

Unconditional Election

Introduction. "Unconditional election" is a fancy phrase that refers to what is commonly known as "Predestination." "Predestinate" comes from *proorizo* which is translated three different ways in the KJV: "predestinated, ordained, and determined before."

In the context of Calvinism, "unconditional election" follows right along with "total inherited depravity" in that God must intervene in man's salvation if one is depraved and cannot do anything about it. In this lesson we will consider and refute "unconditional election."

I. ***Unconditional Election Explained By Calvinists***

- A. Based solely on God's choice, only a few will be saved. Steele and Thomas, in *The Five Points Of Calvinism*, write, "The doctrine of election declares that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam's race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and these only, He purposed to save. God could have chosen to save all men (for He had the power and authority to do so) or He could have chosen to save none (for He was under no obligation to show mercy to any) -- but He did neither. Instead He chose to save some and to exclude others. His eternal choice of particular sinners unto salvation was not based upon any foreseen act or response on the part of those selected, but was based solely on His own good pleasure and sovereign will. Thus election was not determined by, or conditioned upon, anything that men would do, but resulted entirely from God's self-determined purpose."
- B. All others are excluded from salvation. Again, Steel and Thomas state, "Those who were not chosen to salvation were passed by and left to their own evil desires and choices. It is not within the creature's jurisdiction to call into question the justice of the Creator for not choosing everyone to salvation. It is enough to know that the Judge of the earth has done right. It should, however, be kept in mind that if God had not graciously chosen a people for Himself and sovereignly determined to provide salvation for them and apply it to them, none would be saved. The fact that He did this for some, to the exclusion of others, is in no way unfair to the latter group, unless of course one maintains that God was under obligation to provide salvation for sinners -- a position which the Bible utterly rejects."

II. ***The Results Of Unconditional Election***

- A. It says that God predetermined the non-elect to perish -- He did nothing to save them.

1. Scripture says that God was not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto repentance (2 Peter 3:9).
 2. The Bible also says that God would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4).
- B. It says that God foreordained and therefore foreknew each individual person who would be saved far in advance.
1. The Bible teaches predestination; but God predetermined, not the identity of the individual person, but the character of the saved (Romans 8:28-30).
 2. Those who hear, believe, and respond in obedience to the gospel are referred to as "the called" (Galatians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:14).
- C. It makes God's laws and decrees contradictory.
1. Adam was commanded not to eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:17). God decreed that he should eat. In doing what God decreed, Adam sinned against God's law.
 2. At the time of the flood man's heart was evil continually (Genesis 6:5). God decreed that their hearts should be that way, yet He punished them for their sin.
 3. His law condemns drunkenness (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:21). His decree is that men should sin; therefore, His decree is the first cause for the sin.
- D. It destroys the free moral agency and accountability of man.
1. God decrees that man irresistibly sins. Does this not violate 1 Corinthians 10:13? If God has decreed sin, then how can He provide a way of escape without conflicting with Himself (cf. James 1:13)?
 2. If this is the case, then how can man be entirely responsible for his sin? Because of total inherited depravity, man is not responsible a day in his life! He cannot believe the gospel so that God regenerates him. He is thereby eternally saved.
- E. It makes God unfair at the judgment.
1. Calvinism says that sinners are lost because God decreed their damnation; God punishes the sinner for what He made him do.
 2. It cannot be argued that the sinner was inclined to sin anyway because according to Calvinism, it was God who foreordained the fall of man. Why did God elect some to be saved and not elect others? This false doctrine teaches that God will make arbitrary, unfair choices regarding the whole human race (cf. Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:11; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

III. **Prooftexts Examined**

A. Acts 2:23.

1. Concerning this verse, Calvin said, "God does not merely contemplate our salvation, but actually accomplishes it."
2. But this only reveals that God determined to deliver Jesus up to die. God did not program the Jews to reject Him. They were accountable for their own actions.

B. Ephesians 1:4-5, 9.

1. We are chosen in Christ. We were foreordained unto adoption before the foundation of the world. Christ is the one in whom God chose to place salvation. Therefore, our works had nothing to do with it; God acted according to the good pleasure of His own will and His perfect nature.
2. Those who come to Him and believe in Him will be saved; those who will not come will be lost (Revelation 22:17). Election is through the knowledge of the truth (John 8:32; Romans 1:16-17; 10:17).

C. Colossians 1:12.

1. We could do nothing to make ourselves elect.
2. God made us acceptable to be partakers of life through the cleansing of the gospel.

D. 1 Peter 1:2.

1. Calvin said this passage "Properly expresses that secret predestination by which God has sealed those whom he has been pleased to adopt as sons."
2. The elect are made that way because of the blood of Jesus. They are required to express their "obedience" in order to be saved.

E. 2 Timothy 1:9.

1. We were called with a holy calling.
2. We are not called according to works.

F. Romans 9-11.

1. Romans 9:1-5: Paul expresses sorrow for his physical kinsmen, the Israelites. So many advantages were given to them. The fact that most of them did not seize the promises given to them did not nullify the promises.
2. Romans 9:6-13: It is not as though the word of God amounted to nothing. Just because one is Abraham's seed does not mean he is a child. The children of God are not the children according to the flesh but the children of promise.
 - a) Calvin wrote, "The principal point to be considered was the special election of God, by which alone His adoption was ratified. If the piety of some established them in the hope of salvation, and the revolt of others was the sole cause of their being rejected, it

would have been foolish and absurd in Paul to carry his readers back to a secret election." Paul's point is that God's election was not secret. Most of Israel was willfully ignorant of what that election consisted of.

- b) One of the many mistakes Calvin made was taking passages he did not understand and advocate false doctrines upon them. He views God's choice of Jacob over Esau as illustrative that God chooses men to be saved or lost. But God's choice of Jacob had nothing to do with whether they would be saved or not.
3. Romans 9:14-18: Is God unrighteous to choose what He wishes? No. He has the right to do so. No Jew would have accused God of being unfair in choosing the descendants of Jacob instead of the descendants of Esau to be His holy nation. God can bestow His mercy on whomever He pleases, and He can harden whom He wishes. Calvin wrote, "God finds nothing in men to induce Him to show kindness, that it is owing entirely to His own mercy, and accordingly that their salvation is His own work."
4. Romans 9:19-33: God's right as the potter over the clay, and His longsuffering with the disobedient Jews, as He patiently brought His salvation to all men, should silence all those who would question His justice.
 - a) It was not injustice that made God endure the wickedness of the disobedient; it was His mercy. The reason God endured the wicked Jews was He was waiting to extend His grace to the vessels of mercy -- from the Jews and the Gentiles.
 - b) An assumption of Calvinism is that a vessel of dishonor is necessarily a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction. But a man may purge himself (1 Timothy 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:20-21). If the clay is marred, it was not as the potter designed it to be for He intended to make a vessel of honor out of it. Calvinism makes the non-elect vessels of wrath from before the foundation of the world.
5. Romans 10:1-15: Salvation is possible to all who believe. The Jews were ignorant of God's righteousness and did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. The righteousness of the law was unattainable, but the righteousness through faith is made available to all men.
6. Romans 10:16-21: Israel did not listen to preaching from the Old Testament. Did Israel hear? Did Israel know? What was the problem with Israel?
7. Romans 11:1-10: God has a remnant for Himself today. Not all of Israel was unfaithful in Elijah's day. There was a remnant of faithful people who had not bowed the knee to Baal. The remnant today is

by grace. In other words, the people of God today are not chosen because they deserve to be, but through faith in Christ.

8. Romans 11:11-24: God is willing to save Israel. Was the purpose of Israel's crash that they might fall? Was it merely the arbitrary wish of God that they fall? No. Instead, their rejection of Christ was the occasion for God to offer salvation to the Gentiles. God broke off natural branches of the olive tree because of their unbelief. He grafted in wild olive branches. If He can graft wild olive branches into the olive tree, surely He can graft cultured olive branches in again.
9. Romans 11:25-32: A hardening of part of Israel has occurred (through their unbelief) until the full harvest of Gentiles has been reaped. So all Israel (spiritual) shall be saved. He points out that the Gentiles, who formerly were disobedient, have obtained mercy because of the disobedience of the Jews. God has judged all men to be disobedient that He might have mercy upon all. His plan is for all men to recognize that they are sinners, in order that they might receive His mercy. If Calvinistic doctrine is true then these elect were never without God's mercy and were always His people.

Conclusion. God is in control. His sovereignty is not diminished by the fact that He made man a free moral agent. Nor is His power denigrated by giving man the responsibility of choosing either to accept or to reject God's plan of salvation. God in His sovereignty could control man as a robot (i.e., whatever will be, will be), but He purposed not to do so. Instead, God created man in His own image with a spirit which can make intelligent choices. Whether we are eternally blessed or punished by our heavenly Father will be determined by our individual response to God's predestined plan of salvation.

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