

# “AS MANY AS WERE APPOINTED TO ETERNAL LIFE”: (PRE-)DETERMINING TRANSLATION, EXEGESIS, AND THEOLOGY IN ACTS 13:48

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*And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.*

Acts 13:48 ESV

## INTRODUCTION

Acts 13:48 has long been a favorite Calvinist proof-text for the doctrine of unconditional election. When I use the term “unconditional election,” I have in mind John Piper’s articulation: “God’s election is an unconditional act of free grace that was given through his Son Jesus before the world began...*God chose, before the foundation of the world, those who would be delivered from bondage to sin and brought to repentance and saving faith in Jesus.*”<sup>1</sup>

Luke’s parenthetical comment “as many as were appointed to eternal life believed” seems to strike a decidedly deterministic note that emboldens Calvinist interpreters. Perhaps no one has stated a Calvinist conclusion on Acts 13:48 as strongly as Bruce Ware: “Only an unconditional view of election can account for what Luke says here.”<sup>2</sup>

Stone-Campbell movement interpreters have proposed a change in translation that avoids any semblance of supporting Calvinist teachings. At issue is whether the participle *τεταγμένοι* (“appointed”) carries a passive sense or a middle (and specifically, reflexive) sense. With a reflexive sense, the line in question would read, “as many as disposed themselves toward eternal life believed.” Recently, Jack Cottrell and Don De Welt have advocated a middle/reflexive sense. Less recently, J.W. McGarvey advocated the same view.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *Five Points* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus, 2013) 15–16. Emphasis mine.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce A. Ware, “Divine Election to Salvation: Unconditional, Individual, and Infralapsarian,” in *Perspectives on Election* (ed. Chad Brand; Nashville: B&H, 2006) 9.

<sup>3</sup> Don De Welt, *Acts Made Actual* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1960) 183, leaning heavily on comments from D.D. Whedon, *Acts–Romans* (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1875); J.W. McGarvey, *A Commentary on Acts of Apostles, with a Revised Version of the Text* (Lexington, KY: Transylvania, 1872) 169–171; Jack W. Cottrell, “Response by Jack W. Cottrell,” in *Perspectives on Election* (ed. Chad Brand; Nashville: B&H, 2006) 59–60. Beyond the Stone-Campbell movement, William W. Klein, *The New Chosen People* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015) 82–83, advocates a reflexive translation of the participle in Acts 13:48. David J. Williams, *Acts* (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990) 239, also cites this view approvingly.

Calvinist interpreters, and most translations, render the participle with the passive sense. This is not a partisan move on the part of translators: several non-Calvinist interpreters (including Dennis Gaertner—a Stone-Campbell commentator, Craig Keener, Ben Witherington III, and Richard P. Thompson) support the passive translation and acknowledge the predestinarian significance of the verse.<sup>4</sup>

Acts 13:48 then warrants further exegetical and theological examination from a non-Calvinist perspective for two reasons. First, there is no consensus among non-Calvinist interpreters—even among Stone-Campbell interpreters—about how to approach Acts 13:48. They are divided on whether the text is about divine election to salvation.

Second, recent Calvinist interpreters make strong claims that exegesis is definitively on their side with this text. I have already quoted Bruce Ware’s statement that “Only an unconditional view of election can account for what Luke says here.”<sup>5</sup> We could also add R.C. Sproul’s censure of non-Calvinist interpreters who, in his words, “create a variety of slants on this text and do funny things with the context and syntax of the Greek to change the clear meaning.”<sup>6</sup>

In response to this, I would like to contend for what seems to be a relatively modest thesis. I would like to contend that even a predestinarian reading of Acts 13:48 does not entail unconditional election. I would like to support this thesis in two movements: first, the participle τεταγμένοι does indeed carry a passive sense in Acts 13:48 and signals divine election to salvation. Second, interpreters have largely overlooked a pivotal detail in the text—the term “eternal life” (ζωὴν αἰώνιον). The probable meaning of “eternal life” changes the force of Luke’s comment in Acts 13:48 and negates the need for an unconditional view of election. After making these two movements, I would like to draw out two brief theological implications from Acts 13:48.

### TRANSLATION OF Τεταγμένοι

As noted, Jack Cottrell has registered the fact that τεταγμένοι by form could be either in the passive or the middle voice.<sup>7</sup> He therefore recommends that we understand the word as the middle voice. He recommends a reflexive translation so that the clause reads “as many as disposed themselves toward eternal life believed,” thereby avoiding Calvinist implications.

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 416: “This is certainly as strong a statement about predestination as one finds in Luke-Acts.” See Dennis Gaertner, *Acts* (College Press NIV Commentary Series; Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995) 216; Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Vol. 2; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013) 2101–2102; Richard P. Thompson, *Acts: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (NBBC; Kansas City, MO: Nazarene, 2016) 246.

<sup>5</sup> Ware, “Divine Election,” 9.

<sup>6</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Acts* (St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary Series; Wheaton: Crossway, 2010) 247.

<sup>7</sup> Jack Cottrell, “Acts 13:48 and Calvinism” on *Jack Cottrell Blog* (23 December 2011, <http://jackcottrell.com/notes/acts-1348-and-calvinism>).

While Cottrell's proposal is grammatically and theologically possible, I do not find it persuasive in light of contextual considerations. There are at least five considerations that favor a passive rendering for τεταγμένοι.

First, the verb τάσσω does not take a middle/reflexive sense in the four occurrences elsewhere in Luke's writings. The centurion of Luke's Gospel is a man who has been "set" under authority (Lk 7:8). Luke speaks twice of Paul being "appointed" as a delegate of the church and of Jesus (Acts 15:2; 22:10). And finally, the Jewish leaders in Rome actively "appoint" a day to hear Paul (Acts 28:23). Luke does not seem to utilize a middle/reflexive sense for τάσσω elsewhere in his writings. This seems to suggest τεταγμένοι carries the passive sense in Acts 13:48.

Second, τεταγμένοι occurs in Acts 13:48 without a reflexive pronoun. In 1 Corinthians 16:15, the reflexive pronoun ἐαυτούς occurs alongside a form of τάσσω, signaling that the verb takes on a reflexive sense. Luke certainly has the option to do the same in Acts 13:48: he uses ἐαυτούς to describe the Jewish leaders' actions in 13:46. If Luke had intended the participle to carry a reflexive sense, it seems that he would have signaled that by using a reflexive pronoun to clarify a grammatically ambiguous form. The fact that Luke omits a reflexive pronoun suggests that the participle carries the passive sense.<sup>8</sup>

Third, the term "eternal life" in Acts 13:46, 48 alludes to Daniel 12:1–2 LXX.<sup>9</sup> Daniel 12:1–2 indicates that the names of the holy people are written in "the book" by God. God will resurrect the saints and save them in the end. Canonical, pseudepigraphal, and rabbinic texts support the concept that God appoints or "inscribes" his faithful covenant people in the book of life.<sup>10</sup> By alluding to this concept from Daniel, Paul and Luke point to God's ultimate authority over who is finally saved. We will return to this point and clarify it later in the paper.

Fourth, in a context where Paul surveys the landscape of salvation history from Abraham to Jesus the Messiah in Acts 13:16–41, the overall emphasis naturally falls on how God is guiding history in order to fulfil his promises.<sup>11</sup> The Isaiah quotation in Acts 13:47 carries this emphasis as well: the Lord Jesus intended the gospel witness to shine not only to the Jews, but to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8). Paul affirms that "the Lord commanded us" to turn to the Gentiles, and in the broader narrative of Acts, this Pauline comment evokes the Lord's commission to the apostle on the road to Damascus. The overall emphasis in Acts 13 is on God's sovereign guidance of history.

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<sup>8</sup> Esther Yue L Ng, "ἦσαν τεταγμένοι in Acts 13:48: Middle Voice or Passive Voice? Implications for the Doctrine of Divine Election" (CGST Journal 50, 2011) 189–190, makes a similar argument.

<sup>9</sup> Acts 13:48 contains the precise phrase used in Daniel 12:2 LXX: ζῶν αἰώνιον, while Acts 13:46 is similar: τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς. Daniel 12:2 is the only OT text to use the term. It would obviously become a paradigmatic term within the Jewish eschatological tradition. The NT writers use the term accordingly.

<sup>10</sup> See F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 267–268; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Anchor Bible 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998) 520–522; Keener, *Acts*, 2101–2102; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Sacra Pagina; Collegeville, MN: 1992) 242.

<sup>11</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016) 184, states it well: "This is not simply a piece of arbitrary predestinarianism: it has been Luke's concern from the beginning to underline that everything has taken place in accord with the plan of God..."

Fifth, Luke often pairs a comment about the positive reception of the gospel with a comment emphasizing the Lord's initiative in bringing people—and especially Gentiles—to salvation (Acts 2:47; 11:21; 14:1–3; 16:14).<sup>12</sup> It is especially important for Luke to emphasize God's initiative in this section of Acts because the narrative is moving from the Cornelius episode toward the circumcision controversy and the Jerusalem council. Luke wants his readers to personally make the paradigmatic shift along with the apostolic community.

These five considerations strongly indicate that the participle carries a passive sense.

But if interpreters should take τεταγμένοι as a passive participle, does that automatically score a victory for those who would want to use Acts 13:48 as a proof-text for unconditional election? This question leads us to the next section, where we examine an overlooked exegetical detail in the verse: the term ζῶν αἰώνιον (“eternal life”).

### MEANING OF “ETERNAL LIFE”

Scripture speaks of election or appointment to various roles and benefits. In the context of Acts 13:48, Paul speaks of the Patriarchs being “chosen” (ἐξελέξατο) by God as instruments of salvation (Acts 13:17, 26). Later in Acts, Paul and Barnabas would be “appointed” (ἔταξαν, from the same root as τεταγμένοι) as delegates from the Jerusalem council (15:2).

It seems paramount then, whenever election or appointment language arises, to clarify the end of the election, or in this case, the aim of the appointment. It is not enough to simply say that Abraham was “chosen” or that Paul was “appointed” without clarifying the role or end to which those individuals were selected. Similarly, in Acts 13:48 it is important to clarify the end of the election—the aim of the divine appointment. In other words, what is the “eternal life” that Paul and Luke speak of in Acts 13:46, 48?

Most interpreters are content to equate “eternal life” with terms such as “the salvation Paul proclaimed through the life of the resurrected Jesus.”<sup>13</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel explicitly broadens the term to include “forgiveness of sins,” “justification before [God's] tribunal,” and “salvation.”<sup>14</sup> C.K. Barrett explains it as “a comprehensive term for Christian salvation” and includes belief as an element of it.<sup>15</sup>

The assumption that the majority of interpreters share is that Paul and Luke intend the term “eternal life” to encompass both present and future aspects of salvation. To state it using the vocabulary of inaugurated eschatology, the majority of interpreters assume that “eternal life”

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<sup>12</sup> Luke's comments about God's initiative elsewhere in Acts beg the question if Gentiles were capable of “disposing themselves to eternal life” apart from God's grace given through the preaching of the gospel. See Christoph Wilhelm Stenschke, “Luke's Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith” (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Thompson, *Acts*, 245; cf. Keener, *Acts*, 2099; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 415; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (ECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) 463. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 521, admits that Palestinian Judaism used the term to “describe life in the blessed period of final consummation,” but immediately says the term “would be equivalent to ‘salvation.’”

<sup>14</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012) 589.

<sup>15</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994) 658.

encompasses both the “already” and the “not yet” of salvation.<sup>16</sup> But does this assumption hold up under scrutiny?

To answer this question, let us survey both Paul’s and Luke’s use of the term “eternal life.” I hope to show that neither Paul nor Luke use the term “eternal life” to encompass both the “already” and the “not yet” of salvation. Rather, both authors reserve the term to designate the final aspects of salvation that will come to believers after their resurrection from the dead. This is consistent with the sense of Daniel 12:2, the OT text that both Paul and Luke allude to when they use the term.

### *Paul’s Use of “Eternal Life”*

Paul uses the term nine times in his letters. Seven of the nine instances plainly refer to final salvation. In Romans 2:7, “eternal life” is juxtaposed to “wrath” and both are measured out “on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment is revealed” (2:5). In Romans 5:21, “eternal life” is the final outworking of grace and righteousness. Similarly, in Romans 6:22–23, eternal life is not a comprehensive term for salvation. Rather, it is the culminating result—the τέλος—of conversion, spiritual fruit, and sanctification. In Galatians 6:8, “eternal life” is the product of a life carried out in the Spirit, as opposed to the “corruption” that ultimately results from a life carried out in the flesh. In 1 Timothy 6:12, Timothy is already a believer, yet he must persevere to the end to obtain eternal life. In Titus 3:7, Paul distinguishes the grace of justification in the present from “the hope of eternal life” in the future.<sup>17</sup>

Two of Paul’s nine uses are perhaps open to debate: 1 Timothy 1:16 and Titus 1:2. In 1 Timothy 1:16, Paul acknowledges “I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.” It is not immediately clear from context if “eternal life” carries the sense of final salvation in context. But the term is used in a “not yet” sense at the end of the letter, in 6:12. And both instances culminate in references to Jesus as the immortal King (1:17; 6:15–16), which strongly suggests that the term at the end of the letter carries the same weight as the beginning of the letter.<sup>18</sup> Titus 1:2 could perhaps be liable to debate as well except for the fact that Paul links “eternal life” with hope in both Titus 1:2; 3:7, and explicitly ties that hope to Jesus’ return in 2:13.

This survey suggests that the apostle Paul reserved “eternal life” to designate final salvation.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, we have good reason to understand the term the same way in Acts

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<sup>16</sup> Y. R. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1962) 553, explicitly states the assumption: “‘Life eternal’ does not refer only to the heavenly life to come.”

<sup>17</sup> Paul repeatedly connects the concept of hope to Christ’s second coming and the resurrection of believers (e.g. Rom 5:2; 8:20, 24–25; Gal 5:5; Col 1:5, 23; 1 Thess 2:19; 4:13; 5:8).

<sup>18</sup> Other reasons to see “eternal life” as exclusively final salvation in 1 Timothy 1:16 include 1) Paul’s overall emphasis on perseverance throughout the letter and the other Pastoral Epistles, and 2) conceptually parallel passages in 2 Timothy that tie kingdom language—rare features in the Pauline letters—to Christ’s return (2 Tim 4:1–8, 18).

<sup>19</sup> Given this conclusion about Paul’s epistles, I cannot agree with F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 266, when he asserts that “In Paul’s teaching [eternal life] is Christ’s own risen life shared by him with those who are united to him by faith.” I would suggest that John’s use of the term in his Gospel influences how Bruce sees the apostle Paul’s use of the term in his epistles.

13:46.<sup>20</sup> But Luke is the one using the term in Acts 13:48. Does Luke demonstrably use the term in the same way as Paul? This question leads us to survey the use of the term in Luke's writings.

### *Luke's Use of "Eternal Life"*

Luke uses the term five times. Two of the instances are in question, in Acts 13:46, 48. The remaining three instances then occur in Luke's Gospel. In the first two instances, a learned Jew comes to Jesus with the question, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"<sup>21</sup> And Jesus responds, not with a presentation of the Four Spiritual Laws or a call to repent and believe, but with a reaffirmation of the requirements of the Law. If Jesus (and Luke) intend for the term "eternal life" to carry the sense of "forgiveness of sins" or "justification" in these instances, then proponents of justification by faith should be squirming in their seats at these passages. Jesus would seem to be teaching that people can earn forgiveness and righteousness before God by obeying the Law.

It is then far more likely that Jesus uses the term in the same sense as Daniel 12:2: to designate the final salvation of God's people after their resurrection from the dead. This is confirmed by Luke's final inclusion of "eternal life" in Luke 18:30. There Jesus encourages his disciples that those who have left houses or human relationships will "receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life." Jesus distinguishes between "this time," and "the age to come." He distinguishes between the "already" and the "not yet" aspects of salvation for the disciples and assigns eternal life exclusively to the "not yet."<sup>22</sup> So then, Luke, in recording the words of Jesus, never intends the term "eternal life" to encompass all of salvation.<sup>23</sup>

We can conclude then that both Paul and Luke reserve the term "eternal life" to designate the final aspects of salvation for believers. This is in keeping with the sense of the term in Daniel 12:2.

So then the Calvinist conclusion that Acts 13:48 necessarily entails unconditional election is a false theological conclusion based on faulty exegetical and theological premises.

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<sup>20</sup> Additionally, taking the term to designate final salvation fits the context of Acts well. True, the precise term "eternal life" is not used outside of chapter 13. However, Paul hints at final eschatological realities in Acts 13 when he speaks of Jesus rising from the dead and never returning to "corruption" (v. 30–37; cf. 1 Cor 15:53–54), as well as the term "perish" (ἀφανίσθητε) in the Habakkuk citation (v. 41; cf. Peter G. Bolt, "Mission and Witness," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* [ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998] 205–207). Later in Acts, Paul's main appeal to the Jews is that his "Christian" message—in line with the OT Messianic hope—hinges on his belief in "the resurrection of the just and the unjust" (24:15–21; cf. 23:6–10; 26:6–8; 28:20).

<sup>21</sup> In Greek the questions are verbatim: τί ποιήσας ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω (Lk 10:25; 18:18).

<sup>22</sup> Otherwise Jesus would again be implying that people could gain forgiveness with God and righteousness before him by doing good works—by abandoning their homes and relationships to earn God's favor. And again, Protestants would be obliged to squirm.

<sup>23</sup> A broader survey of the Synoptics only confirms the conclusion we have drawn about the meaning of the term. Matthew and Mark contain their own account of the ruler's conversation with Jesus and Jesus' resulting conversation with his disciples. Both retain the eschatological distinctions Jesus makes in Luke's account (Mt 19:16–30; Mk 10:17–31). Further, Matthew contains at least two passages that record Jesus explicitly alluding to Daniel 12:2 (Matthew 18:8; 25:46).

Acts 13:48 does not necessarily entail that God appointed specific sinners to be regenerated and have faith. In the terms of systematic theology, it is not a predestination to grace. Rather, Acts 13:48 indicates that God appoints specific individuals to glory—and does not specify the basis of God’s appointing those individuals for glory.

On the one hand, Calvinists could argue (bringing in other texts and theological presuppositions) that God elects those individuals to glory unconditionally, that is, apart from the basis of foreseen faith.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Acts 13:48 could also be understood with the classical Arminian theological paradigm as God choosing individuals for glory based on his foreknowledge of their faith. A firm conclusion depends on exegetical and theological presuppositions beyond those indicated in Acts 13:48.<sup>25</sup> Our exegetical and theological understanding of the rest of the NT will significantly affect how we understand Acts 13:48. This leads us to the next section. Let’s examine two theological implications of our study.

### THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

First, Acts 13:48 invites us to regularly filter NT soteriological terms through the paradigm of inaugurated eschatology. In other words, when we come to terms like “eternal life” or “salvation” or “redemption” or “entering the kingdom of God” in the NT, we should develop an instinct to ask questions such as, “Does this term refer to salvation comprehensively? Or is there something in the context that would indicate this term refers exclusively to the ‘already’ or to the ‘not yet?’” We should instinctively examine soteriological terms this way.

Some terms will take on a clear “already” or a “not yet” nuance. For instance, Paul says in Colossians 1:14 that in Christ we have “redemption” and “the forgiveness of sins,” it seems clear that we possess those salvation blessings already at conversion. But when Paul says in Romans 8:23 that “we wait eagerly for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies,” it is clear from the context that Paul uses these terms to refer to the “not yet” aspects of final salvation.<sup>26</sup>

Maintaining the eschatological distinctions between the “already” and the “not yet” helps explain many passages that otherwise may appear problematic for Christian doctrine and living. I have already mentioned the words of Jesus to the ruler in Luke 18:18–30. Another example is Paul’s words in Philippians 2:12–13 for the Philippian Christians to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

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<sup>24</sup> Recent Calvinist interpreters have not communicated the doctrine of unconditional election as a predestination to final salvation. Rather, they have articulated unconditional election as the vehicle that brings sinners to faith. This seems to represent a notable shift in emphasis from how Calvin, those who formed the Westminster Confession, Francis Turretin, and even Lorraine Boettner have articulated the doctrine.

<sup>25</sup> Klein, *New Chosen People*, 96, notes this.

<sup>26</sup> Many instances will not be as clear as Romans 8:23. At times it may even be impossible to tell if there is an “already” or a “not yet” nuance. But if we’ve never asked these questions of these terms, this approach can yield new insights into the scriptures and into the Christian life.

If the salvation that Paul speaks of here is that of conversion, this text would seem to conflict with his emphasis on justification by faith elsewhere. But if Paul means “salvation” here in the sense of final salvation, there is no contradiction with his emphasis on justification by faith. We truly do work out our final salvation as God works in us through his Spirit for his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12–13 is a potentially confusing or problematic passage that I believe the distinctions of inaugurated eschatology help explain. And there are numerous other passages we could examine and explain in this way.

The bottom line is that we should not assume every salvation term refers only to conversion, or to salvation considered comprehensively. We should look for eschatological nuance. This is the first implication of this paper.

The second implication is especially for those concerned with the Calvinism debate. Those who are concerned with Calvinism should keep the focus of the debate on scripture. This may seem obvious, but in the face of the bold exegetical claims of some Calvinist interpreters, it is tempting for non-Calvinists to retreat to theological or philosophical arguments to the neglect of exegetical ones. I do not want to discount theological or philosophical arguments for a non-Calvinist or Arminian view. Yet I am convinced that the way forward in the debate is for non-Calvinists to further develop exegetical arguments. We should aim to explain texts like Acts 13:48 better than Calvinists can explain those texts. We can and should own Romans 9–11. We can and should own Ephesians 1 and other texts. When we can articulate a compelling response to every proof text in the Calvinist model, we may have arrived. Jack Cottrell, William Klein, and others have blazed the trail in this direction. Yet I believe we have further to go. This is the second implication of this paper.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Acts 13:48 has posed problems for non-Calvinist interpreters and has been a favorite proof text for Calvinists espousing unconditional election. While some non-Calvinists suggest a change in translation, I find that suggestion unpersuasive for contextual reasons. However, I have attempted to show that even a predestinarian reading of Acts 13:48 does not entail the doctrine of unconditional election. This is true because the election of Acts 13:48 is not to faith, but to final salvation. It is not a predestination to grace, but a predestination to glory. And this verse does not specify the basis on which individuals are elected or predestined to that final salvation. While Calvinists may claim God’s mysterious decree as the absolute cause of election in Acts 13:48, Arminians can also appeal to an election based on foreseen faith. Practically speaking, Acts 13:48 invites us to filter soteriological terms through an inaugurated eschatology paradigm, and focuses the Calvinist debate on exegetical matters.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> I would like to thank Mary Ellen (Lantzer) Pereira for her suggestions during the writing and editing of this paper.