

Biblical “Election”

Biblical election refers to the concept of God choosing certain individuals or groups for a specific purpose, often tied to salvation and service. This doctrine is found throughout Scripture and is closely related to *God's sovereignty, grace, and covenantal promises*. The understanding of election can vary across Christian traditions, but it primarily emphasizes God's initiative in choosing people for His purposes.

1. Election of Israel:

God's election is first seen in His *choice of Israel as His people*. This election was not based on Israel's merit or size, but on God's love and faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham.

- **Deuteronomy 7:6-8:** "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples...but it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors."

2. Election and Grace:

The New Testament expands on the concept of election, particularly in relation to salvation. Here, election is described as *an act of God's grace, not based on human works or merit*, but solely on His sovereign choice.

- **Ephesians 1:4-5:** "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will."

Paul emphasizes that God's election is part of His eternal plan, highlighting that believers are chosen in Christ for a purpose—holiness and adoption into God's family.

3. Election and Predestination:

The relationship between election and predestination is significant in Christian theology. While predestination refers to God's foreordaining of events and destinies, *election refers specifically to His choosing of people for salvation*.

- **Romans 8:29-30:** "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son... And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

This passage emphasizes the progression from God's foreknowledge to glorification, affirming that election is part of God's redemptive plan for His people.

4. Universal Call vs. Election:

Scripture distinguishes between *God's universal call to all people and His specific election of some for salvation*. The universal call invites everyone to respond to the gospel, while election refers to those whom God has specifically chosen.

- **Matthew 22:14:** "For many are called, but few are chosen."

This parable of the wedding feast illustrates that though the invitation to the kingdom of God is broad, only the elect respond and are granted entrance.

5. Election and Responsibility:

While election emphasizes God's initiative in salvation, the Bible also teaches human responsibility in responding to God's call. *The mystery of how God's sovereignty and human free will work together is a topic of ongoing theological discussion.*

- **2 Peter 1:10:** "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble."

Peter exhorts believers to live out their election through righteous living, confirming their place among God's chosen.

Conclusion:

The doctrine of election highlights God's sovereign grace and purpose in choosing individuals and nations for His glory. *It underscores that salvation is not based on human merit but on God's gracious will.* Biblical election points to God's eternal plan to redeem and restore through Christ, while still maintaining the importance of human response and faithfulness.

Special notes – Opposing views:

Biblical election has been interpreted differently across various Christian denominations, leading to distinct theological perspectives. The two primary opposing views are *Calvinism and Arminianism*, with additional nuances within **Catholicism** and **Eastern Orthodoxy**. Below is an outline of these views, along with scriptural support and denominational differences.

1. Calvinist View: **Unconditional Election**

Key Belief: *Calvinism teaches that God's election is **unconditional**, meaning God chooses individuals for salvation based solely on His sovereign will and not on any foreseen faith or action on their part.* Election is part of the doctrine of **predestination**, where some are elected to eternal life, while others are passed over (reprobation).

Scriptural Support:

- **Romans 9:15-16:** "For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy."
- **Ephesians 1:4-5:** "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ."

Key Points:

- *Election is based on God's will, not on any condition in the individual.*
- *Irresistible grace—those who are elected will inevitably come to faith.*
- *Perseverance of the saints—those elected will not lose their salvation.*

Denominational Adherents:

- **Reformed Churches:** Presbyterian, some Baptist denominations, and certain non-denominational churches.

2. Arminian View: **Conditional Election**

Key Belief: Arminianism teaches **conditional election**, meaning God's election is based on His *foreknowledge* of those who will believe in Christ. God's election is not arbitrary but based on foreseeing who will respond to the gospel by faith.

Scriptural Support:

- **Romans 8:29:** "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son..."
- **1 Peter 1:1-2:** "...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ..."

Key Points:

- Election is conditional on foreseen faith, not on God's arbitrary will.
- Free will—humans have the ability to accept or reject God's offer of salvation.
- Resistible grace—grace can be resisted, and not all who are called are saved.
- Possibility of apostasy—believers can fall away from grace and lose salvation.

Denominational Adherents:

- **Methodist** churches, **Wesleyan**, **Pentecostal**, and some **Baptist** traditions (such as Free Will Baptists).

3. Catholic View: Synergism and the Role of Works

Key Belief: The Catholic Church teaches that election involves a cooperation (**synergism**) *between God's grace and human free will*. Salvation is seen as a process where God's grace initiates, but humans must freely respond to this grace through faith and works.

Scriptural Support:

- **Philippians 2:12-13:** "Therefore, my dear friends... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."
- **James 2:24:** "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone."

Key Points:

- Election is connected to God's grace but also involves human cooperation through faith and good works.
- Justification is not a one-time event but a lifelong process.
- Sacraments, especially baptism and the Eucharist, are essential for salvation.

Denominational Adherents:

- **Roman Catholic Church** and **Eastern Orthodox Church** (with some variations).

4. Eastern Orthodox View: The Mystery of God's Will

Key Belief: The Eastern Orthodox Church emphasizes *the mystery of God's will in election*. It rejects strict predestination and emphasizes human freedom, synergy between God's grace and human effort, and the ongoing process of *theosis* (becoming more like God). Election is seen within the context of community and the Church, not just individual salvation.

Scriptural Support:

- **1 Timothy 2:4:** "...who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."
- **2 Peter 3:9:** "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise... not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

Key Points:

- *Universal call: God desires the salvation of all, and everyone has the potential to be saved.*
- *Synergistic salvation: Divine grace and human freedom work together.*
- *Emphasis on theosis—participation in God's life and becoming more like Christ through spiritual practices.*

Denominational Adherents:

- **Eastern Orthodox Churches** and **Oriental Orthodox Churches**

5. Comparison of Key Differences:

Aspect	<u>Calvinism</u>	<u>Arminianism</u>	<u>Catholicism</u>	<u>Eastern Orthodoxy</u>
Election Basis	Unconditional (God's will)	Conditional (Foreseen faith)	Synergistic (Faith + Works)	Mystery (God's will + human freedom)
Role of Free Will	Minimal	Significant	Cooperation with grace	Human freedom essential
Grace	Irresistible	Resistible	Sacramental and cooperative	Synergistic with human effort
Possibility of Apostasy	No	Yes	Yes (mortal sin)	Salvation is a process

Conclusion:

The doctrine of election reveals deep theological differences across Christian traditions, especially between Calvinism's emphasis on God's sovereign will and Arminianism's focus on human responsibility. Catholicism and Orthodoxy offer more synergistic models, highlighting the cooperation between divine grace and human freedom. Despite these differences, all Christian traditions affirm the importance of God's grace in salvation and the need for a faithful response to His call.