

Predestination And Free-Will

What Is Meant By ALL, THE WORLD, Etc.?

A great deal of confusion about the issue of man having a free will to receive Christ is caused by the use of the words 'all', 'whosoever' and 'world'. These terms come up in the verses that many people try to use to justify the idea of a 'free' will. We will see that Bible writers use these words to point out, primarily to Jewish believers, that the Gentiles – people of all nations – are now to be included in God's plan of salvation. This idea was something that many of the early Jewish believers did not understand and so the New Testament writers sought to point this out to them repeatedly. Careful examination of scripture verifies this claim:

Romans 10:13 – “For **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

At first glance this verse looks like anybody and everybody can be saved UNTIL we look at the verse immediately preceding it:

Romans 10:12 – “For there is no difference between **the Jew and the Greek**: for the same Lord over all is rich unto **all** that call upon him.”

That is, God plans to save both Jews AND Gentiles. There are many other verses that can be confusing if taken out of context such as shown here:

2 Corinthians 5:15 – “And that **he died for all**, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

The confusion is cleared up if we read further:

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 – “18 And **all things are of God**, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that **God** was in Christ, **reconciling** the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Obviously in verse 19, God was not saying that He would not impute trespasses to anybody at all in the entire world, but rather He had to be speaking of the elect – both Jews and Gentiles. The fact that a verse says “whosoever” or “all” does not negate scriptures like John 6:44 which says that no one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him or Romans 9:15 which says that God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. God does not contradict Himself. So when we see a verse like:

2Peter 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.”

we know it must mean that God desires that none of **His elect** should perish, especially when we look at the verse in context. Because then we will see that two verses above (i.e. in verse 7), God is planning to destroy ungodly men, which makes verse 9 (i.e. not willing that any should perish) sound like a contradiction to what was stated in verse 7:

2Peter 3:7 – “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, **reserved unto fire** against the day of judgment and perdition of **ungodly men**.”

Since God does not contradict Himself, we know that when we read 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.”

the phrase “for God so loved *the world*” must mean that God loves people (His elect) from all nations, a point that is made in Revelation chapter 5:

Revelation 5:9 – “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood **out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation**”.

It is also important to note in John 3:16, the ones who will end up “believing in him” are those whom God converts into new creatures in Christ. They won’t believe in one that they don’t yet know.

Charles Spurgeon, in a sermon on particular Redemption, had some additional light to shed on this issue of how words like “all” and “world” are used in scripture:

“... “the **world** has gone after him” (John 12:19). Did all the world go after Christ? “then went **all** Judea, and were baptized of him in Jordan” (Matt 3:5). Was all Judea, or all Jerusalem, baptized in Jordan? “Ye are of God, little children”, and the whole **world** lieth in the wicked one” (1John 5:19). Does the whole world there mean everybody? The words “world” and “all” are used in some seven or eight senses in Scripture, and it is very rarely the “all” means all persons, taken individually. The words are generally used to signify that Christ has redeemed some of all sorts — some Jews, some Gentiles, some rich, some poor, and has not restricted His redemption to either Jew or Gentile ...”.
[Charles Spurgeon]

Summary: This article is a section of a much larger article on the Bible doctrines of Election and Predestination called “Who accepts Whom?”. You are urged to check out that larger article for many other thought provoking questions pertaining these “Doctrines of Grace”. — *RM Kane*

