

PLUCKING THE TULIP

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

INTRODUCTION

- A.** The reformer John Calvin first penned his magnum opus Institutes of the Christian Religion in 1536 and finalized it in 1559. The doctrines contained therein were consolidated into a five-point list under the T.U.L.I.P. acronym in 1903 by Presbyterian minister Cleland Boyd McAfee.
1. **Total Hereditary Depravity**
 2. **Unconditional Election**
 3. **Limited Atonement**
 4. **Irresistible Grace**
 5. **Perseverance of the Saints**
- B.** The second of five core tenets of Calvin's theology is "Unconditional Election".
1. "All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death" (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book Third, Chapter 21, Paragraph 5).
 2. "Now, since the arrangement of all things is in the hand of God, since to him belongs the disposal of life and death, he arranges all things by his sovereign counsel, in such a way that individuals are born, who are doomed from the womb to certain death, and are to glorify him by their destruction" (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book Third, Chapter 23, Paragraph 6).
 3. "God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his posterity; but also at his own pleasure arranged it" (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book Third, Chapter 23, Paragraph 7).

4. “The first man fell because the Lord deemed it meet that he should” (John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book Third, Chapter 23, Paragraph 8).
5. “God inflicts due punishment on those whom he reprobates, and bestows unmerited favor on those whom he calls” (John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book Third, Chapter 23, Paragraph 11).

I. SALVATION IS CONDITIONAL

- A. **Romans 11:22** *“Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, **if** you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”*

Goodness from God, as opposed to severity, awaits “if” one continues therein.

- B. **1st Corinthians 15:1-2** *“Brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, **if** you hold fast that word which I preached to you — **unless** you believed in vain.”*

Salvation depends on “if.”

- C. **Colossians 1:21-23** *“You, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight — **if** indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard.”*

Reconciliation hinges on “if.” This word ought to be erased from inspiration if God’s election is without condition.

II. ONE MUST CHOOSE ELECTION

If a candidate is voted into office in this country, it is because he was elected by the constituents after he chose to run for office and fulfill the necessary requirements to

become ballot qualified. Being elected, that is being chosen, requires the one elected to choose to be elected.

- A. **2nd Thessalonians 2:13-14** *"God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The conditions for election include:

1. The Spirit sanctifies,
2. The individual believes.

- B. **2nd Peter 1:10-11** *"Brethren, be even more diligent to **make your call and election sure**, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*

We are responsible for certifying our own election.

III. GOD IS IMPARTIAL

- A. **Acts 10:34-35** *"Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows **no partiality**. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.'"*

God is not biased.

- B. **Romans 2:11** *"There is **no partiality** with God."*

He is not prejudiced.

- C. **Colossians 3:25** *"He who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is **no partiality**."*

Judgment will be rendered according to individual action,

- D. **1st Peter 1:17** *"If you call on the Father, who **without partiality** judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear."*

His judgment is without partiality.

IV. FOREKNOWLEDGE IS NOT THE SAME AS PREDESTINATION

- A. **2nd Peter 3:17** *"Since **you know this beforehand**, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked."*

All of us have foreknowledge of the coming destruction of the earth and the judgment of all souls, but that doesn't mean we caused it.

- B. **Romans 8:29** *"Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."*

1. Foreknowledge is translated from the Greek word *proginosko*, literally prognosis. When a doctor provides his patient with a prognosis, a statement of what will happen with his disease, it does not mean the doctor is the cause of the disease! God, who sees the end from the beginning, can know in advance what will happen without causing it.
2. Notice, specifically, that foreknowledge and predestination are treated as separate acts, not equal to one another.

- C. **Matthew 22:14** *"Many are called, but few are chosen."*

Not all who are called are chosen/elected. Let's not get mixed up.

V. THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S PREDETERMINATION WERE NOT INDIVIDUAL PERSONS

- A. **Acts 4:27-28** *"Against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and **Your purpose determined before** to be done."*

Acts 2:22-23 *"Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know — **Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God**, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death."*

What God predetermined was that the Christ would suffer, not who, personally, would be saved.

- B. Acts 13:46-48** *"Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and **judge yourselves unworthy** of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'" Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."*

This passage does not even hint at the possibility that the Lord was the one who appointed them to eternal life, but it does present them in contrast to those who "*judged [them]selves unworthy of everlasting life*", so the implication is that they were determined to do what was necessary to be saved, and so they did!

- C. Romans 8:28-30** *"We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."*

This text makes no mention of individual, personal predestination, so we cannot reach that conclusion here. Keep looking.

- D. 1st Corinthians 2:7** *"We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory."*

It is the gospel itself that God preordained, not who would be saved.

- E. Ephesians 1:3-5, 11-12** *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed **us** with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as **He chose us** in Him before the foundation of the world, that **we** should be holy and without blame before Him in love, **having predestined us** to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will... In Him also **we** have obtained an inheritance, being*

*predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that **we** who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory."*

Notice the repetition of collective pronouns, "we" and "us," indicating God made an advance selection of a group, not persons.

VI. FREEWILL EXISTS

- A. **Joshua 24:15** *"If it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, **choose for yourselves** this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah."*

Why be told to "choose for yourselves" if that is impossible?

- B. **Matthew 23:37** *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often **I wanted** to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, **but you were not willing!**"*

Jesus lamented that He could not save some because they "were not willing".

What does that even mean if freewill is a myth?

- C. **John 5:40** *"**You are not willing** to come to Me that you may have life."*

The foremost barrier to salvation is that some are "not willing".

CONCLUSION

- A. **2nd Timothy 2:10** *"I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."*

The "elect" "may obtain the salvation". It is not guaranteed.