

Unconditional Election

Introduction. "Unconditional election" is a fancy phrase that refers to what is commonly known as "Predestination." "Predestinate" comes from the Greek word *proorizo*. This word was translated three different ways in the King James Version: "predestinated, ordained and determined before." The American Standard Version is more consistent and translates the word in every case as "foreordained."

"Unconditional election" follows right along with "total hereditary depravity" in that God must intervene in man's salvation if one is depraved and cannot do anything about it. Let's 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. ***A Study Of Calvin's Passages Used For Unconditional Election***

- A. Ephesians 1:4-5, 9 -- We are chosen in Christ. We were foreordained unto adoption before the foundation of the world. Therefore, our works had nothing to do with it; God acted according to the good pleasure of His own will. He considered nothing outside Himself.
- B. Colossians 1:12 -- We could do nothing to make ourselves elect. It was God who made us acceptable to be partakers of life.
- C. 2 Timothy 1:9 -- We were called with a holy calling, not according to works.
- D. John 10:16; Romans 11:35 -- Calvin continues to pound his point that our election had nothing at all to do with anything we did.
- E. Romans 9:6 -- "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.
- F. Romans 9:11-13 -- One of the many mistakes Calvin made was taking passages he did not understand and propounding false doctrines upon them. He views God's choice of Jacob as illustrative that God chooses men to be saved or lost, just as He chose Jacob over Esau. God's choice of Jacob had nothing to do with whether they would be saved or not. Calvin argues that God's election of Jacob to receive the primogeniture was an earthly sign "to declare the spiritual election of Jacob." Therefore he does argue that God elected Jacob to be saved and Esau to be lost.
- G. Romans 9:15 -- 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."
- H. Romans 11:2 -- "We must therefore come to that smaller number whom Paul elsewhere describes as foreknown of God."
- I. Acts 2:23 -- "God does not merely contemplate our salvation, but actually accomplishes it."
- J. 1 Peter 1:2 -- "Properly expresses that secret predestination by which God has sealed those whom he has been pleased to adopt as sons. In using the term 'purpose' as synonymous with a term which uniformly denotes what is called a fixed determination, he undoubtedly shows that God, in being the author of our salvation, does not go beyond Himself."
- K. 1 Peter 1:19-20 -- "In this sense He says in the same chapter, that Christ as 'a lamb was foreordained before the creation of the world.'"

- L. The arguments Calvin makes with 2 Timothy 2:19; John 6:37, 39, 44-45; 13:18; 15:19; 17:9 are weak and predictable. The greater strength of his arguments are in the passages which have already been considered. These earlier passages set the direction for his argument, and these later passages merely follow in the path of his argument.

III. **Romans 9-11 Examined**

- A. 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 appropriate the promises given to them did not nullify the promises.
- B. Romans 9:6-13 -- It is not as though the word of God amounted to nothing.
 - 1. Not all Israel that are called Israel.
 - 2. Just because one is Abraham's seed does not mean he is a child: in Isaac shall thy seed be called. God chose Isaac, not Ishmael. The children of God are not the children according to the flesh but the children of promise.
 - a) Sarah would have a son (Genesis 18:10).
 - b) Jacob was chosen instead of Esau (Genesis 27:30).
- C. Romans 9:14-18 -- Is God unrighteous to choose what He wishes? No, He has the right to do so.
 - 1. The point is that 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. Why then would they think it out of harmony with God's nature to reject those who disbelieve and accept those who do believe?
 - 2. Likewise, God chose Pharaoh as the one through whom He would manifest His power.
 - 3. Therefore God can bestow His mercy on whomever He pleases, and He can harden whom He wishes.
- D. 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.
 - 1. Verses 19-21:
 - a) Paul here deals with quibbles of those who reason that if God rejects the unbelieving, who can resist God, so why should God blame them. Like most quibbles, it is illogical. It is apparent that if God has rejected the unbelieving, the unbelieving could have done something to alter the situation. They could have be-

lieved! Rather than see this, the quibbler says, "Why will God blame men? Who can withstand Him?"

- b) His point about the potter has one term of comparison: blame. What if the potter takes from the clay a mass and molds it into a vessel to be used for dishonor, a chamber pot for example? Could the chamber pot ask him why he did that? Paul does not deal with the reasons why the clay was made into a vessel of dishonor or a vessel of honor (Isaiah 45:9; Jeremiah 18:1-12).
2. Verses 22-29:
 - a) If God, totally willing to show His wrath against the wicked, endured their disobedience with great longsuffering, so that He could bestow His mercy on vessels of mercy, this should make all such questioning impossible. It was not injustice that made God endure the wickedness of the disobedient; it was His mercy.
 - b) The reason God endured the wicked Jews was He was waiting to extend His grace to the vessels of mercy, not only of the Jews but also from the Gentiles.
 3. Verses 30-33:
 - a) God's salvation, coming as promise and as mercy, the Gentiles attained by faith.
 - b) Israel, seeking salvation through works and being without faith, failed.
- E. Romans 10:1-15 -- Salvation is possible to all who believe.
1. The Jews were ignorant of God's righteousness and did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.
 2. Christ is the end or goal of the law unto righteousness.
 3. The righteousness of the law was unattainable, but the righteousness through faith is made available to all men.
 4. There is no distinction: to both Jews and Greeks, whoever calls upon the Lord shall be saved. Notice the chain of thought the apostle develops in verses 11-17.
- F. Romans 10:16-21 -- Israel did not listen to the preaching that was done to them in the Old Testament.
1. Did Israel hear (vs. 18)?
 2. Did Israel know (vs. 19)?
 3. Then what was the problem with Israel (vs. 21)?
- G. Romans 11:1-10 -- As of old God has a remnant for Himself today.
1. Comparison with the days of Elijah: not all Israel was unfaithful in his day. There was a remnant of faithful people who had not bowed the knee to Baal.
 2. 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.

3. Israel failed to receive what he sought because he sought it by works (in other words by perfect obedience instead of accepting Christ).
 4. The elect (those who believed and accepted God's mercy on His terms) did receive salvation.
- H. Romans 11:11-24 -- God is perfectly willing to save Israel.
1. Was the purpose of Israel's crash simply that they might fall? Was it merely the arbitrary wish of God that they might fall? No.
 2. Rather their rejection of Christ was the occasion for God to offer salvation to the Gentiles.
 3. Paul gloried in his ministry among the Gentiles because he hoped by their conversion to stir his fleshly brethren to yearn for the spiritual blessings in Christ.
 4. God broke off natural branches of the olive tree because of their unbelief (vs. 20). 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.
- I. 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.
1. He makes the point that the Gentiles, who formerly were disobedient have obtained mercy in the occasion of the disobedience of the Jews. It is Paul's hope that by the mercy of God shown to the Gentiles, the Jews may also obtain mercy.
 2. God has judged all men to be disobedient that He might have mercy upon all. God did not make all men disobedient, but He judged all men to be disobedient. God's plan is for all men to recognize that they are all sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, in order that they might receive God's mercy.

IV. ***The Scriptural Election***

- A. Ephesians 1:3-14 -- Election is in Christ. Christ is the one in whom God chose to place salvation. Those who come to Him and believe in Him will be saved; those who will not come will be lost.
- B. Revelation 22:17 -- He that will, let him take the water of life freely.
- C. John 8:32 -- Election is through the knowledge of the truth.
- D. Mark 16:16 -- He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.
- E. Romans 1:16-17 -- The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. The way faith comes is through hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17).

V. **Results Of Unconditional Election Examined**

- A. Calvinism says that God predetermined the non-elect to perish, and that 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. Calvin says clearly that God foreordained and therefore foreknew, because only that which is predetermined can be certain.
 - 1. However, Paul said, "For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29).
 - 2. Paul says that God foreordained according to what He foreknew. According to Calvin God foreknew what He foreordained.
- C. Calvinism makes God's laws and decrees contradictory.
 - 1. His law forbids drunkenness as sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:21). His decree is that men should sin. His decree is the first cause for the sin.
 - 2. Adam was commanded not to eat the forbidden fruit. God decreed that he should eat. In doing what God decreed, Adam sinned against God's law.
 - 3. At the time of the flood man's heart was evil continually. God decreed that their hearts should be thus, yet He punished them for their sin. It even repented Him that He had made man. God was sorry for His own folly!
- D. Calvinism destroys the free moral agency of man.
 - 1. God decrees that man sins. The decree of God is irresistible. Therefore man cannot do otherwise than commit the sin. Does this not violate 1 Corinthians 10:13, which says that God will not suffer a man to be tempted above that he is able to bear, but will with the temptation provide also a way of escape? If God has decreed sin, then how can He provide a way of escape without conflicting with Himself?
 - 2. Is not ordaining the means to sin and exciting the motive to sin in violation of the Bible statement that God does not tempt man (James 1:13)?
- E. Calvinism destroys the accountability of man.
 - 1. If God is the author of sin, and God ordains the means of a man's sin by exciting the act, then how can man be entirely responsible for his sin?
 - 2. Because of total depravity man is not responsible. He cannot believe the gospel so that God regenerates him. He is thereby eter-

nally saved. This affirms that man is not responsible a day in his life!

- F. Calvinism makes God unfair at the judgment.
 - 1. God decrees that the sinner sin (2 Corinthians 5:1-10). 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.
 - 2. Sinners are lost because God decreed their damnation; God punishes the sinner for what He made him do.
- G. Calvinism reflects on the character of God.
 - 1. Why did God elect some and not elect others? God is presented as making arbitrary choices in unfairness to the whole human race.
 - 2. How can this be reconciled with the fact that God is not a respecter of persons (Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34-35)?
- H. Election is conditional because we must give diligence to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).
- I. The elect race of Christians were not God's people and were without His mercy, but now are God's people enjoying His mercy.
 - 1. If Calvinistic doctrine is true then these elect were never without God's mercy and were always His people.
 - 2. The elect are warned against apostasy (John 15:1-6; 1 Corinthians 9:26-27; 10:5-12; Galatians 5:4; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Hebrews 6:1-6; 10:26-29).
- J. Non-elect infants dying in infancy go to hell.
 - 1. "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word" (The Confession of Faith, Chapter X, Section 3).
 - 2. This quotation only covers elect infants. Non-elect infants who die are lost!
- K. The potter and the clay (Romans 9:20-23; Jeremiah 18:1-10; 19:1-2, 6-11).
 - 1. An assumption of Calvinism is that a vessel of dishonor is necessarily a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction.
 - 2. A man may purge himself (2 Timothy 2:20-21). He becomes a vessel of honor in the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15).
 - 3. 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. The non-elect are vessels of wrath before the foundation of the world.
 - 4. The potter did not make the vessel that he might destroy it himself; it was not created for destruction.
 - 5. When a lump of clay was marred in potter's hand, he worked it over and made from the same lump a vessel as it pleased him.

6. Calvinist needs two lumps: one for elect, another for non-elect. Both come from the same lump in the parable.
7. Reprobate Israel can again become elect if by faith they are grafted in the olive tree (Romans 11:30-32).

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.