

Calvinism - Unconditional Election

Words Used - "*prooridzo*", meaning "to predestine, to determine beforehand"; and "*eklogoma*", meaning "to elect, to choose, to select". Related terms are the adjective "*eklektos*", meaning "elect" or "chosen" is used 17 times in the New Testament & noun "*ekloge*", meaning "the election".

The Election of Christ

"Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth..."(Isaiah 42:1).

"Behold My Servant, in whom I have chosen; My Beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased"(Mt 12:18)

Christ's election conveys the love and value the Father notice words "elect" or "chosen" and the word "beloved" are interchangeable.

Matthew 17:5 "This is my *beloved* Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him"

Mark 9:7 "...a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My *Beloved* Son: hear Him."

Luke 9:35 (NASV) "And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My Son, My *Chosen One*

1 Pet. 2:4, 6- "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious"

The meaning and usage of Christ as elect - pre-eminence (chief-cornerstone 1 Peter 2:6); service (Behold my servant, Matt. 12:18); Preciousness (precious, 1 Peter 2:4); choseness (Chosen of God, 1 Peter 2:4); and belovedness (My beloved, Matt. 12:18).

The Election of Israel

Gen. 12:2-3 - "...I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shall be a blessing..."

Deut. 7:6 - "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath *chosen* thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself above all peoples that are on the face of the earth" .

- Was All Elect Israel Saved? No.
- Were some non-Israelites Saved? Yes- Ruth, City of Nineveh, Rahab
- How did an Israelite become Elect? Physical Birth

"With many of them God was not well pleased: they were overthrown in the wilderness" (1 Cor. 10:5).

This remnant of faithful Israel Paul calls "the elect according to grace"(Rom. 11:5-7). Paul argues that an individual enters Israel's election by either birth or choice, but an individual obtains a right standing with God only by faith (Rom. 11:7, 23).

Election of the Church

1 Peter 2:9 - "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation..." "

Col. 3:12-13 - Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness ...forgiving one another ...even as Christ forgave you..."

Rom. 8:32-3 - "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all ...who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect".

God, through His sovereign will and electing grace, has selected His "Chosen One" to fulfill His purposes and the church is chosen in Him to be His elect people.

	Israel	Church
Election	Chosen in Abraham	Chosen in Christ
Task	Light to Gentiles	To preach the unsearchable riches of Christ
Entrance	Physical birth	Spiritual new birth
Blessings	Earthly and Material	Heavenly and spiritual
Origin	From the foundation of the earth	From before the foundation of the world (Eph.1:3)

What is Election? "*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*" (Eph. 1:3-4).

Definition - Election is the sovereign choosing by God, before the foundation of the world, of those who are in Christ to receive spiritual blessings and a call to a divine work. These high and spiritual blessings were purposed by God from eternity past for those who are elect in Christ. When a person places faith in Christ, he is numbered with the elect in Christ. He is not elected to be put in Christ, but he is elect because he is in Christ by faith. Paul expresses it this way, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: Election is: (a) "in Christ"; (b) before the foundation of the world ; and (c) unto heavenly blessings.

The Blessings of Election - The terms “election” and “predestination”.

Election is the sovereign act of God in grace, whereby He chose, in eternity past in Christ, believers for heavenly blessings. **Predestination** is the purpose, goal, or end result that God desires for a believer.

In every case where these words are found, they never relate to a “choosing out for salvation”, but rather denote a “choosing” or “a marking out beforehand” of believers for heavenly and eternal blessing.

H. A. Ironside (1876-1951), clarifies the meaning of predestination and its blessings:

There are two things that are absolutely clear in Scripture-one is that God by His foreknowledge has predestinated all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ “to be conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29). Predestination is never to heaven nor yet to hell; but always to special privilege in and with Christ. All who believe in Him were chosen in Christ “before the foundation of the world.”- H. A. Ironside, What’s the Answer, (Grand Rapids, MI : Zondervan, MI, 1944), p.43

BLESSING OF HOLINESS AND BLAMELESSNESS - “that we might be holy and blameless before Him in love” (Eph. 1:4). God, before the foundation of the world, has chosen believers in Christ to bear the very stamp of heaven. God’s plan is for believers to share in God’s attributes of holiness and blamelessness. God has chosen believers in the church to possess higher blessings than Adam ever enjoyed on earth.

BLESSING OF SONSHIP - The second blessing links him to God Himself in sonship. “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph. 1:5). The phrase “adoption of children” is the Greek word *huiothesia*, meaning “placing as a son”. The term “child of God” relates to spiritual birth, but the term “son” of God relates to family standing. Through sonship, the believer can immediately draw on all of the riches of the Father’s wealth and the spiritual blessings of heaven.

BLESSING OF CONFORMITY TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON - “For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29). The word “conformed” is the Greek word *summorphos*, which conveys the thought of the moral character of Christ and not merely His external physical appearance. William MacDonald writes:

That ungodly sinners shall one day be transformed into the image of Christ by a miracle of grace is one of the most astounding truths of divine revelation. The point is not, of course, that we will ever have the attributes of deity, or even that we will have Christ’s facial resemblance, but that we will be morally like Him, absolutely free from sin, and will have glorified bodies like His.
- William MacDonald, *Justification by Faith*, (Kansas City, KS : Walterick, 1981), p. 93

BLESSING OF BELOVEDNESS AND VALUE - The term the “elect” throughout the Bible conveys the idea of love, nearness, and preciousness to God. Therefore, in the New Testament the idea of election is, firstly, an elevated term which sets forth the dignity and value of the elect to God. Three times we read that the elect are beloved by God: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved...” (Col. 3:12); “knowing brethren, beloved of God, your election, how that...” (1 Thess . 1:4); “we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for God chose you...” (2 Th. 2:13).

Election Refers to Christians Alone

The term “elect” is never used of the unsaved in the Bible; it is a term that always refers to those who are already saved. Time and time again, careful study shows that election is a doctrine that is written to and refers to Christians only. In Ephesians, Romans, 1 Peter, Titus, and other passages, the message of election is to Christians and for Christians.

Colossians 3:12 - “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness and long-suffering...” In this verse the elect are described as “holy” and “beloved”, descriptive and suggestive words which can only characterize believers. It would be contrary to the tenor of Scripture to look at unsaved people in the world and wonder if they are some of God’s elect.

Eph. 4:18-19- The unsaved, the Bible teaches, are those “who have their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” . This can never be descriptive of the elect. The unsaved are never numbered among the elect, for the term “elect “ is a term that refers only to believers.

1 Thess. 1:4 - “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God...” how did Paul know that all the believers in this assembly were elect? Thessalonians 1:1 “...unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.” To be “in Christ” is to share in the very life of God through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Samuel Fisk, a Baptist :

“Predestination and election do not refer to certain people of the world becoming saved or lost, but they relate to those who are already children of God in respect to certain privileges or positions out ahead; they look forward to what God will work in those who have become His own.” Samuel Fisk, Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom. (Nentune. NJ : Loizeaux. 1981). q.

Paul could speak freely of those who were God's elect because of their personal faith. The unbeliever cannot be among the elect, for the most important of reasons, he does not possess faith. The emphasis of the apostle in his letter to Titus is that the most foundational characteristic of the elect of God is their faith.

Titus 1:1 - "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness".

Paul stresses two important points about the faith of God's elect. Firstly, the elect are God's elect! The elect possess the marks that set them apart as God's own people. They have godliness. They have truth. They know and own God as their Sovereign and Lord. The unbeliever does not do this. Our Lord Jesus Christ told the unbelieving Jews that "you are not of God" (John 8:47). Secondly, the elect of God have faith. There are no unbelievers among the elect. The "faith of God's elect" refers to the body of truth, or the doctrines, to which all subscribe. Foremost of these is faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ upon Calvary's cross for salvation.

The doctrine of election does not refer to unbelievers, or the choosing of some to salvation while passing others by; rather, it speaks of the uniqueness and dignity of the believer's position in Christ. Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918), the Old Testament scholar and theologian, sets forth the very heart of the term "election" when he writes:

First, the Scriptural expression "God's Elect", is not the mere statement of fact, or even of a privilege, but like first-born, it is a title of dignity and privilege, applicable exclusively to the Christian. And secondly, the prominent thought in election, especially in this dispensation of the Church, is rank and privilege, and not deliverance from perdition. -Sir Robert Anderson, The Gospel and Its Ministry, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1980), p. 76

Election Proof Texts

2 THESS. 2:13 - "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God from the beginning hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth".

Let us look more closely at the word "salvation" in Paul's writing. Paul writes, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:9); and later "Therefore I endure all things for the elects' sakes, that they may obtain salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10). In both of these verses the context is physical deliverance (through Christ's coming for the church) from the judgment and wrath that will fall upon this world. The word "salvation" in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 1 and 2 Timothy may be best understood in light of the coming of Christ to deliver or "save" believers from future judgment.

We might suggest that Paul is setting forth a promise of end-times tribulational deliverance in this verse. The believers at Thessalonica are not in danger of persecution from the "man of sin ...the son of perdition"(2:3) because the Lord will deliver them from judgment before that time. Additionally, God will also keep them through the trials and persecutions of this life (1 Thess 1:6) through their ongoing growth in sanctification and belief in the truth.

When would this salvation or deliverance work of God begin in their lives? The words "from the beginning" are two words in the Greek New Testament, "*ap arches*". These words have been translated by many New Testament scholars as "first fruits, or new converts" (F. F. Bruce, Jamison, Fausett, Brown). The Revised Standard Version of the Bible suggests that the verse should be read, "God chose you as the first converts..." Might this suggest that God has chosen to deliver the believers of this early church from the judgment and the wrath to come, as well as from trials in this life through sanctification and belief in the truth.

ACTS 13:48 - "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord: and as many were ordained to eternal life believed." (KJV)

Paul and Barnabas had begun their preaching ministry in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13:14-52. Many Gentiles were ready to believe the truth and approached the gospel messengers-"the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath" (13:42). On the other hand, while some Jews believed, the majority were moved with envy and "spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming" (13:45). The Jewish majority had angrily rejected the gospel, and so Paul and Barnabas now turn to the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas use Old Testament Scripture, quoting Isaiah 42, verses 6 and 7, as the basis for their action. Then in Acts 13:46, Paul says of the Jews, "but seeing that ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles". This marks a contrast between the Jews who set themselves against the gospel and the Gentiles who disposed themselves to believe it. So we read, "as many as were disposed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48 Dean Alford, New Testament for English Readers vol. 1,(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983),p. 745

Much of the interpretation of this passage turns on the Greek verb *tasso*, translated in the KJV as "ordained", but generally agreed to have the broader meaning of "to decide" or "be disposed to". In addition the verb *tasso* is in the middle voice which indicates that the subject is acting on itself. The Greek scholar Dean Alford translates it, "as many as were disposed to eternal life believed". The Liddell and Scott Greek Dictionary suggests a number of alternative meanings for the verb "*tasso*", but the word "ordain" is not among them. Scholars are very much divided concerning the use of "ordain" as the meaning of the Greek verb "*tasso*". ("They have addicted(Gk.- *tasso*) themselves to the ministry" - 1 Cor. 16:15) The Baptist Greek scholar Dr. A. T. Robertson writes:

The word "ordain" is not the best translation here... The Jews had voluntarily rejected the word of God. On the other side were those Gentiles who gladly accepted what the Jews rejected... Why these Gentiles ranged themselves on God's side ...Luke does not tell us. This verse does not solve the vexed problem of divine sovereignty and human free agency. There is no evidence that Luke had in mind a absolutum decretum(absolute decree) of personal salvation. -A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. 3, (New York : Harper, 1930), p. 200

On the other hand, we see that God was working in the hearts of the Gentiles. The Gentiles were ready to hear and believe the gospel. This verse does not teach that God, by eternal decree, had chosen these Gentiles to believe; rather, these Gentiles, after being drawn by the Spirit of God and hearing the gospel preached, were disposed to the truth and believed. The Gentiles were not chosen to believe while the Jews were passed over. No, both had made a choice; one for Christ, and one against Christ. The door of faith was now opened to the Gentiles and many believed. It was not that every Jew had rejected the gospel, nor that every Gentile had believed, but that God in His sovereignty was now turning to the Gentiles and the Gentiles were responding by faith. When Paul and Barnabas had returned to Antioch and were recounting the work of God among the Gentiles, they declared "all that they had done and how God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).

JOHN 6:37 - "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

This verse in John six has been considered by Calvinists to be incontrovertible evidence for their position. The words, "All that the Father giveth to Me shall come to Me", have been taken to mean that God, in eternity past, has chosen a small group of persons, called the elect, for salvation. Now He is irresistibly drawing them to Himself so that they alone may be saved. However, at the outset we cannot help but notice the absence of words such as "elect", "irresistible", and "eternal decree". At times Calvinists, in their sincere desire to convince others of their position, over reach and assume that certain "suggestive" phrases set forth the Reformed view of election. John's gospel contains the phrase "All that the Father giveth..." or "which Thou has given..." on at least four different occasions (John 6:37; 17:2, 6, 9). It is assumed by the majority of Calvinists that these "given ones" will all be saved. while the others are passed over by God. Others have suggested that God, by virtue of His foreknowledge, knew those who would trust Christ and these are given to Christ. Dr. Henry C. Theissen, a past chairman of the faculty of Wheaton Graduate School, in IL, writes:

There is a recurring declaration that certain men have been given to Christ, and it is assumed that this was an arbitrary act of God by which the rest were left to perish. But we reply that it is nowhere indicated what caused God to give certain men to Christ and not others. In light of God's revealed character, it is more probable that He did this because of what He foresaw they would do, than merely to exercise sovereign authority. -Henry C. Theissen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, (Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdmans, 1976), p. 348

Who are they which the Father has "given" to Christ in John 6:37? It seems from a study of relevant verses in John's gospel that the "given ones" are those who believe on Him and have personal knowledge of Him. The "given ones" are those: who kept God's Word (John 17:6); who were with Christ in the world (John 17:12); to whom Christ gave God's Word (John 17:8) ; to whom Christ declared the Father's Name (17:26). In context, these "given ones" seem to be: (1) His own disciples, excepting, of course, Judas who was lost (John 17:12); but also (2) all those who believe on Him (John 17:20).

We might also ask, are the "given ones" persons who do not possess a free will, but who are irresistibly drawn by the Father to salvation in Christ? This is the suggested view of many Calvinist writers. But it does not seem to meet the demands of Scripture. If the "given ones" are drawn irresistibly, then John 6:37 is in conflict with John 6:40: "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which sees the Son and believes on Him may have everlasting life..." (6:40). According to the Calvinist John 6:37 speaks of a select number who are chosen for salvation, regardless of free will but John 6:40 states that the gospel is open to "every one which sees the Son and believes on Him may have everlasting life." Free will and the exercise of faith seem to be the key factors in salvation.

What is Jesus teaching in John six? Christ's main teaching should be the interpreter's main focus. When the focus is exclusively on Calvinist proof texts, the larger and more important meaning of the passage can be lost. Jesus is teaching that a vast group of people are on their way to a glorious destination-resurrection to life everlasting. Jesus assures us that He will not lose any believer ..."I will in no wise cast out". They will all attain to the resurrection. This is God's will. However, there is a divine side and a human side. The divine side is that God is drawing men to Himself, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which sent me draw him..." (6:44) . No man can come to Christ unless the Father draw him. The conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8), the drawing of the Father, and the Scripture's power to produce faith (Rom. 10:17) are all working in the hearts of the lost to bring men to Christ. Eternal salvation is of God. However, we must not make the mistake of thinking that God draws in some irresistible way the elect, while passing over others. John 12:32, using the same Greek word for "draw" (*helkuo*), says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me". This is the divine side of salvation.

Calvinism - Irresistible Grace

Current Reformed theology teaches that regeneration, or new birth, must precede faith. Calvinist Dr. R. C. Sproul writes:

"In regeneration, God changes our hearts. He gives us a new disposition, a new inclination. He plants a desire for Christ in our hearts. We can never trust Christ for our salvation unless we first desire Him. This is why we said earlier that regeneration precedes faith." R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*, (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1986), p. 118

Calvinistic Scriptural Support

- Ezekiel 36:26 - "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.""house of Israel"(v. 17).
- (Ezek. 18:31 - "Cast away all your transgressions ...and make yourself a new heart and a new spirit".)
- John 3:3 - "Unless a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Scriptural Support Opposing the Calvinistic View

- John 1:12 "As many as received him gave he the power to become the children of God."
- Ephesians 1:13 - "In whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit."
- John 3:16 - "...that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life."
- Acts 16:31 - "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved-you and your house."
- Romans 5:1 - "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God."
- 1 Peter 1:23 - "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

Samuel Ridout - "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." New birth is by the Word of God. That it is a sovereign act of God, by His Spirit, none can question. But this verse forbids us from separating, as has sometimes been done, new birth from faith in the gospel. It has been taught that new birth precedes faith; here we are told that the Word of God is the instrument in new birth. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God"; "the word which by the gospel is preached." Thus while we can distinguish between faith and new birth, we cannot separate them. John 3:3 and 3:16 must ever go together. There is no such anomaly possible as a man born again, but who has not yet believed the gospel." Samuel Ridout, *Numerical Bible*, Vol. 6, (NY : Loizeaux, 1903), p. 148-149

Logic of C. H. Spurgeon - C. H. Spurgeon, in his famous sermon "The Warrant of Faith":

"If I am to preach faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. Am I only to preach faith to those who have it? Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners." C. H. Spurgeon, *Warrant of Faith*, (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1978)

How Does God Bring Unsaved to Salvation (Regeneration) in Christ

- John 16:7-11 "The comforter ...when He is come ...He *will reprove the world of sin*, and of righteousness, and of judgment: *Of sin, because they believe not in me*; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of Judgment ..."
- Romans 10:17 - "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God"
- Acts 2:37 - "When they heard this they were *pricked in their heart*, ...Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts 5:33 "When they heard that, they were *cut to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them."
- Acts 7:51, 54 You stiffneck and uncircumcised in heart and ears ye do always resist the Holy Spirit ...(54)
- When they heard these things, they were *cut to the heart*...
- Acts 16:14 "heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things spoken."

Regeneration brings individuals into a Relationship with Jesus Christ

1 John 5:12 "He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life." Paul uses the carefully chosen and deeply meaningful term "in Christ" to explain this truth. Paul states, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation)..." (2 Cor. 5:17).