

REVIEW:

According to the Bible, no one has the ability or the desire to seek God (in theology we call this total depravity - see notes on 1/9/12). Therefore, for anyone to be saved, God must exercise grace, intervene in that person's life, and draw them to Himself. This drawing is called "irresistible grace" for *all* who the Father draws come to Him; none can resist (see notes on 1/16/12). Of course, it is logical that if *God* is the One who draws *us*, then *He* must choose who He will draw. This choosing is called "unconditional election,"

Unconditional election means that "from all eternity God decided to save some members of the human race and to let the rest of the human race perish. God made a choice – He chose some individuals to be saved unto everlasting blessedness in heaven, and He chose others to pass over, allowing them to suffer the consequences of their sins, eternal punishment in hell. He chooses based on His good pleasure who will receive grace and who will not." (R.C. Sproul).

Piper comments of the "unconditional" aspect of election. He says, "Election . . . is unconditional in that there is no condition man *must* meet before God chooses to save him. Man is dead in trespasses and sins, so there is no condition he *can* meet before God chooses to save him from his deadness.

Unconditional election does not mean that salvation is unconditional. It is not. We must meet the condition of faith in Christ in order to inherit eternal life. But faith is not a condition for election - it is just the reverse - election is the condition for faith." (John Piper. © Desiring God. Website: desiringGod.org).

Although it is my belief that these truths are clearly taught in the Bible, some people think that the belief in election leads to a number of insurmountable difficulties. They ask: How can God be just or how can He be loving? These are the two main questions we want to address in our study together.

IF GOD ONLY CHOOSES SOME PEOPLE TO BE SAVED, DOESN'T THIS MAKE GOD UNJUST OR UNFAIR?

One of the more frequently heard objections to unconditional election is that if God treats people differently, that is, if He gives salvation to some but not to others, then God isn't just or fair. But this is surely a strange way of defining justice or fairness. Justice takes place when a person is given what he deserves. Fairness is treating all people equally with the same standard. If you are indebted to me, one could hardly say I was unjust if I demanded that you pay what is owed. And if you didn't pay me, justice demands that you suffer consequences. And if you owe me it is fair to demand justice.

Considering that all men are sinners, indebted to God, and deserving of punishment, we shouldn't conclude that God is unjust for NOT SAVING everyone; if anything, we should conclude that God would be unjust if He let our sin go unpunished.

This is why the death of Christ is so necessary. The Bible says that God made Christ a substitution for our sin (II Cor. 5:21). Christ's death satisfied the demands of the law, so that we could be justified (declared righteous). In other words, the death of Christ was necessary because it would be unjust for God to ignore the consequences of sin. The punishment had to be delivered for God to be just. Romans 3:24-26

tells us that Christ's death demonstrated the righteousness of God for it showed that a proper payment for sin had been made for sinners, that the demands of the law were satisfied, and that God is just in declaring sinners righteous if they accept Christ's sacrifice as payment for their sins (See notes on Ro. 3:24-26 @ www.gracefellowshiphawaii.org > Resource Library > Biblical Studies > Romans 3:21-31).

Therefore, the doctrine of election does not infringe upon God's justice. God would be completely just if He sent all men to hell, for that is the proper punishment for our willful rebellion against Him.

Furthermore, election doesn't mean that God is unfair to the non-elect, for those who He allows to go the way of their own choosing are simply reaping the consequences of their actions.

God isn't under obligation to save anyone, so if He decides to save some, it is simply a free act of His mercy and grace. It should not startle us that God did not choose to save all mankind, but that He saved any. The "marvel of marvels" says Benjamin Warfield "is how the holy God could get the consent of his [holy] nature to save a single sinner."

By way of illustration let's suppose that God decided not to save anybody but passed by the whole human race leaving them in their condemned, fallen condition, just as He passed by the fallen angels. Could God be called unjust? Of course not. If God is not unjust for passing by all men, then how can He be called unjust if he passes by some? Does the injustice consist in saving some? If God by His grace gives salvation to some, can it be said that God is depriving others of something they deserve?

Those who are saved don't deserve it. They are saved by grace, not by merit. So, does bestowing blessings on people who have no right to them, give others the right to claim the same blessings for themselves? If all men deserve salvation because it is given to one, then as soon as God saved one sinner He would be obligated to save every sinner. In that case God would be paying off an obligation to humanity and no one else would be receiving salvation by grace. In other words, if God owes all men grace, then grace is no longer grace; salvation would be a payment for what is due. Such an idea is absurd. No one would assume that if the governor pardons a criminal he is obligated to pardon all criminals in the state; neither should any assume the same of God.

If we admit that God is just in leaving all men to perish, it follows inevitably that in saving some He isn't doing injustice to those whom He does not save. In other words, if God is just in leaving all to perish, He is not bound to save any and He does no injustice to those whom He does not save.

Some would admit that God is just and fair if he let all perish, but would argue that He would be unloving if election were true. For, they say, if Christ's death is sufficient for all people and if God is all powerful and could save all people, then not to save them would be unloving. In other words, if God loves all people and can save all people, then why doesn't He? The answer (in their minds) must be either that God is unloving, or election cannot be true. This then becomes the topic of our next section of study.