

1. **Introduction:** The doctrine of election is difficult to comprehend. No explanation is satisfying to everyone. However, it is a scriptural doctrine. As Bible-believers, we are obligated to accept and try to understand it.
2. **Preliminary Thoughts:** Does God’s “election” leave all people (chosen or not) free to choose? Yes! In what sense are both elect and non-elect free to choose?
 - Two categories of how to understand making choices – “free agency” and “free choice.” All humans have “free agency” but not “free will.” What is the difference?
 - “Free will” (libertarian free will) means the unrestricted moral ability, independent of their own nature, to choose any one of the multitude of options available in a situation – without regard to whether the option is good, evil, or neutral.
 - “Free agency” means a person is free to choose in accordance with their “inner person,” the inclination of intellect, emotions, conscience, memory, imagination.
 - Since the consequences of Adam and Eve’s fall into sin, no one has “free will” but everyone is a morally responsible “free agent.”
 - “Free agency” is compatible with God’s foreordination of whatever comes to pass (including election), but libertarian free will is not.”
 - During the mortal life of the elect, at a time of God’s choosing, an elect person is regenerated, giving them spiritual life and beginning a transformation to a new nature producing inclinations and emotions inclined toward God and His gospel.
 - When an “elect person” chooses faith in Christ, they choose according to their regenerated nature’s strongest inclination and emotion at the instant of choice.
3. **Scripture - Jonah 2:9 b (NIV): Salvation comes from the Lord. Ephesians 1:1-5 (NASB):** *Paul ... To the saints who are ... are faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace to you ... ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ... ⁴...chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.*
 - Paul’s letter is to believers faithful “in Christ,” chosen (elected) by God the Father.
 - Jesus’ human nature was the first chosen. **Luke 9:35:** *And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!”* Others are chosen to enable them to become holy and blameless, able to live in the God’s presence in His dwelling place. Life in God’s presence is salvation’s final goal.
 - Adam and Eve in their original (as created) state were immortal and holy, able to live in the presence of God which they did in the Garden of Eden.
 - Through their own choice, they disobeyed God causing them to become mortal, unholy, unable to live in God’s presence, so they were ejected from the Garden.

- All the earth's people are progeny of Adam and Eve. The damaging personal effects of the fall are transmitted to all their descendants.
- The function of salvation is to "undo" the disastrous effects of the "fall," both the personal effects and the effects on the rest of creation. Salvation is entirely of God.
- Without regeneration by God, how many people would be saved? None!
- "Election of some to salvation," in no way hinders anyone from believing and being saved. God's actions in "election" are positive, producing a change in human nature.

4. **Scripture on Election:** Passages in the NT on "election" include Eph 1:3-14; Rm 8:28-30, 9:6-24; Jn 6:44; Acts 13:49; 1 Peter 2:8, and Rev 17:8.

5. **Election 1:** Election, which in eternity began the salvation process, falls under the general subject of foreordination. Foreordained means "determined in advance."

- The principle of election is life's common process of purposeful "selection."
- We are born into families whose circumstances are widely different. People are of different races. Some are female and some male, all have different IQs, strength, health, opportunities, and threats. Each condition is the result of a selection process.
- The selectivity involved in these things is taken for granted. It's the way it is.
- The "broad" meaning of election" is the process of differentiation in which God selects specific people for specific purposes. Individuals and groups can be "elect."
- For example, (1.) Israel was God's chosen nation (Dt 4:37; 1 Ch 16:13). (2.) God chose specific people to work on different parts of the tabernacle. (3.) Cyrus of Persia, called God's anointed (or chosen) one, does not appear saved (Is 45:1-4).
- The concept of "election" (or selection for a purpose) is rooted in the character of God. Election, like everything God does, is in harmony with His character.
- Since the "fall," Humans are in deep trouble with their Creator. They are spiritually dead, disobedient, unable to do anything to become spiritually alive and obedient.
- The only way the situation can change is if God makes it possible, which He does.

6. **Romans 8:29-30:** *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

- What does "know" signify in the Bible? "To know" is to have a loving, personal, intimate relationship.
- For God to foreknow someone means He loved and established a personal relationship with them before they were created. Those whom God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to Christ's image.
- Through eternal decrees, God foreordained (determined or approved in advance) whatsoever would come to pass. We see foreordination signifies a before-and-after

time relationship, but God does not experience things in a time sequence. God “foresees” things because He ordains them, not the other way around.

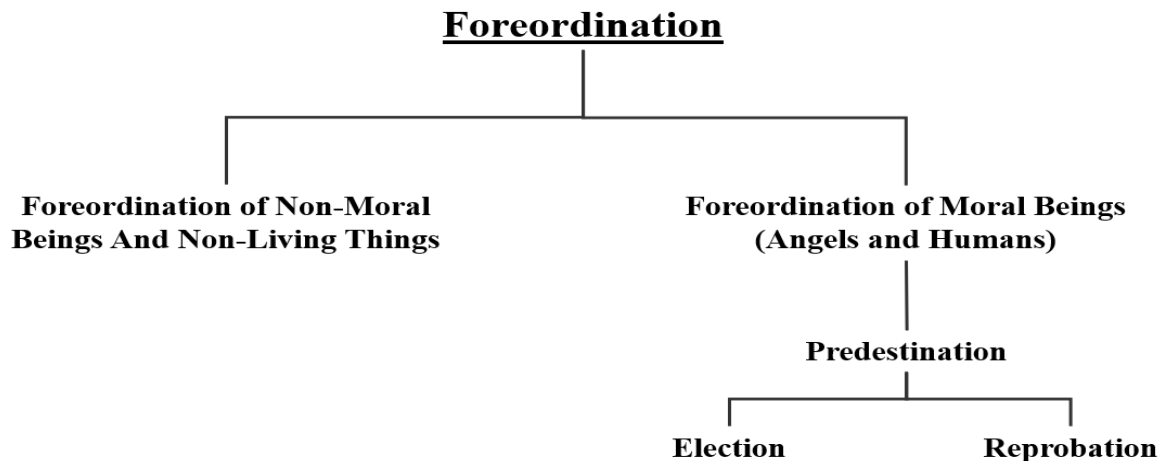
7. Westminster Confession of Faith: Chapter 3:1-2 “Of God’s Eternal Decree.”

- “God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.
- Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass, upon all supposed conditions; yet hath He not decreed anything because He foresaw it as future, as that which would come to pass, upon such conditions.”
- Foreordination is the broad category of God ordaining whatsoever comes to pass.
- How foreordination works is not revealed but appears to be a combination of many things including the “laws of nature” and the Holy Spirit’s influence.

8. Predestination is the foreordination subcategory that applies to moral creatures.

- It is the general term for God's sovereign decree concerning His moral creatures.
- Election is the specific term for God’s decree that selects individuals to be saved “in Christ.” The selection criteria God uses are private to Him (Dt 29:29).
- Is Election necessary and, if so, why? “Yes,” necessary because Adam and Eve’s fall from moral perfection was total, and their progeny inherited the consequences.
- Adam and Eve’s moral perfection depended on their being spiritually connected with God. When they sinned, they died spiritually (were separated from God).
- Losing their spiritual connection to God degraded and corrupted all their faculties.
- The following diagram shows the various foreordination/election relationships.
- Their entire nature became corrupt. Their fallenness was heritable and passed to all their progeny from their first-born to the last born before Christ comes again.

Election & Free Will



- Scripture’s summary comments on consequences of the fall to humans are given in several places.

9. **Ephesians 2:1**: All fallen people are spiritually “*dead in ... transgressions and sins.*”

Romans 3:10-11: “*None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands ; no one*

seeks for God.” **John 6:44**: Jesus said, “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them.*” **Genesis 6:5**: (about people just before the flood) “*The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.*”

- Each statement concerns fallen people who are spiritually dead (separated from God), but physically and mentally alive. Their human faculties are degraded.
- John Calvin referred to the resulting degraded state as “total depravity.” He didn’t mean fallen people are as bad as they possibly could be. He meant every human faculty is dead toward God (separated from God’s sustaining power).
- Are fallen people capable of restoring themselves to moral perfection and holiness so that they can live in the presence of God ? No! Of themselves, they can do nothing to transform them toward moral perfection.

10. **Requirement to Live in God’s Presence**: People must be holy and righteous to live in God’s presence. Since the fall, none are holy or righteous. Only God can fix the problem.

- Everyone since the fall is born spiritually dead and unable to meet God’s requirement to obey Him in thought, word, and deed. Unless God intervenes, all people would remain spiritually dead.
- God does intervene. He has chosen to provide a way for people to become holy.

11. **Who Shall be Saved**: Who shall He make holy – everyone, some, or none?

- Since no one deserves to be made holy, that choice can’t be based on merit.
- Despite lack of merit, (1.) God could choose to save all or save some while maintaining active control to assure all chosen would receive complete salvation.
- (2.) God could make salvation available to everyone who will believe but leave to individuals in control of the decision of whether to accept or reject the offered redemption. Only those who choose to accept salvation will be saved.
- The first way recognizes God’s all-encompassing sovereignty. The second way recognizes God’s sovereignty to make the steps of salvation possible, but the critical step of acceptance or rejection is reserved to the person’s sovereign will.
- All known understandings of how election works fit into one of the two categories.
- The “everyone is saved” possibility is not consistent with Scripture. 2 Peter 3:9 mentions God does not **wish (or desire) for any to perish**. However, the message throughout Scripture is, some will be saved but not all - some will perish.
- Whatever interpretation of election is accepted, the process of salvation is entirely of God. Human speculation and manipulation cannot change God’s decrees.

- The elect receive salvation they do not deserve. The non-elect receive justice. God’s purpose and implementation of election are fixed and immutable.
- Election is what it is. No fallen person is holy, and only the “holy” can live in God’s presence, so election assures God’s heavenly home has human residents.
- It offends people to think God might save someone without the person’s permission or refuse salvation to someone who yearns for it. He doesn’t!

12. **Election 2:** All people are born into the world “spiritually dead.” If all were to fail to be obedient to God, justice requires that all perish. Divine love, mercy, and grace intervene to save some but not all. Why not save all? We don’t know.

- God neither tempts anyone to sin nor does anything to incline them to sin. God does bring about good through the evil actions of sinners. A Judas was necessary in the plan of salvation, as was a treacherous high priest, a Pilate (who though he believed Him innocent, sentenced Jesus to be crucified). Joseph’s brothers meant to do him evil, but God used their evil actions for good.

13. **Election 3:** The implications of election raise persistent questions, most of which concern justice and fairness.

- Why aren’t “non-elect” people given an opportunity to believe? Paul says all are without excuse. Everyone has sufficient information and opportunity to believe.
- A more difficult question is how can people be responsible for not believing if only God can make belief possible through His sovereign “regeneration?”
- From knowledge about his unbelieving fellow Jews, Paul struggled with implications of election. Even with his deep understanding of election, Paul was in emotional anguish at the widespread unbelief he saw among his Jewish relatives and friends.
- Knowing the Jews to be the people God chose and trained, preparing them to be ancestors of Christ’s human nature, how is it so few appear to be among the elect?
- Does God have the power to intervene in every life and draw all people to Himself?
- Of course! Then, why does He limit the number of the elect? Why were so many Jews of Paul’s day resistant to the gospel? We don’t know. But we do know God is good, powerful, all-knowing, and loving.
- “Is God being unjust in withholding saving grace from some?”
- After much agonizing, Paul’s answer was, “God is not at fault in any way. God’s purpose and plan remain right and true through all the ages.”
- We still wonder. If everyone begins mortal life spiritually dead and sinful, why should some be saved but not all? We don’t know! Election is a mystery that belongs to God (Dt 29:29). But God is good, and He has reasons for doing things.
- Jesus paid a dreadful personal price to enable salvation. We are saved “in Him.” That was not done without good reason. Because we belong to Him, in this world we will have tribulation. The narrow path of obedience will at times be painful and difficult.

- We walk with Jesus in anticipation of the joy of being transformed into a spiritual likeness of Him, He who is the One with whom the Father is well-pleased.
- Though perplexed about election, we should rejoice at being “in Christ” and beloved by the Father. We don’t know how or why anyone is chosen, but we are told to teach the gospel and pray for the salvation of others. God, who is not bound by time, heard and knew all prayers before the beginning of creation. He is trustworthy!