

Unconditional Election — Quick Hits

A condensed briefing from "Chosen in Him." Scripture: Legacy Standard Bible (LSB).

1. The Answer Up Front

Before the foundation of the world, God the Father chose in Christ a definite people out of fallen humanity for salvation. He did not base that choice on faith, works, or merit He foresaw in them. He based it on "the good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:5), "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:6). Because God chose them, He sent His Son to redeem them, His Spirit to call them effectually, and His power to keep them to glory (Romans 8:29–30).

Why "Reformed theology," not merely "Calvinism." Calvin inherited this doctrine. He did not invent it. It comes from Paul, from Jesus in John 6, 10 and 17, and from God's choice of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:6–8). Augustine taught it a thousand years before Calvin, and Luther defended it against Erasmus before the Institutes appeared. Dort, Westminster, and the 1689 London Baptist Confession all state it as the teaching of Scripture.

2. What Election Is and Is Not

- **It is** God's free, gracious choice of particular persons, made in Christ and grounded in His good pleasure alone.
- **It is not fatalism.** God ordains the means (preaching, faith, repentance) as well as the end (2 Thessalonians 2:13; Romans 10:14).
- **It is not based on foreseen faith.** Faith is the fruit of election, not its cause (Acts 13:48; Dort I.9).
- **It does not make God the author of sin.** The reprobate are passed by and judged for their own sin (WCF 3.7; Dort I.15).
- **It does not silence evangelism.** The gospel goes "without differentiation or discrimination to all nations and people" (Dort II.5).

3. The Biblical Pillars

Old Testament: free choice. "Yahweh did not set His affection on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because Yahweh loved you..." (Deuteronomy 7:7–8). The only reason given is God's love. Isaiah 46:9–10 places election within God's sovereign counsel.

Jesus: the Father's gift.

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out." (John 6:37) "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:44) "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep." (John 10:26) "You did not choose Me but I chose you..." (John 15:16)

The person drawn is the person raised ("him... him"), so the drawing cannot fail. Belonging to the flock comes before believing and explains it. Jesus' intercession is particular: "I do not ask on behalf of the world but of those whom You have given Me" (John 17:9).

Acts: appointed, then believing.

"...and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48)

Appointment comes first. Faith follows.

Paul: the golden chain and Romans 9.

"...those whom He foreknew, He also predestined... and those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30) "...for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that the purpose of God according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls..." (Romans 9:11) "So then it does not depend on the one who wills or the one who runs, but on God who has mercy." (Romans 9:16)

No one drops out of the chain, so the calling is effectual. "Foreknew" takes persons as its object: it means God's prior covenant love for them, not foresight of their faith. Romans 9 rules out foreseen choices, and Paul expects the charge "Is there any unrighteousness with God?" (9:14). Nobody would raise that charge against conditional election.

Paul: Ephesians 1.

"...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love, by predestining us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace..." (Ephesians 1:4-6)

Ephesians 1 gives the timing (eternity), the sphere (in Christ), the purpose (holiness as the goal, not the ground), the cause (His will), and the end (His glory). See also 2 Timothy 1:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 1:1-2, and Ephesians 2:8-9.

4. Particular Redemption in Brief

The Father chose a people, the Son redeemed that people, and the Spirit applies redemption to that people. The Trinity acts with one purpose. "...He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). "...I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:15). See also Ephesians 5:25, Titus 2:14, and Revelation 5:9.

Sufficient for all, efficient for the elect. Christ's death "is of infinite value and worth, more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world" (Dort II.3). What is definite is its saving design and effect. This is not Hyper-Calvinism: the free offer is sincere and goes to all (Dort II.5; III/IV.8).

5. Witnesses

Augustine: "For He chose us, not because we believed, but that we might believe..."

Luther: "God foreknows nothing by contingency, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His immutable, eternal, and infallible will."

Calvin: "We shall never feel persuaded as we ought that our salvation flows from the free mercy of God as its fountain, until we are made acquainted with his eternal election..."

Whitefield (to Wesley, 1740): "...instead of warping, does but more and more confirm me in the belief of the doctrine of God's eternal election."

Edwards: "The doctrine has very often appeared exceedingly pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God."

Spurgeon: "Faith is the gift of God... Therefore it cannot have caused him to elect men, because it is his gift."

Sproul: "One group receives grace; the other receives justice. No one receives injustice."

MacArthur: "I think if you truly understand the doctrine of election, you're going to be humbled by it, not made proud by it."

6. Top Objections, Short Replies

Objection (texts used)	Reply
Free will / fairness (Joshua 24:15; Matthew 23:37)	A command shows duty, not ability (Romans 3:10–11; Ephesians 2:1; John 6:44). Mercy is undeserved, so God may give it freely (Romans 9:14–21). Grace renews the will; it does not force it (Dort III/IV.16).
"God desires all to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)	"All" in 1 Timothy 2 means all kinds of people (2:1–2). 2 Peter 3:9 says God is "patient toward you," meaning the beloved. Scripture distinguishes God's revealed will from His decretive will (Ezekiel 33:11; Romans 9:18).
"Whosoever" (John 3:16; Romans 10:13)	These verses are true of everyone who believes, but they do not say who can believe. John 6:44 answers that. The offer goes to all, and the elect are gathered by it.
Corporate election only (Romans 9 read as nations)	Romans 9 concerns salvation (9:3, 6), and its conclusion is "even us, whom He also called" (9:24). Spurgeon: choosing a nation means choosing "that Jew, and that Jew."
Foreseen faith (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2)	"Foreknew" has persons as its object, and 1 Peter 1:20 uses "foreknown" of Christ. Faith is a gift (Philippians 1:29; Acts 13:48). Romans 9:11 rules out foreseen choices, and WCF 3.2 agrees.
Caricatures ("God drags people / turns seekers away")	Reprobation is not the cause of unbelief (Dort I.15). "The one who comes to Me I will never cast out" (John 6:37).
"Then why evangelize?"	Election guarantees that evangelism will bear fruit: "for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:10). See also 2 Timothy 2:10 and Matthew 28:19.

7. Confessional Pointer and Close

Confessions: WCF 3.5 says God chose the elect "without any foresight of faith or good works." Dort I.7–11 says election is unconditional, in Christ, and unchangeable. The 1689 London Baptist Confession, Chapter 3, agrees.

Use of the doctrine: humility (1 Corinthians 1:29), assurance ("Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" Romans 8:33), bold evangelism (Acts 18:10), and doxology.

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" (Romans 11:33)

Soli Deo Gloria.