

Article 3 – Regeneration and the New Birth

“We believe in the doctrine of predestination and of the election of a definite number of the human family to grace and glory before the world began, and that they will in time be manifested heirs of God, and joint heirs of, or with, the Lord Jesus Christ by a birth of the Spirit.”

This third Article of Faith affirms that God has acted sovereignly to save His people. While many sincere believers in God have difficulties understanding or accepting this important Biblical truth, the Scriptures clearly teach that God chose out a specific group of individuals for salvation before He created the world. These people are often referred to as the Elect.

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” Ephesians 1:4-5.

The term “predestination” means God has decreed a certain outcome, that is, something that will most surely come to pass. With respect to His people, God has predetermined their destiny of being adopted into the family of God (Ephesians 1:5), that they will share in the glory and perfection of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29), and that they will receive and enjoy an eternal inheritance and live with God forever (Ephesians 1:11; Romans 8:17; 1 Peter 1:4).

The term “election” refers to God’s sovereign choice in choosing out the Elect from every kindred, tongue, people and nation (Revelation 5:9). This election by God was unconditional, meaning that it was not based on any merit or foreseen faith on their part, but rather, solely out of His own sovereign grace and mercy. “[God,] *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*” 2 Timothy 1:9.

Article 3 further affirms the Biblical truth that every one of the Elect will, at some point in their lives prior to their death, be manifested (shown) to be a child of God by a birth of the Spirit. This new birth is also unconditional and is given sovereignly by God at His own good pleasure. *“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”* John 3:8.

The doctrines of unconditional predestination, election and regeneration have several positive implications for the Christian life. These doctrines provide assurance for believers, knowing their salvation was not dependent upon their own efforts or merit, but solely on God’s grace. These doctrines provide comfort to believers who may have loved ones who have not yet made a profession of faith, knowing that God is in control of their salvation for good. These doctrines are also highly motivating for evangelism, since knowing that God has a people in every nation means that the light of the gospel may bear fruit in many unexpected places.

In sum, Article 3 affirms the sovereignty of God in acting for the good of His people, both in eternity past and during our lives. We should be ever thankful to our great God for the mercy and grace that He has given us through Jesus Christ our Lord.