

# Tower of Strength

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower  
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”

—Proverbs 18:10



## Is Election Unconditional?

We have heard preached so often that human beings have free will, that it may come as a surprise to read a passage like Ephesians 1:3–6, which says,

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 would be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Many people, often called Calvinists, explain this text according to a doctrine called **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

Lake Wales  
Church of Christ  
463 N. Buck Moore Rd.  
Lake Wales, FL 33898  
[www.lakewalescoc.com](http://www.lakewalescoc.com)  
(863) 676-4114

VOL. XXX  
NO. 31  
August 2, 2015

save... His choice of particular sinners unto salvation was not based upon any foreseen act or response on the part of those selected, but was based solely on His own good pleasure and sovereign will. Thus election was not determined by, or conditioned upon, anything that men would do, but resulted entirely from God's self-determined purpose (Steele, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, p. 30).

In other words, the doctrine of unconditional election teaches that God looked out over the gathered souls of every human being before they were ever born into the world, and selected *more or less at random* a number of individuals to be saved. Furthermore, the doctrine teaches that no individual has any choice whatsoever in the matter of salvation. If he is one of the lucky elect, he will at some point in his life be touched by the gospel and saved by an act of God's sovereign will (a moment which the same Calvinists often call **Irresistible Grace**). All the other souls who were not one of the lucky elect will be lost. In fact, they will have no desire to be saved, because they are afflicted by a complete wickedness which Calvinists often call **Total Depravity**). Jesus, as the teaching goes, shed His blood *only* for the elect which He has already purposed to save, a process which Calvinists call **Limited Atonement**). And, since it is God's sovereign will which has chosen these individuals for salvation, and caused them to become saved, He is certainly not going to leave it up to them whether or not to remain saved; thus, Calvinists teach a doctrine of once saved always saved, also known as **Perseverance of the Saints**).

To summarize, let me quote from John Calvin himself, from his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.21.5,

We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which He compacted with Himself what He willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.

It would be silly to deny that God “chose us in Him before the foundation of the world” and to deny that God “predestined us to adoption as sons.” Election and Predestination are clearly Biblical doctrines which are found in more places than just Ephesians 1. The question is whether or not these passages teach the same thing that Calvinism teaches.

Allow me, in the brief space available in this bulletin, give my view of predestination and election. For lack of a better term, I guess I would like to call it “conditional election.”

There is no question that God chose something for salvation before the foundation of the world. The question is: what? Did He choose each and every individual? Or did He choose the group? When Paul says God “chose us” does he mean each person, or the body of Christ?

I am convinced that it is the saved group, the church. God, in His sovereign will, knowing that mankind would sin and fall into condemnation, determined to send His Son into the world to provide salvation. He chose all those who would be in Christ to be saved.

God could have done this any way He wanted to. He could have decided that anyone who can run a mile in under 10 minutes would be saved. He could have decided that anyone with an IQ of 130 or above would be saved. But God’s choice was those who have faith in Jesus.

It remains the choice of each person whether or not he or she wants to be a part of this saved group. God has chosen the church and predestined the church for salvation, but He has placed conditions on whether or not an individual would like to join that winning team. He declares this truth, He begs mankind to be saved, but the choice is still ours to make. Election is conditional.

The implications of Unconditional Election need to be examined as well, in light of the rest of the Bible. Consider:

- Unconditional Election teaches man cannot exercise his own will whether or not he wants to be saved, free will is taught everywhere in the Bible (Josh. 24:15, Deut. 30:15–20; Mark 16:15–16). In fact, if Unconditional Election were true, why are there imperative statements in the Bible (“Do this...” or “Don’t do that”)?

- The Bible teaches that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11). We are created with an opportunity for salvation. To put it another way, no individual is created with no opportunity for salvation.
- Unconditional Election renders meaningless the Bible emphasis on preaching the gospel to all creation (Matt. 28:18–20; Rom. 10:13–17; Acts 2:21; Titus 2:11; Rev. 22:17). If God has already selected those who will be saved before they were even born, and individuals cannot influence this, why bother?
- Unconditional Election makes a complete mockery of a judgment in which God holds individuals responsible for their own deeds, a kind of judgment which the Bible clearly teaches (John 5:28–29; Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11–15). The idea that “election was not determined by, or conditioned upon, anything that men would do,” rings false.

Calvinism presumes the wishes of God regarding the salvation of mankind, that He exercised His sovereign will to “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.” But we don’t have to presume. The Bible declares the wishes of God. He “desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). If God really were to exercise His sovereign will for the salvation of mankind, it would not be to select a few apples from the shelf and leave the rest behind to rot, it would be to sweep the entire shelf into His cart and proceed to the checkout.

John Calvin has painted an unbiblical picture of God’s will for mankind. What, might you ask, is the obstacle that gets between God’s desire for all to be saved, and the reality that many will be lost? The answer is human choice!

The church, the body of Christ, is God’s elect people and predestined for salvation. Why don’t you join this winning team? —*John Guzzetta*

---

**Quote of the Week:**

“We learn best by doing.”

—*old saying*