

Calvinism: Unconditional Election

After understanding Calvinism's belief of Total Depravity and comparing it to what the Bible says, you may ask, "Who then gets the gift of faith in order to be saved?" Calvinism's belief in Unconditional Election answers that question: the small minority of people who God has sovereignly elected to salvation. No one, according to Calvinism, who has not been elected by God can be saved.

Calvinism's Definition of Unconditional Election

"The 'U' (in TULIP) stands for 'Unconditional Election.' God determined before the foundation of the world whom He would save and whom He would send to Hell. Man would have no choice or free will to either accept or reject Christ as Savior." [Bob Kirkland, Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teaching of John Calvin (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails, 2018), 34.]

Divine Sovereignty vs Human Freewill

There are many passages that state that God chooses those who will be saved and spend eternity in heaven with Him. However, there are other passages that clearly state that mankind has to make a free will choice to believe in Jesus by faith in order to be saved. The problem is that those who have chosen the divine sovereignty position use those passages to re-write the passages that talk about mankind's free will. And those who choose the free will position re-write the divine sovereignty passages to support their viewpoint.

The best way to go about viewing both of these types of passages is to take both for what they say, without re-writing them, and live with the tension between both divine sovereignty and free will. This is the same thing we do with our belief in the Trinity.

When studying divine sovereignty/free will, it's important to keep Is 55:9-10 in mind:

9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.

10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it produce and sprout, And providing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;

Below verses supporting each position:

- Divine Sovereignty:

- Job 42:2
- Ps 135:6
- Is 46:9-10
- Jer 1:5
- Matt 24:22,24,31
- Luke 18:7
- Rom 8:29-30
- Gal 1:15
- 2 Tim 2:10
- 1 Peter 1:1-2
- Human Volition (Free Will)
 - John 1:9-13
 - John 3:16,36
 - John 6:47
 - John 20:30-31
 - Acts 16:30-31
 - Rom 10:11-13
 - 1 John 5:9-13
 - ...as well as every command in the NT epistles.

However Calvinism completely rejects this balance completely in favor of teaching very aggressively the side of divine sovereignty and absolutely zero free will for mankind. Calvinists act like free will doesn't even exist. This is called the doctrine of Double Predestination.

Here's John Calvin himself articulating his view of Unconditional Election/Predestination:

*"By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. **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 predestined to life or to death."* [John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 3, (Orlando, Signalman Publishing, from the 4th edition, 2009, Kindle edition), Chapter 21, section 5, Kindle location: 17221]

"We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to

admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction." [Calvin, *Institutes*, Vol. 3, Chapter 23, section 7]

"I say with Augustine, that the Lord has created those who, as he certainly foreknow, were to go to destruction, and he did so because he so willed. Why he willed it is not ours to ask, as we cannot comprehend, nor can it become us even to raise a controversy as to the justice of the divine will. Whenever we speak of it, we are speaking of the supreme standard of justice." [Calvin, *Institutes*, Vol. 3, Chapter 23, section 5]

To be clear, it's not as if Calvinism is saying that God *foreknew* who would come to Christ and who would not, but that God *purposely predestined/determined* who would and who would not. He *hand-selected* some to be saved, and *hand-selected* everyone else to eternal damnation.

If you question a Calvinist on the sadistic belief that God hand-selected people to go to hell, without any chance of their salvation, and that is actually glorified by it, they will ask you, "Who are you to talk back to or question God?"

*"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**."* [Calvin, *Institutes*, Vol. 3, Chapter 23, section 6]

- "doomed from the womb" is a teaching directly from the mouth (pen) of John Calvin himself
 - And to make it even worse, those who are "doomed from the womb," according to Calvin, actually glorify God by their destruction

Calvinism often looks to the creeds and confessions of the early church as biblical truth:

Westminster Confession III, iii, iv: *By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and **others foreordained to everlasting death**. These angels and men, thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.*

Calvin's Overstatement of Divine Sovereignty

Omni-Causality

Calvinism confuses sovereignty (God *is* sovereign) with omni-causality (everything that happens is caused by God, including evil). Of course God is sovereign...but His sovereignty

is demonstrated differently than what Calvinism believes.

Calvinism believes that in order for God to be sovereign, He has to pull every string, make every decision, and control every person's thoughts and actions for their entire lives, including their sin.

But how God actually displays His sovereignty is by allowing human beings to make their own free will decisions, and He demonstrates His sovereignty in that His divine will is completed regardless and in spite of the free will decisions of mankind.

When you think about it, God is more sovereign when He works out His perfect will through the free will decisions of people, rather than controlling and micro-managing every thought and action.

*"Reformed theology stresses the sovereignty of God in virtue of which He has sovereignly determined from all eternity **whatsoever will come to pass**, and works His sovereign will in His entire creation, both natural and spiritual, according to His pre-determined plan."*

[Louis Berkoff, *Systematic Theology: With a Complete Textual Index*, 4th and rev. ed.

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1932; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 100]

So if God, according to Calvinism, has sovereignly predestined everything to come to pass, what about the sin of Adam & Eve?

*"Nor ought it to seem absurd when I say, that **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**."*

[Calvin, *Institutes*, Vol. 3, Chapter 23, section 7]

*"God is in back of everything. He decides and causes all things to happen that do happen...even sin...**God ordained sin and unbelief**."* [Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, Enlarged Edition, 1980, 24th printing, 2005), p25, 102]

*"**[God] desired that man would fall into sin...[God] created sin**."* [R.C. Sproul Jr., *Almighty Over All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999, Second printing, July 1999), p53-54]

So where in Genesis 3, or anywhere else in the Bible, does it even hint that God was behind the works and words of the serpent, or Adam & Eve's actions? Scripture doesn't say anything about God causing sin, but you're not allowed to question this belief because God hid it as a secret from us.

"God's having even brought about the Nazis' brutality at Birkenau and Auschwitz as well as the terrible killings of Dennis Rader and even the sexual abuse of a young child..."

John Piper - "Suffering and the Sovereignty of God" page 42



According to John Piper...

- God caused the Holocaust and the death of 6 million Jews
- God caused a mass shooting event that killed Dennis Rader
- And God causes the sexual exploitation and abuse of a child

Somehow, when these people say or write these horrific things, they claim to be faithful to the Word of God.

"[God] creates the very thoughts and intents of the soul." [Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1932), 32]

My child was hit by a drunk driver in the crosswalk and died. Did God cause that event? A Calvinist would say YES!

Notice *not a single biblical passage* referenced in any of these quotes. They don't reference any passages because there aren't any! So what does the Bible say about God's sovereignty vs Omni-Causality?

Mark 7:20-23:

20 And He was saying, **"That which comes out of the person, that is what defiles the person."**

- Calvinists say God causes man to sin; Jesus says that evil/sin comes out of the man himself

21 For **from within, out of the hearts of people**, come the evil thoughts, *acts of sexual immorality, thefts, murders, acts of adultery,*
22 *deeds of greed, wickedness, deceit, indecent behavior, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness.*

23 **All these evil things come from within** and defile the person."

- Jesus reiterates that these evil deeds do not come from God, but come out of man

Rom 8:19-22:

19 For the eagerly awaiting creation waits for the revealing of the sons *and daughters* of God.

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of **himwho subjected it**, in hope

- "...him" = Adam
- If you're looking for someone to blame for the state of this world right now, don't look to God--look to Adam (this is the doctrine of seminal headship, meaning Adam's decision was my decision. I would've done the same thing if put in the same position)

21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

James 1:13: No one is to say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and **He Himself does not tempt anyone.**

- God does not tempt someone (set them up to fall into sin). It is contrary to God's nature to entice someone to sin.

1 John 1:5: This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that **God is Light**, and **in Him there is no darkness at all.**

- If God's character is clothed in unapproachable light, how could God possibly cause someone to sin?

The big confusion of Calvinism's belief that God causes everything is that in reality, God *uses* everything. God is powerful enough to use the mistaken, fallen ideas of man, even man's sin, to further His perfect will. God's using of man-caused events does not in any way indicate that God *caused* these events.

Did God cause Auschwitz, as John Piper believes? No! But did God use Auschwitz for His glory and purpose? Yes! Here's an example:

It has been said that WW1 prepared the land for the Jews, and WW2 prepared the Jews for the land. After WW1 at the San Remo (Italy) Conference, where the allies met and divided up the Middle East and gave a spot of land to Israel (larger than today's borders of Israel). The problem was that the Jews did not want to go back into the land of Israel. After WW2 and the Jews who emerged from the Holocaust, there was universal consensus among both the Jewish people and the entire world that the Jews needed their own land. So Auschwitz, as brutal and horrific as it was, was not something that God *caused* but it was something that God *used*. The fact that God uses events, people, or circumstances that come into our lives is very different than believing that God causes events, people, or circumstances in our lives.

Salvation Is Available To All

The Bible clearly states, more times than can be counted, that all people everywhere and for all time are *savable*. They are able and have the capacity to place their faith and trust in Christ and be saved. They are not actually saved until they place their faith in God's provision for salvation, Jesus Christ, but all men everywhere have that option available to them.

2 Cor 5:19-20:

19 namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself**, not counting their wrongdoings against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

- Paul says that because God has already reconciled the world (not only the elect) to Himself through Christ, his ministry is pleading with people to be reconciled to God, which is right at their fingertips
- Calvinism rejects this idea...they do not believe that the world has been reconciled to God. They believe only those elected by God have been reconciled...everyone else cannot come to Christ, even if they wanted to.

God Desires All To Be Saved

1 Tim 2:4: who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- God wants every single person to be saved
- And He's made it easy for them because He has already reconciled the entire world to God through Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:19-20)

2 Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.

Calvinism has a very difficult time explaining the "whosoever wills" passages:

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that **everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.**

Rom 10:13: for "**EVERYONEWHO** CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."

1 John 5:1: **Everyone who** believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him.

Rev 22:17: The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let **the one who** hears say, "Come." And let **the one who** is thirsty come; let **the one whodesires** [*thelō*], take the water of life without cost.

- Nowhere do we see this idea that some people, in fact most people, can't have it because they don't have the ability to receive it because they aren't one of the elect.

God Commands All To Repent

Acts 17:30:

30 So having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now proclaiming to mankind that **all people everywhere** are to repent [*metanoeō*],

- On Mars Hill, Paul gives them the gospel (instructs them to repent [change their mind about who Jesus is]), then (v31) gives them the reason why...

31 because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead."

- "all people everywhere" - the invitation Paul gives is to everyone, not to just a small group of people; this is a non-sensical statement if the vast majority of people are able to respond to the gospel

God's Grace Has Appeared To All

John 1:9: *This* was the true Light that, coming into the world, **enlightens every person.**

- How could Christ enlighten every person if people are like rocks, in an insensate state and unable to respond to the gospel
 - This verse means that every single person is in a position, especially when convicted by the Holy Spirit, where they are capable of receiving truth
 - Tragically, many will take the truth they have received and suppress it in unrighteousness, but this has to do with their free will/volition, not their inability

Titus 2:11: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people,

- Doesn't mean all men are saved, just means that salvation has been brought (is available) to all men

God Is Not A Respector of Persons

Programmed into the idea that some are elected by God unto salvation and others are elected by God into eternal torment is the idea that God is a respector of persons.

However, the Bible says that God is not a respector of persons.

Here's what Calvin said about unconditional election and how God has to be a respector of persons to do such a thing: *"By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man.*

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 predestined to life or to death." [John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 3, (Orlando, Signalman Publishing, from the 4th edition, 2009, Kindle edition), Chapter 21, section 5, Kindle location: 17221]

Acts 10:34: Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand *now* that **God is not one to show partiality,**

Rom 2:11: For **there is no partiality with God.**

Eph 6:9: And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and **there is no partiality with Him.**

Col 3:25: For the one who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

Election Proof-Texts Used By Calvinism

John 6:44: **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 15:16: **You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.**

- This verse is often used to argue in favor of Calvinism's Unconditional Election, but if you read the verse carefully, you see that the choosing here is for service ("go and bear fruit"), not an election to salvation.

- Just like Paul mentioned numerous times that he was "chosen" to be an apostle, Jesus is telling His disciples that they were "chosen" to bear fruit
- Jesus can't be referring to salvation here because His audience is 11 saved disciples. They were already saved...Jesus is encouraging them in fruit bearing.

Acts 13:48: When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and all who had been **appointed** to eternal life believed.

- This is Calvinism's "big kahuna" verse on the doctrine of Unconditional Election...
- "...appointed" - *tassō*, Calvinists will ask, who believed? Their answer: Those who were appointed. Who didn't believe? Presumably, everyone who wasn't appointed.
- Calvinists want this verse to say: God in eternity past appointed some people to salvation, and appointed everyone else to eternal torment in hell. This was a decision that God sovereignly made. Therefore, when people get saved, God caused it because He gave those who were fortunate enough to be among the elect the gift of faith. He had to impart to them the gift of faith because otherwise they would have no ability to believe.

And by a simple reading of Acts 13:48, it would appear that the Calvinist interpretation of this verse is accurate. However, remember Prov 18:17: "The first to plead his case *seems* right, *Until* another comes and examines him." Here is the other side of the story:

1. One verse cannot be used to undo hundreds of other verses that teach the exact opposite. It is exceptionally clear in multiple verses that God desires all men to be saved. Therefore, one verse (Acts 13:48) cannot be used to contradict all of these verses, which declare God's heart for the salvation of all people.
 - a. God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4). God does not wish for anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).
 - b. So I cannot interpret Acts 13:48 in a way that is out of harmony with these two very clear passages, along with numerous others that agree with them.
 - c. If your interpretation of a verse or passage does not correlate with what the rest of the Bible is saying, you have a wrong interpretation. It is a "warning light" that your interpretation is incorrect.
 - d. It is critically important to be "hermeneutically humble" enough to recognize that if our initial reading or interpretation of a verse does not correlate with the rest of Scripture, that we do not re-write the verse, we re-write our interpretation.
2. The Greek word (*tassō*) that is translated "appointed" [NASB] or "ordained" [KJV] is translated as "wanted" [Living Bible] or "disposed" [REB] in other English translations.

- a. These other translations "soften" the very dogmatic Calvinistic reading of the verse
3. *Tassō* is used rather than *proorizō*, which is used in other predestination passages
 - a. *Tassō* never refers to predestination unto salvation in any of its other NT uses
 - b. If *tassō* here refers to an election unto salvation, then that is a usage of *tassō* that is not found anywhere else in Scripture in any of its other usages (Matt 28:16; Luke 7:38; Acts 15:2; 22:10; 28:23; Rom 13:1; 1 Cor 16:15).
4. The corrupted Roman Catholic Latin Vulgate mistranslates *tassō* as "preordained"
 - a. The Latin Vulgate was written by Jerome in the 4th century to translate the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin, the common language of the day.
 - b. The idea was to translate the Hebrew and Greek into the language of the common man
 - c. When Jerome got to Acts 13:48, he translated *tassō* as "preordained." However, many other English translations choose a different word (see #2 above) to be more accurate.
 - d. The Latin Vulgate is the Roman Catholic translation of the Bible. Luther, when he was translating the Bible (Hebrew and Greek) into German, refused to use the Latin Vulgate because he didn't trust it. He believed it was corrupted by the Roman Catholic church.
5. The context of Acts pertains to the predisposition of the Gentiles (rather than the Jews) toward the Gospel (Acts 13:46; 28:26-28).
 - a. That is the immediate context of 13:48 (Cf. 13:46). So a better translation for *tassō* here is "wanted" or "disposed."
 - b. Paul's point here, after the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia rejected the gospel (13:45-46), Paul turned to the Gentiles, who were much more "predisposed" or open to the gospel compared to the Jews.
 - c. The Jews of that day, throughout the Acts period, were increasingly closed off to the gospel, while the Gentiles were much more pre-disposed to listening to and accepting the gospel.
6. There is no textual or exegetical evidence that the divine appointing (*tassō*) caused the believing (*pisteuō*).
 - a. The verse does not state that the "appointing" was the cause of the "believing," even though that's how Calvinism wants you to interpret the verse.
 - b. They want you to believe that something that they do not have the ability to have (belief) was imparted ("appointed") to them by God so that they could believe.
 - c. There is a way to express causation (indicate that one thing causes another) in Greek (the *hoti* clause), but that is not present in this verse.

- d. It is grammatically in correct to say the Greek verb for "believe" (*episteusan*) is the result of the perfect passive participle "appointed" (*tetagemoi*). Grammatically, all that the aorist tense verb of "believe" shows when it is combined with the periphrastic construction of "had been appointed" is that the appointing on God's part preceded the believing on man's part. The Greek grammar of this verse does not show that one is the result of the other.
- e. In order to show that the act of believing was the result of or caused by God's prior appointing, there must be a causal conjunction after "believed" (*episteusan*), so that the verse would say, "and believed" (*episteusan*) because (*hoti*) they had been appointed to life eternal." The conjunctions *hoti*, *hina*, *hos*, or *hoste* are all used in Greek to show purpose, result, or cause. Acts 13:48 contains none of these.
- f. In order to get to the Calvinist interpretation of this verse, there must be a *hoti* clause, and there is not. If there was, the verse would say, "and as many as were appointed to believe received eternal life." But the verse doesn't say that.
- g. There are no verses in the Bible that say we were preordained to believe. Acts 13:48 simply doesn't say WHY the Galatians were appointed to eternal life. However, since the context of the passage involves human responsibility (v46), and it is consistent with Scripture elsewhere, we should interpret v48 to mean that God's ordaining must have factored in their faith which He foresaw.
7. Contrary to many English translations, the word order of Acts 13:48 in the Greek text places the verb "believed" before the Greek verb "preordained" or "appointed."
 - a. The English translation has the "appointing" first, indicating emphasis, then the "believing" comes second. This opens the door for a Calvinistic understanding.
 - b. But the Greek is the opposite: "believing" is first, indicating that their belief is the emphasis, and the "appointing" comes second
 - c. Reading it in English you're led to believe that the "appointing" is the important fact, but the Greek indicates that the "believing" is the important fact.

Acts 13:48 [MGNT-Morphological Greek NT]: ἀκούοντα δὲ τὰ ἔθνη εὐχαιρον καὶ ἐδόξαζον τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου καὶ **ἐπίστευσαν** [believe] ὅσοι **ἦσαν τεταγμένοι** [had been appointed] εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον

- Notice that the verb "believed" (aorist tense, active voice, indicative mood) stands first in the word order in the Greek text, thus it is emphasized. The statement literally is, "And they believed, as many as were ordained unto eternal life" (a perfect tense periphrastic in Greek). They did not believe because they were ordained unto eternal life.
8. In Acts 13:48, "believed" is in the active voice.

- a. If faith was given to a person in order for them to believe, "believed" would be in the passive voice (indicating that something is being done to me).
- b. But it's not, it's in the active voice, meaning the person who "believed" is doing something, not having something done to them.
- c. The active voice of "believed" expresses positive volition (free will) toward the gospel
- d. Interestingly, "believed" or "believe" is consistently in the active voice in its over 100 uses in the NT relative to trust in Christ and Him alone. This means that the person who believes is actively, not passively, trusting the gospel. They are exercising their faith, not someone else's and not a faith given to them.
- e. Additionally, in contrast those who believed in the context are those who did not believe. Instead, they "contradicted the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming" (v45). Again, the voice is active, meaning these unbelieving Jews were actively expressing their negative volition to the gospel. To their retort, Paul says (v46), "you repudiate it (the word of God expressed in the gospel he had just spoken) and consider yourselves unworthy of eternal life." These verbs are also in the active voice, thus they could not blame their negativity toward the gospel on Satan or anyone else. Paul does not say that God declared these unbelieving Jews unworthy of eternal life...he says that they declared themselves unworthy of it.

Rom 8:29-30:

29 For those whom He **foreknew** [*proginōskō*], He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers *and sisters*;

30 and these whom He predestined, He also **called**; and these whom He called, He also **justified**; and these whom He justified, He also **glorified**.

- "...foreknew" - *proginōskō*, in His omniscience, God looked down the corridor of time and knew who would choose Him out of their own free will, and who would not
- Some question whether *proginōskō* can mean that God looked down the corridor of time and chose those based on some decision that they would make? Yes, *proginōskō* can be used that way. Peter uses it that way in 2 Peter 3:17, where he describes an action for them to take based on knowledge that his readers had beforehand.
- This is why it's important to recognize that "foreknew" [*proginōskō*] precedes "predestined" [*proorizō*]. Those He "foreknew" would one day accept Him are the same ones who are "predestined" to be conformed to the image of His Son.
- "...predestined" - *proorizō*, the word that Calvinists camp on to bolster their argument for Unconditional Election; however, this is not the main operative word in this passage, but pretend for a minute that it is...

- What are we "predestined" to? We are predestined to be "conformed to the image of His Son." It doesn't say that we were predestined to salvation because God somehow selected us so that we could be saved.
- We are predestined to be sanctified and eventually glorified. This passage does not state, and cannot mean, that people were predestined for salvation.

Calvinism's Proof-Texts on Double Predestination

Rom 9:10-23 is the end-all-be-all of double predestination proof texts for Calvinism:

10 And not only *that*, but there was also Rebekah, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac;

11 for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

12 it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."

- The exact opposite of how it typically worked in the ancient near east; the younger would always serve the older
 - But God in this case, and others in Genesis, made a sovereign choice to choose the younger brother over the older (Cf. Bypass of Firstborn)
- God basically said, I'm going to make a sovereign choice about which of these twins (Esau or Jacob) the Messiah will descend from
- Notice that it doesn't say that one will be saved and the other will go to hell...it says that the older (Esau) will serve the younger (Jacob). God is making national, not individual, decisions here.
- God made a sovereign choice that the Messiah will come through the line of Jacob, the younger, rather than Esau, the older

13 Just as it is written: "JACOB I HAVE LOVED, BUT ESAU I HAVE HATED."

- Calvinism reads this as God chose Jacob for life, and chose Esau for death
 - They read this as God made a sovereign choice on both accounts...to save one and to sovereignly predestine the other to eternal damnation
- "Hate" during biblical times does not mean the same thing it means today. Back then, it meant to not be chosen. Jacob was sovereignly chosen by God, but Esau was not.
 - A good example of this is what Jesus said in Luke 14:26...He tells His disciples to "hate" their father and mother. When He says this, He's not instructing them to emotionally "hate" their parents, He's saying that if you have the choice to follow what God says or what your parents say, if they are contradictory, a disciple will choose to obey what God says and reject (not choose) what their parents say.

- What this verse simply means is that God made a sovereign choice to choose Jacob to be the forefather of the Messiah, meaning that He sovereignly excluded (did not choose) Esau for that role.
 - This verse has nothing to do with Esau somehow going to hell because he was not sovereignly chosen to be saved. It simply means that God did not choose him for the national honor of bringing forth the Messiah.

14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? Far from it!

15 For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOMEVER I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL SHOW COMPASSION TO WHOMEVER I SHOW COMPASSION."

16 **So** then, *it does not depend* on the *person* who wants *it* nor the one who runs, but on God who has mercy.

17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY REASON I RAISED YOU UP, IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE EARTH."

- How could you do this God? God says, I do it all the time. Here's an example in Pharaoh...
 - God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart is used as a justification for God choosing Jacob over Esau to bring forth the Messiah
- Calvinism looks at v15 & v17 and says, "There you go, God elected Pharaoh to go to hell. And to assure that he would go there, God hardened his heart."
 - This is proof, in their minds, of this double-predestination doctrine, except it's not. Just like you have to understand the context of Romans 9 to understand what it says, you have to read somewhere outside of a single verse in Exodus to understand what is really going on with Pharaoh's heart (this is basic Bible study 101).
 - Exodus states that Pharaoh hardened his own heart 6x (Cf. Ex 7:13,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7) before the Bible ever says that God began to harden Pharaoh's heart (see notes on Ex 4:21).
 - *After* Pharaoh hardened his own heart on at least six different occasions, *then* God began to harden Pharaoh's heart
 - What happened to Pharaoh is a good example of what happens to people when they put themselves into a place of such spiritual darkness that they are unable to receive truth. But long before that happens, to get to that dark point, people make their own free will decision to reject truth.
 - One of the scariest things we see in the Bible is that sometimes God allows people to have what they want, and sometimes God even expedites the process. But long before that happens, that person is making poor decisions of their own free will.

- A good example of this is in Rom 1:21,28, where the same thing happens to the unbelieving Gentile world. Three times in that passage (v18-32), it says that "God gave them over" (v24,26,28) to a debased mind.
 - In both the episode with Pharaoh, and the description of unbelieving Gentiles in Rom 1, God is not arbitrarily hardening the hearts of people so they cannot believe the gospel, and then somehow getting glory for it. God doesn't do that. Long before God makes the decision to hand people over to spiritual darkness so they cannot see or reason spiritually, they first put themselves in that position out of their own free will (Cf. Rom 1:18, men "suppress the truth in unrighteousness"). God's revelation to them is so obvious that they are "without excuse" for their unbelief and rejection.
- 18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.
- Again here, the Calvinistic reading of this is that God elected one to salvation and another to damnation
 - They'll say, "See, God hardens people (i.e. Pharaoh) to the point that they cannot believe the gospel, so He could judge them"
 - In the Calvinistic mindset, He does this because He loves one and hates the other (Cf. v13)
- 19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"
- 20 On the contrary, who are you, you *foolish* person, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?
- 21 Or does the potter not have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one object for honorable use, and another for common use?
- Calvinism believes that you're not even allowed to question this doctrine, according to this verse, because God is God and you are not...
 - They think that to say to God that it isn't fair or just for Him to choose people to go straight to eternal destruction, without ever having the ability to chance to be saved, is questioning God and this verse says you can't do that.
- 22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with great patience objects of wrath prepared for destruction?
- 23 And *He did* so to make known the riches of His glory upon objects of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

So how does a non-Calvinist answer this passage and these allegations?

First for foremost, you have to put Romans 9 into its context. Calvinism LOVES to take verses or passages out of their context. In the context of Rom 9-11, God is not dealing in soteriology (salvation) as He was in chapters 3-5, or sanctification as He was in chapters 6-8. In Rom 9-11, God is dealing with the nation of Israel.

In Romans 9, Paul is not dealing with individual election of believers...he's dealing with the *national election* of Israel. Paul explains how Israel nationally tripped over Jesus because they wanted salvation their way, not the way in which God prescribed. They wanted/tried to be saved through their own righteousness, but that's not how it works. They needed the imputed righteousness of Christ.

In Romans 10, Paul explains what went wrong, and in Romans 11 he explains how God will keep every single promise He made to the nation of Israel. They will go into the 70th Week of Daniel and near the end, call out to Christ to rescue them.

Is 65:21-22:

21 "They will build houses and inhabit *them*; They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

22 "They will not build and another inhabit, They will not plant and another eat; For as the lifetime of a tree, so *will be* the days of My people, And **My chosen ones** will fully enjoy the work of their hands.

- The choice God made in the OT of Israel was a national election, not an individual election

Deut 7:7-8:

7 "The LORD did not make you His beloved nor **choose you** because you were greater in number than any of the peoples, since you were the fewest of all peoples,

8 but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

- Again, God elected Israel nationally; He did not elect individual Jews

So when Calvinism goes to Romans 9 and reads into it individual election to salvation, they are not understanding the context. Romans 9 describes God's *national* election of Israel, not His individual election of certain people over others, or the special election of some people to go to hell. And specifically, it was His national election of Israel to bring forth the Messiah into the world.

The Dangers of Calvinism's Unconditional Election

Loss of Evangelism

The doctrine of Unconditional Election completely destroys personal evangelism. If Unconditional Election is true (which it's not, but play along), then what's the point of evangelism? If everyone who has been elected, whether I evangelize or not, will be saved,

then what's the point of evangelizing? And if everyone who is not elected cannot get saved, no matter what, then what's the point of evangelizing them?

The Puritans, who founded this country as a "shining city on a hill" were devoutly religious, but they had a skewed (Calvinistic) view of divine sovereignty. How many Puritans do you know today? Here about any Puritan churches? No, because their view of evangelism was so tainted by their wrong view about divine sovereignty vs human responsibility that they did not even evangelize their own children. This is why you don't see Puritans today, and why they lost their "shining city on a hill" after just a few generations.

Loss of Love for the Lost

The loss of evangelism (above) that is experienced and normal through the teaching of Calvinism invariably leads to a loss of love and concern for the lost. As you read Calvinistic writers, you can see the lack of love for the lost in their writings. Here are some examples:

*"The primary teaching in Calvinism is the teaching on 'election' in that the majority of people God created, He did not elect to save nor did He love them. In fact, He hated them from before they were even born. **Under the Calvinist view of election, wherein God does not love every human being or desires that each one come to faith and be saved, it makes sense that John Calvin did not have God's love toward those he saw as his unsaved fellow man.** After all, if God does not even love them, why should he? It is this reasoning that would have made it easy for Calvin to justify the torture and murder of people whom he believed, in his own estimation, to be heretics. But the Bible says that God is love. And He is righteous, true, faithful, and just. Such are fruits of the Spirit as described in Gal 5:22, and love is the first one mentioned. It is hard not to believe that John Calvin was under the influence of some other spirit than the Holy Spirit. You will have to look long and hard to find anything in Calvin's writings about love. It is certainly not obvious in his manner of life."* [Bob Kirkland, *Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails, 2018, 24-25)]

- Calvin was one of the most voluminous writers in all of church history, yet Kirkland says that you have to "look long and hard to find anything in Calvin's writings about love."

Calvin said of God, *"for, (as he hates sin) he can only love those whom he justifies (i.e. the elect)."* [Calvin, *Institutes*, Vol. 3, Chapter 11, section 11]

According to Calvin himself, and confirmed by numerous Calvinist authors, God does not love everyone...He only loves the elect. This is a direct contradiction to numerous passages, including John 3:16; 1 John 4:8. God doesn't just do loving things...God *IS* love.

If this is what you believe about unsaved people, why would you waste your time and effort loving them?

This is the problem that Thomas Jefferson had with Calvinism. Now if you take the overall theology of John Calvin vs the theology of Thomas Jefferson, I would tend toward John Calvin. Thomas Jefferson's theology was off in a number of areas (the Trinity, etc.). But here is what Thomas Jefferson said about the lack of love he saw in Calvinism:

"I can never join Calvin in addressing his god. He was indeed an Atheist, which I can never be; or rather his religion was Demonism. If ever man worshipped a false god, he did. The being described in his 5 points is not the god whom you and I acknowledge and adore, the Creator and benevolent and governor of the world, but a daemon of malignant spirit. It would be more pardonable to believe in no god at all, than to blaspheme him by the atrocious attributes of Calvin." [Thomas Jefferson, Letter to John Adams, April 11, 1823]

John F. Kennedy said, while he was President and in the White House dining room with a bunch of professors and Nobel Laureates, that there hadn't been that much brain power in the White House dining room since Thomas Jefferson dined there alone. That is how intelligent Thomas Jefferson was.

"The Presbyterian clergy (primary progenitors of Calvinism in Jefferson's day) are the loudest, the most intolerant of all sects, the most tyrannical, and ambitious; ready at the word of the lawgiver, if such a word could be now obtained, to put the torch to the pile, and to rekindle in this virgin hemisphere, the flames in which their oracle Calvin consumed the poor Servetus, because he could not find in his Euclid the proposition which has demonstrated that three are one, and one is three, nor subscribe to that of Calvin that the magistrates have a right to exterminate all heretics to Calvinistic creed." [Jefferson, Letter to William Short, April 13, 1820]

- In this letter, Jefferson is lamenting the loudness and rudeness of the primary authors of Calvinism in his day, and how they were gleeful at the death of those whom they label as heretics, which were those who didn't believe the doctrines of Calvin.

God does not revel or get joy at the death of an unbeliever. Ezekiel talks about this in a few different passages:

Ezek 18:23,32:

23 Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord GOD, "rather than that he would turn from his ways and live?

32 For **I take no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,**" declares the Lord GOD.
"Therefore, repent and live!"

Ezek 33:11: Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, '**I take no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked**, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then should you die, house of Israel?'

What About Babies? Are They Saved?

If a baby is aborted, or tragically dies before the "age of accountability," does the baby go to heaven or to hell?

If you ask a Calvinist this question, they will not want to answer it. But if they are true to their theology, they will answer that if the baby was elect, it will go to heaven, but if they were not elect, they will go to hell.

And if they are a pastor or counselor and they are Calvinist, they won't say this to the hurting mother of a dead baby. They will keep their theology to themselves because it's not encouraging or uplifting to the hurting mother.

Consider this: if the Calvinistic view of Unconditional Election was biblical, don't you think that a pastor or counselor should be able to share it openly and honestly with someone who has this question, or who has experienced such a thing? If you can't apply your theology to reality, then what good is your theology?

If you ask a non-Calvinist (provisionist), their answer will be, "That child went immediately into the presence of the Lord" because of 2 Sam 12:19-24:

19 But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead; so David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" And they said, "He is dead."

20 So David got up from the ground, washed, anointed *himself*, and changed his clothes; and **he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped**. Then he went to his own house, and when he asked, they served him food, and he ate.

- Not sure this would've been the reaction of David to his child's death if he was a Calvinist and unsure if his child went to heaven or hell
- Certainly seems as if David is confident that his child went directly into the presence of the Lord

21 Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child *while he was alive*; but when the child died, you got up and ate food."

22 And he said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, and the child may live.'

23 But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? **I am going to him**, but he will not return to me."

- Many interpret this verse as David's confidence that his child was in heaven, and that upon David's death, he would see his child again in heaven

24 Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went in to her and slept with her; and she gave birth to a son, and he named him Solomon. Now the LORD loved him,

- David is so confident about his child's heavenly destination that he comforts Bathsheba (then slept with her)
- If the child was possibly pre-programmed to go to hell (non-elect), what comfort is there for David or Bathsheba?