

CAN JUST ANYONE BE SAVED?

The Calvinistic Doctrine of Unconditional Election

by Ted J. Clarke

Introduction:

Quite likely most of the "unchurched" people in the world who believe in some sense in God, Christ and the Bible would say that everyone and anyone could be saved, if they had a desire to do so. A great number of religious denominations also teach that salvation is available to anyone who desires to be saved. One of the best known passages in all Scripture seems to teach the possibility of salvation for anyone who would come to God through faith in Christ. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

However, there are a number of denominations of the Calvinistic persuasion that deny this teaching.

Unconditional Election

Many Baptist, Presbyterian and Pentecostal faiths teach that not just anyone can be saved. In the Calvinistic flower of T U-L-I-P the "U" stands for the doctrine of unconditional election. We will let the creed books followed by these groups define their own position.

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined or foreordained to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace; others being left to act to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice [The Westminster - and Savoy Confessions read for this last clause: "and others foreordained to everlasting death." -TJC] . . . These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number so certain, and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished. ["Of God's Decrees," Chapter Three, *The Philadelphia Confession of Faith*].

What these quotes teach is that God has chosen a certain number of specific people to be saved and a certain number of specific people to be lost and who those people are in those specific categories cannot be changed in any way. Thus, if you were one determined by God to be saved you will be saved whether you desire to be saved or not. If you were a person chosen by God to be lost, you will be lost and there is nothing you can do to change that determination by God. This also applies to infants. Some are elected by God to be saved; others to be lost. A statement from the same creed book quoted above says, "Elect infants dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit

...Others not elected ...cannot be saved" [Chapter 10, "Of Effectual Calling", emphasis TJC].

Conditional Election

The Scriptures assuredly speak of God's election of some to be saved and others to be lost, but this election is not unconditional and arbitrary as Calvinism teaches. God is no respecter of persons, whimsically choosing so many to be saved and all others to be lost without such having any personal choice in the matter! "Then Peter opened his mouth and said: In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34-35). People are saved or lost because of their personal choices regarding fearing God and obeying Him. Those whom God chose to be saved are those who believe in and put on Christ.

“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, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:3-7).

Please notice that it is "in Christ" that we are blessed; that God chose us "in him;" that we are made acceptable "in the beloved;" and it is "in whom" that we are saved. God has elected or chosen those who are in Christ to be saved. This is the condition upon which anyone can be one of the elect of God.

God desires that "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). The Lord "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). It is not God's will that any should perish! Shame on Calvinists for saying otherwise. Remember that John 3:16 says that God "gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The last invitation God gave in the Bible to come to salvation says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

Elect In Christ

Dear friend, in God's will you have as much right to be saved as anyone else. God wants you to be saved, as we showed above, and if you are lost on the Judgment Day it will be because of your choice, not because God chose you to be lost. However, you must be positioned in Christ, where God has placed salvation. "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" (2 Timothy 2:10).

To be placed "in Christ" and be counted as one of the elect of God we must believe in Christ as God's Son and His work of atonement on the cross for our sins (John 3:16; 8:24; Romans 5:1-2, 6). This faith must be an abiding faith that obeys God. Faith alone is dead and does not save anyone (James 2:14-26; Hebrews 11:6= God rewards those who diligently seek Him). Based on a faith that obeys (Hebrews 5:9), one must repent of past sins (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30-31). We then must make a public confession of our faith in Christ (Matthew 10:32; Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10), and then be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

Baptism (immersion in water in the name of Christ) is the means God has chosen to place us "in Christ"- and puts us in a state of being God's elect, His chosen. Please notice the following two passages that state clearly that we are "baptized into Christ." "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4). "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). "In Christ" we are God's elect and we are saved. There is no promise of salvation for those outside of Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). God has chosen whom He will save. Will you choose to be saved? Yes, anyone who follows God's will can be saved.