

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

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.

Scripture: Rom. 8:30; 9:11, 13, 16; Eph. 1:4, 6, 9, 11–12; 1 Thess. 5:9; 2 Timothy 1:9

1. If God has ordained all things, including all those who will be saved, then why should we evangelize?

- (1) God has ordained the means by which his elect will be saved.
- (2) Scripture commands us to.
- (3) The preaching of God's word always accomplishes its purposes: it softens hearts or it hardens hearts.

2. If God is sovereign over all things, and has preordained whatever comes to pass, then why should we pray?

- (1) God commands us to pray.
- (2) Prayer aligns our will with God's will.
- (3) Prayer glorifies God.
- (4) Prayer humbles us.
- (5) Prayer shows our ultimate dependence upon God.
- (6) No one in the Bible makes the argument that because God is sovereign, we should not pray. In fact, it is just the opposite: because God is sovereign, we ought to pray.

3. If God chooses to give grace to some people, but not to others, does that mean that God is unjust?

- (1) God is not under obligation to give grace to anyone. Grace, by definition, is not obligatory. Grace is God's free and undeserved gift. To think that God is obligated to give everyone grace is to confuse grace with justice. God is obligated to give justice — because justice by its nature is what we deserve.
- (2) In passing by some, God glorifies his attribute of justice.
- (3) Ultimately, we must trust that the Judge of the earth will do what is just. As R.C. Sproul used to say, the elect get grace (which they don't deserve). The non-elect get justice (which we all deserve). But no one gets injustice.

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The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.

4. If the doctrine of unconditional election is true, do I still have to choose to believe in Jesus?

(1) The doctrine of unconditional election does not negate choosing to believe in Jesus. In order for one to want to believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit must first change one's heart, giving them the desire to want to receive Christ by faith (regeneration).

(2) Scripture often speaks of God's sovereign election and coming to Christ in faith in the same passages.

All that the Father gives to me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out (John 6:37).

I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him... Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:25–28).

5. How are we to reconcile God's sovereign choice with our non-elect family and friends?

(1) We don't know who the elect and non-elect are. Even if someone has repeatedly rejected the gospel, as long as they are alive, there is still hope they will trust in Christ.

(2) Everyone who wants to be saved will be saved. The problem is not with the free offer of the gospel (the gospel is there for the taking). The problem is with the human heart that does not desire Christ.

(3) We must resist the temptation to embrace Hyper-Calvinism and Pelagianism.

6. Does this doctrine make God the author of sin?

(1) God does not create evil in the hearts of people causing them to sin or reject him.

(2) WCF 3.7 uses the language of withholding mercy or passing by.

(3) No one goes to hell because they were not chosen by God; they go to hell because of their sin.

7. What if I struggle with this doctrine?

(1) Rest assured that most people struggle with unconditional election — sometimes for years. It can seem unfair or even arbitrary on God's part.

(2) For me, it boiled down to being faithful to scripture and letting God be God. If God is sovereign, then he is not manageable or subject to human reason. Rather, he is entirely unconditioned and free — meaning he is not subject to human will, control, or merit.

(3) I recommend reading scripture with an open mind and committing the matter to prayer.

(4) Ultimately, this doctrine exalts God's free mercy, glorifies God, and humbles us.

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The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.
