

The Five Points of Calvinism: Unconditional Election

[Total Depravity | **Unconditional Election** | Limited Atonement | Irresistible Grace | Perseverance of the Saints]

"Of all the doctrines of the Bible, none is so offensive to human nature as the doctrine of God's sovereignty." – J.C. Ryle

Defined

Unconditional: With no conditions attached, foreseen or otherwise

Election: 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.

Predestination: to predetermine, decide beforehand.

Reprobation: The sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons, in sorrow deciding not to save them, and to punish them for their sins and thereby to manifest his justice.

Grace: God's goodness toward those who deserve only punishment.

Definition From the Westminster Confession of Faith

3.5 Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.

3.6 As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

God Has a Chosen People

"Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. *Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring* after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day." (Deu 10:14-15)

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, *the people whom he has chosen* as his heritage!" (Psa 33:12)

"For many are called, but *few are chosen*." (Mat 22:14)

"And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But *for the sake of the elect* those days will be cut short... For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, *even the elect*... And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and *they will gather his elect* from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt 24:22, 24, 31)

" So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because *they disobey the word, as they were destined to do*. But *you are a chosen race*, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1Pe 2:7-9)

(See also: Matthew 11:27, Luke 18:7, Romans 8:28-30, Colossians 3:12, 1 Peter 1:1-2, Titus 1:1)

Election is not based on foreseen choices

1. God did the choosing.

“...for the sake of the elect, whom he chose.” (Mark 13:20) (also, 1 Thess 1:4, 2 Thess 2:13)

2. God’s choice was made before the foundation of the world

“...he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will...” (Eph 1:4-5)

“...all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.” (Rev 13:8)

“And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world...” (Rev 17:8)

(also, 2 Thess 2:13, 2 Tim 1:9)

3. God’s choice was not based on any foreseen merit residing in those whom He chose, nor was it based on any foreseen good works performed by them.

"I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." (Rom 10:20)

“So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.” (Rom 9:16)

“But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.” (1Co 1:27-29)

“...who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, (2Tim 1:9)

4. Good works are the result, not the ground, of salvation

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide...” (John 15:16)

5. Our faith comes about by God’s grace

“...he greatly helped those who through grace had believed...” (Act 18:27)

For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, (Phil 1:29)

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil 2:12-13)

Election precedes salvation

Election is not salvation, but is for salvation. Those chosen for salvation are not saved until they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and justified by faith in Christ.

“Therefore I endure everything *for the sake of the elect*, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” (2Tim 2:10)

(See also: Acts 13:48, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, Ephesians 1:4, Romans 16:7)

Unconditional election is about the sovereign mercy of God

Election is based on the sovereign mercy of God. It is not man's will, but God's will that determines which sinners will be shown mercy and saved.

"And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." (Exod 33:19) (See also: Deuteronomy 7:6-7, Matthew 20:15, Romans 9:10-24)

Unconditional election is about God's sovereignty over all things

"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. (Job 42:2)

"Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases." (Psa 115:3)

"The LORD of hosts has sworn: "As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand... For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" (Isa 14:24-27)

"...with God all things are possible." (Mat 19:26)

Common objections to unconditional election

1. It is unfair to man

"But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?'" (Matt 20:13-15)

2. It represents God as arbitrary

"But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." (1Tim 1:16)

3. It inspires pride in those who think they are elect

"For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (1Cor 4:7)

4. It discourages efforts for the salvation of sinners

"And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." (Acts 18:9-10)

Why does unconditional election matter?

- It frees us to enjoy the grace of God (Jeremiah 31:2-3, Revelation 22:17)
- It guarantees missions will succeed (John 10:16, Revelation 5:9, Acts 4:27-28)
- It makes us thankful for God's initiative-taking work because we cannot seek God on our own (Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10-12, 7:18, 1 Corinthians 2:14)
- It humbles us (1 Cor 4:7)
- God alone gets the glory (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

"Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev 7:10)