**God is Good: The Graciousness of God**

**Review:**

**Definition:** The goodness of God expressed to those who only deserve evil is called grace. The grace of God is “demerited” divine favor.

**Definition:** The unmerited goodness or love of God to those who have forfeited it, and are by nature under a sentence of condemnation.[[1]](#footnote-1)

***Two views***[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. The first view holds that election has no basis whatsoever in man.
   1. This view is frequently referred to as *reformed*, because it was prominent during the Reformation period, though St. Augustine (recognized by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Reformed as one of the greatest theologians ever) wrote prolifically on this doctrine in the 4th century.
   2. It is held today by churches who identify their theology as *Reformed*.
2. The second view sees divine foreknowledge as the basis for election.
   1. This view is usually referred to as *Arminian*, after the 16th century Dutch pastor, Jacob Arminius who formed the doctrine toward the end of the Reformation period.

**Conditional Election**(Article 1)[[3]](#footnote-3) From the “Society of Evangelical Arminians”:

1. God has sovereignly decided to choose only those who have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, for salvation and his eternal blessing.
2. God has foreknown from eternity which individuals would believe in Christ.
3. Among Arminians, there are two different views of election conditioned on faith:
   1. *Individual election:* The classic view in which God individually chose each believer based upon His foreknowledge of each one’s faith and so predestined each to eternal life
   2. *Corporate election:* Election to salvation is primarily of the Church as a people and embraces individuals only in faith-union with Christ the Chosen One and as members of his people. Since the election of the individual derives from the election of Christ and the corporate people of God, individuals become elect when they believe and remain elect only as long as they believe.

**Romans 8:28-30**

**Romans 11:2**

1. God’s election, guidance, rescue, redemption, and all other benefits that Israel received in distinction from other peoples, can only be attributed to God’s grace, not something he foresaw in them.[[4]](#footnote-4)
   1. **Deuteronomy 4:32-40**
   2. **Deuteronomy 7:6-11**
   3. **Deuteronomy 9:1-6, 24**

**Romans 8:28-9:24**

1. In the New Testament, God’s grace is the voluntary, unrestrained, and demerited favor that he shows to sinners and that, instead of the verdict of death, brings them righteousness and life. It is demonstrated in the sending of His own Son, and in the bestowal of all sorts of spiritual and material benefits, all of which are the gifts of grace and are themselves called “grace,” thus radically excluding all merit on the part of humans.[[5]](#footnote-5)
   * 1. **Ephesians 1:3-6**

Does foreknowledge really preserve free will?

1. “…people often have free will, which means that, with respect to an action, they can at least either do the action or refrain from doing it.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Packer on Election:[[7]](#footnote-7)

“The verb *elect* means “to select, or choose out.” The biblical doctrine of election is that before Creation God selected out of the human race, foreseen as fallen, those whom he would redeem, bring to faith, justify, and glorify in and through Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:28-39; Eph. 1:3-14; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9-10). This divine choice is an expression of free and sovereign grace, for it is unconstrained and unconditional, not merited by anything in those who are its subjects. God owes sinners no mercy of any kind, only condemnation; so it is a wonder, and matter for endless praise, that he should choose to save any of us; and doubly so when his choice involved the giving of his own Son to suffer as sin-bearer for the elect (Rom. 8:32).”

“The doctrine of election, like every truth about God, involves mystery and sometimes stirs controversy. But in Scripture it is a pastoral doctrine, brought in to help Christians see how great is the grace that saves them, and to move them to humility, confidence, joy, praise, faithfulness, and holiness in response. It is the family secret of the children of God. We do not know who else he has chosen among those who do not yet believe, nor why it was his good pleasure to choose us in particular. What we do know is, first, that had we not been chosen for life we would not be believers now (for only the elect are brought to faith), and, second, that as elect believers we may rely on God to finish in us the good work that he started (1 Cor. 1:8-9; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18). Knowledge of one’s election thus brings comfort and joy.”

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1. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (http://books.biblicaltraining.org/Systematic%20Theology%20by%20Louis%20

   Berkhof.pdf ed.; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I am indebted here to Smalling’s work: Roger Smalling, “Does Foreknowledge Explain Election”, n.d., n.p. Online: http://www.smallings.com/english/Essays/Foreknowledge.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “An Outline of the FACTS of Arminianism Vs. The TULIP of Calvinism,” *Soc. Evang. Arminians*, n.d., n.p. [cited 6 June 2013]. Online: http://evangelicalarminians.org/an-outline-of-the-facts-of-arminianism-vs-the-tulip-of-calvinism/. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2: God and Creation* (ed. John Bolt; trans. John Vriend; Baker Academic, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “An Outline of the FACTS of Arminianism.”, Society of Evangelical Arminians. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001) 149-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)