

ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION

ARMINIANISM VS. CALVINISM

- To understand why there are different opinions on how God saves sinners, it is necessary to understand the theological conflict which occurred in Holland in the early 17th century

The Roots of Arminianism

- Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) was a Dutch pastor, theologian, and seminary professor
- One year after his death (1610), his followers drew up five articles of faith based on his teachings, articles which became known as the Remonstrance (i.e. a protest)
- The Arminian party argued that the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism (the doctrinal position of the Church of Holland) be changed to reflect the views advocated by the Remonstrance
- “The theology which it contained (known to history as Arminianism) stemmed from two philosophical principles: first, that divine sovereignty is not compatible with human freedom, nor therefore with human responsibility; second, that ability limits obligation...From these principles, the Arminians drew two deductions: first, that since the Bible regards faith as a free and responsible act, it cannot be caused by God, but is exercised independently of Him; second, that since the Bible regards faith as obligatory on the part of all who hear the gospel, ability to believe must be universal. Hence, they maintained, Scripture must be interpreted as teaching the following positions: (1) Man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the gospel when it is put before him, nor (2) is he ever so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject it. (3) God’s election of those who shall be saved is promoted by His foreseeing that they will of their own accord believe. (4) Christ’s death did not ensure the salvation of anyone, for it did not secure the gift of faith to anyone (there is no such gift); what it did was rather to create a possibility of salvation for everyone if they believe. (5) It rests with believers to keep themselves in a state of grace by keeping up with their faith; those who fail here fall away and are lost. Thus, Arminianism made man’s salvation depend ultimately on man himself, saving faith being viewed throughout as man’s own work and, because his own, not God’s in him.”¹
- In response to these teaching of Arminius’ followers, a national Synod was called to meet in 1618 to examine these views in light of Scripture...from Nov 13, 1618, to May 9, 1619, there were 154 sessions during which the Synod met to consider these matters
- The Synod came decisively on the side of Calvinism, concluding it was more biblically correct
- “[T]he vast majority of the Protestant [theologians of that day took a much different view of the matter. They maintained that the Bible set forth a system of doctrine quite different from that advocated by the Arminian party. Salvation was viewed by the members of the Synod as *a work of grace from beginning to end*; they did not believe that the sinner saved himself or contributed to his salvation in any sense. Adam’s fall had completely ruined the race. All men were by nature spiritually dead, and their wills were in bondage to sin and Satan. The ability to believe the gospel was itself a gift from God, bestowed upon only those whom He had chosen to be the objects of His unmerited favor. It was not man, but God, who determined which sinners would be shown mercy and saved. This, in essence, is what the members of the Synod of Dort understood the Bible to teach.”²

¹ J.I. Packer, “Introductory Essay,” in *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, by John Owen, 3-4.

² David Steele, Curtis Thomas, and Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 5.

Calvinism and Arminianism Compared

THE FIVE POINTS OF ARMINIANISM	THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM
<p>1. Free Will of Human Ability – Although human nature was seriously affected by the Fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does so in such a manner as not to interfere with man’s freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man’s freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power either to cooperate with God’s Spirit and be regenerated or to resist God’s grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit’s assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man’s act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner’s gift to God; it is man’s contribution to salvation.</p>	<p>1. Total Inability or Total Depravity – Because of the Fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinners is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free; it is bondage to his evil nature. Therefore, he will not – indeed he cannot – choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit’s assistance to bring a sinner to Christ. It takes regeneration, by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation, but is itself a part of God’s gift of salvation. It is God’s gift to the sinners, not the sinner’s gift to God.</p>
<p>2. Conditional Election – God’s choice of certain individuals for salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was determined by, or conditioned upon, what man would do. The faith which God foresaw, and upon which He based His choice, was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit), but resulted solely from man’s will. It was left entirely up to man to determine who would believe and therefore who would be elected for salvation. God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus, the sinner’s choice of Christ, not God’s choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.</p>	<p>2. Unconditional Election – God’s choice of certain individuals for salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause, of God’s choice. Election, therefore, was not determined by, or conditioned upon, any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus, God’s choice of the sinner, not the sinner’s choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.</p>
<p>3. Universal Redemption or General Atonement – Christ’s redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved, but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe in Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone’s sins. Christ’s redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.</p>	<p>3. Particular Redemption or Limited Atonement – Christ’s redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ’s redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith, which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.</p>
<p>4. The Holy Spirit Can Be Effectually Resisted – The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation; He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit’s call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man’s contribution) precedes and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man’s free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ’s saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to have His way with them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God’s grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted by man.</p>	<p>4. The Efficacious Call of the Spirit or Irresistible Grace – In addition to the outward general call to salvation, which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected. However, the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call, the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man’s will, nor is He dependent upon man’s cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God’s grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.</p>
<p>5. Falling From Grace – Those who believe and are truly</p>	<p>5. Perseverance of the Saints – All who are chosen by God,</p>

<p>saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith, etc. All Arminians have not been agreed on this point; some have held that believers are eternally secure in Christ – that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.</p>	<p>redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit, are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of almighty God, and thus persevere to the end.</p>
<p>According to Arminianism: Salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God (who takes the initiative) and man (who must respond) – man’s response being the determining factor. God has provided salvation for everyone, but His provision becomes effective only for those who, of their own free will, choose to cooperate with Him and accept His offer of grace. At the crucial point, man’s will plays a decisive role; thus, <i>man</i>, not God, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.</p>	<p>According to Calvinism: Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the triune God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, and the Holy Spirit makes Christ’s death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus, <i>God</i>, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.</p>
<p>Rejected by the Synod of Dort – This was the system of thought contained in the “Remonstrance” (though the “five points” were not originally in this order). It was submitted by the Arminians to the Church of Holland in 1610 for adoption, but was rejected by the Synod of Dort in 1619 on the ground that it was unscriptural.</p>	<p>Reaffirmed by the Synod of Dort – This system of theology was reaffirmed by the Synod of Dort in 1619 as the doctrine of salvation contained in the Holy Scriptures. The system was at that time formulated in “five points” (in answer to the five points submitted by the Arminians) and has ever since been known as “the five points of Calvinism.”</p>

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- The roots of this controversy can be traced back to the dispute between Pelagius and Augustine (5th century)
- Pelagius denied that human nature had been corrupted by sin and he argued that the only ill effect of Adam’s sin was that it provided a bad example for mankind
- According to Pelagius, every person begins life in the same way Adam began...innocent and with a will that is completely free
- In his view, everyone has the power within himself to believe the Gospel
- Conversely, Augustine held that human nature had been so corrupted by the Fall that no one has the ability to believe the Gospel in themselves
- Sovereign grace is essential and necessary if sinners are going to be saved, a grace extended only to those whom God chose before the foundation of the world
- Faith, then, when it is expressed, is the result of God’s grace extended to the elect only
- Semi-Pelagianism is the forerunner of Arminianism: “Augustine’s unanswerable polemic had so fully discredited Pelagianism in the field of argument, that it could no longer be made plausible to the Christian mind. It collapsed. But a new system soon presented itself, teaching that *man with his own natural powers is able to take the first step towards his conversion*, and that this obtains or merits the Spirit’s assistance. Cassian...was the founder of this middle way, which came to be called Semi-Pelagianism, because it occupied intermediate ground between Pelagianism and Augustinianism, and took in elements from both. He acknowledge that Adam’s sin extended to his posterity, and that human nature was corrupted by the original sin. But, on the other hand, he held a system of universal grace for all men alike, making the final decision in the case of every individual dependent on the exercise of free will...[The followers of Cassian] held that the first movement of the will in the assent of faith must be ascribed to the natural powers of the human mind. This was their primary error. Their maxim was: “*It is mine to be willing to believe*, and it is the part of God’s grace to assist.” They asserted the sufficiency of Christ’s grace for all, and that every one according to his own will obeyed or rejected the invitation, while God equally wished and equally aided all men to be saved...The entire system thus formed is a half-way house containing elements of error and elements of truth, and not at all differing from the Arminianism which, after the resuscitation of the doctrines of grace by the Reformers, diffused itself in the very same way through the different Churches.”⁴

³ Ibid., 5-8.

⁴ George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 338-339.

- Semi-Pelagianism was condemned by the Synod of Orange in 529 just as Arminianism was condemned by the Synod of Dort in 1619

The Differences Between Arminianism and Calvinism

- There is a vast difference between these two systems
- “The difference between them is not primarily one of emphasis but of content. One proclaims a God Who saves; the other speaks of a God Who enables man to save himself. One view [Calvinism] presents the three great acts of the Holy Trinity for the recovering of lost mankind – election by the Father, redemption by the Son, calling by the Holy Spirit – as directed towards the same persons, and as securing their salvation infallibly. The other view [Arminianism] gives each act a difference reference (the objects of redemption being all mankind, of calling, those who hear the gospel, and of election, those hearers who respond), and denies that any man’s salvation is secured by any of them. The two theologies thus conceive the plan of salvation in quite different terms. One makes salvation depend on the work of God, the other on a work of man; one regards faith as part of God’s gift of salvation, the other as man’s own contribution to salvation; one gives all glory of saving believers to God, the other divides the praise between God, Who, so to speak, built the machinery of salvation, and man, who by believing operated it. Plainly, these differences are important, and the permanent value of the ‘five points,’ as a summary of Calvinism, is that they make clear the points at which, and the extent to which, these two conceptions are at variance.”⁵
- Packer argues that a true, biblical understanding of salvation can be summarized in one, not five, points
- “The very act of setting out Calvinistic soteriology [the doctrine of salvation] in the form of five distinct points (a number due, as we saw, merely to the fact that there were five Arminian points for the Synod of Dort to answer) tends to obscure the organic character of Calvinistic thought on this subject. For the five points, though separately stated, are really inseparable. They hang together; you cannot reject one without rejecting them all, at least in the sense in which the Synod meant them. For to Calvinism there is really only *one* point to be made in the field of soteriology: the point that *God saves sinners*. *God* – the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit; three Persons working together in sovereign wisdom, power and love to achieve the salvation of a chosen people, the Father electing, the Son fulfilling the Father’s will by redeeming, the Spirit executing the purpose of Father and Son by renewing. *Saves* – does everything, first to last, that is involved in bringing man from death in sin to life in glory: plans, achieves and communicates redemption, calls and keeps, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies. *Sinners* – men as God find them, guilty, vile, helpless, powerless, unable to lift a finger to do God’s will or better their spiritual lot. *God saves sinners* – and the force of this confession may not be weakened by disrupting the unity of the work of the Trinity, or by dividing the achievement of salvation between God and man and making the decisive part man’s own, or by soft-peddalling the sinner’s inability so as to allow him to share the praise of his salvation with his Saviour. This is the one point of Calvinistic soteriology which the ‘five points’ are concerned to establish and Arminianism in all its forms to deny: namely, that sinners do not save themselves in any sense at all, but that salvation, first and last, whole and entire, past, present, and future, is of the Lord, to whom be glory for ever; amen.”⁶

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

- “The doctrine of election is one of the most controversial doctrines in Christian theology. Misconceptions of the nature of God, an unbiblical conception of love, and fallen humanity’s notions of fairness have caused many to balk at the idea that God unconditionally chooses some and not others to receive salvation. Because

⁵ Packer, “Introductory Essay,” 4-5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

the sovereign freedom of God scandalizes the subversive human mind, some theologians have altogether denied the biblical teaching concerning election and predestination.”⁷

- This doctrine has been despised and rejected by man who think it makes God unfair and unloving:
 - “To suggest that the merciful, long-suffering, gracious, and loving God of the Bible would invent a dreadful doctrine like election, which would have us believe it is an act of grace to select only certain people for heaven, comes perilously close to blasphemy.”
 - “To say that God sovereignly chooses is the most twisted thing I have ever read, making God into a monster, no better than a pagan idol.”
 - “The flawed theology of pre-selection is an attempt to eliminate man’s capacity to exercise his free will, which reduces God’s sovereign love to an act of a mere dictator.”
 - “[The doctrine of election] is the most unreasonable, incongruous, self-contradictory, man-belittling, God-dishonoring, scheme of theology that ever appeared in Christian thought. No one can accept its contradictory, mutually exclusive propositions without intellectual self-abasement. It holds up a self-centered, selfish, heartless, remorseless tyrant for God and bids us to worship Him.”⁸
- Accordingly, many have argued against the concept of individual election:
 - “Since, then, there can be no question that election is intimately linked to salvation, opponents of this doctrine question the proper objects of election. That is, while they admit that election clearly concerns salvation, they contend that this election is corporate rather than individual. In other words, God does not choose specific persons to receive salvation but rather chooses to save a class or category of people who trust in Christ. Just as God chose the nation of Israel corporately in the Old Testament, so now in the new covenant era God elects the church as a corporate body. Thus, they say, when Paul declares that God “chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), the “us” is plural and therefore refers to the church as a corporate body, not to individuals.”⁹
 - “Another argument for corporate election is built on Paul’s statement that believers are chosen in Christ. Since Christ is God’s archetypal elect one (Isa. 42:1; Luke 9:35; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2:4, 6), God has chosen only Christ as an individual; believers become part of the elect at the moment of faith by virtue of their union with Christ.”¹⁰
- Admittedly, the doctrine of election is a difficult issue...godly people through the ages have wrestled with this issue and attempted to understand it
- It is important that we first accept what the Bible says about election and then try to synthesize and understand it and its implications
- We must avoid the temptation to first try to understand it in order to accept it
- When dealing with this difficult issue we must not say: “It does not make sense” or “It is not fair”
- We may have our own ideas of how we would like God to act in saving people, but that may not be the way God does it so we must always bring our thoughts into subjection to what God actually tells us
- We have to recognize our limitations and let the biblical texts speak for themselves
- “I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite certain that, if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards; and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love. So I am forced to accept that great Biblical doctrine.”¹¹

⁷ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*, 493.

⁸ Quotes taken from John MacArthur, *Hard to Believe*, 34-35.

⁹ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 496.

¹⁰ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 496.

¹¹ Charles Spurgeon

- Some presuppositions to begin with:
 1. There is nothing God could do to sinful men that would make Him unjust
 2. There is nothing man could do to make himself just before a holy God

THE BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR ELECTION

- “Election is an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of His sovereign good pleasure.”¹²
- “The decree of election is the free and sovereign choice of God, made in eternity past, to set his love on certain individuals, and, on the basis of nothing in themselves but solely because of the good pleasure of his will, to choose them to be saved from sin and damnation and to inherit the blessings of eternal life through the mediatorial work of Christ.”¹³
- “Election may be defined as that eternal act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation.”¹⁴
- This election has been called unconditional: 1) By “election” we mean that God sovereignly, of His own choosing, selects those who will be saved; 2) By “unconditional” we mean that God’s choice of who is saved is not in any way affected by what that person does
- There is no condition man must meet before God chooses to save him...it is not based on anything the sinner does
- It is impossible to deny that the doctrine of election permeates both the OT and NT divine revelation

Election in the Old Testament

God chose Abraham:

Genesis 12:1-3 ~ Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Genesis 18:19 ~ For I have **chosen** him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.”

Nehemiah 9:7 ~ “You are the Lord God, Who **chose** Abram And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, And gave him the name Abraham.

God chose Isaac:

Genesis 17:17-21 ~ Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before You!” But God said, “No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.”

¹² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 670.

¹³ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 493.

¹⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 104.

God chose Jacob:

Genesis 25:23 ~ The Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger.”

Malachi 1:2-3 ~ I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have You loved us?” “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.”

God chose Israel:

Deuteronomy 4:37 ~ Because He loved your fathers, therefore He **chose** their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power,

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 ~ For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has **chosen** you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor **choose** you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:15 ~ Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He **chose** their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day.

- Throughout the OT, God’s sovereign choice of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is clearly evident
- Unconditionally, and completely apart from any consideration of human merit, God elected these men and their descendents to be His people
- It is through these sovereignly elected people, the Israelites, through whom the Redeemer would come
- “God set his electing love and affection on Israel to be his special possession among all the nations of the earth. He entered into covenant with them, and, as such, his choice of that nation is irrevocable. While the vast majority of the Jewish nation are presently enemies of the gospel and cut off from covenant blessing, nevertheless a time is coming when “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26), for “God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew [Gk. *proginōskō*]” (Rom. 11:2). “As regards election [Gk. *eklogē*],” Paul says, “they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:28–29).”¹⁵

Election in the New Testament

Under the idea of “the elect”

Romans 8:32-34 ~ He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God’s **elect**? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

Luke 18:7 ~ now, will not God bring about justice for His **elect** who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

Matthew 24:22 ~ Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the **elect** those days will be cut short.

Matthew 24:31 ~ And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His **elect** from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

¹⁵ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 495.

Under the idea of “choosing”

Ephesians 1:4 ~ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

Colossians 3:12 ~ So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

1 Thessalonians 1:4 ~ knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;

2 Thessalonians 2:13 ~But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

2 Timothy 2:9-10 ~ for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. 10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.

Titus 1:1 ~ Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,

1 Peter 1:1-2 ~ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

Under the idea of “appointing”

Acts 13:48 ~ When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

- Notice the passive verb: it was done to them
- Notice the order: it was those who were appointed/elected who believed, not vice versa
- The prior election of God is the reason some believed while others did not

John 15:16 ~ You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

Under the idea of “predestinating”

Romans 8:29 ~ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

Ephesians 1:5 ~ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will

Ephesians 1:11 ~ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

- “predestination” comes from 2 words: *pro* (before) and *horizo* (to mark out a boundary); this is where we get our English word *horizon*
- Thus, predestination means to mark out the boundary of who is saved, thereby emphasizing the end results of election
- Predestination is similar to election but slightly different
- Whereas election is the conceptual act of choosing someone, predestination is taking possession of that person; Predestination makes God’s election/choosing a reality

Election	Predestination
Choosing	Taking
Conceptual	Reality
Transaction	Possession

Under the idea of “calling”

Romans 1:6-7 ~ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, **called** as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:2 ~ To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by **calling**, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

Galatians 1:6 ~ I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who **called** you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

Ephesians 1:18 ~ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His **calling**, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Ephesians 4:1 ~ Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the **calling** with which you have been called,

Hebrews 9:15 ~ For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been **called** may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

1 Peter 1:15 ~ but like the Holy One who **called** you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

Under the idea of a “book of life”

Revelation 13:8 ~ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

Revelation 17:8 ~ The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

Revelation 21:27 ~ and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Under the idea of “elect angels”

1 Timothy 5:21 ~ I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His **chosen angels**, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.

Ephesians 1:3-6

Ephesians 1:3-6 ~ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

- God’s sovereign choice of individuals for salvation took place “before the foundation of the world” (v. 4)
- In the same way the Father loved the Son “before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24) and foreknew the Son “before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet 1:20), so too did he choose the elect before the foundation of the world

- This understanding of the timing of election is critical because it rules out any personal merit as the ground of God's sovereign choice
- Practically, this means that our salvation did not begin the moment we believed...it began in eternity past when God elected us in Christ before the foundation of the world
- Furthermore, it means that the number of people going to heaven are the exact number that God chose before the foundation of the world...not one more, not one less
- God's purpose in choosing some to be saved was that they would be "holy and blameless before Him" (v. 4)
- God's sovereign plan which began with election is all for the purpose of declaring unworthy sinners worthy
- Election ultimately results in holiness
- God's choice of some unto salvation was done "in love" (v. 4)
- God was motivated to choose some out of love
- This demonstrates that God's love is particular towards the elect...it is a greater love that he demonstrates toward the world

Romans 1:7 ~ to all who are **beloved of God** in Rome, called as saints

Colossians 3:12 ~ So, as those who have been **chosen of God, holy and beloved...**

1 Thessalonians 1:4 ~ knowing, brethren **beloved by God, His choice of you**

2 Thessalonians 2:13 ~ But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren **beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you** from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

- Many people mistakenly assume that if God is by nature loving, he must choose everyone...but this fails to take into consideration the fact that God's love is also sovereign
- True, God does love all people...he made them in his image...he doesn't immediately punish people in their sin...he gives people an opportunity to repent
- God is genuinely compassionate, kind, generous, and good even to the most stubborn sinners
- However, an important distinction must be made: God loves believers with a particular love...God does not love all people savingly
- If God loved all people savingly, they would all be redeemed...but not all are redeemed which shows that God's saving love is not universal
- It is particular...God's love for the elect is an infinite, eternal, saving love
- This particular, sovereign love clearly is not directed toward all of mankind indiscriminately, but is bestowed uniquely and individually on those whom God chose in eternity past
- "The marvel of all marvels is not that God in His infinite love has not elected all this guilty race to be saved, but that He has elected any."¹⁶
- "In the very beginning, when this great universe lay in the mind of God, like unborn forests in the acorn cup; long ere the echoes awoke the solitudes; before the mountains were brought forth; and long ere the light flashed through the sky, God loved His chosen creatures. Before there was any created being – when the ether was not fanned by an angel's wing, when space itself had not an existence, when there was nothing save God alone – even then, in that loneliness of Deity, and in that deep quiet and profundity, His bowels moved with love for His chosen. Their names were written on His heart, and then were they dear to His soul. Jesus loved His people before the foundation of the world – even from eternity! And when he called

¹⁶ B.B. Warfield

me by His grace, He said to me, ‘I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.’”¹⁷

- It was done for the purpose of adopting us into his family (v. 5)
- That word “adoption” and the truths it illustrates presents in vivid color and with great clarity what has happened as a result of God predestinating us
- God took us out of the family of darkness and put us in his family
- God took those who were not His children, made them His own, and treated them as if they were His children
- God’s electing choice was done “according to the kind intention of His will” (v. 5)
- God’s sole motive in election is His good pleasure...it pleased God to set his love upon the elect
- It was not a dispassionate choice on his part little to elect...rather, God delights in the act of election and in the objects of his election
- “It was of the free and sovereign good pleasure of his will, a good pleasure that emanated from the depths of his own goodness, that he chose a people to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. The reason resides wholly in himself.”¹⁸
- This emphasizes “God’s absolute freedom in election. This delivers a fatal blow to the supposition that election was conditioned on faith—or on anything else the sinner might think or do. If the basis of God’s choice was the foreseen faith or actions of those whom he chose, Paul would have had to write that God ‘predestined us...according to his foreknowledge of our faith.’ Yet he explicitly asserts that it was the good pleasure of God’s will, not man’s will, that was the ground of his choice. Quite simply, if election were conditioned on faith, as the Arminian contends, Paul has misspoken in Ephesians 1:5.”¹⁹
- God’s ultimate goal in election is a people who exist “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (v. 6)
- The immediate goal of election is the salvation of those who are chosen...but there is an ultimate goal of election that transcends the immediate goal...worship!
- The primary reason God did not leave all humanity in their sin was so that He might put on display the glory of His grace
- Election establishes a platform on which the glory of God’s saving mercy might be seen and magnified and adored and praised!
- The purpose of election and predestination points in only 1 direction – God’s glory...in other words, this theology is meant to produce doxology!
- “The lofty terms in which he extolls the grace of God toward the Ephesians, are intended to rouse their hearts to gratitude, to set them all on flame, to fill them even to overflowing with this thought.”²⁰

Romans 8:29-30

Romans 8:29-30 ~ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

- Note the unbreakable chain
- God is not presented here as a helpless, waiting love, but rather a sovereign, active love...God’s sovereignty in salvation cannot be impeded, stopped, or overridden

¹⁷ Charles Spurgeon, *The Autobiography of Charles Spurgeon*, 167.

¹⁸ John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 10.

¹⁹ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 501-502.

²⁰ John Calvin

Romans 9

Romans 9:9-13 God's Sovereignty in Election

- God purposed to establish this principle clearly at the beginning of His relationship with His chosen people
- In the case of Rebecca's children, God's choice was indicated before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad
- This demonstrated that God's sovereign choice was not by works but by Him who calls
- "calls" (vs. 11)...This term means to command or speak to another person in order to bring him nearer—either physically or a personal relationship
- It was often an official summons by a recognized authority
- It was also used to refer to an invitation to an activity or function
- 2 types of calls:
 1. General Outward Call
 - In a general way, there is a broad outward call that is directed to all who hear the gospel
 - This call can be rejected since many do choose to refuse to believe the truths of the Gospel.

Matthew 11:28 ~ Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 22:14 ~ For many are called, but few are chosen.
 2. Effectual Inner call
 - In a much more specific way, God has an effectual (it always works) call that He uses to draw all believers to Himself
 - This call cannot be rejected and always produces God's desired result—drawing a sinner to Himself

Romans 8:30 ~ and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.
- "God's love and hatred"
 - God's plan (8:28; 9:11), and not man's works (4:2-6), is the basis of His election
 - God's "love" for Jacob was revealed in His choice of Jacob and God's "hatred" for Esau was seen in His rejecting Esau for the line of promise
 - The word "hatred" conveys not just dislike of certain actions, but also a permanent and deep-seated hostility towards a person...even in secular writings it was used for the divine hatred of unrighteous men who are the objects of divine punishment
 - Here in Romans 9 Paul quotes Malachi 1:2, referring to God's previous decision to love Jacob and hate Esau without any basis on either of their personal merit
 - The emotion of "hatred" is probably not so much in view as much as the fact that God chose one nation for divine blessing (Israel) and one nation He left to divine judgment (Edom)

Romans 9:14-18 Is God unjust?

- Paul introduced the question undoubtedly in his readers' minds: *Is God unjust in choosing Isaac over Ishmael, and Jacob over Esau?*
- The Greek negative particle (*me*) with a question implies a negative response
- Paul responded in his usual emphatic way: "Not at all! Absolutely no way!!!"
- As the sovereign God, He has the right to show mercy to whomever He chooses
- In fact, He is not under obligation to extend mercy to *anyone!*...No one deserves or can earn His mercy

Exodus 33:19 ~ And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

- "The Illustration of Pharaoh"
 - To Pharaoh God said through Moses, "I raised you up to demonstrate My power."
 - God's power was demonstrated as He freed the Israelites from under Pharaoh's hand
 - Paul concluded, God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy and He hardens whom He wants to harden (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:27; 14:4, 8; cf. 14:17)
 - Because of God's choice, Pharaoh then hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:13-14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34-35)
 - While the text says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it doesn't mean that God actively created unbelief or rebellion in his heart; instead, God withdrew His restraining influences in Pharaoh's life which ultimately led to Pharaoh experiencing the full consequences of his sinful rebellion (see Rom 1)

Romans 9:19-29 Is man at fault? How can he resist God's will?

- Once again Paul anticipated the questioning response of his readers: If God makes the choices, how can He hold man responsible? Who can go against what He does? How can God blame anyone for sin and unbelief when He has sovereignly determined that person's destiny?
- In response Paul reaffirmed the reality of God's sovereignty and why such questions are an affront to God's sovereignty....man, the created one, has no right to question God, the Creator

Isaiah 45:9 ~ Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker—An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, "What are you doing?" Or the thing you are making say, "He has no hands"?

- Drawing an analogy between the sovereign Creator and a potter, Paul clearly shows that the pot has no right to question its maker

The Basis for Election

- It is important to remember that God's choosing of some to salvation depends not on anything in man
- The basis for God's sovereign choice is not on anything in those individuals themselves...it is not on the basis of a person's will to believe (John 1:13; Rom 9:16), a person's own choice (John 15:16), the family in which they were raised (John 1:13), or a person's "righteous" works (Eph 2:9; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 3:5)
- Rather, the basis for God's sovereign choice in election is simply His gracious and loving plan to exercise His mercy on undeserving sinners for His glory...it is solely because of God's sovereign and good pleasure
- In 2 Timothy 1:9, Paul indicates that God's choice to save some is "according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."
- Before the foundation of the world, God chose some to lavish His mercy upon (Rom 9:16, 23)
- And He did so in order that "the riches of His glory" might be made known (Rom 9:23) and that those who receive His grace and mercy might be "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph 1:6)
- This is why election is unconditional...it is not predicated on any virtue or worthiness that God foresees in the individuals he chooses

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 ~ For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has **chosen** you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor **choose** you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

- “When the question is asked, why does God choose one person over another? the answer cannot be because that person did this or that but rather because God acted according to the sovereign freedom of his will (Eph. 1:5).”²¹

OBJECTIONS TO ELECTION

1. Election means that we do not have a choice in whether we accept Christ or not; it hinders our freedom; it makes us puppets or robots, not real persons with choices

Reply: If God does not elect, no one is saved! Salvation is not the product of combined or cooperative action or force. Dead men do not conjure up faith.

2. Election makes God arbitrary

Reply: God chooses to save some simply out of His mercy

3. Election is not fair

Reply: It is fair because God is always just and man must still believe. The real question to ask is not, “Why is it fair God chooses some but not others?”; rather it is “Why does God chooses anyone?” because it would be perfectly fair for God not to save anyone.

- Scripture never holds someone accountable for being non-elect
- Scripture holds people accountable for not believing
- The emphasis in Scripture is always man's responsibility; Therefore, God is not responsible for man's rebellion...Man is...Mankind chooses not to believe

4. Election eliminates a genuine Gospel offer; unbelievers never had a chance to believe

Reply: Everyone has a chance to respond to God's general call, but most reject it

5. Election discourages evangelism

Reply: Election actually encourages evangelism; we just throw seeds and let the Lord take care of who receives it; Plus, the whole book of Acts disproves this objection

6. Election produces pride and laziness in the elect

Reply: A true understanding of election produces the opposite

IMPLICATIONS OF ELECTION

It Should Promote Worship, Thankfulness, and Gratitude

- We need to remember that if God did not choose anyone, no one would be saved

²¹ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 497-498.

- Jesus taught: “*No one* can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him....*No one* can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father” (John 6:44, 65)
- This is best understood after we’ve been saved and we look back and realize that God did it all!
- And when we do, it should result in wonder, love, and praise toward the Lord

1 Thessalonians 1:2, 4 ~ We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers...4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;

2 Thessalonians 2:13 ~ But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

- It also diminishes any pride that we might be tempted to feel if our salvation was dependent on us
- “We shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the wellspring of God’s free mercy until we come to know his eternal election...How much the ignorance of this principle detracts from God’s glory, how much it takes away from true humility, is well known...If—to make it clear that our salvation comes about solely from God’s mere generosity—we must be called back to the course of election...”²²

It Should Promote Comfort

- When Paul assures that everything works out to good for those who love the Lord (Rom 8:28), he cites the doctrine of election/predestination as a reasons why we can be assured of this truth (Rom 8:29-30)
- “Paul’s point is to say that God has *always* acted for the good of those whom he called to himself. If Paul looks into the distant past before the creation of the world, he sees that God foreknew and predestined his people to be conformed to the image of Christ. If he looks at the recent past he finds that God called and justified his people whom he had predestined. And if he then looks toward the future when Christ returns, he sees that God has determined to give perfect, glorified bodies to those who believe in Christ. From eternity to eternity God has acted with the good of his people in mind. But if God has *always* acted for our good and will in the future act for our good, Paul reasons, then *will he not also in our present circumstances* work every circumstance together for our good as well? In this way predestination is seen as a comfort for believers in the everyday events of life.”²³

It Should Promote Holiness, Not Licentiousness

- This doctrine should compel holiness, not make us think that we are now free to live any way we like

It Should Promote Evangelism

- Election encourages evangelism...we just throw seeds and let the Lord take care of who receives it
- It is election that guarantees some will be saved...thus, our evangelistic efforts will be successful in some sense

2 Timothy 2:10 ~ For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory

²² John Calvin

²³ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 673.