

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION - THE CORNERSTONE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

The doctrine of unconditional election says that God chooses some people for eternal salvation and not others who must suffer from death in Hell for all eternity. It denies that there is anything you can do about God's decree. The argument is that God is sovereign and is under no obligation to save anyone for all deserve Hell. There is a version of unconditional election that argues that God has a plan to do what is best and as evil exists he has to make some terrible decisions. The casualties are those who are damned forever. That contradicts the notion of a truly sovereign God. God is forced to make do with saving some so he is not sovereign.

Protestants following Calvin and Luther believe in unconditional election.

They teach that man can only use free will to sin until God enables him to do good and to become holy. God chooses some people for salvation and they invariably get saved because he has made his grace irresistible to their free will. This choice made by God, is not based on anything they have merited. It is not a case of him saving them for he foresees that they will do great works after being converted. This is the doctrine of unconditional election. Some are predestined to salvation which means that the rest must be predestined to everlasting torment.

To make sure it is clear, the doctrine teaches not that God programs people to choose him but that he makes people who are too bad to desire to turn to him desire it and this desire ensures that they will convert to him. So the unsaved sinner is able to choose God but won't. When a Calvinist says that a sinner has the inability to do good he does not mean that it is the same as the inability of an invalid to walk but a self-inflicted inability that the sinner maintains until God seduces him or her away from maintaining it.

If God makes his choice arbitrarily then it follows that he hates those he has predestined to everlasting torment.

Calvinism says that God chooses the way he does because he sees some purpose in it. But when the good only do good by God's power and the wicked will be in Hell forever and the saints forever in Heaven it is clear that there can be no purpose. So, the charge made against Calvinism that its God really hates those who are predetermined to go to Hell is the truth.

Non-Calvinists say that God would not choose some people for salvation but that anybody who is not saved is lost through their own fault. That is wrong. They should admit that even if a person chooses Hell that decision is not made final until God acts and ends that person's life. It is not the person's fault that God made the decision irrevocable. God could have let the person live and kill them when they repent and choose him. God could reincarnate the dead on another world and keep doing so until they repent and are ready for Heaven. These people actually do believe in predestination but they will not be honest about it. They call the doctrine evil and then they believe in it. It would be better to be an overt Calvinist. To be one and deny it while castigating the Calvinist God as the Devil himself is just to adore the Devil.

Mercy is something that is freely given. If God is forced to be merciful to fulfil his purpose then that is not mercy. If God has to forgive me because he has to maximise good in general and it is not done for me it is not mercy. He is not intending to cancel the debt of justice but to do something else so it is not mercy. In the same way, if I am nice to X because I want his money then it is not X I care about but the money and so this is not love. Mercy means that there can be no ultimate purpose for predestination and that those who say the God of Calvinism just picks people for salvation for no reason like names out of a hat are right.

When God hates the unsaved and even the saved person sins a lot it follows that the saved person should try to sin more against the unsaved rather than the saved. If a saved and morally weak man likes beating women then he should go for non-Christian women.

Let Calvin's theology thrive among the Christians for it is been said often that it is the kind of doctrine that makes Atheists! To many, it is the supreme proof that all the evidence for Jesus being a prophet is wrong if he preached the dreadful doctrine and he did if he existed. Paul was commissioned by Jesus to speak for him and teach for him and Paul taught the doctrine meaning Jesus did.

The Calvinist can say that even if God makes a person get saved of their own free will it is still true to say that their salvation is entirely God's work. God makes the person exist and makes that person exist until he is saved. The person's free will is God's work because God causes that free will to exist even though he does not force it to choose but manipulates it to choose what he wants. But this is not just what Calvinists mean by saying that salvation is all of grace.

St Paul warned the believers that if they sin by adultery or homosexuality or in some other ways they will not inherit the kingdom of God. How does this fit salvation by faith alone without obedience? It is possible that you can think you have become a true believer and be wrong. Then if you abandon the faith, it shows that you are predestined to everlasting torment. Claiming to be a believer and then apostatising could mean your damnation is guaranteed. Christians who become Catholics are predestined by God to eternal damnation. This is how Paul could write that once you are saved you are always saved but that if a believer commits sins such as homosexuality or adultery or witchcraft he or she will be damned forever. Their behaviour is a sign that they were predestined to everlasting damnation. Holiness in the believer is not required for salvation but is a sign of being chosen for salvation. It is a sign of predestination to eternal happiness with God.

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION IN BIBLE

Does the Bible teach that God arbitrarily chooses some for salvation?

Calvinists argue that John 15:15,16 teaches unconditional election. In it, Jesus tells his disciples that he calls them friends and not servants for he told them all his father instructed him to say. And then he said that they had not chosen him as friends but that he had chosen them as friends.

The Calvinist believes that since Jesus did the choosing and they were not chosen because they had chosen him that unconditional election is correct. The reply is that Jesus is on about choosing disciples or servants and friends and not on about choosing people for salvation.

But Jesus means friends in the spiritual and not worldly sense. He is saying that they are not servants anymore because they want to obey him and God and that makes them friends. Jesus could not have had any friends who were spiritually opposed to him for sin is a rejection of God and all who speak for God. The Calvinists are right. The passage is for unconditional election and it is loud and clear.

The Bible says that the chosen are chosen on the basis of the foreknowledge of God (1 Peter 1:2). It is thought that its meaning is that God saw that they would be saved and he chose them on that basis (page 4, Great Heresies, John R Rice). This seems to confute unconditional election. God could pick those who will pick him when he knows who he chooses when he sees the future as long as the picking does not cause them to pick him. But the verse says that God foresaw the people and chose them. That is all it says. It does not say that he foresaw their good works or conversion but he foresaw them. It preaches unconditional election.

The Bible says that God prevents people from believing in the gospel and coming to salvation (2 Corinthians 4:4; Mark 4:11, 12). It is claimed that since God is forced to respect our free will and he holds all things in being that this is not his will but is his doing. He holds the person who refuses to believe in existence so in that sense he is the cause of their unbelief that is indirectly. But in context, Jesus is discussing why some won't believe so he must be attributing their unbelief to God's direct action. When talking about why some won't believe you don't answer that it is because they won't and because they exist! Therefore, Jesus did affirm the doctrine of predestination.

Faith is plainly and fanatically taught to be of supreme importance in the Bible. For example, we are told to love God alone which is the most important and then others just because it pleases him which is only the next important. We need to believe in God before we can think about doing the greatest good of all which is to love him so much. So belief comes first. To believe is part of the greatest commandment. And the commandment is evil for we know others exist and can only believe in God. Anyway, the commandment means that faith comes first. If so, it follows that God would let all believe if he could. So there is a mysterious reason why some are excluded from salvation and belief.

The Bible makes faith based on dogma more important than salvation. At least if you know the truth which this faith claims to be true, you would have some hope of salvation. Also having the truth even if you don't have the kind of faith in it that is caused entirely by God and not yourself, the faith that is necessary for salvation, is still beneficial. The truth would be promoted better if God liked people he had rejected and he had predestined to salvation. When he doesn't let them believe without the kind of faith that is necessary for salvation he is definitely determined that they won't get near the gates of salvation never mind through them.

U.E. IN PAUL

Unconditional Election is more explicit in Paul than in anywhere else.

Titus 3:5 says that true Christians are saved not because of works but because of God's mercy. Mercy alone was the reason. This unconditional election for mercy that is not free is not true mercy. In other words, God gives mercy because he wants to. It is not because he has to for any reason. You can't show mercy to A for his mother will suffer if you don't. You are really showing mercy to his mother for you would still torment him if you could.

In Romans 8:28-31, we read that everything is caused to work for the good of those who are chosen for salvation. We read that God foreknew them and then predestined them to become holy like Jesus and then he called them to salvation and made them justified in his sight and glorified them. This is evidently in the right order. It describes the steps and the order makes sense. Paul said that those who God foreknew he predestined to be justified or suitable for Heaven. Some say that this says that God only predestined those people for salvation who he foreknew would do much good after being saved. They think it means that God predestined you in the following way. That is, in the sense that he made you so that you could have a future existence which led to salvation for you. Thus he destined you for salvation in the sense that he held you in existence for it. That is not predestination any more than a mother having a baby who becomes a doctor predestined him to be a doctor. And the verse says the people not their works or conversion were what was known beforehand and also says that they were predestined FOR good works not BECAUSE of them. The passage says that God is taking care of the chosen because he has predestined them. This says then that the predestination is proper predestination not the non-predestination that the others call predestination that we have just refuted. God can't predestine a person in the sense of making them exist so that they will convert and then care for them because they have been predestined. God caring for them is supposed to cause the predestination. He cares and he predestines them for salvation. Romans 8 teaches unconditional election.

The order of the passage, first predestination, then foreknown corroborates that. Conditional election would place foreknowledge first for it is the cause of predestination. It claims God chooses you for he foresees what you will do.

Some imagine that since the passage says that those who love God are foreknown and predestined that the call that is a means of working out the predestination depends on loving God – conditional election. But God cannot make it possible for a person to love him because he sees that the person will love him that is for that reason. The future cannot cause the present or the past. If God sees what will happen it will happen. Even he cannot change what he sees in the future. What is foreseen will necessarily happen.

In Ephesians 1:4, we read that God chose Christians before time began that they would be holy and blameless before him. They are not chosen because they are good but to be good. It is replied, "The verse says nothing about being chosen for Heaven or Hell. It says we are chosen that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (page 8, Why I Disagree with All Five Points of Calvinism). But if Christians are saved from a world of people who can't please God unless they get saved then only getting saved can enable them to be blameless and holy. The verse does say that unconditional predestination is correct. It says it indirectly but clearly.

According to 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14, we must thank God because he has chosen us from the beginning for salvation through holiness and the true faith. Why did he say chosen from the beginning? He would have left that phrase out for it was no importance in that context if he did not mean Calvinism. It was sufficient to say that God has chosen us. If you were a Calvinist you would be likely to say that because you want election to be unconditional and decided before the world was made. If you were not a Calvinist you would be unlikely to draw attention to the fact that God is outside time and therefore he has chosen all that has happened "before" he ever created. That is what Peter would have been doing if he were not in agreement with Calvin. But he must have been when he used the phrase to speak of a doctrine of eternal decree that has no relevance to what he had to say.

ROMANS 9

Romans 9 is revered by Calvinists as the supreme unconditional election chapter.

In it Paul says that God choose Jacob to be over Esau before they ever did good or evil because his choice is not influenced by such things. Paul asks if this is injustice and concludes that it is not for God can have mercy on whoever he likes for mercy by its nature is not deserved. Those who reject unconditional election say this says nothing more than that God favoured Jacob more in this world and gave him more worldly blessings than Esau and says nothing about who was preferred spiritually and given grace and salvation or who was not. But the verses say nothing about temporal things and when the Bible claim that God hardened Pharaoh's heart in sin is cited in support, God must have meant that he put Jacob over Esau spiritually. God cited this case to prove that mercy like Jacob received was not dependant on free will or merits so the chapter is about unconditional election.

Verses 19,20 have Paul dealing with the problem of how God could blame us for sinning when he leads us to it. Paul says those who see the problem are not mistaken for God does this but he answers that God can do as he wishes with us like potters can do what they want with the clay. And then he relates this to eternal perdition and eternal glory so he is talking about predestination with a capital P as distinct from predestination to merely temporal things. There is no hint in the chapter that the alternative interpretation, that God fixes your life and gives you things in this world without regard to good works or man's will, is correct. The chapter speaks of spiritual gifts and salvation. Catholics say that it is up to each person and not God if they will be saved or not. Since free will is geared towards good and sin being only a misperceived good it follows that God can force a person to be saved without removing free will. They should believe in predestination for it

follows from the doctrine of God. It impugns his goodness and that is the only problem but you can't believe in God without doing that anyway.

Verses 22,23 say that God made some people for destruction and to show his wrath and made others to show his mercy which he gives them in preparation for their glory. He means final loss of salvation by destruction and means salvation to glory. The Calvinists are right for this is how Paul concludes the argument and the point he is trying to make about Esau, Jacob and Pharaoh. God blessing Jacob most in this world would not show God's salvation for God gave many people great blessings on earth and they lost their souls and were evil. Jesus often said that the rich will be the worst off. So these verses prove that Paul meant that God shows his salvation by admitting into Heaven and his wrath by rejecting those who die unfit for Heaven.

The Catholic and Arminian claim that Romans 9 just says that God gives everybody born into this world a different kind of life. Some will be healthy. Some will be ill. Some will have wealth and others will not. But would Paul really have had to argue so much and even quote the Bible to teach that? Everybody believed in those days that no two lives were equally blessed and that goodness does not guarantee a happy life – they could see it happening all the time. They also believed that there was a divine purpose for all this. Paul was not arguing about what there was no argument about. The only way to interpret him is to take him as meaning the only thing else he could have meant, that unconditional election is true. Romans 9 is about salvation in Heaven for verses 1-5 have Paul lamenting that the Jews are unsaved and estranged from God and Christ. It is not about national blessings but about salvation and their bad spiritual condition.

Verses 22 and 23 speaks of those who are not predestined to salvation as being vessels of divine anger being prepared for destruction. The destruction is apoleian meaning its the reverse of eternal salvation.

Some hope that Romans 9 is about the salvations of groups or religions rather than the salvation of people. They hope that if a religion is damned that this damnation may not refer to individual members. But there is no hint that Paul severs the individuals making the groups from the groups.

Romans 9 teaches that if there is eternal damnation, then God picks some people to face it and they can do nothing to avoid it.

CONCLUSION

The doctrine certainly shows that free will if it exists cannot overrule God. God is sovereign. It rules out any real power for priests and gives all power to God. It means you can be holy and still destined for Hell for salvation is not your choice but God's. It sees free will as a programmed thing which is why it says you do choose Heaven but that is only an outworking of the choice God has already made.