

The Mystery Of Salvation By God's Grace Alone

What makes one sinner come to Christ and another flee from Him? Is there some goodness in one sinner but not the other? Or is it all the grace and mercy of God?

1 Corinthians 4:7 - For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

Romans 9:11 - 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;

Psalms 65:4 - Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

I believe we have the ability to choose, but only choose according to our nature. Give a lion a bowl of grass and a bowl of meat and ask him to choose. I believe according to his nature he will always choose the bowl of meat. Likewise, a spiritually dead sinner will always choose according to *his* nature. Give him a works gospel or Christ, and he will always choose the works gospel, until and unless he be regenerated! An unregenerated man may choose Christ but it will invariably be a Christ who needs the sinner's help, as it was with me and my Catholic Jesus. One of the best word-pictures of salvation that I have found in scripture is found in the book of Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 36:26 - "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

The above passage describes a supernatural work of God, with zero mention of any participation from the sinner. The bible explains why we reject the Lord Jesus Christ, the real Jesus that is. Again it is because of our unregenerated, fallen, spiritually dead and bankrupt nature:

Romans 3:11 - There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Romans 8:7&8 - Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are

in the flesh cannot please God.

It is the new creature in Christ that wants the real Jesus and it is that NEW NATURE that is able and willing and anxious to worship Him in spirit and in truth. To claim that an unsaved person can accept the real Christ of their own free will is to say that the lost sinner is better than God says he is. God graphically describes an UNregenerated soul in Isaiah 59:

59:1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:
2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.
3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.
4 None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.
5 They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.
6 Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.
7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.
8 The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.
9 Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.
10 We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men.
11 We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us.
12 For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them;

I'll give you the salvation formula for the REAL Gospel:

1. The sinner provides the sin.
2. God provides the preacher.
3. The preacher preaches the law of God to the dead sinner.
4. The Holy Spirit uses the preaching of the law of God to convict the sinner.
5. In God's time, the Holy Spirit converts the spiritually dead sinner.... the dry bones come to life... so then the sinner, by an act of God's unmerited favor and apart from any participation whatsoever, the dead sinner is raised to life by

the miracle of regeneration.

The sinner will THEN come to Christ - because now he is no longer lame, blind, deaf, dumb or naked. He is now clothed in the righteousness of Christ and he now has eyes to see and ears to hear. He is now ABLE to hear the Shepherd's voice and he now has the DESIRE to follow Him.

This is the true Gospel. It is not some man-centered gospel that puts the sinner in the driver's seat and God at his mercy waiting to be invited into the sinner's corrupt sin-filled heart. My Jesus only occupies a new heart, the heart of flesh, the one that He HIMSELF puts in after He removes the heart of stone, and that only after the preacher preaches and the Spirit convicts.

Do I know why God chose me and not others?

No. All I know is what He told me in His Word...

1. that He predestinated me to be saved from before the foundation of the world.
2. that He adopted me into His family, that I could become part of the Bride of Christ.
3. that He desires to have a people for Himself (a Bride for His son) to worship the Son for all eternity.
4. that He predestinates the elect "according to His good pleasure", though I may not fully comprehend what that means.
5. that it had nothing to do with me choosing Christ while others walked away.
6. that He saves some to display His grace and mercy to the world.
7. that He damns others to display His justice and hatred for sin to the world.

This salvation plan outlined above allows God to be the potter.

The false free-will gospel does not. Calvinism (i.e. the Doctrines of Grace, election, predestination and all that) IS the gospel, even if we don't fully understand every facet of it, such as limited atonement. I believe the atonement has to be limited, to the elect. There is no way that Jesus could have died for every single person and yet some people will still end up in hell. Either their sins were paid for by Christ OR they have to pay for them themselves in hell. Do I fully understand the propitiatory nature of the work of Christ on the cross? No. Does anyone? I do know that Jesus fully satisfied divine justice for all the sins of all His people on the cross. That is a must for the elect to be in the clear at the bar of God's justice. And I have no problem with verses like John 3:16. I do have problems with people adding words to those verses so that they can interpret it to mean "for God so loved every single person who ever lived or ever will be born". It does not say that but most people interpret it that way. God didn't love the Philistines, the people of Sodom or the people of Noah's day (other than Noah's family). But that does not stop the free-will preachers from inventing their own "friendlier" gospel. Psalm 5:5, Psalm 5:11 and plenty of other Bible verses make it quite clear that God does not love everybody.

What about all the verses that seem to counter these arguments?

Mr. Jim Riscinti came up with an interesting chart a while back that does address some of the “questionable” verses. You might want to check it out:

“Salvation Is Of God”.

What about all those Bible verses that seem to indicate that we have a free will to choose Christ?

Sure, a person can find verses that seem to contradict the verses relating to the doctrines of grace. But once we turn over the “sovereignty” baton to the Potter (God), we will be able to harmonize those seemingly contradictory verses with the verses that undeniably proclaim God’s complete sovereignty in salvation. For example, in Acts 7:51:

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

This quote cannot be interpreted to mean “you always resist and always succeed in overpowering the Holy Spirit of God”.

No man can overpower God. If God wants to save someone, He will, and that person will most definitely have a Damascus experience, even if they are currently on the road to round up and kill Christians. John Gill, who is reformed (Calvinistic in his theology), clarifies many of these confusing passages. For example:

ye do always resist the Holy Ghost;

“The resistance made by these persons was not to the Spirit of God in them, of which they were destitute, but to the Spirit of God in his ministers, in his apostles, and particularly in Stephen; nor to any internal operation of his grace, but to the external ministry of the word, and to all that objective light, knowledge, evidence, and conviction that it gave of Jesus’s being the Messiah: and such who resist Christ’s ministers, resist him, and such who resist him, may be said to resist his Holy Spirit; and the word here used signifies a rushing against, and falling upon, in a rude and hostile way, and fitly expresses their ill treatment of Christ and his ministers, by falling upon them and putting them to death: which is the resistance here designed, as appears by the following verse: so that this passage is no proof of the resistance of the Holy Spirit, and the operations of his grace in conversion, when he is in men, and acts with a purpose and will to convert them; since it does not appear that he was in these persons, and was acting in them, with a design to convert

them; and if he was, it will be difficult to prove that they so resisted, and continued to resist, as that they were not hereafter converted; since it is certain that one of them, Saul, was really and truly converted, and how many more we know not. Though it will be allowed, that the Holy Ghost in the operations of his grace upon the heart in conversion may be resisted, that is, opposed; but not so as to be overcome or be hindered in, or be obliged to cease from, the work of conversion, insomuch that may come to nothing.” - John Gill Commentary On The Bible

If a person really wants to cling to “their” sovereignty in salvation, I realize that no amount of reasoning from the scriptures will dissuade them. I also realize that years and years of free-will preaching and teaching has heavily influenced and biased many a Christian into thinking that all the anti-election (i.e. resistible grace, etc.) arguments are entirely valid and rock-solid... like the one that says if God is sovereign in salvation then we are just puppets. I personally don't mind being clay in the Potter's hands. I am eternally grateful that He decided to make me a vessel of mercy. If I was left to my self, I would still be on the road to perdition. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! Thanks be to God that He took out my heart of stone and gave me a heart of flesh. Thanks be to God that HE made me “willing in the day of His power” (Psalm 110:3). How about you? Are YOU still taking the credit for turning to God when YOU had nothing to do with it... when it was HE who TURNED you?

Psalm 80:3 - “Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

Psalm 80:7 - “Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

Where did Calvinism come from?

John Calvin's writings regarding election and predestination were just his REPLY to heresy - to the 5 points of Arminianism that were condemned as heresy at the synod of Dort church council:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synod_of_Dort

Are the 5 points of Calvinism in the Bible? I believe they most certainly are, but not all lined up in a row, nice and neat for use by a Sunday School teacher. Bereans have no trouble finding those doctrines. However, they are quite a bit harder to find for Christians who have heard opposing arguments for decades. I myself had to unlearn a bit of bad doctrine in the process of seriously studying election and predestination in the Bible. Here is the study I put together in or around 1996:

“Who Accepts Whom?”

Are there opposing or contradicting bible verses to limited atonement and

total depravity, etc.? While there appear to be many such verses, at some point the believer has to be content with God's declarations about Himself, that He is INDEED sovereign in ALL things (including salvation):

"all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"
- Daniel 4:35

When you allow God to be sovereign, then you can look at apparent contradictions in the light of verses that clear up the confusion. If a person does NOT understand the sovereignty of God, the full extent of it, then they will most definitely draw the wrong conclusions about a lot of bible verses. By the way, ALL these highly respected theologians and Bible scholars believed that Calvinism was a biblical summary of legitimate Bible doctrines:

"Famous Calvinists"

I don't know about you but I think the above dead guys were far less ignorant of the Bible and far more knowledgeable than today's free-will "scholars". Is the word trinity in the Bible? No. But just about all true Christians agree it is taught by the bible. Unfortunately - as I see it - the church has been dumbed-down by dumbed-down pastors from dumbed-down bible colleges and seminaries who are taught almost nothing about church history, the puritans, the reformers and the great preachers, teachers and theologians of the past. The way so many churches are run nowadays, it looks as if the bible schools are training people to "market" Christianity, rather than preach the gospel and make disciples. Have you ever been in a church that teaches even a handful of the subjects listed here:

"Words They Never Taught Me In Sunday School"

In closing, I will end with this bible verse, that I believe is a word-picture of our inability to come to Christ of our own free-will:

Jeremiah 13:23 - "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil."
