

Foreknowledge:

Can God foreknow all things? Yes.

Can God foreknow all things without determining (causing) all things? Yes.

Faith is a condition of salvation. God foresees the faith of all who believe.

Is foreseen faith the ground of salvation? No.

Is foreseen faith the ground of election? Some say yes.

God foreknows all things that will be. Nothing will be because he foreknows it.

“Foreknow” does not mean “foreordain.” Reason: in Rom 8:29 the two verbs “foreknow” and “predestine” would be identical in meaning and could not be connected by the Greek particle “also” which suggests gradation—“this, then this, then this....”

The object of predestination is not faith, salvation (in the sense entering salvation via regeneration, justification), etc., The object of predestination is glorification.

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Compiled by Dr David Allen from various resources

In Calvinism, everything hangs on Unconditional Election.

Election is based on God’s *arbitrary* decision to effectuate faith in whomever he is pleased to save. John Calvin expressed it in this way:

- By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death. (Calvin, *Institutes*, trans. Beveridge, 2:206 [3.21.5]).
- Some are predestined to salvation, others to damnation. . . . Regarding the lost: it was His good pleasure to doom to destruction. . . . Since the disposition of all things is in the hands of God and He can give life or death at His pleasure, He dispenses and ordains by His judgment that some, from their mother’s womb, are destined irrevocably to eternal death in order to glorify His name in their perdition. (Calvin)

In R. C. Sproul’s words, “Faith is a necessary condition for salvation, but not for election. . . .Reformed theology sees faith as the result of election.” (Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997], 145.

1. Calvinists appeal to Romans 9 as evidence for unconditional election.

- 6 Now it is not as though the word of God has failed, because not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. 7 Neither is it the case that all of Abraham’s children are his descendants. On the contrary, your offspring will be traced through Isaac. 8 That is, it is not the children by physical descent who are God’s children, but the children of the promise are considered to be the offspring. 9 For this is the statement of the promise: At this time I will come, and Sarah will have a son. 10 And not only that, but Rebekah conceived children through one man, our father Isaac. 11 For though her sons had not been born yet or done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to election might stand— 12 not from works but from the one who calls—she was told, The older will serve the younger. 13 As it is written: I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau.

2. Calvinists appeal to Ephesians 1:4-5 as evidence for unconditional election.

“Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him”.

Note the text does not say God chose us to *be* in Christ.

3. Calvinists appeal to Romans 8:39-30 as evidence for unconditional election.

For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.

Note the use of “foreknew” and the fact that what we are “predestined” to is not salvation, but conformity to the image of Christ. This text is spoken about those who are believers.



Non-Calvinists reject unconditional election and favor other alternatives:

1. Corporate Election in Christ

The foundation of corporate election in Christ is seen in Eph 1:3–4: “Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every *spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ*. For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him” (emphasis added).

Old Testament and Election

Corporate election is the dominant usage in the OT. God chose his people Israel as his special possession primarily for service: that they would serve as his ambassadors in the world to bring to the nations the light of his salvation. God also chose individuals to serve him, performing various functions or tasks. Individual election is restricted to this use—election for service. Individuals are not chosen to be saved in the OT.

New Testament and Election

1. The Corporate Nature of Election

The NT presents election to salvation in only corporate terms. Simply put, God has chosen the church in Christ as the ones he will save.

All sectors of the New Testament affirm that salvific election is corporate. God chose the church as a body before the world’s foundation (Eph 1:4). The New Testament writers never present election as God’s choice of specific individuals (and not others) to populate that body. Christ is God’s Elect One; all who enter into Christ (the church is the body of Christ) participate in his election. Christians benefit from what Christ accomplished because they are “in Christ,” an especially pervasive formulation in Paul’s writings. Individuals can rightfully be labeled as “elect” only because they are members of Christ’s elect body, the church.

2. Election based on or in Accordance with Foreseen Faith

Some non-Calvinists believe that God elects people to salvation based on or in accordance with foreseen faith.

Romans 8:29 and 1 Peter 1:2 both use the term “foreknow” before “predestined.”

This was the view of the first 400 years of Church history. Augustine was the first to assert Unconditional Election in the early 5th century AD.

3. Predestination

The issue that is often missed in the discussion of election is *how* one becomes elect. In the Calvinist model, the elect are those who are selected by God for salvation. Other Christians regard election as God’s choice of the **conditions** for salvation (repentance of sin and faith in Christ) or his choice of a **people** (those who freely repent and believe), but not the individuals.

The Greek word behind “predestine” is *proorizō*, which appears only 6x in the Greek New Testament. No word translated “predestine” appears in the OT. Predestination is not a prominent theme in the Bible. (To compare, the word “faith” appears 475x in the ESV.)

The English word “predestine” appears only 5x in the *English Standard Version*. All five occurrences of the English word “predestine” appear only in the New Testament.

proorizō: “to come to a decision beforehand—to decide beforehand, to determine ahead of time, to decide upon ahead of time.” The question is: Do these five New Testament verses indicate precisely what was decided beforehand?

Acts 4:28 - “to do whatever your hand and your plan had **predestined** to take place.”

In this verse, the action that is **predestined** is *not* the salvation of certain people chosen by God from eternity past. Rather, it was the *cross of Christ* which God **predestined**—or decided in advance—to take place.

Romans 8:29–30 – “For those whom he foreknew he also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he **predestined** he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

What does verse 29 state about who is **predestined** and for what purpose? The verses refer to people “**predestined** to be conformed to the image of his Son.” In this verse, the predestination does *not* refer to God from eternity choosing certain people for salvation. Instead, this is a promise that *believers* are **predestined** to look like Jesus. In other words, God decided in advance that those who believe in Jesus will eventually *look like Jesus*. Verse 30 refers to the same group, “those whom he **predestined**,” and states they were called, justified, and glorified by God. That believers will be glorified can be seen in other texts such as:

Ephesians 1:5, 11 – “he **predestined** us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will. . . . In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined** according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will”

In verse 5, believers are **predestined** for adoption. In verse 11, believers are informed they have been **predestined** to obtain an inheritance. *In both verses, predestination refers to what occurs to believers or what they receive, not how they become believers.* Verse 13 clarifies *how* a person becomes a believer.

Predestination refers to:

God predestined the cross of Christ.
Believers are predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus.
Believers are predestined, called, justified, and glorified.
Believers are predestined for adoption.
Believers are predestined to obtain an inheritance.

Predestination does not refer to:

1. God electing people to heaven or hell. 2. God electing people to salvation and damnation

Predestination does refer to:

1. Those already saved. 2. God determines those already saved will reach final salvation.