

WHY ARE NOT ALL PEOPLE SAVED

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This is a problem that many Christians struggle with, and the reply to this and other questions that will arise may not be satisfactorily answered. Many Christians and theologians avoid this problem in spite of all their learned writings and detailed commentaries.

Calvinists believe that before the foundation of the world, God chose who He was going to save and that is unalterable. They call this election and predestination. That could indicate that He knew who were going to be lost, although there is no suggestion that He has determined that.

The word elect or election can, of course, mean to choose and it is so that God chose people for specific purposes such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, the prophets and the disciples of Christ. Christians are called the elect of God (1 Thessalonians 1.4). But nowhere does the Bible teach that God has chosen beforehand who are to be saved. Ephesians 1. 4 states that God has chosen you before the foundation of the world that you should be holy, blameless and with love. It does not say you were chosen or predestined to be saved. Romans 8. 20 says that whom God foreknew he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. Predestination has to do with being Christ-like.

God knows everything. He is never taken by surprise. He knows the end from the beginning but as we shall see He is not willing that any should perish but that all may come to repentance and a knowledge of the truth.

There are some modern Christians who quote the passage in Matthew 7, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you as "evidence" that if you pray for someone to be saved then that person will be saved". But, sadly, opinion is divided on this and, again, Bible scholars seem to pass over this matter.

Matthew Henry writes, "Prayer is the appointed means for obtaining what we need. Ask, as a traveller asks the way; seek, as looking for something of value that you have lost; knock in order that the door may be opened to you. It is what we need exclusively for ourselves." Gill's exposition agrees. Weiss says it includes praying for others who have no capacity for receiving the truth of the Gospel. Matthew Henry would cross reference this to Give us this day our daily bread.

F B Hole writes that if we ask the Lord for something, He will not give us a worthless alternative.

It is said that salvation consists of two essential initial happenings namely the work of the Holy Spirit and the individual's response.

What is the Holy Spirit's role to introduce someone to Christ and salvation? How does He communicate with an unbeliever?

I find that many believers and theologians also avoid these questions.

However, some people who show interest may assert that something has happened in their lives which made them think of God and salvation; others claim that the beauty of the world causes them to believe in God; others say that the example of a good Christian is the first impetus; some have been moved by a Hollywood representation of Christ; some have responded to the preaching of the Gospel.

Yet others are turned away by these same matters and raise objections such as the Virgin Birth, days of Creation, that God allows disasters and tragedies and all of this is his fault and there is, of course, the most common objection, If God is real, let Him show Himself to me.

Others say that Christianity may work for some but not for them. But, often, the reason for this is that those who say it does not work for them is because they want to regulate the conditions if they are going to be a Christian and, thereby, they will maintain their independence and modernity since it is asserted that Christianity is, in the main, so out of date and does not belong to the real world of today. These objectors will not submit to God (James 4. 7). They want to be independent and modern. People do not want to be trammelled by Biblical morality and decency. Everything has to be up to date. As it says in the last verse of Judges, (21.25), everyone wants to do what is right in their own eyes.

Some people may go to a so-called lively church, that is to say a church with mainly young people where the songs are more like pop songs and played by a band with guitars and drums, and where there may be flashing lights, dancing, drama and the church has a football team and pretty girls dancing. There may be a coffee bar and in these churches the preaching is often light hearted and everything is fun. They explain that this is the only way to get people in. But entertainment and spirituality does not mix and going to church for the pop music, dance, drama, fun and the football team and social events are not the right reasons to go.

Those who think like this are usually very harsh on groups of Christians who meet in very small numbers and have old fashioned hymns, read the Bible, and usually it is a traditional version with "thees" and "thous", and their old fashioned services are both inactive and boring and only attended by a few old frumps. They do not consider that these people are sincere and love the Lord. The charismatic preacher, David Pawson, has said on tape, which I have, "Only the young people have the right ideas when it comes to worship!"

The Holy Spirit's role in salvation concerns convicting unbelievers of sin and to reveal to them that they are guilty and have the need of Christ as Saviour. The Spirit also makes clear the matter of righteousness, that the Lord Jesus lived a holy life but was crucified for our sins and then rose again conquering death, hell and offering salvation. Then there is the matter of judgment when those who did not accept the Lord Jesus as Saviour will be judged.

What is a major concern is that Satan has blinded the eyes of unbelievers to the truth (2 Corinthians 4.4) whereas the Holy Spirit wants to open their eyes. The New Testament states the Lord wants everyone to be saved and come to a knowledge of all the truth (1 Timothy 2.4) and that He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3. 9) and these verses contradicts the Calvinism teaching that God has already chosen who will be saved.

The objection to all of this is that if someone is unsaved, it is Satan's fault since he has blinded people's eyes. The epistle to the Ephesians talks about the wiles of the Devil. He exaggerates the pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11. 24ff.) and enters the lives of people through emotions and mood (Ephesians 4. 26). He wants to lead people astray (Matthew 7.15).

James 4.7 tells us to submit to God and resist the Devil and ' he will flee from you.'

A very real problem is that there are many who have no desire for Christianity, which is the only true spirituality, and choose another activity in which they feel happy. Some go into spiritualism and the occult which can be very dangerous; others join cults and pagan societies and Satan, the prince of darkness, rejoices in such things. These people want to rebel.

In the UK, we have politicians, usually of a left wing persuasion, and others in the public eye, who are atheists and many are against the Jews such as George Galloway and Ken Livingston. Galloway is pro-Arab and grossly offensive towards the Jews.

There is the problem of evolution which, in most cases, deny Divine creation and yet there is no evidence to support this theory. I know of many scientists, such as Dr F A Tatford, who has said, "I cannot believe in evolution, because I am a scientist!". He, and many others in the science world, have written convincingly to give evidence that evolution is in error.

Of course, Marxism and Communism is strongly atheistic being left wing politics.

There are many reported cases of people who have live their lives without Christ and then are suddenly faced with some potential disaster or death and then call upon the Lord Jesus.

There is the very distressing problem of depression and mental illness and some people suffer severely from this and, for them, every day is torture and some contemplate suicide. Such people are often treated badly and with contempt and to care from them is exceptionally difficult and creates pain for their loved ones.

To add to this, there are many who have been deterred from the Christian faith because of the behaviour of some Christians including clergy and modern and autocratic denominations. A close friend of mine was told that she was not saved because she had not spoken in tongues which is a shocking and destructive false doctrine.

She has now rebelled against Christianity although this is due to an example of false Christianity. Where does she stand now before God and where do those who proclaim this false doctrine stand?

Someone has said that there are so-called Christians who work for the Devil, although they will not accept that.

But depression is an illness just as heart trouble or cancer is. Some modern Christians give advice when they are not qualified to do so and I have heard some say to a very ill patient, "Pull yourself together. Buck your ideas up!". Others say, "If you had faith, you would not have this condition but you have it because of your lack of faith!". In other words, it is the patients' fault. This is another example of false teaching and it is dangerous.

A young man in a Christian pop group was a fine Christian but one day he collapsed while performing. It was later discovered that he had developed mental health troubles and was very poorly. He sometimes could not function at all but has lucid intervals when he graciously acknowledges his condition and is still a devoted believer. Some people in his church were very judgmental about him while others were kind and supportive.

The fine hymn writer William Cowper (1731-1800) suffered from mental illness and was confined at least once. Yet he wrote these hymns which begin

Hark, my soul it is the Lord

O for a closer walk with God

God moves in a mysterious way

There are those who believe that Christianity can cause mental health problems. The followers of the Lord Jesus were accused of mental health problems (Acts 26 24, 2 Corinthians 5.13). Even the Lord Jesus was accused of being out of His head (Mark 3.21, John 10.20). The apostle Paul warns about the confusion associated with speaking in tongues and states that people will consider this to be madness. It is better to speak in a tongue, a language, that everyone knows.

People object to any debate about those in the New Testament who were demon possessed or possessed by devils which showed itself in mental problems and irrational behaviour such as cutting oneself which is self-harm. Those possessed by demons showed dreadful signs such as speechlessness (Matthew 9.33), deafness (Mark 9.25), blindness (Matthew 12.22), fierceness (Matthew 8.28), unusual strength (Mark 3.4), convulsions (Mark 1.26) and foaming at the mouth (Luke 9.39). There were also those healed from evil spirits (Luke 8.2, 13.11).

Incidentally, it has been shown that other religions can contribute to mental health problems. A friend who is a senior psychiatrist tells me that the majority of mental patients are those with hereditary problems or feel betrayed by family or have been involved in spiritualism and the occult and, yes, some have been damaged by Christians and their false doctrines although these are comparatively few.

People quote the alleged unfairness of God in examples such as that the Devil entered into Judas Iscariot. Why did God allow this? But the point is that Judas must have welcomed the Devil to some extent. Judas obeyed Satan.

There is the vexing problems of denominations with so many different types of churches and various doctrines. The Roman Catholics believe that the bread and wine at Communion becomes the actual body and blood of Christ; Baptists churches differ in doctrine and there is no uniformity which bind them all together with the same doctrine; the Salvation Army, often excellent in social work, do not have Communion although the New Testament teaches that this is to be done; and the New Testament teaches baptism is to be by immersion for believers; most Pentecostals and charismatics teach speaking in tongue as essential doctrine and that healing for all illness and disease is available today being included in the atonement.

There is an interesting passage in John 5 verses 31-47 where the Lord Jesus accuses His hearers of unbelief quoting four witnesses they were refusing namely John the Baptism, the work he was doing, the Father at the baptism of Christ and the Old Testament scriptures particularly the words of Moses.

I do regret that there is so much negativity in what has been said here but we have to understand these problems and it raises the problem of what is the knowledge of all the truth which we have previously mentioned. Is it possible or is it wise to set out a statement of accurate doctrine and, if so, would every denomination accept it? So much denominationalism is man-made and certainly not God made and it has seriously deterred people coming to faith.

There is the belief that all religions lead to God and this is called religious pluralism which means that we live in a society with many cultures and religions and, in effect this means that all religions are both valid and equal.

What is religion? Is Taoism a religion or a philosophy for life? Buddhism is a religion but has no god.

Satanism is said to be a religion but denies God

All religions lead to God teaches, in effect, that everyone will be saved regardless of their beliefs and this is called universalism.

Different religions have different gods or ideas about God. The Muslims state that only they and their faith leads to God and different religions contradict each other as do some Christian denominations in certain matters of doctrine such as baptism, communion and the gifts of the Spirit.

The belief in universalism means that everyone is saved and goes to heaven and the argument is made that if God is a god of love He would not allow anyone to go to hell.

Hell is described in many ways such as fire and brimstone, a burning wind, a fiery oven, unquenchable fire, eternal fire, eternal punishment, a pit of darkness, a place of torment, weeping and gnashing of teeth. Why is there a hell?

God has made us as eternal beings which means that we live after death. But God is absolute holiness and will not tolerate the presence of sin and sinners in His presence. Hell is for Satan and his angels and for those who are unrepentant and have rejected Christ as Saviour and therefore cannot enter into heaven where the Lord Jesus dwells. Those who reject or ignore Christ are in the very greatest danger.

The work of the Holy Spirit having been dealt with, albeit probably not adequately, we come to the second essential and initial essential which is the unbeliever's response.

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10.17). One version states that faith comes from the message of salvation in the Word of God. One can become irritated, and with just cause, when someone says that they led So-and-so to the Lord. The work of salvation is the Lord's work. It is true that often emotionalism is used and one can question the validity of this. There are trite sayings like, "Give your heart to Jesus!" although people who say such things are probably sincere.

Faith does not come from a church that is lively or its pop group and new worship songs or the testimony of A N Other. Nor does it come from a traditional church which some find boring. Indeed, as already indicated, some are slightly influenced by a good Christian or a Hollywood Biblical film or some other event, but faith comes from hearing the Word of God and the preaching of the Gospel when it is faithful to the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit reveals our sin and our need of Christ as Saviour and if we reject this we will enter into judgment and be lost.

People complain about the sad state of the world and exclaim, "Why doesn't God do something about it?"

We point to the Cross and say, "He has!".

The Lord Jesus willingly died on the Cross bearing our sins so that if we trust Him and accept Him as Saviour we shall be saved and for eternity. But this response includes obedience to Him and not setting down our own rules. We are dependent on Him and if we realised what He has done for us, we will gladly obey Him.

The opposite to salvation is condemnation hence Romans 8.1 reads, ' There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus ' and so the Calvinistic doctrine is nullified by such verses as Acts 2.21 which states whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord Jesus shall be saved and this is repeated in Romans 10.13 and Romans 5.18 reminds us that the free gift of salvation is available to all. We have already quoted 1 Timothy 2.4 which reads that God's will is that all be saved and come to a knowledge of all the truth and 2 Peter 3.9 assures us that God is not willing that any should perish but that all come to repentance.

The process of salvation is to recognise that we are sinners and that the wages of sin is death and thereafter in these circumstance there is no access to heaven but to be lost. Sin is anything that is disobedience to God and that is called unrighteousness. Repentance is owning up to our sins and asking the Lord Jesus to be our Saviour. It is also true contrition and we recall the verse that says, Whosoever comes to the Lord, He will not turn away which is of what John 6.37 assures us. God forgives us upon true repentance and we must have and maintain a commitment to Him and what is promised to believers is an eternity of bliss.

Some claim to be saved but find the way is tough and give up. The Christian is not promised an easy life and, in our day, Christians are being persecuted as well as being ridiculed.

Heaven is a place of no-mores. No more death, nor sorrow, nor crying and no pain and there will be no dogs there in the sense of undesirables, no spiritualists, mediums and clairvoyants and the like, nor any who are idolaters will be there, that is to say those who are promiscuous and those in the sex industry. However, if such repent and change their lives and come to faith in the Lord Jesus they can be saved.

It is up to each individual to respond.

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