

10 Why Does God Save Some?

It has been clear in everything that has been said about salvation that we are saved by God's grace and by God's grace alone, but it is a point worth emphasising.

Amazing Grace

Grace is a key word. If you do not understand its meaning, you will never properly appreciate what God has done for you.

God's grace is His free, unmerited, undeserved favour to sinners; it flows out of His boundless love. God's grace is God loving the unlovable, pardoning the guilty, saving the lost, doing good to those who do not deserve it. Grace goes beyond mercy. Mercy withholds the punishment we deserve but grace blesses us in ways we do not deserve.

It is God's nature to be gracious.

The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.

Psalms 103:8

Saved By Grace Alone

Every aspect of our salvation, indeed every good thing we have, depends on God's grace: none of it is earned, we are not worthy of any of it, none of it depends in any way on anything we do.

Salvation has to be by grace because of both the character of man and the character of God. In his sin man is cut off from God and can do nothing about it. God's holiness, truth and justice, on the other hand, demand that sin must be punished. Without grace there is no hope for anyone. The alternative is to be saved by our own efforts and that is a non-starter because God could not accept it and anyway, we are so thoroughly sinful that if it depended on us to take the initiative or make an effort we would not even want to do it.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Romans 3:20

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."

Titus 3:5

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."

Ephesians 2:8 – 10

Because salvation is by grace alone it cannot depend even on us choosing to follow Him; He must choose us.

God Chooses

The doctrine of election or predestination is probably the most controversial of all the doctrines we will look at. Nevertheless, it is clearly taught in the Bible

"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to

adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.”

Ephesians 1:4 – 5

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Romans 8:29 –30

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims... elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”

1 Peter 1:1 – 2

“God from the beginning chose you for salvation.”

2 Thessalonians 2:13

“[God] who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began”

2 Timothy 1:9

A Reasonable Doctrine

The doctrine of election is not only a biblical doctrine; it is also entirely reasonable.

All through the Bible we find God making choices. He chose Abraham (Nehemiah 9:7). He chose Israel to be His people (Deuteronomy 7:7) and He chose David to be their king (1 Kings 8:16). In these, as in all God’s choices, there were of necessity others He did not choose.

More than that, we are taught that God is sovereign; that is, He governs His creation and is at any given moment in full control of everything that happens. His hands cannot be tied waiting for the co-operation and permission of men.

Thirdly we have seen already that Jesus did not come into the world merely to make salvation possible; He came to save.

All these observations are consistent with the doctrine of election but still, some Christians find it hard to accept.

But It Is Hard To Take

Some say election is unjust; why should God choose some and not others? Some say election removes human responsibility; so if a man is not saved, God cannot blame him.

Paul answers them in Romans 9 where he quotes Exodus 33:19:

“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

He reasons that God does not punish anyone unjustly. We are all sinners by nature and we all deserve God’s wrath. The non-elect receive what their sin deserves so they can never complain that they are being treated unjustly. If God in his mercy chooses to save some, far from being unjust, it is an act of divine mercy.

The human responsibility objection is answered in verses 19 – 21:

“You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour?”

Romans 9:19 – 21

God is our Creator. Who are we to complain about what He chooses to do, just because it is not acceptable to our minds?

Question: Yet others will say not that election is unjust but that it is unfair. What would you say to that?

Election and foreknowledge

Some, appealing to Romans 8:29 and 1 Peter 1:2 and argue that what is meant by election is that God, because of His omniscience, foreknew who would believe. So it is not a case of God choosing people for salvation, but rather seeing in advance what they would choose to do and merely acting in line with it. But this does not work because in the Bible to foreknow means to foreordain. In Acts 2:23, for example, we are told the death of Jesus was by ‘God’s set purpose and foreknowledge’. This does not mean that God foresaw what would happen to Jesus on the cross; it means He planned it.

Question: Why do you think so many people struggle to accept the doctrine of election?

Why Does It Matter?

The doctrine of election does not lead to pride on the part of those who are saved; quite the opposite. The elect — those who are chosen for salvation — are no better than anyone else. They know they are not chosen because they deserve to be, so they can never feel superior to any who are not elect. Election removes every possible ground for thinking that we have contributed to our own salvation in some way. Salvation is indeed entirely by God’s grace and the glory is all His. Ultimately that is why this doctrine matters for the glory must always be His and His alone.

Question: Some argue that those who accept the doctrine of election have no incentive to preach the gospel. What do you think about that?

Key Words

Mercy	To withhold a punishment that is deserved
Grace	To give good things that are not deserved. The word grace can also mean “beauty”.
Predestination	God’s determination of all things in eternity past.
Election	God’s gracious choice of people for Himself.

Memory Verses

- ☺ Titus 3:5
- ☺ Romans 8:29 – 30
- ☺ 2 Timothy 1:9