

CALVINISM (3)

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Introduction

- 1) **Calvinism** is a theological system of interconnected doctrines which emphasizes divine sovereignty and predestination and denies the free will of man to yield to God's will
- 2) Five points of Calvinism (TULIP): **T**otal Hereditary Depravity, **U**nconditional Election, **L**imited Atonement, **I**rresistible Grace, **P**erseverance of the Saints
- 3) This lesson will examine *Unconditional Election* in the light of Biblical teaching

I) **The Doctrine of Unconditional Election Defined**

- A) "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass ... By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite it cannot be either increased or diminished" (*The Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.*)
- B) "All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death" (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*)

II) **Understanding Bible Words – Predestination, Foreknow, Election**

- A) **Proorizo** (Gk) – to predetermine, foreordain, mark out beforehand; to preestablish boundaries
 - 1) Ephesians 1:5; Romans 8:29, 30
- B) **Proginosko** (Gk) – to know beforehand, foreknow
 - 1) Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:20
- C) **Eklego** (Gk) – elect, select, choose; **Ekloge** – a choosing out, selection; **Eklektos** – chosen out
 - 1) Ephesians 1:4; 2 Peter 1:10; Colossians 3:12
- D) The **key issue** is not whether the elect were foreknown and predestined by God from the beginning unto salvation (they absolutely were!), but whether their election was **conditional** (conditions to meet) or **unconditional** (no conditions to meet)
 - 1) If we are born totally depraved in sin (unable to obey), then God must elect us unconditionally
 - 2) But, since we are **not** born totally depraved, then we are able to meet God's conditions
- E) **Bible predestination** concerns God's creation of man and His setting forth beforehand, by His grace and mercy, the conditions by which man might be saved and live with Him eternally; God foreknew and predetermined that all who meet His conditions will live eternally in heaven and all who refuse to meet His conditions will suffer eternal condemnation
 - 1) An illustration of this would be a teacher predetermining which students will pass or fail his course. The teacher informs the students about what is necessary to pass the course. If they do what is necessary, they will pass, but if they do not do what is necessary, they will fail. The teacher's choice of who will pass the course is conditioned on meeting his requirements. The teacher has the authority to make the conditions, and the students have the free will to meet the conditions or not. Likewise, God predestined before the foundation of the world who would be saved and has revealed to us how – believe in Him and obey His will (Eccl. 12:13; Acts 10:34-35)

III) Examining Bible Texts Used to Support Unconditional Election

- A) **Ephesians 1:4, 5, 11** – *“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...having predestined us...being predestined according to the purpose of Him...”*
- 1) This election and predestination is **not** unconditional – must have faith in Christ (vv. 11-13)
 - 2) God predestined a particular group of people to be saved – all who trust in Jesus (Jn. 8:24)
- B) **Romans 8:28-30** – *“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined...”*
- 1) **Not** an unconditional election, but an unconditional promise to all those who “love God...who are the called according to His purpose” (v. 28)
 - 2) Called by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14), and faith comes by hearing the gospel (Rom. 10:17)
 - 3) Those who believe and obey are predestined (by the predetermined plan of God) to be “conformed to the image of His Son” as well as “justified” and “glorified” (vv. 29, 30)
- C) **Acts 13:48** – *“And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed”*
- 1) **Not** mean that their salvation was unconditional – faith is a condition! (Jn. 6:29; Acts 16:31)
 - 2) The unbelieving Jews chose to reject the call of God (vv. 45-46)
 - 3) In the context, this is describing the attitude of the Gentiles in contrast to the Jews – those Gentiles who were “strongly desiring” to gain eternal life heard the gospel and believed!
- D) **1 Corinthians 2:7** – *“...which God ordained before the ages...”*
- 1) This preordained “mystery” was the plan of redemption for man in Christ Jesus
 - 2) God foreknew and predetermined the plan of salvation and death of Christ (Acts 4:27-28)
 - 3) Man’s free will was involved in its unfolding and continues to be in its reception

IV) Bible Teaching that Refutes Unconditional Election

- A) **God is Impartial and No Respector of Persons**
- 1) Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:6-11; 1 Peter 1:17
- B) **God Desires the Salvation of Everyone**
- 1) 1 Timothy 2:4; Titus 2:11; Acts 17:30; 2 Peter. 3:9; Ezekiel 33:9, 11
 - 2) Great commission (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15); why preach the gospel message if men cannot choose to turn from sin and obey God, and God will miraculously save those He’s chosen?
- C) **Man has the Free Will to Choose His Way**
- 1) Ezekiel 18:20-25 – Calvinism makes God a respector of persons and unfair
- D) **God’s Judgment Changes According to Man’s Actions**
- 1) Jeremiah 18:7-10; Jonah 3:4, 10
 - 2) God and His purpose remain sovereign while judging the free will choices of man
 - 3) Sinners are in danger of the wrath of God, but if they repent, God will save!

Conclusion

Unconditional election is found to be absent from the Scriptures and contradictory to the principles of God’s impartiality and man’s free will. God did not arbitrarily choose certain ones to be saved and all others to be lost. God loves the world and desires all men to be saved, and those who turn to God through obedient faith in Christ are chosen and predestined by God’s eternal plan to be justified by the blood of Jesus and glorified eternally. Let us not be deceived by the doctrines of men, but humbly hear and respond to the free and gracious invitation of God (Rev. 22:17).