

CALVINISM???

IS IT BIBLICAL?

SOME QUESTIONS AND ISSUES AROUND CALVINISM

Summary of Why Selective Salvation Can't be True

from Michael Bronson at

<http://biblehelp.org/selsalv.htm> (Selected reasons not all listed)

There are many reasons why I don't believe the doctrine of selective salvation is Biblical. To help you obtain a quick overall understanding of the problems with this doctrine, I have created this summary for you. Once you have gone through the list, you can read the remaining 60 plus chapters or you can go to the specific chapter that has captured your interest.

As you read through the list, you will find some of the problems with this doctrine are simple and obvious. Other problems, however, are more complex and the Biblical contradictions are less obvious. Although many Christians don't do it, we need to think through each doctrine to its obvious conclusion. It is important to see the hidden implications of each doctrine and then see how they affect other doctrines.

As we study the doctrine of selective salvation, we will find that its implications contradict a large number of other doctrines. Hopefully, this section will help you think about some things you have never considered before. Listed below are some of the contradictions I have found with selective salvation.

IT IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE BIBLE

- There are over a hundred verses that say salvation is offered to everyone. For example, 1 John 2:2 says, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world."
- The Bible says God desires the salvation of those who are perishing. For example, 2 Peter 3:9 says, "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."
- The Bible says people are going to Hell against God's will. For example, 1 Corinthians 15:34 says, "For there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame."
- Selective Salvationists say before God created the universe, He selected certain people to go to Heaven and the rest go to Hell. Yet, the Bible says Hell was created for the fallen angels, not us (Matthew 25:41).

IT IS INCONSISTENT WITH OBSERVABLE FACTS

- **If selective salvation were true, you would expect an even distribution of Christians all over the world. In contrast to this, we find areas with very high concentrations of Christians and other areas with very low concentrations of Christians.**
- **If selective salvation were true, exposure to the gospel should not have any impact on how many people become Christians in a given area. Yet, areas with a strong gospel witness have a high number of believers and areas with little or no gospel witness have few or no new Christians.**
- **If selective salvation were true, parental influence should not increase or decrease a child's chance of becoming a Christian. However, we find children raised in Christian homes are much more likely to become Christians than children who are raised in atheistic homes. In fact, children who are raised by strong, mature Christians are much more likely to become Christians than children raised by weak and spiritually immature Christians.**

IT IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE NATURE OF GOD

The Bible provides us with a general description of God's nature. It describes Him as a loving, compassionate, fair, and righteous being. The doctrine of selective salvation totally contradicts this description. A basic premise of selective salvation is God chose to love or hate certain people purely on an arbitrary basis. This contradicts the nature of God outlined in the Bible. For example:

- You would expect a loving God would love all of His creation.
- You would not expect to find a loving God arbitrarily choosing to hate people (and condemning them to Hell before they were even created) simply because "He can."
- "Hate" is a strong emotion. It is an emotion developed in response to an offense. To passionately hate someone who has not yet existed does not even make sense.
- A person who is "sovereign" over another being will treat the other being in a manner consistent with his own nature. A dog owner, for example, is basically "sovereign" over his dog. Yet, a good owner would never mistreat his dog. Likewise, a sovereign God who is loving and compassionate would never mistreat His creation simply because "He can." Arbitrarily condemning a person to Hell before he is even created (with no choice, say, or recourse) is not the actions of a loving and compassionate God. A good person (sovereign or not) would never mistreat his subjects.

CALVINISM

John Calvin (1509 - 1564) is credited with developing the view point known as Calvinism. The belief became a major emphasis in the doctrine of Reformed Orthodoxy and the core beliefs were formalized in the Synod of Dort in 1618 - 1619. The beliefs are known by the acronym TULIP.

- T - Total Depravity -** man cannot do anything at all to bring about his salvation (this the Bible teaches). The issue for Calvinists is *total inability*, the result of total depravity, and their belief that man has no ability to repent, believe, etc.
- U - Unconditional Election -** an individual's eternal destiny is wholly and totally God's decision.
- L - Limited Atonement -** Jesus died only for the elect
- I - Irresistible Grace -** a sinner can't resist God's call to salvation
- P - Perseverance of the Saints -** sinners are eternally secure and will persevere in their faith neither totally falling nor finally falling from grace.

ARMINIANISM

Jacob Arminius (1560 - 1609) was a Dutch theologian who strongly objected to the reform position - especially limited atonement. His position was published after his death in the *Remonstrance* in 1610.

The view today is often associated with a works salvation position although Jacob Arminius did not teach this. Charles Hodge, a respected Calvinist, said, "It is a well known fact that Arminius himself did not depart as far from the Scripture truth and from the teachings of the reformers as did his followers at the time of the Synod of Dort. Moses Stuart even thought it possible to prove that Arminius was not an Arminian."

Most Arminianists today believe one can lose his salvation.

**There is a
third position
available for
consideration.**

***A biblical* understanding.**

T.U.L.I.P. IN LIGHT OF BASIC BIBLICAL TRUTHS

TOTAL DEPRAVITY (INABILITY) **We can respond, if language means anything**

Isaiah 45:22

Matt. 11:28

Mark 1:15

Luke 8:12

John 7:37

Acts 17:30

1 John 3:23

Revelation 2:17

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION **The Bible offers salvation to all who will believe**

Isaiah 45:22; 55:1

John 3:16

Romans 10:13

Revelation 22:17

“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.” John 3:16

LIMITED ATONEMENT

Isaiah 53:6
John 1:9; 12:32
1 Timothy 2:4-5; 4:10
Titus 2:11
2 Peter 3:9
1 John 2:2

Christ died for all not just for the elect

**“And he is the propitiation for our sins:
and not for ours only, but also for the sins
of the whole world.” 1 John 2:2**

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

Proverbs 1:24-25
John 1:9; 3:19; 5:40
Acts 7:51
2 Peter 2:20-22

The Scriptures teach we have ability to resist grace

**“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart
and ears, ye do always resist the Holy
Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.”**

Acts 7:51

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

If what is meant is that God will keep believers, believers are eternally secure, there is no problem with this doctrine. If one means that believers will always be faithful in their Christian life and never totally fall this is erroneous. Believers can sin and even “sin unto death” (1 John 5:16; 1 Cor. 5:5; 11:27-30).

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PREDESTINATION

The following material is from *Beyond Calvinism: Ten Little Reasons For Reforming the Church* by Bob Moore, 1998
And *The Other Side of Calvinism* by Laurence M. Vance

Between 100 A.D. and 400 A.D. the church believed in men making totally free moral choices and that God elects them based on his ability to foresee the choices that they would make. Writers such as Philo, the Jewish intellectual, and church fathers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Origen elaborated in their writings on this view.

Around 400 A.D. Pelagius, a heretic condemned by the church, taught that men are born essentially good and are capable of doing what is necessary for salvation. In response to this teaching Augustine (354 A.D.-430 A.D.) changed his view on election and began to teach that God's role in salvation is total.

Augustine's understanding that man was unable to save himself was derived from Scripture. His view that God elected those whom he chose and the rest are left to suffer the punishments of their sin was most likely developed based on Aristotle's "Unmoved Mover" which Augustine had studied in Carthage before his conversion.

“Plato inspired Aristotle’s thinking about the superiority of things that do not change. We see it expressed in Aristotle’s idea of the “Unmoved Mover.” God is thus ‘the eternal self-mover; pure actuality, for any potentiality and change would suggest imperfection; hence this god must also be incorporeal and without perishable qualities. Thus the Prime Mover is without sensation or desire.”

“From ideas such as this Augustine and others took the Biblical concept of God’s immutability (unchangeableness) and gave it new non-Biblical meanings. From the Bible comes the revelation that God cannot change in character. From the Greeks came the idea that God cannot change at all.”

The Stoics philosophy that God is the only Uncaused Cause and all other actions are pre-determined probably also influenced Augustine’s thinking.

Augustine’s philosophical training seems to have wrongly influenced his ideas about God and he introduced the idea that election was not based on what God foresees but based on the mystery of His unsearchable will. The post-apostolic fathers had a slight misunderstanding regarding God’s foreknowledge of believers and Augustine’s attempted correction was misleading.

For 1100 years the church taught a semi-Augustinian view of things. The church believed that God's predestination and calling were rooted in God's foreknowledge. The influence of semi-Pelagian views in the church, a works salvation, caused a number of men to argue against this view with John Calvin bringing his followers back to an Augustinian viewpoint.

Charles Spurgeon said, "Calvin got his Calvinism from Augustine." Lorraine Boettner states, "Augustine had taught the essentials of the system a thousand years before Calvin was born." B.B. Warfield said, "The system of doctrine taught by Calvin is just the Augustinianism common to the whole body of the Reformers." Calvinism is Augustinian theology.

Augustine was in many ways the father of Roman Catholic belief. Sir Robert Anderson says, "Nearly all the errors prevalent in Romanism can be traced back to Augustine." B.B. Warfield says that Augustine was "in a true sense the founder of Roman Catholicism." Louis Berkhof in his preface to his work the *History of Christian Doctrines* says Augustine was: "The first real Roman Catholic."

In commenting on how some call Augustine a great theologian Laurence Vance makes the point "To rank a heretic as Augustine with the greatest Christian who ever lived is nothing short of blasphemy against the one who saved Paul and called him to be an apostle. Augustine was wrong on baptism. He was wrong on philosophy. He was wrong on the 'sacraments' and the nature of the Lord's Supper. He was also mistaken on the Millennium, hermeneutics, the Resurrection, eternal security, and marriage: WHY WOULD ANYONE THINK HE WOULD BE RIGHT ON ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION?" (Emphasis in the original)

PREDESTINE AND ADOPTION AS USED IN THE BIBLE

Predestination, *proorizo* (bold in the verses) in the Greek, is used only six times in the New Testament.

Acts 4:28 *"to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose **determined** before to be done.*

This has to do with God's plan for Jesus and has nothing to do with believers.

1 Corinthians 2:7 *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God **ordained** before the ages for our glory,*

This has to do with God's plan of the Gospel, the hidden wisdom, being revealed at a certain point in time and has nothing to do with the "predestination" of believers.

The other four verses are the only times "predestination" is used in regard to believers.

"Predestinate" is used twice in Ephesians 1

Ephesians 1:5 *"having **predestined** us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,"*

Notice from the first four verses of chapter one that believers are being addressed. People that are already saved.

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 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:

Verse 5 says we (saints, believers) are predestined to adoption *as sons*. We are predestined *not to be* sons but *as sons*, we already are sons, and as sons we are predestined. We are predestined to adoption.

Galatians 4:3-5 speaks of the same truth that because we are sons we will receive the adoption.

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

What is the adoption?

Romans 8:23 clearly tells us what the adoption is.

“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

Adoption is the redemption of our bodies. In other words all believers, “*we...who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,*” are “predestined” to have a glorified body one day.

This is eternal security.

The “adoption” takes place when we are resurrected and get our glorified bodies.

Ephesians 1:11 *"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,"*

The context of "predestined" in this verse (verse 10 - *"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him"*) **is that believers end result is already established along with an inheritance. The text here is speaking of what God has planned, predestined, for those that are believers, in the future.**

“Predestinate” is used twice in Romans 8, the other two uses in the Bible in reference to believers.

Romans 8:29 *“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.”*

This verse is a close parallel to Ephesians 1:5 and Romans 8:23. Notice those “whom He foreknew,” obviously speaking of believers, God has “predestined” to “be conformed to the image of His Son.” That means we will have a body like his and be like him (this doesn't mean we become God) one day. Our body will be perfect like his, our thoughts will be perfect like his, etc.

Romans 8:30 *“Moreover whom He **predestined**, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”*

God has "predestined" believers, thus he has called them, justified them, and will glorify them. This verse does not teach that we are "predestined" to be saved. Believers are "predestined" to be glorified one day and God has called, justified, and glorified them. It would be wrong to equate "call" with predestination. There are plenty of verses that say God has "called" all men and yet not all respond. There are passages where men resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit. They were "called" but didn't respond positively.

Predestination, when it applies to people, has to do with believers being one day glorified.

It has nothing to do with unbelievers being predestined to be saved.

Yet, this is what many believe. A study of the above verses would argue against this belief.

Predestine(d) or predestinate should always be used in the way the Bible uses it, speaking of believers and their ultimate destiny, which is heaven and their glorification.

THE CHOSEN OF GOD

1) Who are the chosen (elect) of God?

Israel **Isaiah 41:8-9; Psalm 105: 6, 43; 106:5**

Christ **Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 12:18; 1 Peter 2:4**

Angels **1 Timothy 5:21**

Church **Ephesians 1:4,6**

2) What are the chosen (elect) of God, chosen (elected) for?

“Israel’s election by God was clearly corporate...; it was for service.” C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*, pg. 193-94

“In the national election of Israel several ideas are in view: service, choice and blessing...the initial purpose of the election was that Israel *as a nation* might be a channel of blessing to the whole earth.”

John F. Parkinson, *The Faith of God’s Elect*, page 20

“First, the scriptural expression ‘God’s elect’, is not the mere statement of a fact, or even of a purpose, but, like ‘first-born’, it is a title of dignity and privilege, applicable exclusively to the Christian. And secondly, the prominent thought in election, especially in this dispensation of the Church (as the word *ecclesia* suggests), is rank and privilege, and not deliverance from perdition.”

Sir Robert Anderson, *The Gospel and It’s Ministry*, Page 76

“Keep in mind then that election is ‘IN CHRIST.’ We are not among the elect until we come into Christ by repentance and faith. Remember too that election is collective - the Church. It is only when individuals come into the church by simple faith in Christ that they become part of God’s elect. Election is not to go anywhere, either to heaven or to hell, but to be something and to fulfill a mission and perform a task.”

Robert McClurkin, Election & Freewill in *Biblical Balance on Election and Freewill*, pg. 40

“Central to the Hebraic concept of community is the idea of corporate personality. This concept means that the individual was always thought of in the collective (family, tribe, nation) and the collective in the individual. This corporate solidarity was reinforced by the fact that the entire community (past ancestors and future members) was viewed as one personality, ‘a living whole, a single animated mass of blood, flesh and bones.’”

Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, page 187

“This election does not have individual emphasis in Paul, any more than it did for Israel in the Old Testament or the early Jewish period. Rather, it implies a covenant-relationship through which God chooses for Himself a whole people. This collectivism is of supreme importance for the understanding of the implications of ‘election in Christ.’”

R. P. Shedd, *Man in Community*, page 133

“The prime point is that the election of the church is a corporate rather than an individual thing. It is not that individuals are in the church because they are elect, it is rather that they are elect because they are in the church, which is the body of the elect one.”

Roger

Forster and Paul Marston, *God’s Strategy in Human History*, page 137

“The words ‘chosen’ and ‘election’ have to do with the purpose of God in service. Israel was that chosen nation which God used to preach the Kingdom of God to the world...The Church is that nation through whom God is now preaching the Kingdom of God....The only requisite to become the called of God is Faith.”

Mark Cambron, *The New Testament, A Book-by-Book Survey*, pages 201,203

“M.R. Vincent, a Presbyterian and authority of language, said: “*Ekloge* election, this, and the kindred words, *to choose*, and *chosen* or *elect*, are used of God’s selection of men or agencies for special missions or attainments; but neither here nor elsewhere in the New Testament is there any warrant for the revolting doctrine that God has predestined a definite number of mankind to eternal life, and the rest to eternal destruction...Election - the act of God’s holy will in selecting His own methods, instruments, and times for carrying out His purpose - is a fact of history and of daily observation.”

Dr. Alan Richardson, British scholar, in his work An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament in the section “The Elect of God,” says, “...election in the OT is to the service of God in this world and has nothing at all to do with salvation in the world to come.... A proper understanding of the NT doctrine of election in Christ will dispel the sombre and frightening mists of post- Reformation theories about predestination, double predestination, reprobation and the rest of the lingering errors of medievalism, from which the rise of biblical science has set us free... Election refers to God’s purpose in this world... In the NT, as in the OT, election is a matter of service, not of privilege.”

C. Gordon Olson, "Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism," Global Gospel Publishers, 2003, pg. 193-94 has 7 points to summarize:

- 1. Israel's election by God was clearly corporate and did not guarantee salvation to anybody; it was for service.**
- 2. The concept of corporate solidarity is not only essential to the cultures into which the Old Testament came, but is an essential component of the Old Testament itself. Corporate solidarity is still today integral to Asian and African cultures. With our strong emphasis upon individualism, this has been lost in our western cultures. It is not surprising that the notion of individual election to salvation arose in the western, Latin church and is totally absent from eastern Christianity. The Greek churches, which presumably understood Greek better, have no concept of individual election.**

- 3. Peter unequivocally confirmed the corporate nature of election in 1 Peter 2:9, as we have seen. Paul's heavy corporate-solidarity emphasis in Romans 5 and 9-11, strongly colors the rest of his epistles. The idea of Adam, as corporate head of the human race, affecting the whole race by one sin (Rom. 5:12ff.), both transmitted and imputed, is hard for westerners to grasp. We more easily accept that Christ was our representative head, suffering for our sins. That Israel should corporately be set aside and cut off from the root of Abraham is another major issue in Romans. The references to churches in 2 John is further confirmatory.**

- 4. There are many New Testament symbols of the church which have strong corporate overtones: the vine, the body, the temple of God, the flock, the bride, and the people (nation) of God.**

- 5. The ordinances of the church are ultimately corporate in nature. The Lord's table is more obvious, but when we relate water baptism to spirit baptism putting us into the corporate church, its corporate dimension is also clear.**
- 6. Election (chosenness) is functional. Israel was chosen to be God's servant nation. The twelve apostles were chosen to be messengers to Israel, and this did not guarantee their salvation (i.e. Judas).**
- 7. The use of the adjective 'elect' is always in the plural, except in Romans 16:13 and 2 John, where the references were not to individuals as elect.**

“In considering all the theologically relevant passages, I have concluded that there is no basis for a doctrine of individual unconditional election. The corporate nature of election is so clear in enough contexts to lead to the probability that all should be taken corporately.”

**“Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism,” C. Gordon Olson,
Global Gospel Publishers, 2003, pg. 195**

ROMANS 9

“For the first four hundred years of church history, people read Romans 9 and did not think it taught what came later to be called Calvinism. Speaking of Romans 9 and the early Church Fathers, Gerald Bray notes, ‘Only Augustine, and then only in his later writings, was prepared to accept the full implications of divine predestination.’⁶⁸

End Note 68 ...Similarly, Gregory Boyd notes that no one prior to Augustine—except the dualistic and deterministic Manicheans—read Romans 9 in this fashion. Interestingly enough, Augustine was a Manichean prior to becoming a Christian. See Boyd, *Is God to Blame?*, pg. 205.”

Austin Fishcer, *Young, Restless, No Longer Reformed*, pg.48

“While studying Bible passages about Calvinism, God's sovereignty, and man's free will, Calvinists frequently turn to Romans 9 as a favorite proof-text. The chapter contains multiple passages, which *appear* to support Calvinism. Therefore, this article will analyze the entire chapter in its context, discussing the arguments raised by Calvinists.

Careful examination of the context of Romans 9 reveals that Paul was explaining God's right to predetermine and use the nation of Israel to produce the Messiah. The Jews profited greatly from this arrangement; however, such a relationship did not guarantee God's mercy unto salvation. God maintained and exercised His right to use nations to accomplish His promise to Abraham, and furthermore, He demonstrated His prerogative to save individuals as He

deemed best. As long as Israel would seek to establish their own righteousness by the law of Moses, over-emphasizing their national part in God's plan, they would fail to be saved. God's promise for mercy was ultimately extended to whomever would live by faith, not necessarily those who required the law of Moses, nor necessarily those who descended from Abraham.

The spiritual salvation of individuals, especially a predestined, unconditional election, is not the subject of Romans 9. Vindication of God's judgment regarding the nation of Israel is the primary point. However, detailed analysis of the immediate context, plus the context of the Old Testament passages, which Paul quoted, clearly teaches that God's mercy has always been conditioned upon man's repentance."

http://www.insearchoftruth.org/articles/romans_9.html

“All that Paul has said up until this point...has *begged the question of Israel*. Why has Israel, by and large, rejected its Messiah? What is God doing with Israel? Has he forsaken his first chosen people (Israel) for a new chosen people (Gentiles)? If so, hasn't God been unfaithful to his promises to Israel?

As Romans 9:1-6 makes clear, **these questions are the glasses through which we must read chapters 9-11 and if you take them off for a second, everything is going to get fuzzy.**

So what is going on with Israel?

Appropriately enough, Paul answers this question by retelling Israel's history, illustrating that from start to finish the faithfulness and mercy of God have been stronger than the faithlessness of Israel. From the patriarchs (9:6-13), to the exodus (9:14-18), to the exile (9:19-29), God has found a way to overcome the futility of Israel's sin and circumstances so he

might show the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, both Jew and Gentile (9:23-24). The emphasis - from start to finish - is on God's desire to let people in, not keep them out. It is about the wideness of God's mercy, not its narrowness. Israel doesn't deserve it, the Gentiles don't deserve it, but God nevertheless gives it.

Far from being a treatise meant to justify God's righteousness in unconditional election, Romans 9-11 is a treatise about the incomprehensible mercy and scandalous faithfulness of God toward his creatures, through the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ."

Austin Fishcer, Young, Restless, No Longer Reformed, selections from pgs. 100-104

“As to the scope of the passage, it will become obvious that it is all about God’s dealings with men and nations historically and dispensationally, and is *not* about individual salvation and destiny beyond the grave. Now that is the absolutely vital fact to remember in reading the problem verses of the chapters. John Calvin is wrong when he reads into these verses election either to salvation or to damnation in the eternal sense. That is not their scope. They belong only to a divine economy of history....Let us further say that God could never create any man either to be wicked or to be eternally damned. ‘Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!’ In Romans 9 we simply must not read an after-death significance into what is solely historical.”

J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, Vol. VI. Pp. 88-89

Romans 9:10-13: The reference is to national calling, not individual salvation

(10) And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (11) (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) (12) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. (13) As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Vs. 12

see Gen. 25:23

"And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger."

Vs. 13

see Malachi 1:1-3

"The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."

Now, please ask yourself this question, "Up to this point, has Paul been focused on the election of individuals or nations?" Go back and reread verses 1-5. Physical, national Israel has clearly been the topic of Paul's and his readers' shared concern. Now, in these verses, Paul turns his attention to two specific cases, as examples of his previous point. Unfortunately, the Calvinist begins reading here - without the benefit of the previous context. Consequently, although the passage never mentions salvation, the Calvinist assumes that the discussion pertains to the predetermined, unconditional election of individuals unto salvation, specifically Jacob over Esau. However, the context we have already studied proves the discussion is focused on the judgment of the Israelite nation."

http://www.insearchoftruth.org/articles/romans_9.html

Romans 9:16 "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

God shows mercy on all (see Romans 11:32)

"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

Romans 9:17-18 "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

"raised thee up" means to his throne, not from birth, Exodus 9:16. Pharaoh's heart was hardened because of his rejection of God, Ex. 3:19;5:2.

Exodus 9:13 And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. 14 For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. 15 For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. 16 And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

“And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.” Exodus 3:19

“And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.” Exodus 5:2

“The Hebrew word [*chazaq*] does not carry any of the evil or cruel connotations conveyed by the English phrase ‘hard-hearted.’ The phrase ‘strengthened his resolve’ would perhaps be a nearer English equivalent than ‘hardened his heart.’ The renderings in the main text of the KJV, RV, and RSV of ‘harden’ when it refers to pharaoh are therefore unfortunate. Elsewhere the most common rendering is one such as ‘strengthen.’

Paul Marston and Roger Forster, *God’s Strategy in Human History*, pg. 270

“Perhaps the most unfortunate translation in Exodus regarding the Pharaohic aspect of the exodus narrative is found in 7:13, a verse that has misled Christians for a long time. While the NAS is an improvement over the KJV, we will see that it too leaves something to be desired. One of the morbidly fascinating things I have observed, during my personal study of the exodus narrative, is how the KJV and NAS appear to approach Exodus 7:13 with a prejudice toward a Calvinistic interpretation. The KJV, for example, blunders with a total mistranslation: “And he hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” All major translations today, including the New King James Version (NKJV), as well as major Reformed authors like A.W. Pink, recognize that the original KJV (Authorized) translation of this phrase in this verse was a bastardization of the Hebrew. The New King James Version reads, “But Pharaoh’s heart grew hard,” and the NAS reads, “But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened.” Notice that the word “he” was added into the KJV, indicating that another party besides Pharaoh was strengthening Pharaoh’s heart.”

Daniel Gracely, *Calvinism: A Closer Look*, see

<http://www.xcalvinist.com/category/chapter-14/>

Romans 9:19-23

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? (20) Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? (21) Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? (22) What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath **FITTED TO DESTRUCTION**: (23) And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.

"fitted to destruction" is in the middle voice, indicating that the vessels of wrath fitted themselves for destruction."

If the "vessels of wrath" were "fitted to destruction," in that they were doing exactly what God designed them to do, why would God "endure with much longsuffering"?

“Again we may note that in this passage (Romans 9:14-24) ‘election’ is set forth in terms of nations or their representative rulers (like Pharaoh) considered as the agents of God’s purpose in history; the passage is not saying anything at all about ultimate salvation in the world to come, and the phrase ‘vessels of wrath’ does not refer to individuals predestined from the creation of the world to everlasting damnation; it means nations (or their rulers in their representative capacity) who are ‘raised’ up to execute God’s righteousness in this present age.”

An Introduction to the Theology of the N.T., Alan Richardson, page 280

Romans 9-11

“Using the lens of the Israel question (9:1-6) and the interpretive vistas of 9:30-32 and 11:20-32 (as opposed to standing on top of 9:14-23 and interpreting the rest of the Bible from there), we catch a glimpse of a grander vision. I’d encourage you to read it now and see for yourself.”

Austin Fishcer, Young, Restless, No Longer Reformed, page 104

“What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone.” Romans 9:30-32

“(20) Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: (21) For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. (22) Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. (23) And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again. (24) For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree? (25) For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (26) And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: (27) For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. (28) As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. (29) For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. (30) For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: (31) Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. (32) For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.”

Romans 11:20-32

There is a biblical alternative to the systems of Calvinism and Arminiansim.

Calvinism, in particular, because it is so pervasive in the evangelical world, is not the biblical position.

There are answers to Calvinistic arguments.

God has not “predestined” anyone to heaven or hell.

God loves the world and all can respond to His gracious gift of salvation through Jesus!!!