

PREDESTINATION

“which He prepared beforehand”

Key question

Has God predestined all that takes place including the salvation of some and not others?

Key text

Romans 9:14-24

“14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! 15 For He says to Moses, “*I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.*” 16 So then it {does} not {depend} on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “*For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.*” 18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. 19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?” 20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it?”

Key Definition

Predestination

God’s eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His own will, and for His own glory, has in eternity past been foreordained to come to pass.

Introduction

1. The mystery of Predestination - It must be understood that although a doctrine of predestination is evident in Scripture, it is a mystery that raises questions that cannot be easily answered. For example, how can ethics have any meaning without free will? How can God be just in judging those who are predestined to act in a certain way? These questions are best left open as mysteries that will not be solved this side of Christ’s return.
2. Biblical examples of both predestination and responsible choice.
 - a. **Israel.** God chose the nation Israel not on the basis of their choice of Him but on the basis of His own independent plan and will. Israel, nevertheless, needed to respond by accepting and acting in a prescribed way.

- b. **The crucifixion of Jesus.** Acts 2:23 “this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to the cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”
- c. **The betrayal of Jesus by Judas.** Mk.14:21 “For the Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!” It is said that Judas’ actions were Satanically motivated (Lk.22:3; Jn.13:2,27)
- d. **Eph.1:9,11** “He made known to us the **mystery of His will**, according to the kind intention which He purposed in Him. . . . Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who **works all things after the counsel of His will.**” God is both sovereign and working things to accomplish His purposes. The question is – What is the nature of His working?
- e. **Phil. 2:13** — “for it is God who is at work in you, **both to will and to work** for His good pleasure.”
- f. **Jn.6:37** “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away”
- g. **Acts 13:48** “all who were appointed for eternal life believed” (**14:1** “They spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed”)
3. **Everyone recognizes that no human has a perfectly free will.**
- a. We are constrained by many natural (secondary) issues – environment, genetic make up, temperament, early life experiences, etc.
- b. There is a shared sense of responsibility when we account for wrong behavior.
- **In Matt.18:6** Jesus warns those who cause a little one to stumble. “but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea.”
 - **Rom.7:15** suggests that we are conflicted in such a way that we do not always act as we would like. “For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate”
 - **Rom.14:13-23** suggests that someone can cause me to stumble by their example. (See I Cor.10:32 also.)
 - **I Jn.2:10** speaks of a cause for stumbling that is in those who do not walk in the light. “The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.”
 - In **Matt.26:31** we read that when the shepherd is struck the sheep flee as a result. “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’”
 - **Gal.5:17** indicates that because of internal tensions between the flesh and the spirit we can not do as we please. “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are in opposition to one another; so that you may not do the things that you please.”
 - The sins of fathers often bring an effect on offspring. **Ex.20:5**; 34:6-7; Lev.26:39-40
4. **Three different solutions to the mystery.**

God ordains all things We act freely in our own mind but are really governed	God knows all things God sees what we would freely choose and then	God limits His power God limits Himself in creating free moral	God limits His knowledge God is, on some issues, in process with us.
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by preconditioning that is controlled by God.	uses it as a part of His eternal purpose.	agents.	
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5. Key terms

- **Foreordination** - God's will with respect to all events.
- **Predestination** - God's choice of individuals for eternal life or eternal death.
- **Election** - Predestination to life or the positive side of predestination.
- **Foreknow** - God's ability to see through time what will happen. This term can carry the idea of an intimate relationship as well as an awareness of what will happen.

6. The history of the development of the doctrine.

- a. **Augustine** developed the doctrine in response to Pelagius' (a Roman moralistic monk) concept of human innocence and moral freedom.
- b. Pelagianism was condemned by the **Council of Ephesus** in 431.
- c. Semi-Pelagianism (the idea that God and man cooperate in salvation) was condemned by the **Synod of Orange** in 529.
- d. **Origen** believed that predestination was based upon his foreknowledge of what men will do.
- e. **Gottschalk** (9th century) defended double predestination.
- f. **Luther and Calvin** held strong views of predestination.
- g. **Theodore Beza** extended Calvin's view of double predestination to suggest that God causes man to sin.
- h. When Beza's view came under attack, **James Arminius** (a popular pastor in Amsterdam) was asked to defend Beza's view but as he studied he became supportive of a semi-Pelagian view.

A. **Arminianism** (autonomy - indeterminism)

1. **James Arminius** (1560-1609) was a Dutch Reformed pastor and theologian who modified considerably the theological position in which he had been trained. Arminius saw what he believed were two great errors in Calvinism: 1. It made God the author of sin; and 2., it did away with genuine human freedom. John Wesley followed his teaching.
2. Arminianism is concerned that we give proper respect to:
 - a. God's JUSTICE & EQUITY.
 - b. A realistic view of man's RESPONSIBILITY before God and his FREEDOM OF CHOICE.
 1. Humans are distinct from other animals in that they have moral responsibility and its corollary free volition. We do not act only or always by instinct, or external control as do animals. That freedom is removed in the Fall of Adam and restored in Christ.
 2. The extent of God's power to influencing our decisions is a mystery but it cannot violate the freedom that is the corollary to ethical imperatives and still hold humans morally responsible.
 - c. Scriptural texts that emphasize:
 1. FOREKNOWLEDGE as the basis of election -
Rom.8:29-30 "For whom He **foreknew**, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and

whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

I Pet.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, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood;” Just as God could foresee that sin would enter the universe without efficiently decreeing that it should enter, so He can also foresee how man will act without efficiently decreeing how he shall act.

2. CHRIST DIED FOR ALL MEN.

- **I Tim.2:6** “who gave Himself a ransom for all,”
- **II Pet.2:1** “false teachers ...even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.”
- **II Pet.3:9** “The Lord is ... not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”
- **Titus 2:11** “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,”
- **II Cor.5:19** “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,”
- **Rom.5:18** “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men; even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.”
- **Jn.3:16-17** “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him.”

3. GOD IS JUST and therefore is no respecter of persons.

- **Rev.22:17** “let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.”

4. ELECTION IS CORPORATE (IN CHRIST) – the election to salvation is corporate and comprehends individual men only in identification and association with the elect body of Christ. See “national election” below (D.2.).

- **Eph.1:3-14** Individuals are elect “in Him” not “to faith in Him.”
- **Isa.42:1-7** “I will appoint you as a covenant to the people” (49:1-13).

B. **Calvinism** (contingency - determinism) (**Rom.9:14-33, Eph.1:11**)

1. **John Calvin** (1509-1564) was a Genevan reformer and pastor who developed a comprehensive understanding of the plan of God in the context of His total sovereignty.
2. Calvinism is concerned that we give proper respect to:
 - a. God’s sovereign grace (independent of man’s volition).
 - b. Man’s totally depraved nature.
 - c. Scriptural texts which emphasize:
 1. God’s CHOICE apart from any foreseen merit or faith within man. Rom.9:11-24, Rom.10:20, IITim.1:9, Jn.1:12-13, Acts 18:27, Phil.1:29, Phil.2:12-13, I Thess.1:4-5, II Thess.2:13-14, Jas.2:5

2. Faith and repentance are DIVINE GIFTS TO SOME, NOT ALL. Acts 5:31, Acts 11:18, Acts 13:48, Acts 16:14, Acts 18:27, Eph.2:8-9, Phil.1:29, II Tim.2:25-26, Rom.12:3
3. This is the general philosophical thesis, which states that for everything that ever happens there are conditions such that, given them, nothing else could happen.
 - a. Its secular form - biological, social, and psychological determinism.
 - b. Its theological form - Divine decree or predestination.
4. The basic tenants of Calvinism
 - a. **(T)otal depravity** - the total inability of the human to save itself.
 - b. **(U)nconditional election** - God is sovereign in His call to salvation.
 - c. **(L)imited atonement** - Jesus died only for the elect.
 - d. **(I)rresistible grace** - God's call to faith can not be resisted.
 - e. **(P)erseverance of the saints** - those who are born of God will continue in the faith until death.
5. Variations within Calvinism
 - a. With respect to double predestination
 1. Those who hold to double predestination believe that God actually designs some people for hell.
 2. Those who do not hold this view believe that those who go to hell do so on the basis of their own will to reject God's grace.
 - b. With respect to the order of the decrees ("Lapsarian" is a term that refers to "the fall" of Adam)
 1. **Supralapsarianism** (God decrees to save before He permits the fall.) hypercalvinism.
 - a. The decree to save some and condemn others.
 - b. The decree to create both the elect and the reprobate.
 - c. The decree to permit the fall of both classes.
 - d. The decree to provide salvation only for the elect.
 2. **Infralapsarianism** (God decrees to save after He permits the fall.) moderate calvinism
 - a. The decree to create human beings.
 - b. The decree to permit the fall.
 - c. The decree to save some and condemn others.
 - d. The decree to provide salvation only for the elect.
 3. **Sublapsarianism** (unlimited atonement with a limited application) modified calvinism
 - a. The decree to create human beings.
 - b. The decree to permit the fall.
 - c. The decree to provide salvation sufficient for all.
 - d. The decree to choose some to receive this salvation.

Note: a comparison of Calvinist and Arminian positions on key issues. This chart is modified from Robert C. Walton's Chronological and Background Charts of Church History published by Zondervan

Issue	Calvinist Position	Arminian Position
Original sin	total depravity and guilt inherited from Adam	weakness inherited from Adam
Human will	In bondage to sin	free to do spiritual good
Grace of God	common grace to all; saving grace given to elect	enabling grace given to all; saving grace given to those who believe; persevering grace given to those who obey
Predestination	rooted in God's decrees	rooted in God's foreknowledge
Regeneration	the act of God alone	the act of God and man
Atonement	Christ's death a substitutionary penal sacrifice	Christ's death a sacrifice that God benevolently accepted in place of a penalty
Extent of atonement	intended only for the elect	intended for all
Application of atonement	by power of the Holy Spirit according to the will of God	by power of the Holy Spirit in response to the will of the sinner
Order of the decrees	election, predestination, union with Christ, calling, regeneration, faith, repentance, justification, sanctification, glorification	calling, faith, repentance, regeneration, justification, perseverance, glorification
Perseverance	perseverance of all the elect by the grace of God	perseverance dependent on obedience

C. **Problems with both views**

Note that for the Calvinist, God's sovereignty is clear and human responsibility is a mystery. For the Arminian it is just the opposite.

"Calvinism emphasizes divine sovereignty and free grace; Arminianism emphasizes human responsibility. The one restricts the saving grace to the elect; the other extends it to all men on the condition of faith. Both are right in what they assert; both are wrong in what they deny. If one important truth is pressed to the exclusion of another truth of equal importance, it becomes an error, and loses its hold upon the conscience. The Bible gives us a theology which is more human than Calvinism, and more divine than Arminianism, and more Christian than either of them." *Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, vo. VIII:815-6*

D. **Attempts at harmonization**

1. **Karl Barth's view**

- a. Christ is elect.
- b. All humanity is elect in Christ.

- c. The evangelist is to call people to live as though they were elect.
 - d. Believers are those who realize they are elect.
2. **National election** (God elects a class or nation of people – Israel and the Body of Christ)
- a. The NT does speak of election that can be understood to apply to a community of individuals. The idea of “corporate personality” is more common in Eastern cultures than in the West. Corporate personality means for us the treatment of the family, the clan, or eth nation, as the unit in place of the individual. It does not mean that no individual life is recognized, but simply that in a number of realms in which we have come to think individualistically, and to treat the single man as the unit, e.g., for punishment or reward, ancient though envisaged the whole group of which he was a part. This is seen often in the Bible.
 - 1. Identification of a group with its ancestor (Gen.13:15-17; Isa.41:8; Hos.11:1; Mal.1:3-4)
 - 2. Punishment of the group for an individual’s offense (Jos.7; Num.16; Ex.20:5-6)
 - 3. The high priest on the Day of Atonement represented the nation (Lev.16:15,19,21)
 - 4. Corporate guilt (Nehemiah 9:33; Dan.9:5-19)
 - 5. Israel was often treated as a unit (Isa.5:1-7; Jer.12:10)
 - b. Jesus is identified as the chosen or choice One. Luke 9:35 “This is my Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!” 23:35 “And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One’” Isa.42:1-7 “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; my chosen (choice or excellent) one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. . .and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes,. . .” Messiah is the chosen one in these passages. Eph.1:4 “just as He chose us in Him.” Note that we are chosen “in Him” not chosen “to be” in Him.
 - c. Believers as a group are identified as the chosen. I Pet.2:4,6 “an elect (“choice” as in I Pet.2:4,6; Rom.16:13; Lk.9:35) race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God.” Rom.11:5 “In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice” Rom.11:7 “What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened”
 - d. The nation of Israel was God’s chosen people in the Old Testament. Certainly they were not all saved. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die,” in Ezekiel was clearly a warning to the house of Israel. Romans 9 is a blueprint of how God chose, or elected, the elect. In short, God chose nations, or people groups. For a time, Israel was God’s elect. When Christ brought a new, “better covenant,” all people, both Jews and Gentiles, became His chosen, or elect, people. The “grace of God. . . appeared to all men.” Thus the national, or corporate, election view holds that election is indeed unconditional, but in all other respects it agrees with the traditional Arminian view.
 - e. We notice first that these choices for blessing were totally arbitrary and unconditional. Second, each example given—Abraham and Isaac, Isaac and Jacob, and Moses—deals not with personal salvation, but with the group of people whom God would bless above all other groups.
 - f. Then Paul deals with the accusation against God of unfairness. He shows that God chose, elected, or predestinated the people of Israel to “make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called,

not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.” He quotes Hosea’s and Isaiah’s prophecies that the Gentiles would become the people of God. He concludes that the Gentiles “have attained to righteousness,” but Israel did not.

- g. In short, God, before the foundation of the world, elected the nation of Israel to be His people until the coming of Christ, after which the Gentiles are also His elect. Thus He fulfilled his promise to Abraham that “In thee shall all nations be blessed.” (Gen.12:3; 22:18; Gal.3:8).
 - h. For a treatment of the “open view” of God go to theology notes #309.
3. **Compatibleism** (God works in such a persuasive way with the will of the individual that the person freely makes the choice that God intends.)
- a. I am led by many forces to act, as I freely choose. This is an action that God knows for certain I will choose given the forces that influence my choosing. It is an action that is consistent with God’s ultimate plan for history.
 - b. I certainly will choose to do that which God has decreed I would do but it is not necessary that I do it. It will happen but it need not happen.

E. **Scripture cited by Calvinists supporting predestination**

1. **God’s plan is eternal.**

- **II Tim.1:9** — “(God) who 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 granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.”
- **Ps.33:11** — “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation”
- **Is.37:26** — “Have you not heard? Long ago I did it, from ancient times I planned it.”
- **Is.46:9-10** — “I am God and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done.”
- **II Thess.2:13** — “God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.”
- **Matt.25:34** — “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ ”
- **I Pet.1:20** — “For He (Christ) was foreknown (as a sacrifice) before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.”
- **Jer.31:3** — “The Lord appeared to him from afar, saying, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love.’ ”
- **Acts 15:18** — “Says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.”
- **Ps.139:16** — “Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.”

2. **God’s plan is unchangeable.**

- **James 1:17** — “Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.”
- **Is.14:24** — “The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, ‘Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand.’ ”

- **Num.23:19** — “God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”
- **Mal.3:6** — “For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.”

3. The divine plan includes the future acts of men.

- **Dan.2:28** — “However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days.”
- **John 6:64** — “For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.”
- **Matt.20:18-19** — “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify {Him,} and on the third day He will be raised up.”

NOTE: (All the Scripture prophecies which are predictions of future events come under this heading. See especially: Micah 5:2, cp. with Matt. 2:5-6; Luke 2:1-7; Psalm 22:18 cp. with John 19:24; Psalm 69:21 cp. with John 19:29; Zech. 12:10 cp. with John 19:37; Mark 14:30; Zech. 11:12-13 cp. with Matt. 27:9-10; Psalm 34:19-20 cp. with John 19:33, 36.)

4. The divine plan includes the fortuitous events of chance happenings.

- **Prov.16:33** — “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.”
- **Jonah 1:7** — “So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.”
- **Acts 1:24, 26** — “And they prayed, and said, 'Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen . . .' And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias.”
- **Job 36:32** — “He covers his hands with the lightning, and commands it to strike the mark.”
- **I Kings 22:28, 34** — “And Micaiah said, ‘If you (Ahab) indeed return safely, the Lord has not spoken by me’ . . . Now a certain man drew his bow at random, and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor.”
- **Job 5:6** — “For affliction does not come from the dust; neither does trouble sprout from the ground.”
- **Mk.14:30** — “And Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, that you yourself this very night, before a cock crows twice, shall three times deny Me.’ ”
(Cp. Gen. 37:28 & 45:5; I Sam. 9:15,16 and 9:5-10)

5. Some events are recorded as fixed or inevitably certain.

- **Lk.22:22** — “For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!”
- **Jn.8:20** — “These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.”
- **Matt.24:36** — “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”
- **Gen.41:32** — “Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.”

- **Hab.2:3** — “For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hastens toward the goal, and will not fail; though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay.”
- **Lk.21:24** — “And Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”
- **Jer.15:2** — “And it shall be that when they say to you, ‘Where should we go?’ then you are to tell them, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Those destined for death, to death; and those destined for the sword, to the sword; and those destined for famine, to famine; and those destined for captivity, to captivity.” ’ ”
- **Job 14:5** — “Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with Thee, and his limits Thou hast set so that he cannot pass.”
- **Jer.27:7** — “And all nations shall serve him (Nebuchadnezzar), and his son, and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant.”

6. **Even the sinful acts of men are included in the plan of God and are used for good.**

- **Gen.50:20** — “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good. . .”
- **Is.45:7** — “The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these.”
- **Amos 3:6** — “If a calamity occurs in a city, has not the Lord done it?”
- **Acts 3:18** — “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled.”
- **Matt.21:42** — “The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner.”
- **Rom.8:28** — “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to {His} purpose.”

F. **Scripture cited by Calvinists with respect to the purpose of predestination.**

1. **Man’s pleasure**

- **I Tim.6:17** — “. . . God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.”
- **Col.1:21-23** — “And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind . . . He has now reconciled . . . in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach . . .”

2. **Man’s righteousness**

- **Eph.4:24** — “. . . and put on the new self, which in {the likeness of} God has been created in righteousness . . .”
- **Lev.11:44** — “I am the Lord your God. . . I am holy . . .”

3. **Glory of God**

- **Ps.19:1** — “The heavens are telling of the glory of God . . .”
- **Rom.9:23** — “. . . the riches of His glory . . .”
- **Is.48:11** — “And my glory I will not give to another.”

4. **Will of God**

- **Rev.4:11** — “Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.”
- **Is.46:10** — “My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.”

5. Unknown

- **Rom.11:33** — “How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways.”
- **Deut.29:29** — “The secret things belong to the Lord our God . . .”
- **Jn.13:7** — “Jesus answered, 'What I do you do not realize now . . .’”

G. Scripture cited by Calvinists in support of Election

1. **To outward privileges:** The vast majority of references to election have to do with roles or callings in this life.
 - **Ps.105:26** — “. . . Moses his servant and Aaron whom he had chosen. . .”
 - **I Sam.16:12; 20:30** — David
 - **I Chron.28:5** — “. . . he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne.”
 - **Lk.6:13-16** — Apostles (Judas), **John 6:70; Acts 1:2, 24; 9:15; 22:14**
 - **Gal.1:15** — “But when He who had set me apart (Paul) . . . and called me”
 - **Acts 13:17** — The Exodus (Jews), **Rom.9:4; 11:28; Isa.65:9, 22**
2. **To salvation:**
 - **Jn.6:37** — “all that the Father gives Me shall come to Me . . .”
 - **Jn.6:44** — “No one can come to me unless the Father . . .”
 - **Jn.17:2, 6, 9** — “All whom thou has given Him (the Son). . .”
 - **Acts 13:48** — “As many as had been appointed to eternal life . . .”
 - **Eph.1:4-8** — “. . . He predestined us to adoption as sons . . .”
 - **Rom.8:29-30** — “Whom he foreknew he also predestined. . .”
 - **Rom.16:13** — “. . . chosen in the Lord . . .”
 - **II Thess.2:13** — “. . . chosen . . . for salvation . . .”
 - **I Pet.1:2** — “. . . chosen according to the foreknowledge of God . . .”
 - **Col.3:12** — “. . . those who have been chosen of God . . .”
 - **II Tim.2:10** — “. . . for the sake of those who are chosen . . .”
 - **I Thess.1:4** — “Knowing . . . His choice of you . . .”
 - **I Pet. 5:13** — “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you . . .”
 - **Rom. 11:5,7** — “. . . according to God’s gracious choice . . .”
3. **To repentance and faith:**
 - **Acts 5:31** — “. . . to grant repentance to Israel and forgiveness . . .”
 - **Acts 11:18** — “. . . God has granted to the Gentiles repentance . . .”
 - **Rom.12:3** — “. . . God has allotted to each a measure of faith.”
 - **Eph.2:8-10** — “. . . and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God . . .”
 - **II Tim.2:25** — “. . .if perhaps God may grant them repentance . . .”
 - **Acts 9:15** — “. . .he is a chosen instrument of Mine . . .”
4. **Of individuals:**
 - **Acts 13:48** — “. . . as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”
 - **Gal.1:15** — “God . . . who set me apart, even from my mother's womb . . .”
 - **Jer.1:5** — “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you . . .”

- **II Thess.2:13** — “. . . God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation . . .”
- **Rom.9:11** — “. . . for though {the twins} were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to {His} choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls. . .”

5. To retribution:

- **Rom.9:22** — “God . . . endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction . . .”
- **I Pet.2:8** — “. . . they are disobedient to the word, and to this {doom} they were also appointed.”
- **Rev.17:8** — “. . . whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, . . .”
- **II Thess.2:11** — “And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false.”
- **Jude 4** — “For certain persons . . . who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation . . .”
- **II Cor.4:3-6** — “. . . if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing . . .”
- **Prov.16:4** — “The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.”

6. Of believers:

- **Rom.8:29-33** — “. . . predestined to become conformed . . .”
- **Eph.2:8-10** — “. . . prepared beforehand, that we should walk in . . .”
- **Phil.2:13** — “. . . God is at work in you both to will and to work . . .”

H. **How Calvinist's answer some of the objections to their theology.**

1. It is FATALISTIC.

Predestination differs from fatalism in that it is linked to the wise and purposeful plan of the sovereign and just Lord of life. Predestination encompasses man's choices while fatalism ignores them.

2. It is INCONSISTENT WITH FREE AGENCY AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY.

- a. Freedom is to be understood as relative to man's nature. Man's free agency is best understood as self-will rather than free will. Man is never asked or forced to act against his will. God governs the various aspects of man's life so that he freely does what He purposes. A person can do otherwise but will not because what they are preordained to do seems like the best choice in their eyes. It can be said therefore that they act freely while their actions are also preordained by God. (See Gen.50:20; Acts 4:27-28; 2:23; fulfilled prophecy, Prov.16:9; Jer.10:23; Rev.17:17).
- b. No one is perfectly free. OUR MORAL DECISIONS ARE CONSTRAINED BY MANY FACTORS.
 1. Morality requires free will, not just material determinism. “The simplest proof that human will is free to choose is this: If you are not free to choose, then all our ordinary language about morality is totally meaningless.”
 2. Constraints on our will.
 - a. The **SIN NATURE** - which is in bondage to foolishness. Gal.5:17

- b. The **NURTURING ENVIRONMENT** of sinful strategies - which is teaching us foolishness.
 - c. The **DIVINE DECREE** - God's sovereign purpose. Acts 4:27-28
3. **It makes GOD THE AUTHOR OF SIN.**
 God decrees acts of good and permits acts of sin in respect to the higher virtue of man's volition. He used evil in His wise and just purpose, overruling it for good. (See John 11:4; 21:19; Phil.1:12; II Cor.12:7-10; Heb.12:11; I Chron.10:4, 14; Rom.8:28).
4. **It DISCOURAGES ALL EXERTION.**
 The means as well as the ends are predestined. Predestination can lead to great courage and confidence. Look at Paul's life.
5. **It is BASED ON GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE.**
 God's predetermination is IN ACCORD WITH His foreknowledge, not BASED ON it or IN SPITE OF it. There is not a sequence in God's mind.
6. **It is A MYSTERY.**
- a. It is true that we will never be able to fully understand or explain determinism and freedom but we can see "in part" & "in a glass dimly."
 - b. Two analogies might be helpful: The master chess player (God) granting His opponents (humans) freedom to move where they please yet without ever losing control of the outcome of the match. The professional basket ball player (God) who gives his nonprofessional opponent complete freedom to do whatever he wants yet at any time and at his will is prepared to overpower and win.

I. **Summary**

1. **At the cross Christ paid for the sins of the whole world.** But this does not mean that all are saved.
2. **Justification is by faith in Christ.** But faith is not something that we can boast of. It is not a meritorious work but rather an "act of reception" in response to God's grace. Scripture does normally presents faith not as a gift but as a "free" response originating within the believer.
3. **The relationship between God's choice of us and our "free" choice of God is not as clear as we would like.**
 - a. God's knowledge of all history (from His position outside time) includes many events and decisions that are yet future (from our perspective in time).
 - b. To what extent does God decree events? It seems clear that some events are decreed ahead of time (prophecy) but this may not extend to every event and every detail.
 - c. Although my heart is with the Methodists, my mind is more Presbyterian.
 - d. Israel was elect (chosen) yet inherited the blessings only through faith. When the elect nation did not believe, it was set aside (Rom.11).
4. **All who wish to come may come. Those who are not elect have no desire to believe and therefore do not feel cheated.** But is this not a logical contradiction?
5. **Election is a mystery that we understand only in part.** But how do I identify the elect?
The elect are identified not by (feeling, sacrament, or style) but by abiding faith and godliness.

Eph.2:8-10 “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

II Thess.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.”

II Tim.2:19 “Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let every one who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness.’”

6. **All of us are limited in our choices by many factors outside our control – genetic history, early childhood experiences, ethnic and geographic ties, etc.** There is no room for pride, perfectionism, or manipulation when we realize that “God has set us up in business” so to speak. What we have we have been given.
7. We might use the analogy of a chess game between a novice and a grand master. The novice may be free to move anywhere he pleases but the grand master will always have his way with the novice. We might also use the analogy of a parent and a small child. The parent’s plans can be certain in many areas of family life while at the same time giving the child real freedom to make many decisions.
8. The tension between human responsibility and divine foreordination must be respected.

Human responsibility		God’s foreordination
<p>“And as for you, you meant evil against me”</p> <p>“For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontious Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel to do . . .”</p> <p>“but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”</p> <p>“Turn ye to me, and I will turn to you” Zach.1:3</p>	<p>Gen.50:20</p> <p>Acts 4:27-28</p> <p>Deut.29:29</p>	<p>“but God meant it for good”</p> <p>“. . . whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.”</p> <p>“The secret things belong to the Lord our God,”</p> <p>“Convert us, O Lord, to thee, and we shall be converted.” Lam.5:21</p>
In time		In timeless eternity

The Five Points of Calvinism and Arminianism

Category	Arminianism	Calvinism
Total Depravity	1. Free Will or Human Ability	1. Total Inability or Total Depravity

	<p>Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists in 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>Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the Gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is sinful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in 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 but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation. Salvation is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.</p>
Unconditional Election	2. Conditional Election	2. Unconditional Election
	<p>God's choice of certain individuals to salvation before the foundation of the world was based on 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 on what a person 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 from man's free will, cooperating with the Spirit's working. God chose those whom he knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. In this sense God's election is conditional.</p>	<p>God's choice of certain individuals to 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 on any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.</p>
Limited Atonement	3. Universal Redemption, (General Atonement)	3. Particular Redemption, (Limited Atonement)
	<p>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 people and for every person, only those who believe on 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 a person chooses to accept it.</p>	<p>Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. 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, therefore guaranteeing their salvation.</p>

Irresistible Grace	4. The Holy Spirit Able to Be Effectually Resisted	4. The Efficacious Call of the Spirit, or Irresistible Grace
	<p>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</p>	<p>In addition to the outward general call to salvation, which is made to everyone who hears the Gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the</p>

	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 draw to Christ only 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 men.	elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call can be, and often is, rejected; whereas the internal call cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. 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.
Perseverance of the Saints	5. Falling From Grace	5. Perseverance of the Saints
	Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith. Not all Arminians agree on this point; some hold that believers are eternally secure in Christ—that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.	All who are chosen by God, 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.
	Rejected by the Synod of Dort	Reaffirmed by the Synod of Dort
	This was the system of thought contained in the "Remonstrance" (though the "five points" were not originally arranged 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.	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 into "five points" (in answer to the five points submitted by the Arminians) and has ever since been known as "the five points of Calvinism."

Traditional Arguments on Election

Arminianism	
Arguments For	Arguments Against
God desires all persons to be saved and does not desire the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9).	God has selected some to be saved, not all; and he has even chosen not to reveal some truths to some people (Matt. 13:10-16; John 10:24-30).
The universal character of God's commands and exhortations reveal his desire to save all people (John 3:3, 5-7; 1 Peter 1:16). Also God issues a universal invitation for all to come to Christ (Isa. 55:1; Matt. 11:28; John 9:37-39).	God's standard does not change because of man's inability to obey; a person can come to God only if God draws him (John 6:35-40, 44-47, 65).
All people are able to believe and be saved, because God has issued a universal call to salvation and because God has given all people prevenient grace to counteract sin and to render everyone able to respond to the gospel. There is no need for special grace from God for salvation.	The term "prevenient grace" is not found in the Bible. Paul expresses the fact that man is unable to turn to God and does not even seek God, but that he rejects the revelation he has been given (Rom. 1:18-32; 3:10-19).
It would be unjust of God to hold people responsible for what they are unable to do.	"Foreknowledge," as used in Scripture, is not just knowledge of future events, but is a relational term showing that God has loved and related to the elect before they came into existence and chose them to be saved because he chose to love them, regardless of their deeds (Rom. 9:26-29).

<p>God does choose some to salvation and pass over others, because he has foreseen who will accept the offer of salvation in Christ. Foreknowledge is God’s knowing beforehand who will receive salvation and is closely tied with election (Rom. 8:29; 1 Peter 1:1-2).</p>	
<p>Calvinism</p>	
<p>Arguments For</p>	<p>Arguments Against</p>
<p>The whole human race is lost in sin, and each individual is totally corrupted in intellect, will, and emotions by sin. Man is unable to respond to God’s offer of salvation because he is spiritually dead (Jer. 17:9; John 6:44; Rom. 3:1-23; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:1-3).</p>	<p>If man is unable to respond and cannot obey God, then how can God truly offer salvation to all through the Gospel and expect obedience from man (Matt. 11:28-30; John 3:16; 6:35)?</p>
<p>God is sovereign in all he does, and he does all according to his good will and pleasure. He is not answerable to man, because he is the Creator and can choose whomever he wills to save (Rom. 9:20-21; Eph. 1:5; Phil. 2:13; Rev. 4:11).</p>	<p>God desires everyone to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9).</p>
<p>God has chosen certain people for his special grace, irrespective of their physical descent, character, or good deeds. Specifically in salvation, he has chosen to save certain people through faith in Christ (John 6:37, 44, 65; 15:16; Acts 13:48; Rom. 9:6-24; Eph. 1:4-5).</p>	<p>God would not be fair in choosing only some to eternal life and passing over others, because this would violate man’s free will to choose and because the offer of the Gospel to all would not be in good faith.</p>
<p>Election is an expression of God’s sovereign will and is the cause of faith (Eph. 2:8-10).</p>	<p>God cannot demand that man believe if faith comes from him.</p>
<p>Election is certainly effective for the salvation of all the elect. Those whom God chooses will certainly come to faith in Christ (Rom. 8:29-30).</p>	<p>There is the possibility that those who have come to faith may fall from grace and lose their salvation.</p>
<p>Election is from all eternity and is immutable (Eph. 1:4, 9-11).</p>	<p>God foresaw those who would believe and elected them in eternity (Rom. 8:29).</p>

NOTE: The above two charts are taken from Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine pp. 95-99, by H. Wayne House, Zondervan

Major Evangelical Views of Election

	Arminianism	Calvinism	Moderate Calvinism
Definition	<p>The conditional choice of God by which he determined who would believe based on his foreknowledge of who will exercise faith. It is the result of man’s faith.</p>	<p>The unconditional and loving choice of God by which he determines who must believe. It is the cause of man’s faith.</p>	<p>The unconditional and loving choice of God by which he determines who will believe. It is the cause of man’s faith.</p>
Notable Adherents	<p>Jacobus Arminius, John Wesley</p>	<p>John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon</p>	<p>Millard J. Erickson</p>
Historical Roots	<p>In the early 17th century, the Dutch pastor Arminius, while attempting to defend Beza’s view, became convinced that Beza and Calvin were wrong. Wesley later went beyond Arminius by emphasizing prevenient grace.</p>	<p>During the Reformation, Calvin picked up on Augustine’s emphasis on God’s irresistible grace, man’s sin nature, and predestination. Calvin was succeeded by Beza, who went a step further.</p>	<p>Primarily a recent interpretation.</p>
	<p>Emphasizes the responsibility of man to make a choice. Also acknowledges man’s depravity and helplessness without God’s</p>	<p>Emphasizes the holiness and sovereignty of God and thus his right to make such decrees as election to</p>	<p>Emphasizes the holiness and sovereignty of God while at the same time preserving the idea of man’s responsibility. God’s grace</p>

Pros	intervention. Most attractive aspect is its allowance for man's free will to choose. Man can resist God's grace.	salvation. Rightly emphasizes the total depravity of man and his inability to choose what is right unaided. The overriding doctrine is the absolute sovereignty of God, who is not dependent on the whim or will of man. Man cannot resist God's grace. This view is supported by an overwhelming amount of Scriptural evidence.	is irresistible but only because God has chosen to make it so appealing to the elect that they will accept it. In other words, God enables the elect to want his grace. Thus God works his sovereign will through the will of the elect. Strikes a balanced position between traditional Calvinism and Arminianism.
Cons	De-emphasizes God's sovereignty. By putting God in a position of dependence on the decisions of a created being, this view makes it appear that God is not in control of his universe. Also, acknowledging the doctrine of total depravity required Wesley to come up with prevenient grace, which has no basis in Scripture.	De-emphasizes man's responsibility. Seems to eclipse man's free will and thus his responsibility for his sin. Critics charge that it is fatalistic and destroys motive for evangelism. Biggest problem: apparent logical contradiction to human freedom.	Lacks a clear precedent in church history. Borders on semantical dodging when it distinguishes between God's rendering something certain and something necessary (God's deciding that something will happen as opposed to deciding that it must happen).
Scriptural Evidence	Central text: No logical treatises can be found to support the Arminian position. Thus, they appeal to the universal character of God's invitation to salvation; 1 Timothy 2:3-4 is offered as evidence that God desires all people to be saved (see also Isa. 55:1; Ezek. 33:11; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Peter 3:9).	Central text: Romans 9:6-24. This demonstrates that election is based on God's just character and his sovereignty. Therefore, he will not make an unjust decision, and he is not required to explain to man why he still finds fault with those whom he did not choose.	No central text is specifically offered. Erickson bases his position on the strengths of the Calvinist position and the weakness of the Arminian and is motivated by the apparent contradiction of God's sovereignty and man's free will. He would lean to the Calvinist position in most passages.

NOTE: The above charts are modified from Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine pp.95-99, by H. Wayne House, Zondervan

Order of the Decrees

Supralapsarian (Limited Atonement)	Infralapsarian (Limited Atonement)	Sublapsarianism (Unlimited Atonement)	Lutheran	Wesleyan	Roman Catholic
Creation of man with a view to electing some to eternal life and damning others to eternal perdition	Permission of fall of man results in guilt, corruption, total inability.	Permission of fall of man results in corruption, guilt, moral inability.	Permission of fall of man results in guilt, corruption, total inability.	Permission of fall of man results in guilt, corruption, total inability.	Permission of fall of man results in loss of supernatural righteousness.
Permission of fall of man results in guilt, corruption,	Election of some to life in Christ	Gift of Christ to render salvation possible to all	Gift of Christ to render satisfaction for sins of world	Gift of Christ to render satisfaction for sins of	Gift of Christ to render satisfaction for all human sins

total inability				world	
Gift of Christ to redeem the elect	Gift of Christ to redeem the elect	Election of some for gift of moral ability	Gift of means of grace to communicate saving grace	Remission of original sin to all and gift of sufficient grace to all	Institution of church, the sacraments, to apply satisfaction of Christ
Gift of the Holy Spirit to save the redeemed	Gift of the Holy Spirit to save the redeemed	Gift of the Holy Spirit to work moral ability in the elect	Predestination to life of those who do not resist the means of grace	Predestination to life of those who improve sufficient grace	Application of satisfaction of Christ through sacraments, under operation of second causes
Sanctification of all the redeemed and regenerated	Sanctification of all the redeemed and regenerated	Sanctification by the Spirit	Sanctification through the means of grace	Sanctification of all who cooperate with sufficient grace	Building up in holy life of all to whom the sacraments are communicated

NOTE: Much of the above chart is modified from Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine pp. 98, by H. Wayne House, Zondervan

Questions that you should be able to answer.

1. Specific facts you should know.

- a. What are the strongest arguments for the Arminian position?
- b. What are the strongest arguments for the Calvinist position?
- c. What are the strongest arguments for the position of Barth?
- d. What are the five points of Calvinism?
- e. What is the meaning of double predestination?

2. Issues that you should be able to discuss.

- a. What is the meaning of “forknowledge” in Rom.8:29-30?
- b. What are the implications of “supralapsarianism”?
- c. How important are the ordering of the decrees?
- d. How is predestination related to pride and humility in the Christian life?
- e. How does this doctrine effect our need to control our environment?
- f. How do you respond to this statement – “If a job is worth doing, it is worth doing poorly.”?

Views of Election and Predestination

by Wesley Wilson

When most people explain the doctrines of election and predestination in the Bible, they present either the traditional Calvinist view or the traditional Arminian view. Both views explain certain of the truths contained in Scripture, but both, as they are most commonly explained today, fail to explain other truths. As in science, the theory that best matches the evidence—in this case the Bible—is the most accurate theory.

The Calvinist View

The Calvinist view of election holds that God sovereignly elected, chose, or predestinated certain individuals before the foundation of the world to be saved. He chose to show mercy on those people, the elect, and on them only. This election was unconditional, because it was based on nothing these blessed individuals had done or would ever do. Because God has predestinated His elect, they cannot escape His salvation. God's grace is irresistible. Furthermore, Christ must have died to save only those people. God would be unjust, the theory states, to punish sins for which the blood of Christ atoned. Thus Christ's atonement is limited to the elect. Finally, if God's grace is irresistible, nothing can make a person fall from that grace. Those who are truly God's elect will persevere in the faith and will be eternally secure. So the Calvinist view of election binds together the U, L, I, and P of the Calvinist TULIP, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.

The Traditional Arminian View

The traditional Arminian view of election holds that God sovereignly decreed before the foundation of the world that "whosoever will may come." God chose to save every individual who would respond to His grace. His mercy is offered to all. This election is conditional upon the individual's response. Thus it is possible to resist the grace of God, and it is possible to fall from that grace after a genuine conversion by rejecting it through sin. Those who persevere in the faith will be saved.

Flaws in both views

Unconditional election is the strongest disputed point of Calvinism. (Total depravity is the strongest point, but Arminians hold to it as firmly as Calvinists. The perseverance of the saints is another point of practical agreement, although it is viewed in different ways.) Calvinists can show convincingly from Romans 9 that God's election is not based on anything those who were chosen did. "(For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)" (verse 11). "So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (verse 16). So conditional election is the weakest point of the traditional Arminian view. The primary problem of the Calvinist view of election is that it denies that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (I Tim. 2:4). By choosing certain people to be saved, God by default sends all others to hell, without a chance of redemption.

The National Election View

A third, less common view lies firmly within the Arminian camp. The nation of Israel was God's chosen people in the Old Testament. Certainly they were not all saved. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," in Ezekiel was clearly a warning to the house of Israel. Romans 9 is a blueprint of how God chose, or elected, the elect. In short, God chose nations, or people groups. For a time, Israel was God's elect. When Christ brought a new, "better covenant," all people, both Jews and Gentiles, became His chosen, or elect, people. The "grace of God. . . appeared to all men." Thus the national, or corporate, election view holds that election is indeed unconditional, but in all other respects it agrees with the traditional Arminian view.

A Closer Look at Romans 9

Does Romans 9 really support the national election view? The first five verses tell Paul's sorrow for the Israelites, who have received many blessings from God. He then shows that not all descendants of the patriarchs received these blessings. For example, the promises to Abraham were fulfilled through Isaac, not Ishmael, and through Jacob, not Esau. These blessings were sovereignly determined by God, not based on any deeds of those He chose to bless. It was "not

of him that willeth"—Isaac intended to give Esau the blessing—"nor of him that runneth"—Esau ran to get venison to receive his father's blessing—"but of God that sheweth mercy." In verse 15, Paul quotes God's declaration to Moses when He offered to destroy the rest of the children of Israel and fulfill his promises through Moses' descendants: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

We notice first that these choices for blessing were totally arbitrary and unconditional. Second, each example given—Abraham and Isaac, Isaac and Jacob, and Moses—deals not with personal salvation, but with the group of people whom God would bless above all other groups.

Then Paul deals with the accusation against God of unfairness. He shows that God chose, elected, or predestinated the people of Israel to "make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." He quotes Hosea's and Isaiah's prophecies that the Gentiles would become the people of God. He concludes that the Gentiles "have attained to righteousness," but Israel did not.

In short, God, before the foundation of the world, elected the nation of Israel to be His people until the coming of Christ, after which the Gentiles are also His elect. Thus He fulfilled his promise to Abraham that "In thee shall all nations be blessed." (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Gal. 3:8).