

Bible Study on Hermeneutics – Handout Session 15
 Controversial Doctrines, Practices, and Passages – Unconditional Election
Grace Bible Chapel
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Understanding Calvinism – continued

Five doctrinal positions were determined by the Synod of Dort (1618/1619) to counter the five statements of the Remonstrants. These became known as the Five Points of Calvinism. The points are all interconnected – but, each can easily be supported individually from Scripture.

A Comparison of Arminianism with Calvinism
Point Two – Conditional Election vs. Unconditional Election

By David Steele and Curtis Thomas - Originally posted on Archegos: the Champion Statement on offsite articles

| Arminianism | Calvinism |
|---|---|
| <p>Conditional Election God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon 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 upon what man 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 solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation. God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.</p> | <p>Unconditional Election God's choice of certain individuals unto 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 of 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 upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.</p> |

Election – the Arminian view concerning election - conditional

1. The foundation for Arminian beliefs cannot be directly supported from Scripture. Therefore, proponents have manufactured concepts within the system in order to argue with reason. Wesley stated the following: "Human beings are totally incapable of responding to God without God first empowering them to have faith. This empowerment is known as "Prevenient Grace." Prevenient Grace doesn't save us but, rather, comes before anything that we do, drawing us to God, making us WANT to come to God, and enabling us to have faith in God. Prevenient Grace is Universal, in as much as all humans receive it, regardless of their having heard of Jesus. It is manifested in the deep-seated desire of most humans to know God." John Wesley

2. Such theology must mean that God's prevenient grace takes us part of the way to salvation (makes us partly regenerate) but man's will (or nature) does the rest (or completes it).
3. The Bible does not teach prevenient grace. This is a concept brought about under the belief that all men have "free will" and that Christ died for all men (John 3:16 and similar passages), that God therefore loves all men equally, and is attempting to save all men, but will not violate their will. All of these beliefs are forced upon Scripture. So also is prevenient grace awkwardly forced on the Scripture in order to hold their system together.
4. The central premise of conditional election is based on the Scriptures that use the term "foreknowledge" by interpreting the word to mean *fore-sight* – that God saw into the future as to what each person will do and based His elective decision on this knowledge. This is the idea that God looked into the future as to whether or not the person would believe in Christ and based on this He then elected them. An example for our day is our election of government representatives. We look at candidates and based on what we perceive concerning them, we vote and ultimately elect them. We do this based on what we perceive as their merit thus making it conditional.
5. There are several major problems with this concept. First, it places the ability to be saved into man's hands instead of God's – thereby making salvation no longer by grace, but by merit. Secondly, it denies the teaching of God's Word concerning the sovereignty of God, the depravity of man, and the real meaning of "foreknowledge" from the contexts where it is found. It cannot be supported biblically, but instead it emphatically and clearly is diametrically opposed to Scripture.

Election – the Calvinist view concerning election – unconditional

General Thoughts:

- **Election is in the Bible but rarely spoken about by most.**
 - It is perceived as impersonal and mysterious.
 - It is generally thought too controversial to discuss
 - What in the Bible is not controversial?
 - Every doctrine is profitable.
 - It gives glory to God and joy / comfort to God's people.
- **Unconditional election** is considered by most to be contrary to God's fairness, and untrue because it violates man's "free will." The concept of free will is believed almost universally as a fact, but unsupportable from the Word of God.
- **Overview:**
 - Modern view – synergism – that is that God and man work together in salvation. This is also called semi-Pelagianism. This is the Arminian doctrine.
 - Monergism – salvation is exclusively of a single source and that source is God. This is the Calvinistic doctrine.
 - The "new birth" of John 3 is a monergistic birth. The concept of the "new birth" is robbed of its significance under Arminianism.

What occurs first?

Faith – then the – New Birth or

The New Birth – then –Faith

- All are familiar with the concept of election – one example is our system of choosing people for office.
 - That kind of election is called conditional election.

- “Unconditional election” means the chooser does so without any regard for the merit of the one chosen.
- Election is part of divine sovereignty.
 - Ephesians 1:4-5; 11 – not outside of Himself.
 - It is “according to the kind intention of His will.”
 - The source “His purpose” / “after the counsel of His will.”
 - The Arminian places salvation in the hands of men.
 - If based on men, according to Word, never happen.
 - Total Depravity – means total inability (Rom 3:9-18).
- **Unconditional election** – God’s elective method is first shown in the OT when He chose Israel instead of another nation (Deut 7:7-8).
- **If “total depravity” is true, men have nothing meritorious.** Salvation must be initiated completely from God.
 - Christ came to seek that which was lost (not those who were already cooperating with His will) Mat 18:11.
 - We love because He first loved us” 1 John 4:19.
 - Really a reason to rejoice.
 - No one would be saved if left to men.
 - Ultimately, “unconditional election” is biblical (John 15:16; Acts 13:48 - Rom 13:1 appointed; 2 Thess 2:13 – John 1:1 “beginning” the same word – there was nothing before Him so there is nothing before or preceding election.
 - John 13:8 “chosen” is associated with election and is a term in the Scripture interchangeable with election.
 - Mat 20:16 the call goes out to all, but is only the chosen (elect) profit by the call.
 - One must ultimately be chosen, or they will not be saved (John 10:26).
 - 1 Cor 1:26 – being “chosen” in this context cannot be based on any merit of men – just the opposite.
 - Basis – not wise, not mighty, not noble, weak, base, and despised – in other words “no merit.”
 - Why? – “so that no man may boast before God.”
 - Which gives God the glory or eliminates boasting?
 - God elects us (chooses us) based on our merit.
 - God elects us (chooses us) based on His own will.
- Arminians use the term “foreknowledge” or “foresight” to mean God merely looking into the future to view how each person reacts to the truth.
- **Foreknowledge** – does not mean “fore saw” – in relation to God it means “fore love.” 1 Pet 1:2.
 - Proginosko – pro (before) ginosko (knowledge).
 - Ginosko – absolute knowledge – often indicates a relation between the person knowing and the object known (W.E. Vine) – reference to Christ 1 Pet 1:20.
 - Know – is an idiom for love (Mat 7:23; 12:33; Lk 10:22; John 8:32; 43; 55; 10:14; 10:15; 27; 14:7; 17; 16:3) “determined by context.”
 - Rom 8:28-29 – doesn’t say he saw something about us, the weight is on God’s initiation (the word “also” is repeated for each). He before decreed love for us (before determined a relationship) – we were the object.
 - 1 Pet 1:2 –chosen in this context according to “fore love” not because of obedience, but chosen to obey.
 - 1 Pet 1:2 – not chosen because of obedience, but chosen to be transformed.
 - God must of necessity take the first step – “we are dead” (Eph 2), and were not walking attractively, but “according to the course of the world...disobedience.”
 - Eph 1:3-6 – things to notice:
 - All spiritual blessings come from God.
 - The decision for choice was made before world created – He initiated the process with specific decrees in view.
 - He is in sovereignty carrying out what He planned.
 - kind intention of “His will” – not our “free will.”
 - according to “His good pleasure”- not our merit.

- We do not know why He chose whom He chose, but we know there is no emphasis on anything outside of Himself.
- o Rom 9:6-26 – Paul is answering the question – what happened to Israel?
 - Rom 9:6 – the Word of God has not failed.
 - Goes on to explain (Rom 9:7-13) that salvation is not according to sovereign grace.
 - Rom 9:11 – God’s choice (election) is not based on anything good or better about Jacob – he eliminates any such possibility with this example.
 - If Paul wanted to teach election based on foreseen faith by God, it would have been done here.
- o Rom 9:14-21 – answers the justice of God in how He chooses who will be saved.
 - A question of “injustice” here presupposes the context is addressing “unconditional election” as no one would raise it as an issue if it were based on man’s deserving.
 - Rom 9:19-20 – all objections are silenced ultimately in vs. 20.
- **Issues of a practical nature:**
 - o Evangelism? Some say it makes evangelism unnecessary. Quite the contrary, it is the reason evangelism works (John 10:26).
 - o Election is not salvation – election guarantees that some will respond to the Gospel. It therefore works as an incentive for evangelism (Is 55:11).
 - o Because of man’s depravity, if there were not election, no person would be saved.
 - o If you love to be saved it is because you were elected to be saved (John 6:37).
 - o All who want salvation (truly), prove their election. No one who wants to be saved (according to the Bible’s definition) will be denied. Those not elect do not want it.
 - o Believing is the effect of God’s election, and the new birth (John 3; 1 Pet 1:3-7).