

Unconditional Election

I. What is election?

1. The words *election* and *elect* (both noun and verb) are used 27 times in the Bible.
2. One would think that the words never appear in the scripture based on how often they are mentioned in sermons in most churches these days.
3. Election is the action of God whereby He chose a portion of the human race to save from their sins.
 - A. Election - 1. a. The formal choosing of a person for an office, dignity, or position of any kind; usually by the votes of a constituent body. 2. a. The exercise of deliberate choice or preference; choice between alternatives, *esp.* in matters of conduct. 3. *Theol.* a. The exercise of God's sovereign will in choosing some of His creatures in preference to others for blessings temporal or spiritual, *esp.* for eternal salvation. *doctrine of election*: the doctrine that God actually exercises this prerogative with regard to mankind; in popular language often identified with the (Calvinistic) doctrine of 'unconditional election', i.e. election not conditioned by the conduct or disposition of the individual.
 - B. God elected sinners and predestinated them to be justified, effectually called from spiritual death unto spiritual life, conformed to the image of Christ, and glorified (**Rom 8:29-33**).
 - C. God chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world for Him to make them holy in order to adopt them as His children (**Eph 1:4-5**).
 - D. God chose sinners to be sprinkled by the blood of Christ to purge them of their sins (**1Pe 1:2**).

II. The necessity of unconditional election.

1. The doctrine of unconditional election is plainly declared in the scriptures as will be shown in this study.
2. It can also be logically deduced given what the Bible teaches about the depraved nature of man.
 - A. The natural man, unchanged by the grace of God, is incapable of changing his nature or of saving himself from his sins.
 - i. He is born *spiritually dead* in trespasses and sins (**Rom 5:12; Eph 2:1**).
 - ii. He is *without strength* to change his *nature* (**Rom 5:6; Eph 2:3; Jer 13:23**).
 - B. He is also incapable of meeting any condition that men say is necessary for God to be able to save him, such as:
 - i. Believing on the name of his Son Jesus Christ (**1Jo 3:22-23 c/w Rom 8:8; Joh 10:26**).
 - ii. Believing the gospel (**1Co 1:18**).
 - iii. Seeking God (**Rom 3:10-11**).
 - iv. Understanding and believing the scriptures (**Rom 8:7; 1Co 2:12-14**).
 - v. Doing good works (**Rom 3:12**).
 - C. Therefore, if any man is to be saved from his sins, *God* must save him *unconditionally* by His grace and mercy.
 - D. Since some men are saved eternally (**Tit 3:5-7**) and some men are not (**Jud 1:7**), this demands that God chose to save some and leave others in their sins.

E. That is precisely what the Bible teaches.

III. Election is unconditional.

1. God's election is an *election of grace* (**Rom 11:5**).
 - A. Grace *n.* - II. Favour. 6. a. Favour, favourable or benignant regard or its manifestation (now only on the part of a superior); favour or goodwill, in contradistinction to right or obligation, as the ground of a concession.
 - B. Grace by definition is *unconditional*.
 - C. If election was conditioned upon a sinner's faith (which is a work - **Mat 23:23; Joh 6:28-29**), acceptance, or other works, then the sinner would have a right to it, and God would be obliged to choose him.
 - D. This would not be an *election of grace*, but an *election of works* (**Rom 11:6**).
 - E. God chose His elect before the world began, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace (**Eph 1:4; 2Ti 1:9**).
 - F. Since God chose His elect long before they were born, election is unconditional.
2. God's election is based solely on His *mercy*, not a sinner's will or works (**Rom 9:16**).
 - A. Mercy *n.* - 1. a. Forbearance and compassion shown by one person to another who is in his power and who has no claim to receive kindness; kind and compassionate treatment in a case where severity is merited or expected.
 - B. If God's election was conditioned upon a sinner's faith, acceptance, or other works, then it would not be according to His mercy because the sinner would have a claim to receive God's kindness.
 - C. In this case, God's election would be based on *duty* not on *mercy*.
3. God's election was made without consideration of anything, whether good or bad, that a sinner has done (**Rom 9:11-13**).
 - A. Jacob was elected and Esau was rejected before they were born, before they had done any good or evil.
 - B. This is a proof-text for the doctrine of *unconditional election*.
 - C. Opponents of election, in a desperate attempt to deny the doctrine, claim that the election of Jacob and the rejection of Esau is not referring to them individually, but rather to the nations of Israel and Edom.
 - i. They try to use **Gen 25:23** for proof of this.
 - ii. A fundamental rule of Bible interpretation is to always interpret the Old Testament (**Hos 12:10**) in the light of the New Testament (**2Pe 1:19; Heb 7:22; Eph 3:4-5; Col 1:26**), and not vice versa.
 - iii. There are some major problems with this interpretation.
 - a. First of all, this interpretation contradicts the very premise and core of Paul's argument in Romans 9.
 - (i) The salvation and spiritual state of the nation of Israel is under consideration in Romans 9 (**Rom 9:1-5**).
 - (ii) Paul's core argument in Romans 9 is that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (**Rom 9:6**).
 - (iii) In other words, not all of the natural descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are God's chosen people (**Rom 9:8**).
 - (iv) Paul gives *personal* and *individual* examples of this in **Rom 9:7-13**.

- (v) Paul then justifies God's election of *individuals* in **Rom 9:14-24**.
- (vi) To say that Paul was referring to the nations of Israel and Edom in Rom 9:11-13 totally ignores the context of the chapter.
- b. Secondly, God's election in Romans 9 is *personal* election, not *national* election.
 - (i) He uses Isaac as a personal example of a child of God (**Rom 9:7**).
 - (ii) He uses Jacob and Esau as personal examples of election (**Rom 9:11-13**).
 - (iii) He uses Pharaoh as a personal example of a man whom God did not choose (**Rom 9:17**).
 - (iv) Paul uses personal pronouns to describe election.
 1. God will have mercy on *whom* (not the nation) He will have mercy (**Rom 9:15; Rom 9:18**).
 2. Election is not of *him* that willeth, nor of *him* that runneth (**Rom 9:16**).
 - (v) Paul replies to *a man's* personal objection to election: "why has thou made *me* thus?" (**Rom 9:20**)
 - (vi) Reprobation is of individual *vessels* of wrath (**Rom 9:22**).
 - (vii) Election is of individual *vessels* of mercy (**Rom 9:23**).
 - (viii) Those vessels are called individuals *of the Jews and of the Gentiles*, not the nations of the Jews and Gentiles (**Rom 9:24**).
- c. Thirdly, for this interpretation (that Rom 9:11-13 is referring to the election of the nation of Israel) to be true, God would have to elect and love every member of the nation of Israel and hate and reject every member of the nation of Edom.
 - (i) If this was not the case then the interpretation would be meaningless, having God loving some of those whom He is supposed to hate and hating some of those whom His is supposed to love.
 - (ii) There is only a remnant of Israel that are God's elect (**Rom 9:27; Rom 11:7**), and the rest are reprobates (**Rom 9:29; Rom 11:7**).
 - (iii) There is also a remnant of Edom that are God's elect (**Amo 9:12 c/w Rev 5:9**), and the rest are reprobates.
 - (iv) The fact that God has *a remnant* of elect in both the nations of Israel and Edom destroys the interpretation that God's election of Jacob was referring to the nation of Israel.
- 4. God's election is according to His foreknowledge (**1Pe 1:2**).
 - A. The foreknowledge that election is based on is God's foreknowledge of the *identity* of the elect (*whom*) (**Rom 8:29-30**), not His foreknowledge of their *works*.
 - i. The Lord knows *them* that are His (**2Ti 2:19**).
 - ii. God hath not cast away *His people* which He *foreknew* (**Rom 11:2**).

- iii. Jesus knows *His sheep* (**Joh 10:14; Joh 10:27**).
- iv. The elect are *foreknown*; the rest are *never known* (**Mat 7:21-23**).
- B. If God elected people based on their foreseen faith or good works, He would have elected nobody (**Psa 14:2-3 c/w Rom 3:9-12**).
- C. The elect are elected *unto* obedience, not *because of* their obedience (**1Pe 1:2**).
- D. The elect are elected *unto* good works (**Col 3:12; Eph 2:10**), not *because of* their good works (**2Ti 1:9**).
- E. Faith is the fruit of the Spirit, not the bait of the Spirit (**Gal 5:22**).
- F. The elect were chosen by God that they *should be* holy (past tense of *shall*), not *because of* their holiness (**Eph 1:4**).
- G. Some of the elect are enemies of the gospel, so God obviously did not choose them based on their foreseen faith (**Rom 11:28**).

IV. Election is according to God's will, not man's (**Rom 9:16**).

1. The very concept of election demands that God doesn't want to save the entire human race.
2. God always does what He wants to (**Dan 4:35; Job 23:13; Psa 115:3; Psa 135:6; Ecc 8:3; Isa 46:10**).
 - A. The God of the Bible is not the Arminian god which is as impotent as an idol "god that cannot save" (**Isa 45:20**).
 - i. Most people think that God's hand is not long enough to extend to a sinner to save him without the sinner reaching up to meet him part way.
 - ii. The LORD's hand is not shortened that it cannot save (**Isa 59:1**).
 - B. If God wanted to save the entire human race, He would do it, and they would be saved. Period.
 - C. The fact that they are not all saved proves that God doesn't want to save them.

V. Election is unavoidable.

1. No matter whether one believes in Arminian, freewill salvation or sovereign grace, the concept of God's election is unavoidable.
2. "The first problem with the reformaphobic explanation is that it falls short of its goal of eliminating all unconditional aspects of election. Even if men believe on Christ because of a conditional, free-will decision to do so, and even if they were elected by God on this account, it was still God's choice that led to their existence, and this choice was made while knowing whether they would be believers or unbelievers. God's choice to create a man who thereafter becomes a believer was in fact a choice to create a believer, and His choice to create a man who thereafter becomes an unbeliever was in fact a choice to create an unbeliever. This follows from the reasoning presented in the prior chapter. So the reformaphobic explanation, notwithstanding all its efforts to the contrary, still has God determining the populations of heaven and hell as surely as He does under the most hardened forms of Calvinism." (David Pyles, *Reformaphobia*, p. 18)

VI. God does the electing, not man.

1. There are some that try to spin election into man electing God by wresting **1Th 1:4**.
2. The phrase "your election of God" can be understood in either the objective genitive or the subjective genitive.
 - A. If used in the objective genitive, God is elected.

- B. If used in the subjective genitive, God elects.
- 3. In order to know which genitive is being used, we must compare this verse with other scripture to see who elects whom.
 - A. Scripture teaches that it is God who chooses His elect, not they who elect Him (**Mar 13:20**).
 - B. The elect belong to God (**Mat 24:31; Luk 18:7; Rom 8:33; Tit 1:1**) because He chose them (**Mar 13:20**).
 - C. The election of God happened before men were even born, making it obvious Who elects whom (**Rom 9:11**).
 - D. In fact, God chose His people before the foundation of the world (**Eph 1:4**).
 - E. Scripture is clear that it is God who elects His children; therefore the phrase "your election of God" (**1Th 1:4**) is written in the subjective genitive, meaning God elected the beloved brethren in Thessalonica.

VII. Who the elect are NOT

1. People that want to deny the doctrine of election come up with alternative explanations of who the elect are. Two popular ideas are:
 - A. The elect are those whom God knew would choose Him.
 - B. The elect are the natural Jews.
2. The elect are *not* those whom God knew would choose Him.
 - A. There are none in their natural state that would have chosen God given the chance (**Psa 14:2-3 c/w Rom 3:9-12**).
 - i. There is none that seeketh after God (**Rom 3:11**).
 - a. The wicked *will not seek after God* (**Psa 10:4**).
 - b. The wicked in the context of Psa 10:4 are all natural men (**Psa 10:7 c/w Rom 3:14**).
 - ii. Seeking precedes finding (**Mat 7:7**).
 - iii. Apart from God's electing grace, none would have sought God, and therefore none would have found Him.
 - iv. Since none would have found God, none would have, nor could have, chosen Him to save them.
 - B. The natural man minds the things of the flesh, not the things of the Spirit (**Rom 8:5**).
 - i. Mind v. - 1. a. *trans.* To put (one) in mind of something; to remind. b. To bring (an object) to one's mind. 2. a. To remember, have in one's memory; to think of (a past or absent object).
 - ii. God is not in the thoughts of the natural man (**Psa 10:4**).
 - iii. Therefore, the natural man is not going to choose God whom he doesn't think about.
 - C. Any thoughts the natural man has towards God are thoughts of *enmity* (**Rom 8:7**).
 - i. Enmity - 1. The disposition or the feelings characteristic of an enemy; ill-will, hatred.
 - ii. At the time the elect were saved, they were not choosing God, they were enemies of Him (**Rom 5:10**).
 - iii. A man who hates God and is His enemy is not going to choose Him to be His savior.

- D. The only reason that any man chooses to love God is because God chose to love him first (**1Jo 4:10; 1Jo 4:19**).
- E. God doesn't love some men (**Psa 5:5; Rom 9:13**), therefore they will not love Him.
- 3. The elect are *not* the nation of Israel as a whole.
 - A. The election and Israel are NOT the same thing (**Rom 11:7**).
 - B. Israel were God's elect (**Isa 45:4; Isa 65:22**).
 - C. They were God's elect because God chose them to be His people out of all the nations of earth (**Deut 7:6; Deut 14:2; Psa 135:4**).
 - D. *Nationally* they were all His elect, but *spiritually* only a remnant of them ever were (**Rom 9:6-8; Rom 9:27-29; Rom 11:1-7; Isa 65:9**).

VIII. The fairness of election

1. Many respond to the doctrine of election by charging God with unfairness (**Rom 9:14**).
2. If God were fair, He would send everyone to hell because that's what our sin deserves (**Rom 3:23 c/w Rom 6:23 c/w Rev 20:13-15**).
3. God is the potter and we are the clay, and He has the right to do with us as He pleases (**Rom 9:21**).
4. Don't question God's judgment (**Rom 9:20**).
5. For a man who understands the holiness of God and His abhorrence of sin, the question should not be "Why didn't God choose *everyone*?", but rather, "Why did God choose *anyone*?"

IX. How do you know if you're one of the elect?

1. A man can make his election sure in his own mind by believing the gospel and adding Christian virtues to his faith (**2Pe 1:5-11**).
2. We can be assured that we are the elect by living godly lives (**Col 3:12**).
3. Faith, repentance, good works, obedience, and godly living are the evidence and effects of election, not the cause of it.