

# Unconditional Election

by Ronald Hanko

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*The doctrine of unconditional election teaches that God's choice of certain persons unto salvation is eternal, personal, and not conditioned upon anything in man or that man must do.*

**Topics:** "Predestination", "Election Doctrine"

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## Description

Ronald Hanko preaches on the doctrine of unconditional election, emphasizing its importance as the second of the Five Points of Calvinism represented by the letter U in the acronym TULIP. He highlights that the gospel declares the suffering and death of Jesus Christ for the elect, those predestined unto salvation, and that faith is worked only in the hearts of the elect. Hanko stresses the practical value of understanding predestination, refuting misconceptions that it is a doctrine of little benefit or solely the invention of theologians. He echoes John Calvin's unwavering commitment to proclaiming the free election of God, emphasizing the greatness of God's goodness in calling the faithful to salvation.

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## Transcript

The doctrine of unconditional election is the second of the Five Points of Calvinism and is represented by the letter U in the acronym TULIP.

The doctrine of predestination, of which election is a part, has been called the heart of the gospel. This is true. The gospel is the good news of salvation. But those who are saved are those who have been predestined unto salvation, that is, the elect. The gospel declares the suffering and death of Jesus Christ for unworthy sinners. But Christ died only for those unworthy sinners who had been chosen by God. The gospel calls men to faith in Jesus Christ. But faith is worked only in the hearts of the elect. The gospel is the means to gather the church. But those who are members of the church, genuine church members, are the elect. There can be no doubt about it that the doctrine of predestination is at the very heart of the gospel message.

It is imperative that every believer have a good understanding of predestination. There is much ignorance and confusion over this doctrine in our day. Besides, there are numerous corruptions and denials of this doctrine in places where historically it was confessed. Many are abandoning the doctrine because they suppose that it is the invention of clever theologians but that it is not taught in the Scriptures. Others, who will admit that predestination is taught in the Bible, allege that it is a doctrine of little or no practical benefit for the church.

These people are seriously mistaken! We must see that the doctrine of election is clearly taught in the Word of God. And we must be convinced that it is a doctrine of the greatest practical value for Christians.

We echo the sentiments of John Calvin:

Let those roar at us who will. We will ever brighten forth, with all our power of language, the doctrine which we hold concerning the free election of God, seeing that it is now only by it that the faithful can understand how great the goodness of God is which effectually called them to salvation.... Now, if we are not really ashamed of the Gospel, we must of necessity acknowledge what is therein openly declared: that God by His eternal goodwill appointed those whom He pleased unto salvation, rejecting all the rest.... (Calvin's Calvinism, p. 31)

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## A. The Doctrine

### 1. Statement of the doctrine.

By election we mean the eternal choice by God of certain definite individuals in Jesus Christ unto salvation.

There are many references in the Scriptures to this election or choice by God. It is the Lord Jesus Who declares in Matthew 22:14, "Many are called, but few are chosen (elect)." In Romans 11:5 the apostle Paul writes, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." The same apostle writes in Ephesians 1:4, "According as he hath chosen (elected) us in him before the foundations of the world...." In Colossians 3:12 he exhorts believers, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering." In Titus 1:1 reference is made to "... the faith of God's elect." The apostle Peter writes in I Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen (elect) generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation...." And in II Peter 1:10 he exhorts Christians, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

Election is only one aspect of the broader doctrine of predestination. Predestination is God's eternal (pre-) decision with respect to the everlasting destiny (destination) of all His rational, moral creatures, men, angels, and devils. There are many who become uneasy when the word predestination is mentioned. But predestination is not some hideous monster invented by theologians gone over the deep end. The Bible teaches predestination.

The Greek word from which our English word predestination is derived occurs six times in the New Testament. We find it used twice by the apostle Paul in Romans 8:29, 30: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." In Ephesians 1:5 the apostle Paul declares, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Again we read in Ephesians 1:11, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

The word predestinate is also found in Acts 4:28, where it is translated as "determined before." There the apostle Peter teaches that Christ's crucifixion and the role in Christ's crucifixion played by wicked Herod

and Pontius Pilate were predestined by God. In that context, he declares in verse 28 that these wicked rulers were gathered together "to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before (predestined) to be done."

In I Corinthians 2:7 the word predestinate is translated "ordained": "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained (predestined) before the world unto our glory." Here Paul teaches that the whole plan of salvation was predestined by God.

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## 2. Characteristics.

The outstanding characteristics of election include the following:

### a. Decretive.

Election is a decree, a decision or choice of God. God elects, and God elects whom He wills to elect. Election is part of the counsel and will of God. In Romans 8:29, 30 we read, "Whom he (God) did predestinate." In Ephesians 1:4 we read, "According as he (God) hath chosen...." Ephesians 1:11 states, "In whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him (God) who worketh all things after the counsel of his (God's) own will."

### b. Personal.

Election is God's choice of certain definite individuals. Election is not some vague and indefinite decree of God that merely determines that there shall be salvation. Nor is it a decision on the part of God to save a mass of human beings. But election is God's determination to save particular persons. Ephesians 1:4 teaches this: "According as he hath chosen us...." In John 15:16 Jesus says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you...." In Romans 9:11-13 the apostle Paul teaches that Jacob, a definite individual, was elected by God, while Esau, a definite individual, was not elected by God.

### c. Eternal.

Election is the eternal choice of God of certain persons. Election does not take place in time and history, as God's response to the actions of men, but election is eternal election. Paul writes in Ephesians 1:4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world...." In Revelation 17:8 the apostle John speaks of those "... whose names were written in the book of life from the foundation of the world."

### d. Unto salvation.

The purpose of election is the salvation of those persons whom God has eternally chosen. They are not chosen merely to some earthly, temporal privileges, but they are chosen unto salvation itself. In Romans 8:29, 30 those who are predestinated are justified (have their sins forgiven and Christ's righteousness imputed to them) and glorified (go to heaven). In Ephesians 1:5 Paul teaches that we are predestinated "... unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself." In Revelation 17:8 the elect are said to have their names written in the Book of Life - everlasting life - life with God in the perfection of the new heavens and earth.

### e. Gracious.

That a person is elected by God is not due to anything in that person but is due to the free, unmerited grace of God. The cause of election is not at all to be found in those who are elected, but the cause of election lies only in the will of the electing God. Those who are elected are not different or better in themselves than those who are not elected. All men, as was made plain in the previous chapter, are by nature dead in trespasses and sins. That some men, in distinction from others, should be chosen by God to salvation is to be attributed solely to the grace of God. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." In Romans 11:5 he speaks of "... a remnant according to the election of grace."

f. Unconditional.

If election is gracious, it follows that it must be unconditional. If election is due alone to the grace of God, it is not conditioned upon anything in man or that man must do. This is a crucial point. There are many who professed to hold to biblical election but who have denied the truth of election by making election conditional. This was the false teaching concerning election propounded by the Arminians at the Synod of Dordt. The Arminians professed to believe in election, but the election that they taught was a conditional election. According to this view God in eternity looked into the future and saw who would believe on Him and who would choose Him. These in turn God chose and elected as His people. Election became God's choosing those who chose Him. But this conception of election will not stand the test of the Scriptures. Speaking of God's election of Jacob and rejection of Esau, Paul writes in Romans 9:11, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth...." In John 15:16 the Lord Jesus teaches unconditional election in the clearest of language: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you." Jesus does not mean to teach here that we do not choose Him. We do choose Jesus Christ. We do desire salvation. We do willingly follow Him as His disciples. But Jesus' concern here is with who chose first and whose choice is decisive. His teaching in John 15:16 is that we choose Him only because of and as the result of His choice of us. Our choice of Him is not the reason for His choice of us; but His choice of us is the explanation of our choice of Him. His choice of us is not dependent on our choice of Him; our choice of Him is dependent on His choice of us.

The Bible also teaches unconditional election when it sets forth the truth that our good works, faith, and repentance are not the cause or reason why God has chosen us but are the fruit, result, and evidence of our election. In very many passages of Scripture this relationship between God's election and our works is set forth. In John 15:16 Jesus says that He has chosen us, not because of, but that we should go and bring forth fruit. Paul writes in Ephesians 1:4 that God has chosen us, not because, but "... that we should be holy and without blame." In Ephesians 2:10 the same apostle writes, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto (not 'because of') good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Not only is it taught here that we are chosen unto good works, but there is added the statement that these works themselves have been ordained for us by God.

g. In Jesus Christ.

Although there is no basis for God's election in those who are elected, there is a basis for their election. That basis is to be found alone in Jesus Christ and in His suffering and death as the Son of God. Nor our worth is the basis for God's election of us, but the worth of Christ. Not our works are the ground for God's election of us, but the work of Christ. There must be a basis for God's election of those who are in themselves totally depraved, guilty sinners. That basis for their election, as for all of their salvation, is in

Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 1:4 we read, "According as he (God) hath chosen us in him (Jesus Christ)..." And in verse 5 of the same chapter he writes, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ..."

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### 3. Reprobation.

The Reformed faith maintains "double predestination," that is, not only election, but also reprobation. God's election of men in Jesus Christ is selective and discriminating. Not all men are chosen by God and appointed to salvation. In reality, many are excluded and rejected. In the words of the Canons of Dordt, I, 15: "What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend the unmerited grace of election is that not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree of God." This is the teaching of reprobation.

Like election, reprobation is an eternal decree of God. According to this decree God appoints certain definite persons to the everlasting destiny of rejection and damnation. Those reprobated deserve this punishment to which they are appointed because of their unbelief and other sins. God does not owe salvation to them nor to anyone.

Reprobation demonstrates the sovereignty of God in salvation, that God does what He wills with the creatures He has made. The reprobate are no worse than the elect. All men appear in the mind of God as involved in a common ruin. The ultimate explanation of God's electing some and reprobating others is His own sovereign good pleasure: "... for so it seemed good in his sight" (Matt. 11:26). Beyond that we cannot go, and before that we humans must bow. Theoretically, God could have chosen to save all men (for He has power to do so), or He could have chosen to save none (for He was under no obligation to save any). But He did neither. Instead He has chosen to save some and exclude others.

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### B. Scripture Passages

There are many references both in the Old and New Testaments to the truth of election.

#### 1. The Old Testament.

The outstanding example of election in the Old Testament is God's election of the nation of Israel. In distinction from all other nations, God chose Israel to be His people.

- a. Deuteronomy 7:6. For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all the people that are upon the face of the earth.
- b. I Kings 3:8. And thy servant (Solomon) is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.
- c. Psalm 105:6. O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.
- d. Psalm 132:13. For the Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation.

e. Isaiah 41:8. But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

f. Isaiah 45:4. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee (King Cyrus) by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

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## 2. The New Testament

a. Matthew 22:14. For many are called but few are chosen.

b. Matthew 24:31. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

c. Mark 13:20. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

d. Luke 18:7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

e. John 13:18. I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture might be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

f. John 15:16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

g. John 17:9. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

h. Romans 8:28-30. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

i. Acts 13:7. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.

j. Romans 8:33. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?

k. Romans 9:11-13. For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

l. Romans 9:23. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.

m. Romans 11:5. Even so at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

n. Romans 11:7. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

o. Ephesians 1:3-5. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

p. Ephesians 1:11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

q. Colossians 3:12. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.

r. I Thessalonians 1:4. Knowing brethren beloved, your election of God.

s. I Thessalonians 5:19. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

t. II Thessalonians 2:13. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

u. II Timothy 2:10. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

v. Titus 1:1. Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect.

w. I Peter 1:2. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

x. I Peter 2:9. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

y. I Peter 5:13. The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.

z. II Peter 1:10. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.

aa. Revelation 17:14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

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### 3. Election is definite and particular.

These and all the other a. Deuteronomy 7:6; I Kings 3:8; Psalm 105:6; 132:13; Isaiah 41:8; 45:6; Acts 13:17. (Quoted above in B.1. and 2.)

passages of Scripture which speak of God's election of Israel indicate that election is definite. God chose Israel in distinction from all other nations to be His people.

b. John 15:16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit....

c. Romans 9:28-30. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

d. Romans 9:11-13. For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

In this passage the apostle Paul teaches that God has elected the specific, definite person Jacob.

e. Ephesians 1:4, 5. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

f. Revelation 13:8. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him (the antichristian beast), whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

We are taught here that there are names of definite people which are written down in the Book of Life, specific persons, therefore, who are elected by God. The next passage teaches the same truth.

g. Revelation 17:8. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not: and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they shall behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

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#### 4. Election is an eternal decree.

a. Ephesians 1:4. According as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

b. II Thessalonians 2:13. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

c. II Timothy 1:9. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

d. Revelation 17:8. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they shall behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet

is.

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5. Election is unto salvation.

a. Acts 13:48. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

b. Romans 8:28-30. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

The "Golden Chain of Salvation" described here in Romans 8:29, 30 begins with foreknowledge and predestination and ends with justification and glorification.

c. Ephesians 1:5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

d. II Thessalonians 2:13. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

e. II Timothy 2:10. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

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6. Election is gracious and unconditional.

a. Deuteronomy 7:7. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people.

b. John 1:13. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

c. John 15:16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

d. Romans 9:11. For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.

e. Romans 9:16. So then it (salvation) is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

f. Romans 11:5. Even so at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

g. I Corinthians 1:27-29. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.

- h. Ephesians 2:8. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.
  - i. II Timothy 1:9. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.
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#### 7. Election is gracious and unconditional (continued).

That our election is gracious and unconditional is also indicated by those Scripture passages which teach that repentance, faith, and good works are the fruit, not the cause, of our election.

- a. John 15:16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Here Jesus teaches very clearly that He has chosen and ordained us, not because of the good works ("fruit") that we have produced, but in order that we should produce good works ("fruit"). Our good works are not the cause of our election but the purpose and result of our election.

- b. Acts 5:31. Him (Christ) hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

Repentance is not some work that originates in us, a condition that we fulfill, thus making ourselves worthy of God's election of us. On the contrary, repentance is a gift of Christ to us. That a man repents is due to the grace of God that works repentance in him.

- c. Acts 13:48. And when the Gentiles heard this (the preaching of the apostle Paul), they were glad, and glorified the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

This passage teaches that only as many as were ordained to eternal life (elect) believed the preaching of God's apostle. It teaches that all in his audience who were ordained to eternal life believed. And it teaches that their faith (believing) was the fruit of their having been ordained to eternal life.

- d. Ephesians 1:4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

We have been chosen so that we should be holy and without blame, not because we were holy and without blame. Our holiness (good works) is not the basis for our election but the purpose for which we have been elected.

- e. Ephesians 2:10. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

First, the apostle Paul teaches here that we are created in Christ Jesus (saved) unto good works. Good works cannot be the cause or basis for our salvation but the goal or purpose for which we are saved. Second, the apostle Paul teaches that even these good works which we perform as the result of our salvation "God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." If God has eternally ordained our good work, and if God gives us the strength actually to do good works, how can we ever suppose that our good works are our contribution to salvation, much less the cause of salvation?

f. Acts 18:27. And when he (Apollos) was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace.

Like the passage in Ephesians 2:8, this text teaches that faith (believing) is a gift of God. Faith does not originate in man himself, but faith is worked in us by God. To use this language of Acts 18:27, we believe "through grace." If, now, faith is itself a gift of God, it cannot be that which man produces as the cause of his election and salvation.

g. II Timothy 1:9. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Here Paul expressly states that we have been saved and elected not because of any works that God saw in us but according to his will and grace.

h. Philippians 1:29. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

It is "given" to us to believe. Once again, the Scriptures teach that election and salvation cannot be conditioned on our faith. Faith does not have its source in us who believe but is a gift of God worked in us.

i. Philippians 2:12, 13. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Often verse 12 is quoted by those who teach that man has the ability to earn his salvation. Emphasis is placed on the exhortation, "... work out your own salvation...." But that this cannot possibly be the meaning of the words is made plain by the immediately following words, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

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## 8. Election is in Jesus Christ.

a. Ephesians 1:4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

b. Ephesians 1:5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

c. II Timothy 1:9. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

d. Hebrews 5:9. And being made perfect, he (Christ) became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

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## 9. Reprobation.

The first proof for reprobation is the Greek word, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in the New Testament and which is translated "elect" or "chosen" in our King James Version of the Bible. That Greek word means

literally, not simply "to choose," but "to choose out of." That clearly implies reprobation. If God's elect are chosen out of the fallen human race, it is clearly implied that there are others out of whom the elect have been chosen. They have not so been chosen. They are the non-elect, or reprobate.

The truth of reprobation follows from election. Even the enemies of the doctrine of predestination have recognized this. Repeatedly they have charged that reprobation is only a logical deduction that is made from the truth of election, a logical deduction, according to them, that is not necessarily in harmony with reality. Now, we hope to show that reprobation is not simply a logical implication of election but the express teaching of the Scriptures, as the Reformed faith has always maintained. But it certainly is true that reprobation follows logically from the truth of election. One cannot consistently hold to election without also confessing reprobation. Neither can one deny reprobation without also, by that very fact, denying election. If election is God's choice of certain definite particular persons, then it follows that there are those who are not so chosen by God. Those who deny reprobation but make some effort to hold yet to election end up with an election according to which God chooses all men and desires the salvation of all men. There is no particular election. The reason why some men in distinction from others are in the end actually saved is due to those men themselves, to their free will and to their good works. Thus the unconditionality of election is denied. Election is no longer gracious election. History, too, has demonstrated - let men open their eyes! - that the denial of reprobation is inherently an attack upon and a rejection of unconditional election.

a. Proverbs 16:4. The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

God has made the wicked for the day of evil. They are wicked, wilfully wicked. And they forever bear the blame for their wickedness. But their wickedness does not take away from the fact that they have been made by God for the day of evil.

b. John 10:26. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

Often these words of Jesus to the unbelieving Jews are twisted. Then Jesus says that the unbelieving Jews are not of His sheep (the number of the elect) because they do not believe on Him. That is exactly what Jesus does not say here. On the contrary, they do not believe on Him because they are not of His sheep. That they do not believe on Christ is due to this, on this account, has this as its explanation, that they are not of Jesus' sheep. First they are not of Jesus' sheep, and then because they are not, neither do they believe on Him. Implied is that those who do believe on Jesus believe on Him because they are of His sheep. That they believe on Jesus is itself the evidence that they belong to the number of Jesus' sheep. Because they are of Jesus' sheep they also believe on Him.

c. Romans 9:11-13. For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

d. Romans 9:21-23. Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.

e. I Thessalonians 5:9. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain eternal salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

That "we" have not been appointed by God to wrath clearly implies that there are others who have been appointed by God to wrath, in other words, reprobated.

f. I Peter 2:8. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

g. Jude 4. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

h. Revelation 13:8. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him (the antichristian beast), whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

i. Matthew 11:25, 26. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things (of the kingdom) from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Here the Lord Jesus thanks - think about that, thanks! - His heavenly Father because He has hid, actively hid, the things of the kingdom of heaven from certain men. Jesus indicates that in harmony with the Father's eternal reprobation of some men in time and in history He hides, hardens, withholds, and blinds certain men, thus preventing their salvation.

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### C. Difficult Passages

1. Romans 8:29; I Peter 1:2; and other passages which speak of God's foreknowledge.

The Scripture passages most often used against the doctrine of sovereign unconditional election are those passages which speak of God's foreknowledge and indicate that foreknowledge is before election. The argument, then, is that election is not unconditional, that is, without any regard for what we are or would be but is conditioned on God's prior knowledge of what we would be or do. In other words, God chose certain people because He had already foreseen that they would repent and believe, and their foreseen faith was the condition on which God chose them.

Now apart from the fact that this is a denial of God's sovereignty, inasmuch as it makes God's choice dependent on man's (even though only foreseen), it does not at all reflect the biblical idea of foreknowledge. For one thing, foreknowledge in the Scriptures is not just a kind of predicting of the future but is causative, that is, foreknowledge as much as election does not just foretell our believing but actually brings it about (cf. Acts 2:23). For another thing, foreknowledge in the Scriptures is also much more than mere foresight in that it is actually God's love before time. This becomes very clear when one studies the way in which the Scriptures use the word knowledge in such passages as Genesis 4:1; Amos 3:2; and Galatians 4:9. That means that insofar as foreknowledge does indeed precede election (this we cannot deny) it is the deepest reason for election, but then the deepest reason for election is not our foreseen faith but God's eternal love.

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2. Deuteronomy 7:6, 7; 14:2 and other similar Old Testament passages.

Such passages as these which speak of Israel's election are sometimes used to deny that election (and reprobation) are personal and therefore also sovereign and unconditional. Some teach by these verses that God chose only a nation in the Old Testament and that He chose them only to receive certain privileges. Similarly it is taught that as far as New Testament people are concerned, God did not choose persons either but only an indefinite number. Understand, if God has chosen certain persons and chosen them to salvation as the Scriptures so clearly teach, then election is effective and unconditional. But if He has chosen only an indefinite number of persons or a nation, then election is neither effective nor unconditional, for then those who are saved are not saved because of election but because of their own works or faith.

Especially valuable in this connection is Romans 9:10-13 which speaks so clearly of a personal election and reprobation way back in the Old Testament. This passage along with those that speak of "names" being written in the Book of Life (Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 13:8; 17:8) conclusively shows that election is indeed personal and therefore also effective, sovereign, and unconditional.

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#### D. Objections

##### 1. Predestination a denial of God's love.

Often it is objected against the teaching of predestination that it denies a loving God. Now, certainly, God is a God of love. In I John 4:8 we read, "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

What is forgotten, however, is that God loves Himself first of all. He is a jealous God, jealous of His own Name, His own righteousness, and His own holiness. Exactly in the love that He has for Himself, God judges, punishes, and damns all who are not in harmony with His own holiness.

Reprobation displays God's justice, as election does His mercy. In fact, the mercy of God in election is magnified against the dark background of His righteousness in reprobation. This is exactly what Paul teaches in Romans 9:22, 23, "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."

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##### 2. Predestination a denial of God's justice.

Another familiar objection against the doctrine of predestination is that this is not fair. It is not righteous of God to discriminate between men, electing and saving some while rejecting and condemning others.

The apostle Paul faces this objection against predestination in Romans 9:14, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" The very fact that men raise this objection against us indicates that we are maintaining the same doctrine defended by Paul.

What is our answer to this objection? The same as Paul's: "God forbid!" This objection might have validity if all men alike deserved salvation, but notwithstanding God chose and saved only some men. Then there might be room for the accusation that there is unrighteousness in God - God is not fair! But the case is quite different. The reality is that all men are unworthy of God's salvation. All men alike are fallen in Adam,

and all men are conceived and born dead in sin. There is no injustice on God's part that out of the entire mass of fallen humanity, He should see fit to choose and save some. He is under no obligation to save any. That He should determine to save some is merely a matter of His sovereign mercy: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Rom. 9:15).

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### 3. Predestination a denial of man's responsibility.

Yet another often heard objection against the Reformed doctrine of predestination is that it denies man's responsibility and leads to determinism and fatalism. If God has determined whether or not a man is saved and has decided the everlasting destiny of every man, we might as well live as we please. If we have been elected to salvation, we will be saved anyway. If we have been reprobated, there is nothing that we can do to change the will of God, neither can we really be held responsible for our sins.

This objection, too, is faced by Paul in Romans 9:19, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he (God) yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" Once again, the very fact that people raise this same objection against us puts us in good company. It should be no surprise to us that since the apostle faced this objection regarding his teaching of predestination, we must also be faced with it.

What answer must we give to this objection? The same basic answer as Paul gave: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Paul denies the right of puny man to make this objection. He goes on: "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" (Rom. 9:20, 21). Two things remain true: God's sovereign predestination and man's full responsibility. Paul does not relinquish the doctrine of predestination, neither does he concede the objection that this teaching denies man's responsibility before God. Both are true. In a way that transcends our ability fully to explain or comprehend, God is sovereign, sovereign in determining the everlasting destiny of every man, and man remains a responsible, moral, rational creature.

Although the Scriptures are clear about it that God has eternally predestinated all things, they are equally clear in maintaining the full responsibility of the sinner. There are a couple of examples that bring this out. According to Isaiah 37:21-38, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, invaded and destroyed Judah. This event had been ordained by God long before: "Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, that thou (Sennacherib) shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps" (Is. 37:26). But does the fact of God's predestination excuse Sennacherib's behavior? Not at all! God was angry with Sennacherib for his wickedness and punished him for it, even though He had pre-ordained it: "But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest" (Is. 37:28, 29).

The outstanding example of God's sovereign predestination and man's responsibility is the crucifixion of Christ. In his sermon on Pentecost, Peter declared, "Him (Christ), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Christ's crucifixion took place according to the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." But that did not in the least excuse or minimize the guilt of the "wicked hands" that took Christ and nailed Him to the cross.

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## E. Denials

Reformed Christians ought to be aware of and on their guard against various denials of predestination.

### 1. Free will.

Those who teach that natural man, man outside of and apart from the grace of God, is able to choose Jesus Christ and salvation are compelled to deny predestination. Historically this was true of the Pelagians and Arminians. According to those who hold to free will, the decisive choice for salvation is not God's choice but man's choice. All men are able so to choose, it is said. Election becomes conditional election. God in eternity simply looks down the corridors of history, sees who will choose Him and who will not, elects those who do and rejects the rest. Predestination is reduced to mere prescience. God chooses those who choose Him.

The folly of this teaching ought to be apparent. If salvation depended on man's choice, no man would be saved: "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10-12). The teaching of the free will not only denies the total depravity of fallen man, but it is also an assault on God's sovereign predestination. In the clearest possible language Jesus declares in John 15:16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you...."

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### 2. Common grace.

Another serious attack upon the truth of predestination is the teaching of common grace. In large measure, the increasing silence concerning predestination and denial of it in Reformed and Presbyterian circles today is due to the acceptance of the teaching of common grace. A consistent confession of predestination cannot be made if one also holds to common grace. It is highly necessary that common grace be repudiated if there is to be a return to the teaching of predestination in these churches.

The teaching of common grace is that God loves all men with a certain non-saving love. God demonstrates this love for all men by giving them all of the good things of this present life. The result is that although God's saving love is discriminating, for some only, there is a love of God that embraces all men without distinction.

This is clearly contradictory. In eternity God hates and reprobates some men, but in time and history He loves all men. At the very least, this is a denial of God's unchangeableness. At the worst, it leads to an obvious contradiction in the direction of a denial of predestination, particularly reprobation.

This teaching of common grace cannot stand in the light of the Scriptures. In Psalm 5:5 we read, "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest (in the present) all the workers of iniquity." In Psalm 11:5 David declares, "The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth (in the present)." And in Proverbs 3:33 we are told, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked."

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### 3. The free offer of the gospel.

The teaching known as the free offer or the well-meant offer of the gospel is also an implicit denial of sovereign predestination. According to this teaching God loves and sincerely desires the salvation of all men. Christ has died to make salvation possible for all men. And in the preaching of the gospel salvation is freely offered to all who hear the gospel. In the end salvation is dependent on whether or not a man accepts the gospel offer.

Now certainly, if God has eternally chosen some men unto salvation and rejected and reprobated the rest, it cannot also be true that God sincerely desires to save all men and offers salvation freely to all. Then, at the very least, this offer is not sincere. At the worst, God and His gospel are a failure. For who can deny that many to whom the gospel comes reject the gospel, are not saved by the gospel, but perish in their sin and unbelief? Notwithstanding God's love for them and His earnest desire to save them, they go lost. It ought not surprise us that in those churches and denominations where there has been acceptance of the teaching of the free offer, there has been a resultant and increasing repudiation of sovereign predestination.

It certainly is true that all who come under the preaching of the gospel are confronted with their duty before God to repent of their sins and are called (commanded) to faith in Jesus Christ. That is true. But it is quite another thing to tell all men that God loves them, desires to save them, and freely offers salvation to them.

How does this conception of the preaching of the gospel square with God's commission to the prophet Isaiah? Does God send Isaiah out to tell all men that He loves them and wants to save them? On the contrary: "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed" (Is. 6:9, 10). Or listen to Christ's words, really a prayer of thanksgiving to God, in Matthew 11:25, 26, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things (of the kingdom) from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Or again, Paul's words in II Corinthians 2:14-16, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

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## F. Practical Implications

The doctrine of predestination and the consistent maintaining of this doctrine are of the greatest practical importance for the church. It is not true, as the enemies allege, that this doctrine is cold, lifeless, and of no practical value. True doctrine and upright living, both for the individual Christian and for a church, go hand in hand. This is especially true of the doctrine which stands at the heart of the gospel message: predestination.

### 1. Predestination and the antithesis.

The faithful confession of the doctrine of predestination is vital for the life of the antithesis to which every child of God is called. Denial of predestination - as history shows - inevitably leads to a breakdown of the antithesis.

By the antithesis is meant the separation between the church and the world, and the spiritually separate life the Christian is called to live over against the world. We are to be in the world but not of the world. One forceful passage of Scripture which calls believers to the life of the antithesis is II Corinthians 6:14-17, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

The denial of predestination always results in an abandoning of the life of the antithesis. This is not difficult to understand. If God loves all men without distinction, then there is a common ground upon which believer and unbeliever can stand. There is room for making a common cause. Then, as some have put it, Jerusalem and Athens can be married. And the outcome is that the church becomes one with the world.

The practical implication of the doctrine of predestination, however, forbids the church making common cause with the world. To use the words of the prophet to king Jehoshaphat, who had sinfully made an alliance with wicked Ahab, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?" (II Chron. 19:2)

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## 2. Predestination and the preaching of the gospel.

The truth of election provides the church with the motivation to preach the gospel in all the world, to every creature. The enemies of election charge that such a doctrine precludes the necessity and importance of the preaching of the gospel. If the elect have been eternally predestinated by God to salvation, it is alleged, there is no need for them to hear the gospel. They will be saved anyway. Sometimes it is even said that those who hold to the doctrine of predestination preach only to the elect.

At the worst this is a slanderous misrepresentation; at best it is a serious misunderstanding of the truth of election. Election in no way rules out the means by which God has ordained that the elect shall be brought to salvation, which means is the preaching of the gospel. The same God Who has ordained the elect unto salvation has also ordained the means by which they shall be brought to salvation and to the assurance of their election. The warning of the Canons of Dordt, III/IV, 17 is to the point:

... be it far from either instructors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the church by separating what He in His good pleasure hath most intimately joined together.

God has scattered the elect in every nation, tongue, and tribe under heaven. The means which He has ordained for their faith and salvation is the preaching of the gospel. Thus the church has the divine mandate to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

Nor must it be supposed that the preaching of the gospel serves no purpose with the reprobate who come under the preaching. On the contrary, they are confronted squarely with their duty and warned against their unbelief. Their rejection of the gospel serves to aggravate their guilt and leave them without excuse before God.

At the same time, the truth of election gives the church confidence in preaching the gospel, whether in the established congregation to the sons and daughters born in the church, or to the unsaved in missions. The elect will hear that preaching. By that preaching they will be brought to repentance and faith. The people of God will be saved. The church has that assurance as she preaches.

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### 3. Predestination and humility.

The truth of election also gives reason for profound humility on the part of believers. Is there anything so needed in the church today as humility? The believer is humbled by the truth that his salvation is not due to anything he is or anything he has done but is due alone to the predestinating grace of God. The believer is humbled by the realization that he was not better than those whom God did not choose, indeed was involved in a common ruin. Salvation does not have its cause in us but alone in the will and good-pleasure of God. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded" (Rom. 3:27). If God's choice of us depended on our choice of Him, if our free will rather than the will of God was decisive for salvation, then we would have reason to boast in ourselves. The truth of sovereign, gracious election takes this possibility away. It is a truth that can but lead to humility in the life of one who sincerely confesses it.

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### 4. Predestination and God's glory.

Not only does the truth of predestination remove every cause for glorying in self, it ascribes the glory for salvation to God. God has chosen us to salvation. God has delivered us from the common misery in which we had involved ourselves. God has determined everything needful for our salvation: the sending of His own Son, the preaching of the gospel, the work in us of the Holy Spirit. It is all of Him and nothing of us. To Him and to Him alone must be the glory: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Rom. 11:36).

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## G. Relation to the Other Four Points

The truth of total depravity necessitates unconditional election. By nature man is dead in sin, capable neither of saving himself nor desiring to be saved. He is in no position to accomplish or to cooperate in his salvation. If man is really totally depraved - we must do justice to this truth - the cause of salvation must be in God, as the truth of election teaches that it is.

The truth of election also limits the scope of the death of Christ. Here there is perfect agreement between the will of the Father and the work of the Son. If some only are chosen to salvation, and Christ has died only for those whom God has chosen, Christ's death must be limited to some men only. His redemption is a particular redemption. He has not died, neither did He intend to die, for all men but for some only, for the elect.

If God has chosen us to salvation, so that the almighty will of God Himself rather than the fickle will of man stands behind our election, we may be certain that we shall be saved. No power of the devil, of the wicked world, or of ourselves is able to withstand the power of Almighty God. Hence, the truth of sovereign election implies the irresistibility of grace.

The doctrine of election also gives us confidence of our perseverance in faith and salvation. If my salvation depended on my will, my choice, my decision, then I could never have the assurance of perseverance. Always I would be in doubt whether the same will which brought me into salvation might also take me out of salvation. However, since the cause of my salvation does not rest in my own will but in the Almighty will of an unchangeable God, I can rest assured that I will persevere to the end. We may then be confident that the good work He has begun in us shall by the power of His grace be fully done (Phil. 1:6).

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