

Answers to Popular Objections Against the Doctrines of Grace

- ***“I don’t believe in election because for God to choose some and exclude others would make him unfair.”***

Biblical Response.

God deals with people in two ways. To some he gives mercy and to others he gives justice. To nobody does he give injustice. We must remember that God was under no obligation to save anyone. If God were to give everyone what he or she deserved, we would all be eternally damned. Let’s say there are one hundred men on death row. You are a powerful judge who has the right and the means to pardon men on death row. You are also able to take care of them and turn them into upright citizens. You decide that you’re going to show mercy. You are going to show an act of kindness to these death deserving prisoners. So you go and exert your power and authority, releasing twenty-five of these men. Could I say to you, *“Hey, that’s not fair. These other seventy five men deserve to be released also.”*? The answer is no! That would not be a true statement. The amazing thing would be that the twenty-five were released from their death penalty, not that the seventy-five were left to suffer the consequences of justice. This is what God does in election. All of us are on death row. We have all committed treason. For God to chose some and leaves the rest to justice is not unfair, it is marvelously merciful! The question is why would he save some in the first place.

- ***“I don’t believe in election because God is a gentleman and would not violate my freewill.”***

Biblical Response.

The *Bible* does not teach a neutral will. The *Bible* speaks of the human will as being enslaved to sin. It is free only in that it can sin freely. If God were to leave it to our will, not a single person would come to him (Rom. 3: 11). We should therefore rejoice in the fact that God intervenes.

- ***“If a certain number are chosen for salvation, that would mean that there’s no use in spreading the gospel or praying for the unsaved.”***

Biblical Response.

In order to become saved, the elect must first hear the gospel message. This is the job that the church is privileged to have. If God has ordained someone to be saved, he has also ordained that they should hear the gospel, believe, and repent. Only God knows whom all of his elect are. This is not our business. Our job is to faithfully spread the gospel and pray for the unsaved. God through our witnessing and prayers works to change the hearts of whom he will. God not only foreordains the ends, but also the means.

- ***“Teaching people that we cannot lose our salvation will encourage them to live in and enjoy the pleasure of sin.”*** A true child of God will realize how untrue this statement is. When we become saved, we are a new creature (2 Cor. 5: 17, 18). A child of God has been given a new soul that causes severe conflict within his own personality when he sins. The true believer finds his highest pleasure in obedience to God. It is therefore impossible for a

born-from-above believer to live as the unsaved person he was before he became a new creature in Christ. If we truly love him, we will keep his commandments (John 14: 15, 21).

- ***“I don’t believe that Christ died for only the elect because the Bible says that God loves the “world” and wants “all” to come to repentance.”***

Biblical Response

The word “world” in Scripture commonly means only some men in the world. Look up the following verses:

- ❖ ***Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.*** Every human being on the planet was not under the rule of Caesar. The word “world” in this verse clearly means the Roman Empire.
- ❖ ***John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.*** If “world” meant every individual in this verse, we would have to conclude that there was nobody on the planet that was a believer. But we know that some men did believe on him.
- ❖ ***1 John 5:19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*** This cannot mean every individual because we know there are many true believers in the world that are not under the power of the wicked one.
- ❖ ***John 8:26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.*** Was Jesus speaking to every person in the world? No. Only a few Jews heard him speak.
- ❖ ***John 12:19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him.*** Did the Pharisees mean that every person in the world was following Jesus? No. This can only mean most of the Jewish nation had gone after him. Now let’s look at some passages that are used to teach that Christ died for every human being.
- ❖ ***1 John 2:1-2 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*** To understand this verse, we must remember to whom it was that John was writing. Yes, the scriptures are for the whole church, but here John was writing especially to Jews. We know that John was an apostle to the Jews (the circumcision) from Galatians 2: 9. We can also see this in 1 John 2:7. He is writing to those who had previously heard God’s word. We know that God’s word came to the Jew first (Rom. 1: 16). The Jewish nation was under the opinion that their nation alone was God’s people. John is concerned with preventing Jewish Christians from falling into the error of supposing that they were the only Christians. Christ made atonement for all of his elect which are scattered throughout the world. He did not die for Jews only, but for people from every nation and tongue (John 11: 52). This verse does not teach a doctrine of Christ dying for each and every man.

❖ ***John 3:16 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.*** This verse has been used more than any other to try to prove that Jesus died for everyone in the world. Look at the verse closely. God loved the world, his creation; therefore, he gave his only begotten son so that those of this world who believe on him should not perish. The declaration, “*that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,*” automatically excludes the rest! God did not send his son for those who will not believe. The Bible tells us who will believe. It is all of God’s elect. “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and he that cometh I will in no wise cast out.*” (John 6: 37) The rest shall perish because of their sins. If we were to conclude that Christ paid for everyone’s sins we would not be in agreement with the Bible that a great company of people will pay for their sins in hell.

❖ ***1 John 4:14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*** Christ is called the Saviour of the world because there is no other Saviour for any in the world (Acts 4: 12) and he alone saves all that are saved, all over the world. Obviously, he cannot be called the Saviour of the world because he has actually saved everyone – for he has not.

There are many other scripture passages containing the word “*world*”, but we will stop here. We must remember to see how God uses a word in the Bible. We must let the Bible be it’s own dictionary. We cannot assume that a word means something without comparing it to other scriptures. Now, let’s look at some passages containing the words “*all men*” or “*every man*”.

❖ ***1 Timothy 2:4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*** We know that God does whatever he pleases (Psalm 115: 3). So if “*all men*” means the whole human race, then everyone is saved. If not, then God has failed in his purpose. We know that neither of these conclusions is true. From other passages in the Bible it is plain that God does not will that the whole human race should come to knowledge of the truth (Psalm 147: 19, 20); Matthew 11: 25, 26; Acts 14: 16; Colossians 1: 26; Acts 17: 30). 1 Timothy 2: 4-6 can only mean some men of all sorts.

❖ ***2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*** Here the apostle is speaking to “*us*”. Who are these? In his first letter they are called the “*elect*” (1 Peter 1: 2) and “*purchased people*” (1 Peter 2: 9). In the second letter they are called “*the beloved*” (2 Peter 3: 1), the ones who received great and precious promises (2 Peter 1: 4) and are distinguished from scoffers (2 Peter 3: 3). It is clear that this verse means that it is all and only his elect whom he would not have perish.

❖ ***Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*** Let’s look closely at Hebrews 2 to see who is meant by “*every*”

man". They are many sons (v. 10), the sanctified (v. 11), his brethren (v. 11), the children God gave him (v. 13), and those who are delivered (v. 15). Since none of these descriptions can apply to those who remain in unbelief, "every man" here cannot mean the whole human race. When looking at verses such as these we must look at them in the light of the whole Bible. In Revelation 5: 9 and Revelation 7: 9, John uses "world" as a global perspective of people from every nation and tongue. John 11: 49 speaks of the elect who are scattered throughout the "whole world". In John 6: 37 we see the "all" that God does not wish to perish. They are "all" of the elect throughout the "whole world".

- ***"Election simply means that God knew beforehand who would believe on him and chose these for salvation (Romans 8: 29).***

Biblical Response.

If you have any understanding of the natural man, as taught in the Bible, you'll understand why this cannot be true. A corpse cannot believe and we are spiritually dead. There's none that seeks after God (Rom. 3: 11). If God simply looked ahead to see who would believe on him he would have found no one. We could stop the argument right there, but we'll look at some scripture containing the words "know" and "knew".

- ❖ ***Amos 3:2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.*** Does this verse mean that God was ignorant of all other nations except for Israel? No. It means he knew Israel in a special way.
- ❖ ***2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.***
- ❖ ***1 Corinthians 8:3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.*** Do these verses mean that God is ignorant of all those who are not his? No. It means he regards those who are his with a special favor or love.
- ❖ ***Matthew 7: 23 Will the Lord tell people to depart from him because he was not aware of their existence?*** No. It is because he never "knew" them intimately, in a saving way. The word "foreknow" adds the thought of "beforehand" to the word "know". Many times in scripture the word "know" means far more than intellectual awareness. It often means love, to set regard upon, affection, etc. (Gen. 18: 19; Exodus 2: 25; Psalm 1: 6; 144: 3; Jer. 1: 5; Hosea 13: 5; 1 John 3: 1). In Romans 8: 29, it does not say that God knew something about certain individuals (that they would do this or that), but it says that God knew the individuals themselves. The word "foreknow" is equivalent to "foreloved". Also, in Acts 13: 48, we read "... as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Nowhere does the Bible teach that as many as believed were ordained to eternal life! The only reason a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is because he was foreordained.

Special Note

Some of the arguments against statement number five in this section can be found (along with many others) in the book *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, by John Owen. It is available from the Banner of Truth Trust P.O. Box 621, Carlisle, PA 17013. Although much more could be written on these great biblical truths, I trust that I've set forth enough evidence to show that God alone does the work of salvation apart from anything in or of man. These doctrines are of utmost importance because it is a matter of spiritual life or death. Are you trusting in a work that you've done? Do you believe that Christ has done ninety nine percent of the work and that one percent is left up to you? If so, you do not believe in the salvation plan of the Bible. God gets no less than one hundred percent of the credit for salvation.

Someone reading this might be thinking "*But I remember a day when I did answer the call to salvation. I did believe on Christ and my life did change.*" If you're truly saved, let me say that, yes, you did believe. God did not believe for you. But the only reason you did believe was that God changed your heart first. He gets all the glory.

Others reading this might be saying "I really do want to be saved. I do want Christ as my Saviour, but what if I'm not one of God's elect?" First of all there will be absolutely no one on judgment day that will be able to say to Christ, "*I sought you with all my heart, but it was no use. I wasn't one of the chosen.*" This is an impossibility. The promises of the Bible are true. Those who truly seek Christ will surely find him. Those who believe on him will be saved. If you are not born again or are unsure of your salvation, cry to the Lord for mercy like the publican in Luke 18: 13. If you do this with a broken and a contrite heart it is evidence that the Lord is at work in you. "*And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*" (Rev. 22: 17) Just remember that whosoever comes does so because he is one of God's elect.

I once heard a pastor tell a story about a Methodist woman who was faithfully reading and studying her Bible. She kept coming across those passages that deal with election, the elect, and God choosing. Now, of course, the Methodist church doesn't believe much about election so she hadn't been taught anything about it. One day she decided she would go next door and ask her neighbor, the Baptist preacher, to explain election to her

"*I think I can help you*" said the preacher. Then he asked the woman if she was saved. "*Well, yes, I am*" she answered. "*Who saved you?*" asked the preacher. "*God did*" replied the woman, "*God saved me.*" "*Are you sure?*" "*Yes, I'm sure God saved me*" answered the woman. "*Well,*" said the preacher, "*Did you help him save you or did he save you all by himself?*" "*Oh no, he saved me all by himself*" she replied. "*Now, I have one more question for you. Did God do that on purpose or did he kind of do it by accident?*" "*I guess he did it on purpose*" exclaimed the woman. The preacher said, "*That's election.*"

One time a man went up to the great English preacher Charles Spurgeon and said, "*Mr. Spurgeon, I've read my Bible through twenty times on my knees and I haven't found the doctrine of election once.*" Spurgeon replied, "*No wonder, reading in such an uncomfortable position at such a fast pace, it's a wonder you've noticed anything in the book! May I suggest that you sit down and read more slowly.*"