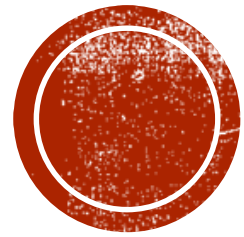


WHAT IS REFORMED THEOLOGY?

It's Bigger Than You Might Think





SOVEREIGN ELECTION

aka. Unconditional Election

SOVEREIGN ELECTION

From all eternity and by the completely wise and holy purpose of his own will, God has freely and unchangeably ordained whatever happens. This ordainment does not mean, however, that God is the author of sin (he is not), that he represses the will of his created beings, or that he takes away the freedom or contingency of secondary causes. Rather, the will of created beings and the freedom and contingency of secondary causes are established by him.

Although God knows whatever may or can happen under all possible circumstances, he has not ordered anything because he foresaw it in the future as something which would happen under such circumstances.



SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Before the creation of the world, according to his eternal, unchangeable plan and the hidden purpose and good pleasure of his will, God has chosen in Christ those of mankind who are predestined to life and to everlasting glory. He has done this solely out of his own mercy and love and completely **to the praise of his wonderful grace.**

According to the hidden purpose of his own will, by which he offers or withholds mercy at his pleasure, and for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, it pleased God not to call the rest of mankind and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin **to the praise of his glorious justice.**

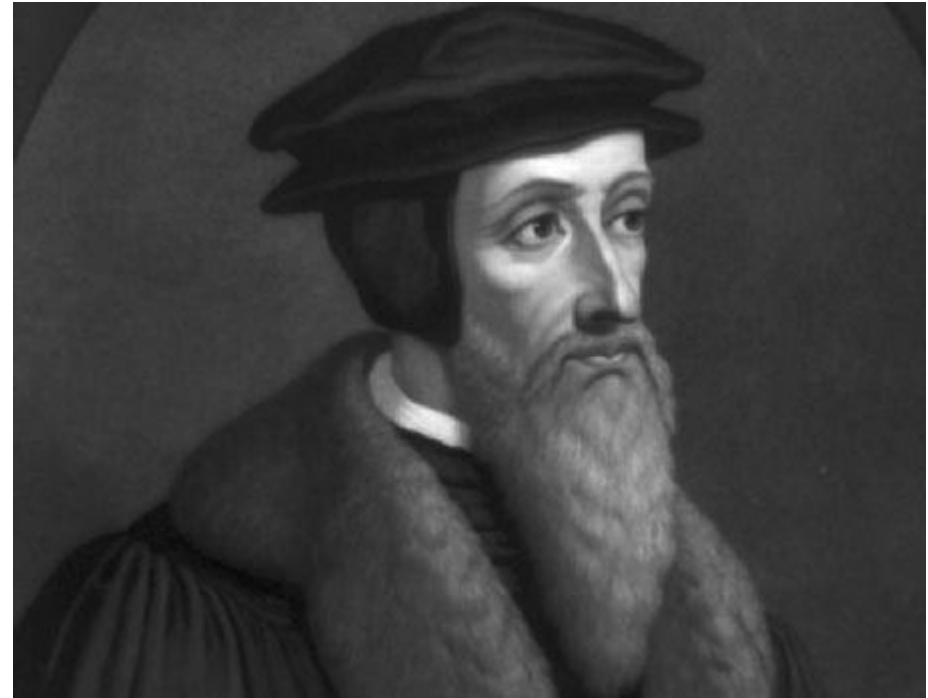
Westminster Confession, 3.5, 7



SOVEREIGN ELECTION

“It is better to limp along this path than to rush with all speed outside it.”

John Calvin
Institutes 1.6.3



SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Essentially there are three options:

1. God elects those who are good.
2. God elects some who are bad, but he elects them since they have exercised faith in Christ. This is Arminianism.
3. God elects some who are bad, and who are not able to save themselves. Thus his election is according to his sovereign good pleasure alone. This is Reformed.



SOVEREIGN ELECTION

- The question reduces to this: Does God elect people because they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or does God elect people in order that they shall believe in Christ? (cf. Storms)
- Or to put it even more simply:
 - The Calvinist says that God elects unbelievers and predestines them to become believers.
 - The Arminian says that God elects believers and predestines them to become his children.



SOVEREIGN ELECTION: OVERVIEW

- God's election is unconditional. God's choice of certain individuals for salvation was not based on any foreseen response of obedience, future faith, repentance or any other action.
- From eternity past, God the Father chose certain individuals from every tongue, tribe, nation and generation of humanity to redeem - the elect - and passed over the rest of mankind - the reprobate.
- Thus God's choice of who he would save was rooted entirely in His sovereign, transcendent, perfect will, the nature or specifics of which the Bible leaves as a complete mystery to us. No one deserves salvation, since "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
- Salvation is, therefore, entirely of God's grace to save some out of the mass of perdition.



SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Aspects of divine election that are key to understand:

- It is God's choice alone - he saves whomever he pleases according to his own will and for his own purposes.
- It is an unconditional choosing - God's choice of who will be saved rests on his sovereign decision alone - it lacks external conditions (such as an act of faith seen in the future).
- Election is **monergistic** (God alone is responsible for our salvation)



SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Romans 9 - "Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue not because of works but because of his call, she was told, "The elder will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'" (vv. 11–13)

Ephesians 1:3-14 - "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace." (vv.4–6); "We who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory" (v. 12).

2 Thessalonians 2:13 - "We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth"



SOVEREIGN ELECTION

2 Timothy 1:9 - God is the one “who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago.”

Revelation 13:7 - “And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain.”

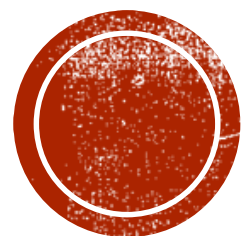
Revelation 17:8 - “The dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to behold the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.”



SOVEREIGN ELECTION: OBJECTIONS

1. Why wouldn't God save everyone if he has the power to do so?
2. Romans 8:29, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son." Does this not suggest that God's election is a result of seeing our faith?
3. Election is fatalistic / mechanistic; it makes people into robots who simply do what they were eternally programmed to do.
4. If everything is fixed and certain, why pray, evangelize, or do anything at all?
5. Election is not fair!
6. If election is true, then there are unbelievers who die in sin who never had a chance to believe.
7. The Bible says that God wills to save everyone.





PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

aka. Limited Atonement

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

Christ insures with absolute certainty that everyone for whom he purchased redemption actually accepts and receives it. He makes intercession for them, reveals the mysteries of salvation to them in and by the word, and effectively persuades them to believe and obey by his Spirit. He governs their hearts by his word and Spirit and overcomes all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom in such ways as are most in agreement with his wonderful and unknowable administration of things.

Westminster Confession, 8, 8



PARTICULAR REDEMPTION: OVERVIEW

- Christ's death was designed to **actually secure** the salvation of all of God's chosen people, rather than merely make it possible. God has determined that all for whom Christ sacrificed Himself will be saved.
- To put it in a slightly different way, “not only was Christ’s Atonement designed for, and given to, only the elect; it also actually secured salvation for them, and purchased all the means to such, including their faith and repentance, thereby guaranteeing their salvation. Thus, the Atonement did not merely offer its objects the opportunity to be redeemed, but it wholly and effectively redeemed them!”
(Christopher Blum)



PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

Here are the options:

- If Christ's death **actually saved all men from all of their sins** you have universalism.
- If Christ died to save **some of the sins of some men**, then Christ did not accomplish their salvation and thus did not save them at all. He merely made them savable. This is the Arminian perspective.
- If Christ's death **actually saved men** from their sin, then his death cannot apply to all men.



PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

1. The restrictive manner in which Scripture speaks.
2. The distinguishing language of how Scripture speaks of the saved.
3. The redemption obtained by Christ is restricted to those who were “chosen in him,” and whom the Father gave to him to redeem by his death. (Ephesians 1:4, 7; John 17:2)
4. The intention of Christ in laying down his life was, not merely to obtain for those for whom he died a possibility of salvation, but actually to save them.
5. The intercession of Christ proceeds upon the ground of his atoning sacrifice. (John 17:9; 1 John 2:1, 2)



PARTICULAR REDEMPTION: OBJECTIONS

2 Timothy 2:3-6 - “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, *who desires all men to be saved* and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself *a ransom for all*, to be testified in due time.”

2 Peter 3:9 - “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*”

To these we could add **John 3:16, 4:42; 1 John 2:2** – the “world” texts.



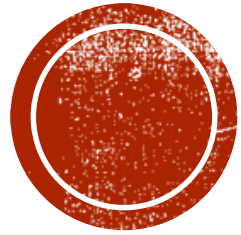
PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

Conclusion:

"Scripture teaches that Jesus did not fail. Rather where Adam failed, Jesus succeeded. As the Second Adam (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22, 44) Jesus actively obeyed God's perfect Law perfectly, and suffered all the wrath which was due to us, his people, for whom he died (Phil 2:5–11).“

R. Scott Clark





EFFECTUAL CALLING

aka. Irresistible Grace

EFFECTUAL CALLING

At the right time, appointed by him, God effectually calls all those and only those whom he has predestined to life. He calls them by his word and Spirit out of their natural state of sin and death into grace and salvation through Jesus Christ... But they come to Jesus voluntarily, having been made willing by God's grace.

This effectual call is freely made by God and is entirely an act of his special grace. It does not depend on anything God foreknew or foresaw about the person called, who is completely passive. God himself gives life and renewal by the Holy Spirit. He thereby enables each person to answer his call and to accept the grace he offers and actually gives.

Westminster Confession, 10, 1, 2



EFFECTUAL CALLING: OVERVIEW

- When the external call to salvation is made through gospel proclamation, the Holy Spirit extends a special inward call to the elect people that God wishes to save at that particular time and regenerates them.
- This regeneration creates within them a new heart and enables them to freely and willingly believe in Christ as Saviour and Lord. The new birth precedes and makes possible saving faith.
- In drawing his elect to himself, God does not force people "against their will, squealing and kicking as it were" to believe in him. (Carson)
- This doctrine emphasizes that "it is God's choice of the sinner, and not the sinner's of God, that ultimately and fully causes salvation, since the sinner's very willingness to put faith in Christ is solely a gift from God that was purchased at the Cross" (Christopher Blum)



EFFECTUAL CALLING

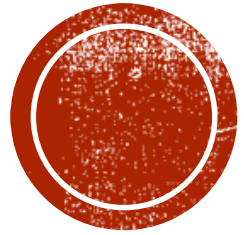
- The doctrine of irresistible grace **DOES NOT** mean that every influence of the Holy Spirit cannot be resisted.
- It **does** mean that the Holy Spirit can overcome all resistance and make his influence irresistible.
- Key passages:
 - John 6
 - 2 Timothy 2:24-25
 - 1 Corinthians 1:23-24
 - 2 Corinthians 4:4-6



EFFECTUAL CALLING: OBJECTIONS

1. "Yes, the Holy Spirit must draw us to God, but we can use our freedom to resist or accept that drawing."
2. God draws all men, not just some.
3. What about the passages that speak of people who resist the Holy Spirit? Doesn't this imply that people can successfully resist God's grace?





PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

aka. Perseverance of the Saints

PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

Those whom God has accepted in his Son and has effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit can never completely or finally fall out of their state of grace. Rather, they shall definitely continue in that state to the end and are eternally saved.

This endurance of the saints does not depend on their own free will but on God's unchangeable decree of election, flowing from his voluntary, unchangeable love. It also depends on the effectiveness of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, on the indwelling Spirit and indwelling seed of God in the saints, and on the nature of the covenant of grace. All these establish the certainty and infallibility of their preservation.

Westminster Confession, 17, 1-2



PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS: OVERVIEW

- All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of God and therefore continue to persevere in faith.
- Once the Holy Spirit regenerates people, and they place their trust in Christ, they are eternally kept in their state of salvation by God. He faithfully preserves all whom He set out to save and drew to him.
- Likewise, whenever anyone apparently “receives Christ,” but later falls away and dies in that state, they were never truly saved at all - for anyone whom the Holy Spirit calls was predestined by the Father and atoned for by the Son, and thus is sealed with God’s promise of eternal life.



PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

1. Our faith, and our obedience, must endure to the end if we are to be saved.
2. God's elect cannot be lost.
3. If there is a persistent falling away of a believer, it shows they were never truly saved.
4. It is the work of God that causes his elect to persevere.
5. We need to be zealous to "confirm our calling and election."



PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

What would it mean if a true believer could fall away?

For God the Father:

1. He would not be worthy of glory nor of our praise and worship
2. His purpose in redemption would fail and unravel
3. His will would be frustrated and fail in fulfillment
4. It would mean the Father has refused to answer the prayers of his Son
5. God, supposedly all-powerful, would be exposed as impotent and helpless
6. God, supposedly righteous, would be exposed as a liar and an imposter
7. God would prove to be faithless



PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

For **God the Son**:

1. Christ will have failed in the purpose for which He died
2. Christ will have failed in the purpose for which He was raised
3. Christ will have failed in the purpose for which He now intercedes in the presence of the Father
4. Christ will fail to accomplish the goal for which He is to return to this earth
5. Christ will prove to have been a liar



PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

For **God the Holy Spirit**:

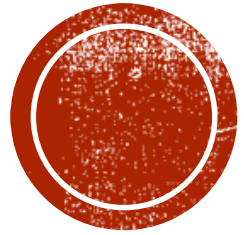
1. The Holy Spirit will have failed in his work of sealing
2. The Holy Spirit will have failed in his ministry as a pledge of the future consummation of our redemption
3. The Holy Spirit will have failed in his ministry as first fruits



PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS: OBJECTIONS

1. Once people are saved, it doesn't matter how they live – they are still guaranteed heaven.
2. God's people can have no assurance of salvation until after they have persevered.





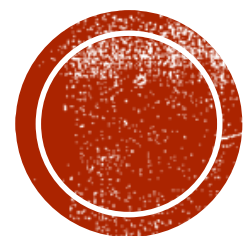
ANSWERING MISCONCEPTIONS



ANSWERING MISCONCEPTIONS

1. Reformed theology says that people are robots and do not have free will.
2. If people are elect there is no reason to witness.
3. If God elects only some to salvation, he is an unloving and unfair God.
4. The belief that salvation cannot be lost undermines the pursuit of continued holiness.
5. Election is a violation of free will; thus God can potentially drag people into heaven that don't want to be there, and reject those who do.





REFORMED THEOLOGY & ARMINIANISM COMPARED

REFORMED THEOLOGY & ARMINIANISM

According to Arminianism:

Salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God (who takes the initiative) and man (who must respond) - man's response being the determining factor. God has provided salvation for everyone, but his provision becomes effective only for those who, of their own free will, "choose" to cooperate with him and accept his offer of grace. At the crucial point, man's will plays a decisive role; thus man, not God, determines who will be recipients of the gift of salvation.

According to Calvinism:

Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.



REFORMED THEOLOGY & ARMINIANISM

Reformed / Monergism

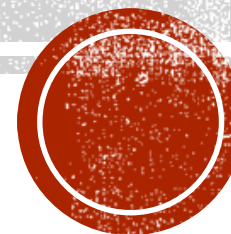
- Total depravity
- Unconditional election
- Limited atonement
- Irresistible grace
- Perseverance of the saints

Arminianism / Synergism

- Total depravity cancelled by prevenient grace; free will determinative
- Conditional election (our choice as seen by God's foreknowledge)
- Limited atonement (efficacy)
- Resistible grace (free will determinative)
- Salvation can be lost



A HIGH VIEW OF THE CHURCH



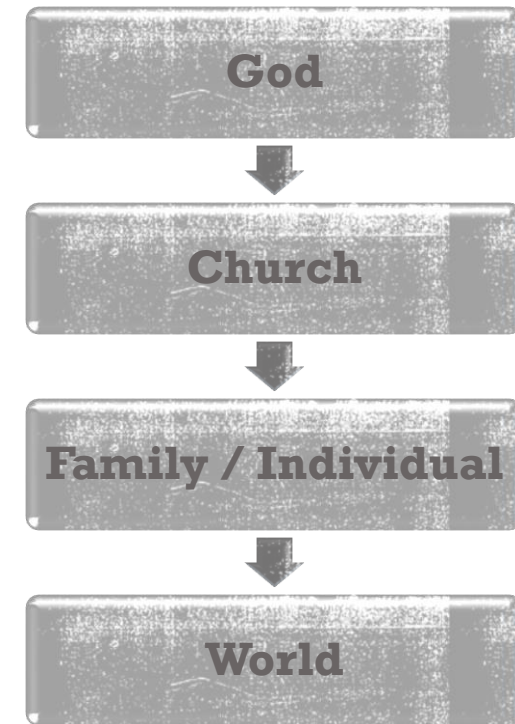
A HIGH VIEW OF THE CHURCH

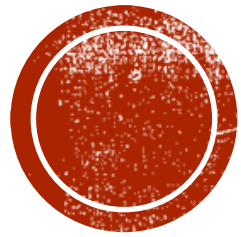
- If we hold Christ as precious, the church must be precious. We are drawn together by Christ. We regard our assembling together, too, as precious.
- The marks of the church are three, which correspond to the offices of Christ as he dwells among his people:
 - Preaching – the prophetic office
 - Sacraments – the priestly office
 - Discipline – the kingly office
- Worship is governed by God's word



HIGH VIEW OF THE CHURCH

- Reformed piety moves in the opposite direction of typical North American spirituality: from the public means of grace to the family to the individual, then to the World.





EXCURSUS

Why we are Credo-Baptists and not Paedo-Baptists

WHY PAEDOBAPTISM?

- The primary argument comes from the relationship between Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism and its application within the visible church.
- Christian baptism, so goes the paedo-baptist argument, is the New Testament counterpart to Old Testament circumcision.
- Infant baptism does not guarantee the salvation of the infant, but sets them apart as children of covenant parents who are thus included in the external blessings and responsibilities of the people of God.
- Colossians 2:11-12 is their main text.



WHY NOT PAEDOBAPTISM?

1. There are no explicit instances of infant baptism in Scripture.
2. Baptism is portrayed in the New Testament as a symbol of the beginning of spiritual life. – Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12
3. Baptism is consistently portrayed as inextricably tied to (conscious) faith and repentance. – Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12-13, 36; 10:47-48
4. In all the examples of “household” baptisms the broader contexts make clear that only “believers” were baptized.
5. When the New Testament church debated in Acts 15 whether circumcision should still be required of believers as part of becoming a Christian, it is surprising that not once in that debate did anyone say anything about baptism standing in the place of circumcision.



WHY NOT PAEDOBAPTISM?

6. We must take into account the nature of the New Covenant inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus and one significant way in which it differs from the covenant God made with Abraham.
7. We must understand the differences between the new covenant people called the Church and the old covenant people called Israel.
8. The paedobaptist understanding of sacrament, which is biblically correct, runs contrary to their practice of baptism.
9. Paedobaptist definitions of baptism run contrary to their practice of baptism.
10. I can't help but notice the absence in the New Testament of any explicit portrayal of an infant being baptized.



HOW CAN WE ALL GET ALONG?

- A number of Reformed denominations would consider us to be a false church on account of our view and practice of baptism.
- However, we would not return the ‘favor’. Why not?

“When I weigh the kind of imperfection involved in tolerating an invalid baptism because some of our members are deeply persuaded that it is biblically valid, over against the kind of imperfection involved in saying to a son or daughter of the living God, “You are excluded from the local church,” my biblical sense is that the latter is more unthinkable than the former. The local church is a visible expression of the invisible, universal, body of Christ. To exclude from it is virtually the same as excommunication. And no serious church takes excommunication as an invitation to attend the church down the street.”

John Piper



THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
AS *CORAM DEO*



LIFE *CORAM DEO*

- *Coram Deo* = Before God
- Starts with a true experience of the gospel - conviction of sin, cleansing by the sacrifice of Christ and glad response to his call to serve him.
- We have been delivered from the bondage of law-breaking to enjoy the freedom of law-keeping.
- The 'cultural mandate' (Genesis 1:28) still applies to us. This means witnessing, in word and life, to Christ's Lordship over all things.

