

Two Basic Views on Salvation

This chart presents a summary of two commonly held views regarding God, man, faith, election and salvation. A much longer summary of the agreements between the adherents of these two positions could be offered. However, this document highlights doctrinal differences. Its goal is to accurately present the best, logically consistent arguments of the two views in straightforward, unambiguous terms. It is possible for a person to have some mixed views, deviating from one column on a subheading (such as preservation or regeneration), but largely the views in each column hold together by logic and consistency and are contradictory to the other column. As a person studies the Bible with an accurate grasp of both paradigms in mind, hopefully a greater understanding of God will emerge. Continued growth in understanding requires continued humility and continued diligence to harmonize all scriptures pertaining to a given theme. Greater understanding yields a healthier walk in the Lord and a healthier unity among the saints.

<p>God chose in eternity past which specific individuals He would save and which He would damn. God's election did not incorporate anything individuals do or choose. Rather, God predetermined the choices of all individuals. The elect must receive salvation. The non-elect must reject salvation. (Cause and effect model)</p>	<p>God chose in eternity past to save all individuals who would trust Him and damn all individuals who would not. God's election incorporated His foreknowledge of individuals, including their free choices. God genuinely offers salvation to all individuals and allows them freedom to receive or reject it. (Influence and response model)</p>
God's Sovereignty in destiny and unbelief	
<p>God is in control of man's eternal destiny by His decreative and preceptive will. God has determined heaven and hell as the only two eternal destinies. God decrees the sin of unbelief in the non-elect to show all His glorious attributes in damnation as well as salvation. God's decreative will to show His glory in damning the non-elect overrides His preceptive will to save all men.</p>	<p>God is in control of man's eternal destiny by His decreative, preceptive, and permissive will. God has determined heaven and hell as the only two eternal destinies. God permits the sin of unbelief, allowing individuals freedom to receive or reject salvation. God's permissive will to allow unbelief and His decreative will to damn those who won't believe overrides His preceptive will to save all men.</p>
God's Sovereignty in election	
<p>God is sovereign and chooses to save and harden whom He pleases. God saves the elect and hardens the non-elect in accordance with His secret will for those specific individuals. God's election does not consider anything individuals do, including believing.</p>	<p>God is sovereign and chooses to save and harden whom He pleases. God has chosen to save believers, whether Jew or Gentile, and His election does not consider individuals' ancestry or works. God's hardening is punishment for those who harden themselves against Him.</p>
God's Election	
<p>Pre-creation election is individual and unconditional upon any choice of man or foreknowledge of man's choice. Election determines by name who will be saved and who will be bypassed for salvation (damned). God foreordains who will be saved and damned with no consideration of man's free will.</p>	<p>Pre-creation election determines salvation for those who God foreknows as believers in Christ. Election is <i>corporate</i> (chosen "in Christ") first, then <i>individual</i>, in accordance with God's foreknowledge of individuals as believers (i.e., God's election incorporates his conceptual, not perceptual, foreknowledge of individuals, including their free choices). God foreordains who will be saved and damned in conjunction with (not based on) their free will</p>
God's Holiness	
<p>God is holy. He cannot sin. He hates sin. However, He does predetermine all choices and actions of all his creatures for his glory, including sinful choices, including the sinful choice of unbelief. Although God predetermines all sin, He is not responsible for it.</p>	<p>God is holy. He cannot sin. He hates sin. He uses sinful choices to accomplish his purposes but does not predetermine that people sin with no way of escape. He blames sinners for their sins, including the sin of unbelief because the choice is theirs; their sin of rejecting salvation was not necessary.</p>
God's Love	
<p>God loves all people in a general way but does not love the non-elect in a saving way. God has a special saving love for the elect that He does not have for all people.</p>	<p>God so loved the world that He gave Jesus to die for the sins of the world, so salvation could be offered to the world, through the good news which is to be preached to the world.</p>

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God's Hatred	
<p>God hates sin. God also hates the non-elect (as He hated Esau) based on God's secret will not to forelove them in election.</p>	<p>God hates sin. God also hates the wicked because of their wickedness. God's hatred of Esau before birth pertained to Esau's future service in God's grand plan to bring forth a Messiah through Israel, not Esau's eternal salvation</p>
God's Foreknowledge	
<p>God's foreknowledge (prescience) is based on his predetermining will (decrees). What God foreknows about man is certain (man will) <i>and necessary (man must)</i>, eliminating man's ability to choose other than what he chooses (no contingencies). Nothing can be foreknown if it is not predetermined and necessary. God decrees all things, including the choices of individuals.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Necessarily, if God knows certain people will not believe, then those people will not believe. 2. (Necessarily?) God knows those people will not believe. 3. Therefore, <i>necessarily</i> (not possibly contingently) those people will not believe. <p>(Without both premises being true necessarily, the conclusion is not true necessarily; yet premise 2 is not necessary, since God is free to have known otherwise)</p> <p>God foreknew (loved beforehand) the elect (with no consideration of their future choices), and on this basis, causes them to believe</p>	<p>God's foreknowledge (prescience) is based on his infinite essence and is not of itself causal. What God foreknows is certain to occur (man will) but what men choose <i>is not necessary (not man must)</i>, allowing persons in God's image (with free will) to make self-determining choices within God-ordained freedoms and limitations. God conceptually foreknew the free choices individuals would make.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Necessarily, if God knows certain people will not believe, then those people will not believe. 2. God knows those people will not believe. 3. Therefore, (possibly contingently) those people will not believe. <p>(Only the first premise is true necessarily. Had those same people <i>believed</i>, which they were free to do, God would have known with certainty they <i>would</i> believe.)</p> <p>God elected those whom He foreknew (loved beforehand) as believers, having conceptually (not perceptually) foreknown them as being in Christ</p>
Atonement	
<p>Jesus died only for the elect. On the cross, Jesus <i>accomplished</i> atonement for the foreknown elect.</p> <p>God foreordained the cross and the sinful acts of those involved who had no choice to do other than what they did (their acts necessary thus certain--they must). God foreordains thus he foreknows.</p>	<p>Jesus died for the whole world, but the benefits of the atonement are only applied to the believing elect.</p> <p>God foreordained the cross, using the sinful acts of those involved (their acts certain but not necessary--they shall). God foreordains in accordance with his conceptual foreknowledge of all possibilities.</p>
God's Fairness (Equality)	
<p>God is no respecter of persons. All people deserve God's eternal wrath because they have sinned against Him. The fairness (i.e., equality) of God <i>is not</i> relevant to God's electing some individuals to eternal torment and some to eternal blessings. God secretly chose some individuals to receive His mercy and some to justly receive His wrath. Although the non-elect have no ability to trust God (because God did not choose them), God deems them deserving of eternal wrath because of their sins and/or Adam's sin imputed to them.</p> <p>We should not take our view of fairness and judge God by it, for He is perfect, and we are not.</p>	<p>God is no respecter of persons. All people deserve God's eternal wrath because they have sinned against Him. The fairness (i.e., equality) of God <i>is</i> relevant to God's electing some individuals to eternal torment and some to eternal blessings. God is fair and treats all people equally in judgment. He will judge individuals based on the ability, knowledge, and opportunity they were given. God's eternal wrath is ultimately realized only by individuals who freely and finally reject God's light, which would have led to salvation had they not rejected it.</p> <p>We should not take our view of fairness and judge God by it, but we must believe God's many assertions in scripture of His fairness toward all people.</p>

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Man's Free Will in Salvation	
God determines the belief or unbelief of individuals with no alternative option available. He allows either 1) no free choice or 2) freedom to choose in accordance with their own desire which God has predetermined	God gives all individuals freedom to receive or reject Him, while inviting all to come to Him and be saved. Free choices, while influenced, require no external causative agent
Drawing	
No one seeks or can come to Christ except the Father draw him. <i>God draws only the elect to Himself.</i> God's drawing is persuasive, convicting, overpowering, <i>irresistible</i> , and therefore <i>always effectual</i> . Many believe God's drawing is regenerates in the sense that spiritual life precedes faith (see regeneration below). God leads only the elect to repentance and faith. Repentance and faith are not possible for the non-elect.	No one seeks or can come to Christ except the Father draw him. <i>Christ draws all men to Himself</i> , but all men do not come to Christ. God's drawing is persuasive, convicting, inviting, imploring, and leading, yet <i>resistible</i> , and is therefore <i>only effectual to those who freely believe in Jesus</i> . Not all men are drawn equally (see God's Fairness above). But even the goodness of God leads men to repentance and faith; God is not far away from anyone.
Faith	
Faith is a gift given only to the elect who cannot refuse it. God so illuminates the elect that they cannot help but believe. Faith is not available to the non-elect	Faith is a gift given and a choice made. No person can believe without God, who is the author and finisher of faith. But faith is the sinner's responsibility. Faith requires a decision of trust that God does not make for the sinner.
Faith is all of God with no contribution of man. If an individual has the freedom to believe or not to believe, that individual upon believing could boast in their faith. This kind of faith would be meritorious. This kind of faith would be a work.	The fact that faith is a choice does not infer merit or works. Faith, by definition, is not meritorious. Faith makes saving grace operative and is contrasted to works. Saving faith is man's acknowledgment that he cannot save himself and is whole-hearted trust in Jesus for salvation. Receiving a free gift is not a work.
Regeneration (i.e., the impartation of the new birth and spiritual life) and man's inability	
A. Regeneration precedes faith. Since man's deadness in sin means he is completely unable to respond to God on his own, God must first regenerate the sinner in order for him to believe. The carnal mind is at enmity with God and cannot discern spiritual things. Spiritual understanding is impossible without first being made alive by God's Spirit, or B. Regeneration follows faith (see right column). The law was given to mankind who were unable to keep it. Similarly, God commands the non-elect to repent and believe the gospel when they are unable to do it.	Regeneration follows faith. All unbelievers are relationally dead to God due to unforgiven sins. Deadness cannot refer to inability to believe. Regeneration must follow faith since faith is a prerequisite for receiving spiritual life, the forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Spirit, and for becoming joined to Christ, spiritually raised with Christ, and becoming a child of God. Thus, man does not have spiritual life before faith. However, man cannot respond to God on his own power, but is enabled to believe by the drawing, convicting, persuading work of God. The law was given to mankind who were unable to keep it. This was to show them their need of a Savior, in whom they are able to trust by God's drawing.
Eternal torment	
God will torment the non-elect for eternity in the lake of fire because they sinned and did not receive salvation. God purposely and specifically created these individuals for this path and destiny to show his wrath and hatred toward them in contrast with His goodness and love for the elect.	God will torment the non-elect for eternity in the lake of fire because they sinned and did not receive salvation. This destiny is sovereignly chosen by God for those who freely choose to reject God, who could have chosen otherwise.
Assurance of Salvation	
Personal assurance of salvation is rooted in believing one's self to be in the number of the elect, as evidenced by initial and persevering faith	Personal assurance of salvation is rooted in believing that God is willing to save all people, and that those who believe are the elect and saved

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Perseverance of the Saints	
The saved will necessarily continue in faith from the point of true conversion until the end of their lives	A. The saved will necessarily continue in faith from the point of true conversion until the end of their lives, or B. A person who once truly believed can stop believing
Preservation of the Saints	
True believers cannot lose their salvation. A person who never believed or who stopped believing was never saved.	A. True believers cannot lose their salvation. A person who never believed or who stopped believing was never saved, or B. A person who has truly believed is saved even if he stops believing, or C. A person can lose his salvation if he stops believing
Preaching of the Gospel	
The command to preach the gospel to all people is the means by which God calls out and saves the elect, albeit the good news does not apply to the non-elect	The command to preach the gospel to all people is the means by which God calls out and saves the elect and is a genuine, bona-fide offer of salvation to all who hear it
Questions Raised	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can God, who is holy and hates sin, predetermine the necessary sin of unbelief in the non-elect? And not be responsible for it? Why is God angry with unbelievers if He decreed their unbelief and they could not have done otherwise? Is He angry with his own decrees? 2. How can God, who is love, create so many people for the very purpose of eternal torment? Does not God love all people and desire their salvation? Is God's very nature not love? 3. How can God, who is fair and equitable in judgment, condemn individuals to eternal torment for their sins (including unbelief) when they had no opportunity to respond in trust to God's grace? 4. How can preachers truthfully preach the gospel according to 1Cor 15:1-5 to the non-elect as commanded if the gospel does not apply to them (i.e., God does not love them in a saving way, Christ did not die for them, and there is no good news for them)? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can God, who is sovereign, be in control if man has free choice regarding his eternal destiny? 2. Doesn't God's foreknowledge of who the elect and non-elect are predetermine who must believe and who must not believe, with no contingencies available? 3. How does the free-will of man regarding salvation harmonize with names written in the book of life of the Lamb slain before the world began? Are not these names fixed before individuals are born? Does this not mean that every person's choice to receive or reject God is closed versus open? 4. Since God has foreordained events involving man's sin (e.g., the cross) how could the individuals involved have been free to do other than what they did? 5. If free-will faith is a determining factor between who is eventually saved and unsaved, wouldn't the saved have something to boast in outside of God (i.e., their wise choice)?