

LBC | Bible Basics 101: God's Purpose of Grace (BFM 2000)

1. The article in the BFM 2000 on God's purpose of grace reads as follows:

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

2. There are a number of passages upon which the above statement is based. Here is a sampling of references:

- A. Deuteronomy 7:6-8: God's election of Israel was and is based upon His love.
- B. Ephesians 1:3-6: God chose us in Jesus before the foundation of the world.
- C. John 10:27-29: God's people are secure in His hand and can never be snatched away.
- D. 2 Timothy 1:12: God is able to keep those who are His until the end of days.

3. There are a few things to be pointed out in the above article:

- A. Southern Baptists believe in the doctrine of election. It is neither right nor good to outright deny the existence of the Bible's teaching on this subject. Many people disagree, sometimes sharply, over the way in which an individual becomes elect. However, there should be no disagreement over whether or not the doctrine of election exists.
- B. Southern Baptists disagree over, and this article is silent on, a few things: in terms of the church is election individual or corporate? Is election based upon God's foreknowledge or is it based upon God's sovereign loving choice? Does faith precede regeneration or does regeneration precede faith? Is God's grace able to be resisted or is it irresistible? In other words, the central questions regarding the ideas of election and predestination are not answered by the BFM 2000.
- C. While there is a broad range of opinions on the subject of election there is agreement on the subject of eternal security in the SBC. In fact, a distinguishing mark among Southern Baptists is their whole-hearted acceptance of the doctrine.

4. There are a few things to keep in mind when thinking through the doctrine of election and eternal security:

- A. We must affirm what the Bible presents to us and embrace it with joy.
- B. We must also keep in mind Deuteronomy 29:29.
- C. We must show much grace to those with whom we might disagree. They are not the enemy.
- D. We need to do a better job of handling Hebrews 2:1-4, 3:7-11, 6:1-12, and 10:26-27.

LBC | Bible Basics 101: The Church (BFM 2000)

1. The article in the BFM 2000 on the church reads as follows:

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

2. There are a number of passages upon which the above statement is based. Here is a sampling of references:

- A. Matthew 16:13-19: Jesus is the head and builder of the church.
- B. Philippians 1:1: Each local church should have two offices: pastor and deacon.
- C. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5: The final “court of appeal” in each local church is the congregation.
- D. 1 Timothy 2:11-14: Only men are qualified to serve in the office of pastor.
- E. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7: Every church member is gifted and called into service for the good of the church.

3. There are a few things to be pointed out in the above article:

- A. The Southern Baptist Convention is not a church. It is a fellowship of churches that have joined themselves together through the gospel, the BFM, and the Cooperative Program. Contrast this with the Orthodox Presbyterian church member who says he is a member of the OPC.
- B. Southern Baptists believe that each local congregation is to be a group of baptized believers. Contrast this with Baptist churches that allow and/or welcome a “sprinkled Presbyterian” into their membership without being immersed.
- C. Southern Baptists, along with most other Baptist groups, lay some sort of stress on the democratic nature of church government. People often refer to this sort of government as congregationalism. It needs to be said that congregationalism is not the same as anarchy. It simply means that each local church is the final court of appeal in matters pertaining to its doctrine and life. There is more to our church conferences than just trying to be organized.
- D. There is pretty much wide-spread agreement among Southern Baptists on the idea that only men are qualified to serve in the office of pastor. There are some Southern Baptist churches that are open to the idea of the deacon body or diaconate being made up of both men and women.
- E. The New Testament speaks of the church in two ways: the local body and the universal body. Since the convention’s conception there have been individuals and groups that have denied, even in a subtle way, the idea of the universal church. These folks identify themselves as Landmark Baptists.

LBC | Bible Basics 101: Baptism & the Lord's Supper (BFM 2000)

1. The article in the BFM 2000 on baptism and the Lord's Supper reads as follows:

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

2. There are a number of passages upon which the above statement is based. Here is a sampling of references:

- A. Acts 2:38: Baptism follows conversion and is an act of obedience.
- B. Romans 6:3-5: Baptism is an outward sign of one's identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
- C. Luke 11:14-20: Jesus institutes what we call the Lord's Table as an act of remembrance.
- D. 1 Corinthians 11:27-34: Self-examination and seriousness should mark every Christians who approaches the table.

3. There are a few things to be pointed out in the above article:

- A. Southern Baptists believe that there are two and only two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Table. Contrast this with other fellowships of churches that add foot-washing to this list. Certain Free-Will Baptist groups along with churches associated with the Grace Brethren movement believe in three ordinances.
- B. Both baptism and the Lord's Table are considered church ordinances. That is, they are practices that should take place when the church is gathered together. Among Southern Baptists "private" baptisms and celebrations of the Lord's Table are usually discouraged.
- C. The BFM 2000 is silent on who may baptize another individual and serve communion. Some individuals believe that only those ordained may administer these ordinances. Others stress that there should be freedom in who baptizes and helps with the Lord's Table.
- D. The BFM 2000 is not silent on who may receive these ordinances. Only those professing faith in Jesus and showing evidence of repentance are to be baptized and celebrate the Lord's Table.
- E. Southern Baptists, along with most other Baptist groups, believe that baptism is to be by immersion only. Sprinkling and pouring water over someone's head are not recognized as valid forms of baptism. Consider Romans 6:3-5 for why baptism needs to be understood as immersion and not sprinkling.
- F. The BFM 2000 specifically states that baptism is to be a prerequisite for celebrating the Lord's Table. Over the years this view has been challenged by some in the convention. This challenge rests upon the fact that there is a lack of exegetical evidence for holding this view with a closed hand. In other words, it is present in Baptist history but not present in the New Testament. In 2012 Lifeway surveyed pastors on this issue and found that only 35% of those surveyed restricted communion to those who have baptized.

LBC | Bible Basics 101: The Lord's Day (BFM 2000)

1. The article in the BFM 2000 on the Lord's Day reads as follows:

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

2. There are a number of passages upon which the above statement is based. Here is a sampling of references:

- A. Mark 2:27-28: Jesus is Lord of and over the Sabbath.
- B. Acts 20:7: The first day of the week is a day of gathering and worship for the church.
- C. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 & Revelation 1:10: The first day of the week came to be known as the Lord's Day.
- D. Colossians 2:16: There is freedom when it comes to the subject of the Sabbath.

3. The above article in the BFM has been revised since 1925 / 1963. Consider the second sentence in the article of the BFM 1925/1963:

It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, and by refraining from worldly amusements, and resting from secular employments, works of necessity and mercy only excepted.

Question: What changes have been made in the BFM 2000?

4. The following cross references are missing from the BFM 2000:

- A. Genesis 2:1-3: A section highlighting God's rest.
- B. Isaiah 58:13-14: A promise of blessing tied to Sabbath keeping
- C. Psalm 92: A psalm historically used in Sabbath worship.

5. There are a few different views on this subject. They are as follows:

- A. Seventh Day Sabbath: This position holds that Saturday is to be observed as the Sabbath per the creation mandate and adherence to the fourth commandment. The resurrection is the key to the loss of ceremonial regulations.
- B. Sunday Sabbath / Christian Sabbath: This position holds that Sunday is to be observed as the Sabbath per adherence to the creation mandate and adherence to the fourth commandment. The resurrection is the key to the change of day and loss of ceremonial regulations.
- C. The Lord's Day / Sabbath Rest in Christ: This position holds that the fourth commandment has been fulfilled in Christ. The church worships on Sunday because of the resurrection and the example put forward in the New Testament.

**There is some overlap between all three positions mentioned above.*

LBC | Bible Basics 101: The Kingdom (BFM 2000)

1. The article in the BFM 2000 on the kingdom reads as follows:

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

2. There are a number of passages upon which the above statement is based. Here is a sampling of references:

- A. Genesis 1:1: As creator God has full authority over all things on earth.
- B. Daniel 4:34-35: God's rule and reign are eternal and extend over all things.
- C. John 3:3: God's kingdom can only be entered by experiencing the new birth.
- D. 1 Corinthians 15: 20-24: In the last days the God's kingdom will come in its fullness.

3. The doctrine of the kingdom is probably the most important in the Bible primarily because it establishes all other doctrines. The fact that God is king and rules over all is what gives meaning and purpose to everything in life. The above article summarizes nicely the doctrine of the kingdom. It might be helpful to tease this doctrine out in a more detailed way.

- A. Universal reign of God. This idea sets up the entire Bible. In Genesis 1:1 we read these words: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." Genesis 1:1 does not offer an explanation of God's existence and His power. It assumes it! Since God is creator He can do what He wants with His creation. This idea is present from the beginning to the end of the Bible.
- B. Mediated reign of God. God certainly rules directly over all things. There are times in the Bible where His rule is mediated through an individual or office. So for example, in the nation of Israel, the office of king was established to mediate the rule and reign of God. God certainly ruled directly, but that authority was sometimes channeled through an individual. This mediated reign is also seen in the coming of Jesus. The kingdom is near because the king is present.
- C. Prophetic reign of God. The Bible has a special emphasis on the prophetic reign of God. Or what you might call "end times" expression of the kingdom. The Old Testament prophets often turn their audience's attention towards a time when the rule of God will be experienced in a world-wide and literal fashion. Many portions of the New Testament do the same, especially the book of Revelation.

4. The doctrine of the kingdom is far from being dry and boring. It ought to provoke a number of responses from us: Consider the following:

- A. Hope: As Christians we should be filled with a confidence that God's purposes will prevail.
- B. Comfort: As Christians we should take consolation in the fact that God rules over all, even the difficulties we face in life.
- C. Allegiance: Since God is King there needs to be a sense of whole-hearted commitment to Him, His ways, His Word, and His Son.

LBC | Bible Basics 101: Last Things (BFM 2000)

1. The article in the BFM 2000 on last things reads as follows:

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

2. There are a number of passages upon which the above statement is based. Here is a sampling of references:

- A. Acts 1:11: Jesus is coming back personally and visibly.
- B. Matthew 25:31-34, 41: Jesus will come back to pronouncement judgment.
- C. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10: Those who reject Christ will experience everlasting punishment.
- D. John 3:16: Those who embrace Christ will experience everlasting life.
- E. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10: God's people will be rewarded for their service offered unto Christ.

3. The BFM 2000 does not take a position on certain issues that usually pervade a discussion on the last days. Consider the following subjects not taken up by the BFM 2000 and the various positions on them.

A. The Rapture:

- (1) Pre-Tribulation View: The church is raptured before the tribulation begins.
- (2) Mid-Tribulation View: The church is raptured at some point in the middle of the tribulation.
- (3) Post-Tribulation View: The church is raptured at the end of the tribulation.

B. The Tribulation:

- (1) Literal View: The tribulation is a real 7 year period meant to purify Israel and inflict judgment on the nations.
- (2) Spiritual View: The "tribulation" simply refers to the suffering experienced by God's people down through the ages or at a non-designated point in history.

C. The Millennium:

- (1) Pre-Millennialism: The millennial reign of Christ is a literal 1000 year reign that occurs after the tribulation but before the inauguration of the new heavens and new earth.
- (2) Post-Millennialism: The millennium is not a set time frame in which Christ rules but is being experienced now as the gospel spread and grows in the present day. Things will get increasingly better and this present age will "morph" into the age to come after judgment.
- (3) A-millennialism: The millennium is not a set time frame in which Christ rules but is being experienced now as the gospel spread and grows in the present day. Things will get increasingly worse and this present age will "morph" into the age to come after judgment.

4. The reason why there is such a broad spectrum of beliefs on the last days has to do with one's approach to hermeneutics. How one handles prophetic literature, the meaning of words, and the relationship of Israel and the church plays into the conversation regarding this subject.