

I. Proofs from reason for unconditional election

A. If (since) total depravity is true, then unconditional election must follow

If the doctrine of Total Inability or Original Sin be admitted, the doctrine of unconditional election follows by the most inescapable logic. If, as the Scriptures and experience tell us, all men are by nature in a state of guilt and depravity from which they are wholly unable to deliver themselves and have no claim whatever on God for deliverance, it follows that if any are saved God must choose out those who shall be the objects of His grace.

Through the election of individuals the truly gracious character of salvation is most clearly shown. Those who declare that salvation is entirely by the grace of God, and yet deny the doctrine of election, hold an inconsistent position. The inspired writers leave no means unused to drive home the fact that God's election of men is an absolutely sovereign one, founded solely upon His unmerited love, and designed to exhibit before men and angels His grace and saving mercy.

B. Is unconditional election “fair”?

- This is a question that almost always arises when dealing with the doctrine of unconditional election. Many will complain that unconditional election cannot be true; they base this position not on the support of the Scriptures, but rather on their own emotional misunderstanding.

As Ruler and Judge, God is at liberty to deal with a world of sinners according to His own good pleasure. He can rightfully pardon some and condemn others; can rightfully give His saving grace to one and not to another. Since all have sinned and come short of His glory, He is free to have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

Rom 9:20-21 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

It may be asked, Why does God save some and not others? But that belongs to His secret counsels. Precisely why this man receives, and that man does not receive, when neither deserves to receive, we are not told. That God was pleased to set upon us in this His electing grace must ever remain for us a matter of adoring wonder. Certainly there was nothing in us, whether of quality or deed, which could attract His favorable notice or make Him partial to us; for we were dead in trespasses and sins and children of wrath even as others (Ephesians 2:1-3). We can only admire, and wonder, and exclaim with Paul, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out!” The marvel of marvels is not that God, in His infinite love and justice, has not elected all of this guilty race to be saved, but that He has elected any. When we consider, on the one hand, what a heinous thing sin is, together with its desert of punishment, and on the other, what holiness is, together with God's perfect hatred for sin, the marvel is that God could get the consent of His holy nature to save a single sinner.

- “Why does God save some and not others?” is the wrong question! We should marvel and ask, “Why has God elected any to be saved?!”

This doctrine of eternal and unconditional election has sometimes been called the “heart” of the Reformed Faith. It emphasizes the sovereignty and grace of God in salvation, while the Arminian view emphasizes the work of faith and obedience in the man who decides to accept the offered grace. In the Calvinistic system it is God alone who chooses those who are to be the heirs of heaven, those with whom He will share His riches in glory; while in the Arminian system it is, in the ultimate analysis, man who determines this,—a principle somewhat lacking in humility to say the least.

II. Faith and good works are the fruits and proof, not the basis, of election

- Neither predestination in general, nor the election of those who are to be saved, is based on God's foresight of any action in the creature.

Westminster Confession of Faith:

3.2. *Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.*

16.2. *These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith...*

A. Faith and good works are never the cause of election. Instead, they are the fruit, or proof of election. *Foreseen faith and good works, then, are never to be looked upon as the cause of the Divine election. They are rather its fruits and proof. They show that the person has been chosen and regenerated. To make them the basis of election involves us again in a covenant of works, and places God's purposes in time rather than in eternity. This would not be pre-destination but post-destination, an inversion of the Scripture account which makes faith and holiness to be the consequents, and not the antecedents, of election (Ephesians 1:4; John 15:16; Titus 3:5). The statement that we were chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world," excludes any consideration of merit in us; for the Hebrew idiom, "before the foundation of the world," means that the thing was done in eternity. And when to Paul's statement that it is "not of works, but of Him that calleth," the Arminian replies that it is of future works, he flatly contradicts the apostle's own words.*

2 Tim 1:9 [God] has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began

Calvinists therefore hold that election precedes, and is not based upon, any good works which the person does. The very essence of the doctrine is that in redemption God is moved by no consideration of merit or goodness in the objects of His saving mercy...To base election on foreseen faith is to say that we are ordained to eternal life because we believe, whereas the Scriptures declare the contrary: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," (Acts 13:48).

Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit

The sinner has no power to turn himself unto God, but is turned or renewed by divine grace before he can do anything spiritually good. In accordance with this Paul teaches that love, joy, peace, goodness, faithfulness, self-control, etc., are not the meritorious basis of salvation, but rather "the fruits of the Spirit," (Gal 5:22,23). Augustine tells us that, "The grace of God does not find men fit to be elected, but makes them so"...

1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

These passages unmistakably teach that faith and good works are the fruits of God's work in us. We were not chosen because we were good, but in order that we might become good. But while good works are not the ground of salvation, they are absolutely essential to it as its fruits and evidences. They are produced by faith as naturally as grapes are produced by the grape vine. And while they do not make us righteous before God, yet they are so united with faith that true faith cannot be found without them. This is the same principle which Jesus set forth when He declared that the character of a tree is shown by its fruits, and that a good tree could not bear evil fruits.

- Faith and good works certainly have their place in the life of the Christian, however, unlike the Arminian teaches, faith and good works are *not* in any way the basis for our election. (remember, it's UN-conditional). Instead, faith and good works are the fruit, or proof, of election in the life of the Saint.

B. God alone is sovereign, including in election.

Foreordination in general cannot rest on foreknowledge; for only that which is certain can be foreknown, and only that which is predetermined can be certain. The Almighty and all-sovereign Ruler of the universe does not govern Himself on the basis of a foreknowledge of things which might haply come to pass. Through the Scriptures the divine foreknowledge is ever thought of as dependent on the divine purpose, and God foreknows only because He has pre-determined. His foreknowledge is but a transcript of His will as to what shall come to pass in the future, and the course which the world takes

under His providential control is but the execution of His all-embracing plan. His foreknowledge of what is yet to be, whether it be in regard to the world as a whole or in regard to the, detailed life of every individual, rests upon His pre-arranged plan.

The Arminian view takes election out of the hands of God and puts it into the hands of man. This makes the purposes of Almighty God to be conditioned by the precarious wills of apostate men and makes temporal events to be the cause of His eternal acts. It means further that He has created a set of sovereign beings upon whom to a certain extent His will and actions are dependent. It represents God as a good old father who endeavors to get his children to do right, but who is usually defeated because of their perverse wills; nay, it represents Him as having evolved a plan which through the ages has been so generally defeated that it has sent innumerable more persons to hell than to heaven. A doctrine which leads to such absurdities is not only un-Scriptural but unreasonable and dishonoring to God. In contrast to all this, Calvinism offers us a great God who is infinite in His perfections, who dispenses mercy and justice as He sees best, and who actually rules in the affairs of men.

C. Conclusion

The Calvinistic view is the only logical one if we accept the Scriptural declaration that salvation is by grace. Any other involves us in a hopeless chaos of views which are contradictory to the Scriptures. There are, of course, mysteries connected with this view; and it is certainly not the view which the natural man would have hit upon if he had been called upon to suggest a plan. But to throw overboard the Scripture doctrine of Predestination simply because it does not fit in with our prejudices and preconceived notions is to act foolishly. To do this is to arraign the Creator at the bar of human reason, to deny the wisdom and righteousness of His dealings just because we cannot fathom them, and then to declare His revelation to be false and deceptive.