
Mission 119 Ministries

**DECONSTRUCTING CALVINISM
EPISODE 2: WHAT IS
UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION?**

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SERIES GOALS

- **Short, focused lessons**
 - **Explain Calvinism**
 - **Address claims of Calvinism**
 - **Exegetically**
 - **Historical**
 - **Philosophically**
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EPIISODE GOAL

- Explain what the doctrine of unconditional election is**
 - Consider some implications**
 - List popular proof texts for unconditional election**
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UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Those of mankind who 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, hath *chosen* in Christ to everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a *condition* or cause moving Him thereunto. (Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689)

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

The doctrine of election declares that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam's race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and these only, He purposed to save. (David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, p. 27)

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Election is an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure. (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 670)

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Election is that eternal act of God, by which in his sovereign pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, he chooses certain out of the number of sinful men to be the recipients of the special grace of his Spirit, and so to be made voluntary partakers of Christ's salvation. (Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 779)

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

It may be defined as God's eternal purpose to save some of the human race in and by Jesus Christ.

(Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, p. 91)

By election we mean that sovereign act of God in grace whereby He chose in Christ Jesus for salvation all those whom He foreknew would accept Him. (Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology*, p. 344)

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Some Calvinists include angels within unconditional election, and some include the idea that certain people are foreordained to hell:

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His own glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. (R.L. Dabney, *Syllabus and Notes of the Course of Systematic and Polemic Theology*, p. 224)

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Some Calvinists would just say God chose to pass by certain people (reprobation):

The doctrine of election naturally implies that some of the human race were not elected. If God purposed to save some, He also purposed not to save others... Reprobation may be defined as *that decree of God whereby He has determined to pass some men by with the operation of His special grace and to punish them for their sin to the manifestation of His justice...* (Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, p. 91)

PREDESTINATION

Refers to unconditional election and reprobation together:

In summary we may define *predestination* broadly as follows: From all eternity God decided to save some members of the human race and to let the rest of the human race perish. God made a choice — he chose some individuals to be saved unto everlasting blessedness in heaven, and he chose others to pass over, allowing them to suffer the consequences of their sins, eternal punishment in hell. (R.C. Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?*, p. 141)

THE DEBATE ON TIMING

- **Calvinists debate the timing of unconditional election — before or after God’s decree to create the world and permit the Fall**
 - **Supralapsarian view — God decided to save some (and perhaps damn others), known only in His mind as possibilities at the time, and then subsequently decreed to create both groups of people, then decreed to permit the Fall, then decreed a way of salvation for the elect**
 - **Infralapsarian view — God decreed to create humanity, then decreed to create the Fall, then decreed to elect some and pass over others (or damn others), and finally decreed a way of salvation for the elect**
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SOME IMPLICATIONS

- **Studies suggest Christianity is the religion of about 31% of the world (about 2.3 billion people) — see, e.g., Pew Research Center 2015**
 - **God either passed over the other 69% in eternity past, or affirmatively chose to predetermine they would go to hell**
 - **Perhaps the real numbers are lower**
 - **Most people including many you know (friends, co-workers, family including your children) are not elect**
 - **Gospel is not good news to the 69%**
 - **Is the gospel even good news to the 31%?**
 - **What can you truthfully tell a lost person when you present the gospel?**
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POPULAR PROOF TEXTS

- **PILLAR PROOF TEXTS: Romans 9 (especially 9:11, 13, 15, 21); Ephesians 1:4; Acts 13:48**
 - **Other common proof texts: Matthew 24:22, 24, 31; John 12:37-41, 15:16; Romans 8:28-29, 11:5, 7; Philippians 1:29, 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 5:21; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2, 2:7-9; Revelation 13:8, 17:8, 20:15, 21:27**
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