție of onderwijzing in de Christelike godsdienst. Deel 2*. Vertaal deur A. Sizoo. 3^{de} druk. Delft: W.D. Meinema.
- Coutts, J. (1957). Ephesians 1:3-14 and 1 Peter 1:3-12. *New Testament Studies*, 3(2), 115–127. Available at: <https://search-ebshost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000655993&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 11 November 2022).
- Crawford, L.J. (2000). Ephesians 1:3-4 and the nature of election, *The Master's Seminary Journal*, 11(1), 75–91. Available at: <https://search-ebshost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000912821&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 11 November 2022).



- Dunn, J.D.G. (1988). *Romans 9–16*. Word Biblical Commentary 38b. Dallas, TX: Word.
- Flowers, H.J. 1929. Election in Jesus Christ: A study of Ephesians 1:3-4, *Review & Expositor*, 26(1), 55–67. Available at: <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAI0171218002614&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 11 November 2022).
- Grice, H.P. (1989). *Studies in the way of words*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Grider, J.K. (1987). Predestination as temporal only. *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 22(2), 56–64. Available at: <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000798765&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 11 November 2022).
- Hann, R.R. (1986). Election, the humanity of Jesus, and possible worlds, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 29(3), 295–305. Available at: <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000971391&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 11 November 2022).
- Jewett, P.K. (1985). *Election and predestination*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Keathley, N.H. 1979. To the praise of his glory: Ephesians 1, *Review & Expositor*, 76(4), 485–493. Available at: <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000773573&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 11 November 2022).
- Lincoln, A.T. (1990). *Ephesians*. Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 42. Dallas, TX: Word.
- Kirk, J.A. (1999). *What is mission? Theological explorations*, London: Darton: Longman Todd.
- Newman, C.C. (1996). Election and predestination in Ephesians 1:4-6a: An exegetical-theological study of the historical, Christological realization of God's purpose. *Review & Expositor*, 93(2), 237–247. Available at: <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001012890&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 11 November 2022).
- Peterson, R.A. (1991). 'Though all hell should endeavor to shake': God's preservation of his saints, *Presbyterion*, 17(1), 40–57. Available at: <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000842353&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 11 November 2022).
- Rakocy, W. (2010). 'Election' as a salvific category according to Romans 9. Study of a biblical concept, *Roczniki Biblijne*, 2, 27–46. Available at: <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rh&AN=ATLAI5QC200720000713&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 8 August 2022).
- Rambiart-Kwaśniewska, A. (2020). Paul's Fullness of Time. (Gal 4:4) and 'Fullness of Times' (Eph 1:10), *Verbum Vitae*, 38(1), 199–218. Available at <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAI14210331001654&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed 11 November 2022).
- Simmons, B.E. (1996). Perspectives on salvation (Eph. 1:1-23, 6:21-24). *The Theological Educator*, 54, 41–51. Available at: <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001015546&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 11 November 2022).



Roach, D. (2008). From free choice to God's choice: Augustine's exegesis of Romans 9. *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 80(2), 129–141. Available at: <https://search-ebscohost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001677218&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed 8 August 2022).

Ryliškytė, L. (2019). God's Mercy: The Key Thematic Undercurrent of Paul's Letter to the Romans, *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 81(1), 85–105. Available at by: <https://search-ebscohost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLAI GOV191021000067&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 8 Augustus 2022).

Schreiner, T.R. (2006). Corporate and individual election in Romans 9: A response to Brian Abasciano, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 49(2), 373–386. Available at: <https://search-ebscohost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001528384&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 8 August 2022).

Tolmie, D.F. (1999). *Narratology and biblical narratives: A practical guide*, San Francisco, CA: International Scholars Publications.

Trinidad, J.T. (1950). Mystery hidden in God: A study of Ephesians 1:3-14, *Biblica* 31(1), 1–26. Available at: <https://search-ebscohost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000653756&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 11 November 2022).

Tutu, D.M. (2011). *God is not a Christian: Speaking truth in a time of crisis*, Ed. by J. Allen. Londen: Rider.

Van Wolde, E.J. (1989). *A semiotic analysis of Genesis 2-3: A semiotic theory and method of analysis applied to the story of the Garden of Eden*, Assen: Van Gorcum.

Venema, C.P. (2015). 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated': Corporate or individual election in Paul's argument in Romans 9, *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, 26, 7–58. Available at: <https://search-ebscohost-Availableatcom.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLAn 3850360&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 8 Augustus 2022).

Wright, C.J.H. (2006). *The mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's grant narrative*, Nottingham: InterVarsity.

White, C.E. (2006). John Calvin's five-point misunderstanding of Romans 9: An intertextual analysis, *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 41(2), 28–50. Available at: <https://search-ebscohost-com.ufs.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001542435&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 8 August 2022).

Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.



This article is open-access and distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence
The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.