

# UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Beale, Jim (US-KOP)

[COMPANY NAME] [Company address]

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: (2 Thess 2:13)

## Introduction

Why are you a Christian? The question may seem out of place. Surely one is a Christian because he has believed the gospel! But is there nothing before that? Well, there was the call. We were called and we answered the call. But how easy is it to forget the part about God having set His love upon us from all eternity. Our salvation begins with God and with election. If we are in Christ, God elected us that we would be partakers of His heavenly calling, that we would respond to the call in Christ. Peter urges us to make our calling and election sure (2 Pet 1:10) and so we must become aware of God's having loved us from eternity. This is our election.

That seems enough but we must proceed a step further. For many have held that our election is somehow based on what we do or affirm in time, that our selection comes in time, or that our election was eternal (supposedly) but that our believing is based on ourselves; we believe in time and so we are elect in time but because God is eternal, then election is eternal. Or something like that! Our election is based on God foreseeing the event of us believing freely. Or something like that – it is not clear to me. The whole idea of an eternal God and a conditional election is hard to express, which is why theologians who go down that path tend to give up on the eternity of God. Arminianism leads to process theology, the idea that God is not infinite, eternal and unchangeable but rather finite, temporal and changeable.

Our God is eternal – He is the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity. (Is 57:15) That makes our election **unconditional**. For we are elect unto faith, redemption, righteousness, and in those we are accepted in the Beloved. We are elect unto the very things that would make us acceptable to God. We do not naturally have those things. Our previous work that we did on Total Depravity must convince us that we have nothing whatsoever to present us to God. We are dead in trespasses and sins.

Now what is election?

We understand from our national and local elections that an election is when you select certain people from among other certain people to run the government, or to run the church. We know that elections are when we choose one person over another.

A conditional election is based on something in the person being elected. We may choose our candidates for election based on whether we think they will be able to do the job in the way we want them to. All of our elections are conditional, even if it is just the person's party which is at stake. Someone might just pull the trigger for all Republicans or all Democrats but this is still to choose based on something in the person.

Here we see that the elect are not elected because of foreseen faith, or a proper response to the gospel. In the words of the Westminster Confession,

V. 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, has 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.\* [West, Logan. Westminster Standards: Confession, Catechisms, Psalms of David in Metre (p. 22). ]

Here we see that the Lord's eternal and immutable purpose are involved and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will are invoked because there is no foresight of faith, no foresight of acceptance of the gospel because each and every creature is in the same condition – they are spiritually dead and cannot, will not, turn to Christ apart from regeneration. Sure, we know that

God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (1 Cor 1:27)

But this doesn't help us too much. Sure, we see that the Lord has tended to emphasize the lower level of people, to elect those who are foolish and weak but why me? Why you? We are weak and foolish but not necessarily obviously so or more so than the guy next to us who doesn't believe. We may be at any level in the world and still be elect because our election has nothing to do with our circumstances, our situation, our person, our nature. His election of us is hidden in the secret will of God – the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will.

### Biblical Usage

The word in the OT is BACHAR. It refers to the divine choice of Abraham, "Thou *art* the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram" (Neh 9:7); Israel : "Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen" (Is 44:1); David, "And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that *there is* none like him among all the people?" (1 Sa 10:24); Jerusalem, "But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel" (1 Kings 11:32). The Lord and others chose many things in the OT and the word BACHAR covers them all.

In the NT, there is the word EKLEKTOS which mean chosen or elect. The EKLEKTOI are the elect, and Paul addresses God's people as the elect: "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's **elect**." The meaning involves the idea of being chosen by God to obtain salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. While Christ is the ultimate Elect of God, compare Luke 23:35 –

And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

Here the Christ is the chosen of God, and He is the ultimate chosen of God. In the OT, we have Isaiah 42:1,

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, [in whom] my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

And we are chosen in Christ and therefore elect with Him. But we proceed too quickly. Let's start at the beginning and go through the verses:

The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye [were] the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out

with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deut 7:7)

Jehovah had singled out Israel of all nations and chosen them as the very people of God. He had developed them from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and then the twelve, and then the multitude. He had elected them from among the nations. As Israel was elect, so all other nations were non-elect. I want you to especially notice that no reason is given for the election – they are chosen by God because they are chosen by God as the text says. He loved them because He loved them. And we know that the Israelites served as a type of the church. As we read,

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. (1 Cor 10:11)

So, given that Israel was clearly elect over against the vast number of non-elect nations, we understand that we individuals are elect in the same way. That is, there is no reason given why we are elect – we just are called out of the world unto God, and we come to Him through Christ.

Now, the Lord used the term 'elect' when discussing the end times, and the unjust judge.

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if [it were] possible, they shall deceive the very elect. ... 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Mat 24:24, 31)

It is possible for those that have been enlightened to fall away but not for those who were elected. If God's chosen ones should be finally deceived, God's choice would be defeated, which is not to be imagined, for whom he did predestinate, he called, justified, and glorified, Rom. 8:30. They were given to Christ; and of all that were given to him, he will lose none, John 10:28. Rather the elect are predestined to being gathered by the angel, not being deceived by the wicked. They shall be gathered from the four winds and so not deceived.

And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? (Luk 18:7)

These verses teach us that God has an elect people upon earth, who are under His special care. The Lord Jesus declares that God will "avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him." "I tell you," He says, "that He will avenge them speedily." Election is a truth which should call forth praise and thanksgiving from all true Christians. Except God had chosen and called them, they would never have chosen and called on Him. Except He had chosen them of His own good pleasure, without respect to any goodness of theirs, there would never have been anything in them to make them worthy of His choice. But now they cry day and night unto God and God will take them into account. Shall not the Lord avenge His people?

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ... 39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. (John 6:37, 39)

Here we have the word of Christ to affirm that all that the Father gives Him shall come to Him and He will by no means kick out one who has come. This is speaking of the elect in contrast with the reprobate who

are not given and do not come. All whom the Father gives to the Son will come to Him – He is that Mediator by whom all come – and He will receive all who come to Him. Here is a people marked out, that come, that remain unto the end. Christ will raise them up at the last day because He will lose none of those who come to Him.

Here we see the very precise nature of election which selects one man and not another. Only those given by the Father to the Son are those who come to Christ. Those who are excluded do not come, do not want to come and so will not, cannot be saved. Here there is the security of the believer who comes to Christ – he will never be turned away, and he will be raised on the last day in great glory. Christ is able to save all who come to Him. He will raise it up on the last day.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and [that] your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. (John 15:16)

Here is the famous saying of Christ that He chose us, not the other way around. We did not choose Christ until He had chosen us. “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). When we look back at the selection of disciples, it is clear that the Lord was in charge. “Men commonly imagine some kind of concurrence to take place between the grace of God and the will of man; but that contrast, I chose you, I was not chosen by you, claims, exclusively, for Christ alone what is usually divided between Christ and man; as if he had said, that a man is not moved of his own accord to seek Christ, until he has been sought by him.” [Calvin, John]

All this is free grace in preparation and action. True, the subject now in hand is not the ordinary election of believers, by which they are adopted to be the children of God, but that special election, by which he set apart his disciples to the office of preaching the Gospel. But if it was by free gift, and not by their own merit, that they were chosen to the apostolic office, much more is it certain that the election, by which, from being the children of wrath and an accursed seed, we become the children of God, is of free grace. [Calvin, John]

And that is the way that it is in all our elections: we did not choose Christ (though we did!) because He chose us (before the world began). We did choose Christ in time but Christ and the Father chose us eternally. We must choose Christ in this world but it doesn't amount to a choice, per se, because it is merely coming into agreement with the previous choice of God. And Christ not only chooses and ordains us but also grants us fruit that remains such that we may ask of the Father whatsoever we desire and He will grant it to us. These are the fruits of election, namely being the elect of God we can call upon Him and He will hear us.

And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48)

Here is another verse which makes our unconditional election a certainty. It is the matter of John 6:37,39 in action. That is, one can picture that there are those given to the Son by the Father and these come to the Son. As many as were ordained to eternal life believed. That is, there is an individual selection and not all are chosen. Many are passed by. But each and every one of God's chosen comes to Christ. There are none of the elect left to their own way, as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

Here Luke puts the entire scope of the blessing unto the Lord – as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. It is not that some men heard the gospel and thought it sounded good and believed, but God, who from eternity works these things. As many as were ordained to eternal life believed. The Lord sets the gospel before many men but only His elect are able to respond. Only God's elect are made willing to respond to the gospel. And all His elect do respond. As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: (2 Thess 2:13)

This is Paul's exclamation of thanks for the Thessalonians who it says, God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation. These are already the brethren beloved by the Lord but Paul goes quite a bit further. When therefore he says "from the beginning" he means that there is no danger lest their salvation which is founded on God's eternal election should be overthrown, regardless of whatever tumultuous changes may occur. The election is unto sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. These are the later elements that come through calling which is a later element than our election. But the point is that election cannot be based on belief of the truth when it is clear that election is unto belief of the truth. Thus this 2 Thessalonians passage teaches a choice by God that is not conditioned by anything in man, either his sanctification or his faith. No, God's election is unconditional.

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ... 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (Eph 1:4-5,11)

Election and predestination, which are the secret springs whence the other doctrines of grace flow. *Election*, or choice, respects that lump or mass of mankind out of which some are chosen, from which they are separated and distinguished. Predestination has respect to the blessings they are designed for; particularly *the adoption of children*, it being the purpose of God that in due time we should become his adopted children, and so have a right to all the privileges and to the inheritance of children. We have here the date of this act of love: it was *before the foundation of the world*; not only before God's people had a being, but before the world had a beginning; for they were chosen in the counsel of God from all eternity. It magnifies these blessings to a high degree that they are the products of eternal counsel. The alms which you give to beggars at your doors proceed from a sudden resolve; but the provision which a parent makes for his children is the result of many thoughts, and is put into his last will and testament with a great deal of solemnity. And, as this magnifies divine love, so it secures the blessings to God's elect; for *the purpose of God according to election shall stand*.

He acts in pursuance of his eternal purpose in bestowing spiritual blessings upon his people. *He hath blessed us according as he hath chosen us in him*, in Christ the great head of the election, who is emphatically called *God's elect, his chosen*; and in the chosen Redeemer an eye of favour was cast upon them. Observe here one great end and design of this choice: *chosen-that we should be holy*; not because he foresaw they would be holy, but because he determined to make them so. All who are chosen to happiness as the end are chosen to holiness as the means.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Rom 8:29-30)

We have the explicit, “whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate” which might seem like a possible Arminianism – but here the language speaks of knowing in a personal sense, “whom he did foreknow” in the sense of “Adam knowing Eve”, that is, of loving them. There is not a sense of foreknowing what they would do, but of foreknowing them as individuals, of foreloving them.

What Paul is saying in Romans 8 is that there is a golden chain of salvation that begins with the eternal, electing love of God and goes on in unbreakable links through foreordination, effectual calling, justification, to final glorification in heaven. Instead of supporting the Arminian view that foreordination is based on foreknowledge, Romans 8 agrees in a most powerful way with the rest of Scripture that foreordination of the believer is based on God’s eternal love. Thank God that there is that unbroken chain of salvation. Anyone who believes on Christ can know that he is in it. [Palmer, Edwin H.. The Five Points of Calvinism (pp. 38-39).]

### Romans 9:6-18

6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they [are] not all Israel, which are of Israel: 7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, [are they] all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. (Romans 9:6-7)

In this section, the Apostle brings to the forefront a very specific argument based on unconditional election to explain why the Jews have not come to Christ. He starts at the very beginning with the distinction that came about in Abraham’s birth of Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael was the first-born but the promise came through Isaac: “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.”

8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these [are] not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9 For this [is] the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. (Rom 9:8-9)

Paul states it outright – “they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God.” Those who are children of the flesh are the non-elect. Those who are passed by are children of the flesh and not the children of God. The children of promise are elect, they are manifested in the world on the basis of a promise. The children of promise are here completely set against the children of the flesh and election is seen to work through the children of promise, to be implemented in terms of children of promise.

10 And not only [this]; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, [even] by our father Isaac; 11 (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;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. (Rom 9:10-13)

In this section also, the Apostle continues the argument. The twins were born at the same time and yet one was born elect and the other non-elect. We are told that the elder will serve the younger. The

children were not yet born nor had any done good or evil. But that the purpose of God according to election might stand – and so it is. The purpose of God in passing by the elder and electing the younger is seen to be of pure grace. The younger, as we read, was not more righteous, nor was he more faithful but he was favored by God and that makes all the difference.

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16 So then [it is] not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. (Rom 9:14-16)

If election is unconditional, then it means that we are helpless before God. We cannot save ourselves, we cannot and do not desire salvation for ourselves, apart from the grace of God. So then salvation is not of him who wills – our willing is not the cause of our salvation. Our willing is not the issue – we are able to will but we cannot will salvation in Christ. We are not able to will the death of self. Romans 8:8 says our wills are “not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” and so our will is continuously far from the gospel. We are dead in trespasses and sins and we cannot spiritually do anything good. It is not of him that wills. Nor is it of him that runs. It is not whether a man wills and runs, not at all, but the difference between men is of God, who shows mercy on some. Willing and running account for the entire scope of man’s choices but none of that makes any difference.

There is nothing in the exercise of this sovereignty inconsistent with either justice or mercy. God only punishes the wicked for their sins, while he extends undeserved mercy to the objects of his grace. There is no injustice done to one wicked man in the pardon of another, especially as there are the highest objects to be accomplished both in the punishment of the vessels of wrath, and the pardon of the vessels of mercy. God does nothing more than exercise a right inherent in sovereignty, viz. that of dispensing pardon at his pleasure, vs. 2-4. [Hodge, Charles]

17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will [have mercy], and whom he will he hardeneth. (Rom 9:17-18)

Here is the conclusion of this section on unconditional election. Therefore he hath mercy on whom he wills, and whom he will, he hardens. This is the final account of things and it brings us low. It makes our election unconditional which means that it is not based on God foreseeing anything about us, but rather that He chose us for His own reasons which have not been revealed to us.

## Doctrine

As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin, according to the words of the apostle:

This is clear from our work on total depravity. Everyone is under the condemnation of the law. Therefore, it is no injustice for God to leave all men to perish, though the reason for extending the creation would be questionable, God does save some.



The wrath of God abides upon those who believe not this gospel. But such as receive it and embrace Jesus the Savior by a true and living faith are by Him delivered from the wrath of God and from destruction, and have the gift of eternal life conferred upon them.

Christ is the distinction between life and death. Those who embrace Christ and are in Christ are saved but those who are outside Christ are lost.

The cause or guilt of this unbelief as well as of all other sins is no wise in God, but in man himself; whereas faith in Jesus Christ and salvation through Him is the free gift of God, as it is written: By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God (Eph 2:8). Likewise: To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, etc. (Phi 1:29).

Our lostness is of ourselves but salvation is of the Lord.

That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree. According to which decree He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe; while He leaves the non-elect in His just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy.

The difference between the unsaved and the saved is entirely because of God.

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He has out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ,

Election is all of grace – God chooses for His own purposes, for His own reasons, not based on any foreseen faith or any such nonsense --

This election was not founded upon foreseen faith and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite, cause, or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc. Therefore election is the fountain of every saving good, from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to the testimony of the apostle: he hath chosen us (not because we were, but) that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (Eph 1:4).

And finally we arrive at the idea that the good pleasure of God is the sole cause of our election:

The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which does not consist herein that out of all possible qualities and actions of men God has chosen some as a condition of salvation, but that He was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to Himself

Here we who are elect say, Glory and Honor belong to God, but to us, wretched creatures saved by grace, the coming glory is almost too much to bear. To be conformed to the image of Christ, who is God of God, through whom we are joined to the Father, is a marvel too great for words. But when we look back we see that God alone was the one who chose us before we were even born, before we had done

anything good or bad. And we naturally did only bad things – but God, in His grace, had mercy on you and me in His time and in His place. What can we say to this but hallelujah what a savior!

### Practical Impact

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: (2 Peter 1:10)

In this verse we are called upon to make our election sure. Now how are we supposed to do that? Election took place in eternity, before all time, in the mind of God. Well, our election in the mind of God always results in a call, in time. This is the same as Romans 8:30, “whom he did predestinate, them he also called” so the predestination always results in a call. And also, “whom he called, them he also justified” and here we enter into the same golden chain. We can make our calling sure by making our justification sure. We make our justification sure by having our life conformed to Christ, by believing the gospel and having our belief of the gospel bringing us into conformance with Christ. That is, our making our calling and election sure depends on good works being present in the life. That is, when the gospel has its way in the life of the individual, then the calling is made sure and with the calling the election.

When we think of the doctrine of unconditional election, what it means to the Christian, we have to think of the biggest picture of all. And then we have to envision that God has you and me in His eternal mentality, that He foreknows us in the sense of foreloves us, that he envisages you and me as His children. It is really quite staggering if you get a mindful of the eternity of God. But that is the very situation in which we find ourselves – eternally loved by God, unconditionally elect. When we further develop the idea that God loved us but we don't know why. We are not given any reason in Scripture as to why God loves us. But we are called to make our calling and election sure. This is naturally the work of the Spirit in us, to convince us of these truths and bringing them home. But it is also our work and a great one at that. Let us be very diligent – let us give diligence to make them sure. Let us get to the place where we can draw joy from the doctrine of unconditional election, in which Christ is all in all.