

God's Purpose of Grace

Article V

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6, 12, 17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

Key Text:

Jeremiah 1:4-5: “Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.” (not in the article)

Jeremiah 31:3: “The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”

Matthew 24:22: “And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.”

Matthew 24:31: “And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

John 1:12-13: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

John 5:24: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

John 6:44-45: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘*And they shall all be taught by God.*’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.”

John 10:27-29: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father’s hand.”

John 15:16: “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”

John 17:6: “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.”

Acts 9:15: “But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.” (not in article)

Acts 13:48: “Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” (not in article)

Romans 8:28-39

Romans 8:28-30: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Romans 9-11

Romans 9:13-18: “As it is written, “*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.*” What shall we say then? *Is there unrighteousness with God?* Certainly not! For He says to Moses, “*I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.*” So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “*For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.*” Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.”

Romans 11:33-36: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out! “*For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?*” “*Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?*” For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.”

Ephesians 1:3-6: “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”

Ephesians 1:11-14: “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

Ephesians 2:8-10: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14: “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2 Timothy 1:12: “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”

2 Timothy 2:10: “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

Hebrews 12:1-2: “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

1 Peter 1:2-5: “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Jude 24-25: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.” (not in article)

God’s Purpose of Grace, Election BF&M Article 5a

This article is a noble condensation of a beautiful biblical and historically Baptist doctrine. “Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners.”

The four elements of salvations discussed in Article 4 arise from God’s purpose of grace in election. Election pulsates with the infinite grace of God.

God has a particular love which rests on certain ones to bring them to salvation (Eph 1:4, 5; 2:4, 5). “Whom he foreknew (that is ‘loved beforehand’), he also predestined” (Rom 8:29).

The confession rightly calls God’s saving choice “gracious,” for it operates for the good of sinners in spite of their infinite demerit. God’s election cannot fail. He administers his decree all the way to the glorification of sinners and to the glory of his beloved Son.

What more glorious end can be imagined than a predestination “to be conformed to the image of his Son?”

Election does not contradict the “free agency of man.” When a person acts, he acts freely – or exactly as he is disposed to act. While dead in trespasses and sins, he is a slave to sin. He freely sins and he sins freely.

Election manifests God’s “sovereign goodness” by displaying his mercy and his justice. Since election results in eternal praise to his glory (Eph 1:14), it is infinitely wise.

W.A. Criswell, legendary pastor of the First Baptist church, Dallas, Texas, addressed the importance of the doctrine of election in the Bible: “We have a tendency to back away from the word ‘predestination,’ to hesitate before the word ‘election,’ but not so with God, and not so with the Word of God. They are words much used. It is a revelation employed and it is a truth of God, functional, on which this earth stands and by which the Kingdom of God abides forever.” The Word of God must form and shape our understanding of predestination and election, not human reason, sensibilities or preferences.

First, what does the biblical term “election” mean? The verb “elect” (*eklegomai* in Greek) means, “to chose out for oneself.” The verb implies a selection of some out of a larger group. The New Testament frequently used the adjective “elect or chosen” (*eklektos*) to refer to God’s people – the elect (Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1).

The biblical teachings highlight three aspects of election. God’s graciously chose undeserving Israel to be His people (Deut. 4:37; 7:6). God graciously chose individuals to serve in various roles. For example, Jesus described His choice of Paul to proclaim His name as “election” (Acts 9:15). The biblical concept of election describes God’s choice, initiative, and plan related to salvation (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13).

Biblical election is Christocentric. Jesus is the Elect One (Lk 9:35; 1 Pet 1:20) and the election of believers is “in Christ” or “through Christ” (Eph 1:3-14). God elects “in love” and “in the Beloved” (Eph 1:4, 6). This is crucial to a right understanding of the doctrine.

Second, what are some of the practical implications of election? The doctrine of election elicits the believers’ worship. Paul expressed thanksgiving for the election unto salvation of the Thessalonian believers (2 Thess 2:13). Peter quoted the Old Testament to demonstrate that as “a chosen (elect) race” we proclaim praise to God (1 Pet 2:9). It is important to note that the New Testament brings together election and holiness (Eph 1:4; Col 3:12; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2). It should move us to pursue the Christlikeness for which God chose us. The New Testament also presents “election” as the foundation of our assurance and hope (Rom 8:28-29).

Third, what truths about election does the *BFM* emphasize? “Election is the gracious purpose of God.” God does not elect or chose based on human merit. The *BFM* highlights the purposeful nature of election. God’s election progresses towards a goal encompassing the regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification of sinners. The purposefulness of God indicates that our sovereign God initiated and chose a plan to reconcile sinners unto Himself. God purposed ultimately that believers be “holy and blameless” (Eph 1:4). The *BFM* correlates God’s sovereignty and human free will; for the *BFM*, these twin truths are not contradictory but compatible. The *BFM* also affirms the *means* of election. God’s election encompasses means to realize His purposes – namely, missions, teaching, personal witness, and public proclamation of the gospel. The elect do not come to Christ apart from a response to the proclamation of the gospel. Romans 9 cannot be separated from Romans 10! It must also include Romans 11 (esp. vs. 33-36)!

Fourth, what are the historic Baptist understandings of the doctrine of election? This always raises the issue of Calvinism (see attached chart). The *BF&M* sets forth a generic statement regarding election; advocates of three historic Baptist understandings of election can affirm the *BFM* truthfully.

- 1) Some Baptists historically have affirmed conditional election, that is, God foresees the faith of the believer and elects the believer. Adherents of this position would appeal to 1 Peter 1:2: “chosen according to the foreknowledge of God.” William Stevens, former professor at Mississippi College wrote, “So God does not choose men because of their works, but because of their faith. Therefore, he must foresee their faith.”
- 2) Some Baptists historically have advocated unconditional election, that is, God’s election is not dependent on any condition a human meets. The founding faculty of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary held this view. This is clearly reflected in the Baptist Confession the “Abstract of Principles” penned in 1858. W.T. Conner, longtime professor at Southwestern Seminary, held this view. Conner stated, “election does not mean that God instituted a general plan of salvation and decreed that whosoever would should be saved and, therefore, the man who willed to be saved is elected in that he brings himself within the scope of God’s plan....It means that God has decreed to bring some, upon whom his heart has been eternally set, who are objects of his eternal love, to faith in Jesus as Saviour.”
- 3) Other Baptists historically have espoused corporate election, that is, God elects a people, not individuals. Stanley Grenz, former professor at Truett Theological Seminary, advocated this view. Grenz stated, “Election is fundamentally corporate....Election, therefore, is bound with community; we are elected to

community and for community. Being elect means being ‘in Christ,’ and hence participating in a corporate reality.”

Summation: the doctrine of election proclaims that our salvation from beginning to end is the work of God. Baptists may and do differ on some details related to understanding election; however, we can unite on the connection between election and missions. Paul endured suffering in the cause of the Gospel for the sake of the elect. “This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation” (2 Tim 2:10 *HCSB*). There is mystery and tension here. Paul felt it as well as Romans 11:33-36 makes clear!

Perseverance

The *BF&M* rejects the negative connotations associated with the concept “once saved, always saved.” For some, “once saved, always saved” implies that a person may express faith in Christ, and then have assurance of a heavenly destiny as they live as a child of the devil. Nothing could be further from the truth of scripture and the beauty of this doctrine.

The *BF&M* strongly affirms the assurance a believer enjoys regarding final salvation. The believer’s assurance, however, is not a specific prayer you may have prayed or a mere past religious experience. The basis of a believer’s assurance is the keeping power of God (1 Pet 1:5). The doctrine of perseverance, then, is not a statement about the perseverance of the saints, but rather the doctrine affirms the perseverance of a Savior with His saints.

Our salvation is grounded in the action of the Holy Trinity on our behalf.

Christian assurance is Trinitarian; the Father, the Son, and the Spirit assure us of our final destiny.

First, the strong biblical language of God's guarding or keeping power assures that believers will persevere. Paul says "God will render you consistent and unwavering until (the) end, guiltless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:8). Peter described believers as "those kept in a state of security through faith for the purpose of salvation" (1 Pet 1:5). Jude closes with a great doxology "to the one able to guard you as a sentinel and keep you from falling and able to make you stand without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing" (Jude 24). The believer never trusts in his ability to persevere; rather, a believer trusts in God's keeping activity.

Second, the promises of Jesus reassure the believer. Jesus claimed, "Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out" (John 6:37 *HCSB*). "This is the will of Him who sent Me: that I should lose none of those He has given Me but should raise them up on the last day" (John 6:39 *HCSB*). The New Testament contains the strongest promise of Jesus regarding assurance in John 10:28. Regarding his sheep, Jesus said, "And I give to them everlasting life and they will never perish in the least unto the age." *The Greek New Testament* expresses the words of Jesus by means of a double negative (no not). While a double negative is bad English grammar, it is wonderful theology! It strongly underscores the impossibility of an action happening. In the strongest way, Jesus taught the utter impossibility of a believer perishing.

Third, the ministry of the Spirit assures a believer. The Spirit functions as a pledge or down payment (2 Cor 1:22b; Eph 1:14). The imagery connotes a deposit obligating the contractual party and serves as a guarantee of full payment at a future time. *The King James Version* translates the Greek word as “earnest” or earnest payment. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, and specifically, the Spirit’s work in effecting salvation, obligates God through His promise to complete salvation in final redemption. The New Testament, further, describes the Spirit’s ministry by the action of “sealing” (2 Cor 1:26; Eph 1:13; 4:30). In antiquity, a seal denoted authenticity, ownership, and protection.

Fourth, the nature of salvation gives assurance to the saints. Salvation is the act of God, not an action of man. Salvation includes justification, the declaration that one is righteous based on the righteousness of Christ. This legal declaration cannot be overturned. Further, salvation involves the reception of everlasting life. Jesus described “everlasting life” as a present possession of a believer (John 5:24). If, as some believe, one can fall away and lose “everlasting life,” then the life was not “everlasting.”

Vance Havner said, “The faith that fizzles before the finish was faulty from the first.” The sign of perseverance is continuance in faith. We keep on because we are kept by God.

FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM

(The T.U.L.I.P.)

The Doctrines	An Explanation
Total Depravity (or inability)	As a result of Adam's fall into sin, the entire human race is born with a sin nature; all of humanity is dead in trespasses and sin. Man is unable to save himself or turn to God without the enablement of the Spirit.
Unconditional Election	Because man is dead in sin, he is unable to initiate a response to God; therefore, in eternity past God elected certain people to salvation. Election and predestination are unconditional; they are not based on man's response or foreseen faith.
Limited Atonement (or particular redemption)	Because God determined that certain ones should be saved as a result of God's unconditional election, He determines that Christ should die for the elect. All whom God has elected and Christ has died for will be saved.
Irresistible Grace (or effectual calling)	Those whom God elected and Christ died for, God draws to Himself through irresistible grace. God enables man to willingly come to Him. When God calls, man responds.
Perseverance of the Saints (or the Savior)	The particular ones God has elected and drawn to Himself through the Holy Spirit will persevere in faith. None whom God has elected will be lost; they are eternally secure.

I believe God predestines and elects persons to salvation but does so in such a way as to do no violence to our freewill and moral responsibility to repent of sin and believe the gospel. There is both tension and mystery to this doctrine as there is in our understanding of the Bible's inspiration and the doctrine of the person of Christ. Salvation is of the Lord. Any person who flees to Jesus for salvation will be saved.

Major Evangelical Views of Election

	Arminianism	Calvinism	Compatibilism
Definition	Election is the conditional choice of God by which He determined who would be saved based on His foreknowledge of who will exercise faith. Election is the result of man's faith.	The unconditional and loving choice of God by which He determined who <u>must</u> believe. Election is the cause of man's faith.	The unconditional and loving choice of God by which He determined who <u>will</u> believe. Election is the cause of man's faith and yet it is consistent with free will/human responsibility.
Notable Adherent	Jacob Arminius, John Wesley, Clark Pinnock, Methodism	John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, RC Sproul, Presbyterianism	Moise Amyraut, Millard J. Erickson, A.H. Strong, Danny Akin
Historical Roots	In the early 17 th century, the Dutch pastor Arminius became convinced that Calvin was wrong. Wesley later went beyond Arminius by emphasizing <u>preventive grace</u> .	During the Reformation, Calvin followed Augustine's emphasis on God's irresistible grace, man's sin nature, and predestination. Calvin was succeeded by Beza, who went a step further, as did the Synod of Dort.	17 th Century and the French Saumur Academy. Starts with justification by faith rather than predestination.
Pros	Emphasizes the responsibility of man to make a choice. Also acknowledge man's depravity and helplessness without God's intervention. Most attractive aspect is its allowance for man's free will to choose. Man can also resist God's grace and thus a genuine believer is capable of losing his salvation	Emphasizes the holiness and sovereignty of God and thus his right to make such decrees as election to salvation. Rightly emphasizes the total depravity of man and his inability to choose what is right unaided. The overriding doctrine is the absolute sovereignty of God, who is not dependent on the whim or will of man. Man cannot resist God's grace. This view is supported by a substantial amount of Scriptural evidence.	Emphasizes the holiness and sovereignty of God while at the same time preserving human responsibility. God's grace is effectual but only because God has chosen to make it so appealing to the elect that they will accept it. In other words, God enables the elect to want his grace. God works his sovereign will through the will of the elect. Strikes a balanced position between traditional Calvinism and Arminianism.
Cons	Deemphasizes God's sovereignty. By putting God in a position of dependence on the decisions of a created being, this view makes it appear that God is not in control of his universe. Also, acknowledging the doctrine of total depravity required Wesley to come up with preventive grace, which has no basis for Scripture.	Deemphasizing man's responsibility. Seems to eclipse man's free will and thus his responsibility for his sin. Critics charge that it is fatalistic and destroys motives for evangelism. Biggest problem: apparent logical contradiction with human freedom.	Borders on semantical dodging when it distinguishes between God's rendering something certain and something necessary (God's deciding that something will happen as opposed to deciding that it must happen).
Scriptural Evidence	Central Text: No logical treatises can be found to support the Arminian Position. Thus, they appeal to the universal character of God's invitation to salvation; 1 Timothy 2:3-4 is offered as evidence that God desires all people to be saved (see also Is. 55:1; Ezek. 33:11; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Peter 3:9).	Central text: Romans 9:6-14; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Pet. 1:1-2. These text demonstrates that election is based on God's just character and his sovereignty. Therefore, he will not make an unjust decision, and he is not required to explain to man why he still finds faulty with those whom he did not chose.	Central text: taking the whole of John 6:35-71 and Romans 9-11. Erickson bases his position on the strengths of the Calvinist position and the weakness of the Arminian and is motivated by the antinomy in God's sovereignty and man's free will. The Calvinist position in most passages is given the greater weight.

Why believe in eternal security: a summation

I. Positive reasons for believing in security

1. The relation of the believer to God.
 - We are elected and called by God according to His sovereign purpose (Rom. 8:28-30).
 - We are related to His sovereign power to preserve us (Jude 24, 25).
 - We are related to Him as children (John 1:12; Rom. 8).
2. We are related as believers to Christ in death, resurrection, resurrection, identification, glorification and heirship (Rom. 8).
3. We are related as believers to the Spirit in sealing, baptism, union (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13-14).
4. Central passages – John 10:27-29; Rom. 8:28-39; Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 13:5; Jude 24-25; 1 Peter 1:3-5.

II. Reasons for lack of assurance

1. Faulty understanding of the fact that it is God who does the saving.
2. Faulty methods of assurance at the time of salvation.
3. Doubt of God's faithfulness.
4. Lack of proper teaching on the Christian life.
5. Presence of sin in one's life.

III. Practical ways to give assurance

1. Look to the cross and use God's word.
2. Ask questions about their experience of the Christian life.
 - a. Do you believe the gospel and trust Christ?
 - b. Do you experience remorse over sin and have a desire to please God?
 - c. Do you see any evidence of fruit in your life?
 - d. Does the Holy Spirit witness to your spirit that you are a child of God?
 - e. When you sin, do you experience the discipline of the Father?

* By his work on the cross Jesus obtained our salvation.

* By his work in heaven Jesus maintains our salvation.