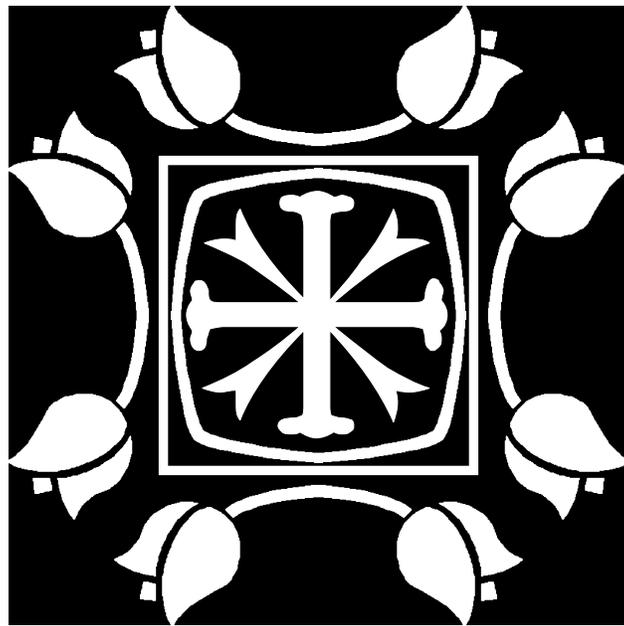


**If Jesus Died for All...**

**Why Are Some  
Not Saved?**



**Book L**

**TULIP SERIES**

# THE WORD OF HIS GRACE

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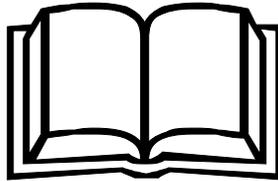
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And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

--Acts 20:32--



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HE THAT SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON, BUT  
DELIVERED HIM UP FOR US ALL, HOW SHALL HE NOT  
WITH HIM ALSO FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS? WHO  
SHALL LAY ANY THING TO THE CHARGE OF GOD'S  
ELECT? IT IS GOD THAT JUSTIFIETH.

In the above verses, Romans 8:32–33, the apostle Paul asserts that God the Father delivered up Jesus Christ to die for “us all.” But who is “us all”? That is just one of the questions I intend to answer in this book.

Another question is posed in this book's title, and can be expanded to the following: If God is all-powerful, if Jesus Christ was and is God in the flesh, and if Jesus died to save everyone, why are some not saved?

The basic problem this book intends to solve is clearly seen if we turn this question into statements: God is all-powerful (omnipotent, and therefore able to do all His will). Jesus was and is God in the flesh. Jesus died to save everyone. Some are not saved.

All of these statements cannot be true at the same time. “Some are not saved” contradicts at least one of the previous statements. If we accept as true the fact that some are not saved, then either God is not omnipotent, or Jesus was not and is not God in the flesh, or Jesus did not die to save everyone.

### **The Doctrine of “Free-Will”**

There are those who will disagree. They teach a doctrine that tries to make all of these statements true at the same time. Their doctrine adds another statement to the list: God is omnipotent, Jesus was and is God in the flesh, Jesus died to save everyone, but, they add, God has left the choice of whether or not to be saved up to each individual (i.e., everyone can exercise free will to choose or reject salvation), and therefore, some (those who reject salvation) are not saved. This free-will doctrine is not an acceptable option for at least four reasons. One problem is that it creates questions such as this: Why should an all-powerful and all-loving God leave such an important question as salvation up to sinful, error-prone, and largely ignorant humans who have a good chance of choosing what will do them great harm? Or put another way, if God is not weak and desires all to be saved, and if all being saved is a good thing (as it would have to be if it is what the perfectly good God desires), then why shouldn't God do as He desires and save everyone?

A second difficulty with the free-will doctrine is that it assumes that everyone is presented with the Gospel and can then choose. But the multitudes of people who live their entire lives without ever hearing the Gospel are certainly not able to choose salvation. So some people, at least, do not have a choice.

A third problem with this free-will teaching is that it contains this fundamental flaw: It assumes that sinful, unregenerate people can choose to believe the Gospel and be saved without God first regenerating their minds. As Book T of this series of books explains, the Bible teaches that this is not possible. God must regenerate a person's mind before the person will believe the Gospel, and this involves God choosing whom to regenerate and whom not to regenerate. To have one's mind regenerated is synonymous with being born again, and as Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see (accept) the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Therefore, who believes the Gospel and is saved is a choice that God makes, not man.

There are other reasons why the free-will doctrine cannot be correct, and I will give one of these later in this book. First, let's shed the light of Scripture on our basic questions.

Is God absolutely all-powerful? Yes: "But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26; see also Daniel 4:35; Mark 14:36; Luke 1:37; Revelation 19:6). Was and is Jesus Christ God in the flesh (and therefore able to do God's will perfectly)? Yes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14; see also Matthew 1:23; 16:16; 22:42-45; Luke 4:34; John 10:30); and He did do God's will: "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34), "I have glorified thee [the Father] on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4), and, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30).

We are then left with the questions, Did Jesus die to save everyone? and, Who are the "us all" in Romans 8:32 whom Jesus died for? Let's examine the first question, which can also be stated, Does God desire to save everyone?

### **Does God Desire to Save Everyone?**

It is assumed by many today that God desires to save everyone. In fact, it is very unpopular to suggest that perhaps He doesn't. A God who doesn't give everyone an equal chance to be saved goes against

our modern notions of equality, fairness, and the “freedom of the human will”; we might even go so far as to say that a God who does not want everyone to be saved is not a God of love. But do we have a right to impose our societal and personal standards on God? Of course not. God lets us know His standards in the Bible.

All of us probably know of people who have died unsaved. But it is upon the Bible, not our personal experiences, that we must found our doctrine. The Bible gives us examples of people who have died unsaved. In the days of Noah, “the wickedness of man was great in the earth” (Genesis 6:5), but, “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (verse 8). When God sent the flood, the wicked died unsaved.

Genesis 19 gives us another example. When God set about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He found one righteous man, Lot. He brought Lot, and Lot’s wife (who died soon afterward) and daughters, out of Sodom, and then He obliterated the cities. The people certainly died unsaved.

When David slew Goliath (1 Samuel 17), the giant died unsaved, and we can assume the same fate for the thousands of heathen slain in the battles recorded in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, we learn that Jesus was crucified along with two thieves, or malefactors (Luke 23:32). One of the malefactors railed at Christ, but the other rebuked his fellow thief. He also asked something for himself: He asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into His kingdom (verses 39–42). Speaking to the repentant malefactor, Jesus said, “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (verse 43). The repentant malefactor was saved and the unrepentant malefactor was not saved.

When the people attributed deity to Herod after he gave a speech, “the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost” (Acts 12:21–23). Can we doubt that Herod died unsaved? This is just a handful of examples among many that could be cited.

Before continuing, let’s take another look at the statements I gave above to see where we stand: God is all-powerful (omnipotent)—PROVEN TRUE from biblical evidence cited earlier; Jesus was God in the flesh—PROVEN TRUE from biblical evidence cited earlier; Jesus died to save everyone—UNPROVEN; Some are not saved—PROVEN TRUE from biblical evidence cited above. Obviously, “Jesus died to save everyone” must be the untrue statement. Nevertheless, let’s see if the Bible directly supports this conclusion.

## **Jesus Did Not Die to Save Everyone**

In explaining the meaning of the parable of the tares, Jesus pulls no punches: "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:40–42).

In Matthew 25, Jesus says, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.... Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:31–34, 41, 46).

Either we must call Jesus a liar, in which case we can reject as lies His statements concerning the everlasting punishment of the wicked (but this also then casts doubt on His promises of eternal life to the righteous); or we can believe Jesus and believe that some people will be saved and some will not. Further, since Jesus tells us that some people will not be saved, and since Jesus is the Savior, we must conclude that Jesus is not the Savior of everyone. And since He is God, we must also conclude that His not saving all people is a purposeful act of His sovereign will and not just an accident or a result of the will of the people. But I will give you further proof not only that all people are not saved, but also that this happens because of God's will.

In explaining why so many did not believe on Jesus, John, using a passage from Isaiah, says that God does not want everyone to be converted: "But though he [Jesus] had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He [God] hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them" (John 12:37–40; see also Matthew 13:14–15). By healing, he means spiritual healing, or reconciliation to God.

The Bible even tells us that God purposely causes people to be deluded so they can be damned: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12). As a point of interest, notice the sharp contrast in the very next verse: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." This contrast shows us that God has from the beginning chosen some for salvation and others for damnation.

We can see this again in John 10, a reference to God's calling of the elect (the sheep) through the Gospel, and the elect's supernatural recognition of and response to that Gospel through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.... Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.... I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.... I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.... I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep [the Gentile elect] I have, which are not of this fold [the Jewish elect]: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

John 10:1–3, 7, 9, 11, 14–16

Notice in the above verses that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep. This is because they are His elect (if you would like more information about the elect, please read *What Must You Do to Be Saved?*, Book U of this TULIP series). The Good Shepherd calls His sheep by name, and they hear His voice and are led by Him. It is these sheep for whom He gives His life. Notice that He does not give his life for goats, pigs, cows, and horses, but only His sheep. Jesus purposely contrasts those who are His sheep with those who are not: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My

sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (verses 26–28).

In other parables, Jesus said the world contains good seed that will be saved—the children of the kingdom, and tares that will be burned—the children of the wicked one (Matthew 13:24–30, 36–40); or good fish that will be gathered and bad fish that will be cast away and burned (Matthew 13:47–50). He also contrasted the children of this world with the children of light (Luke 16:8). Notice also whom Jesus did and did not pray for: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.... Neither pray I for these alone [His disciples at that time], but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:9, 20).

As explained in Book U of this series, the Bible plainly teaches that God has chosen His elect people for salvation from eternity, and only they will be saved. But if God has chosen only certain people to be saved, it inevitably follows that God has determined that the rest of the people will not be saved. The apostle Paul writes of this:

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Romans 9:21–24

### **Reprobation**

In the passage from Romans 9 quoted above, Paul writes of the "vessels of mercy" (verse 23) and the "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (verse 22). He used these terms because he was likening people to clay vessels made by a potter, God. Some vessels God makes for honor—the vessels of mercy, and some He makes to dishonor—the vessels of wrath made for destruction (compare verse 21 with verses 22–23). People fall into one of these categories; they are either made as objects of God's wrath or they are made as objects of his mercy. All of this is up to God. Verse 18 says, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Plainly, it is not only true that God chooses the elect to be

saved, it is also true that He chooses the rest of humanity not to be saved.

This must be the case, because if God has chosen only the elect to be saved, and the rest of humanity will not be saved, then God has chosen the rest not to be saved. To illustrate my point, suppose I am the captain of a ship. The ship is sinking in icy waters in which no one can survive for more than an hour. The nearest rescue ship is three hours away. There are only enough lifeboats for the women and children. As captain, I determine that only the women and children will be allowed into the lifeboats. By making this decision, I have not only decided that the women and children will be saved, but I have also decided that all of the men will perish.

Of course, God has much more control over the situation than a ship's captain. To make the analogy more complete, we would have to say that the captain also made the ship and the ocean and the people, and he also decided before the ship even sailed that it would sink and whom he would save and whom he would not. The point is this: By deciding whom He will save, God has also decided whom He will not save.

The apostle Peter understood this. Referring to those to whom God does not give the faith to accept Jesus as Savior, Peter writes of those "which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Peter 2:8). In writing specifically of the fate of false teachers, he describes the fate of all of the unjust: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Peter 2:9). Instead of sitting in heaven and crying that everyone is not repenting, God has reserved the unjust for the Day of Judgment. In verse 12, writing of these unjust people, Peter says, "But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption." Peter could hardly be more graphic: These people, like animals raised for the purpose of being slaughtered, will perish in their own corruption. Notice the hopelessness with which Peter paints these people: "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever" (verse 17).

If you compare what Peter writes in this chapter with what Jude writes in his letter, you will find a nearly identical thought. Jude clearly says these people have been preordained to condemnation: "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 4).

The teaching that God has predetermined who will not be saved is called the doctrine of reprobation. The Bible refers to some people as reprobate: "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Timothy 3:8), "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). Because God has determined that these people will never be born again, He has therefore given them over to a mind void of right spiritual judgment, or a reprobate mind: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient [proper]" (Romans 1:28).

I must give a word of warning concerning the doctrine of reprobation. While the apostles, under special inspiration of God, may have known who was reprobate and who was not, we cannot know. Even someone who has committed the most heinous crimes may at some time in his life repent and show himself to be elect. Saul, before he became the apostle Paul, persecuted the church (Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1–2), but, as became evident later, was among the elect. In fact, the early church made the mistake of thinking his preconversion actions proved him to be reprobate, and they were at first afraid of him after his conversion (Acts 9:13–15, 26). We must be careful not to make the mistake of classifying someone as reprobate and, therefore, hopeless. The Gospel should be preached indiscriminately to everyone as God gives us opportunity. But we must be sure that the Gospel we present clearly states that God is calling His people to repentance, and that we do not preach a false gospel that says God wants everyone to be saved.

If there are people who are vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, to whom God has not extended mercy, who are reserved until the day of judgment for punishment, who—like base animals with no hope of salvation—will perish in their own corruption, who are so devoid of spiritual life that they are likened to wells without water and clouds carried with a tempest and reserved for the mist of darkness forever, who are from old reserved for condemnation, can we seriously believe that Jesus Christ died for their sins? No, not if we are being intellectually honest. For if Jesus Christ died for their sins, their sins would be forgiven, and they would have no more condemnation.

If Jesus did not die for everyone, then His death on the cross for the sins of His people was limited. The teaching that Jesus did not die for or atone for everyone's sins is called limited atonement. That's why this book is Book L in this series. The L stands for limited atonement.

## Limited Atonement

Let's give the free-will doctrine mentioned near the beginning of this book one last chance. Remember, it is the teaching that Jesus died for everyone's sins (universal atonement) but His death is not applied to a person until that person exercises saving faith, repenting and believing the Gospel and accepting Jesus as Savior. Earlier, I presented three reasons why the free-will doctrine—really an argument against limited atonement—can't be true. The chief of these is that it is impossible for sinful people to choose to believe the Gospel of their own free will; God must take the first step, and therefore God chooses whom He will save and whom He will not save. But, as I mentioned, there is a fourth argument against the free-will doctrine, and it is very simple:

Let's say Jesus died for everyone, including John Doe. But John Doe dies without ever having accepted Jesus as his Savior. All Christians should rightly agree that John Doe is now lost and will be eternally punished for his sins. Did, then, Jesus really die for John Doe's sins? No, for if Jesus died for John Doe's sins, thereby paying for them by his death on the cross, God would be unjust in punishing John Doe for those same sins. To say, "Jesus died for John Doe's sins, but, since John Doe didn't accept Jesus as Savior, Jesus' death doesn't apply to John Doe" is only confusion. This is confusion because if Jesus' death doesn't apply to John Doe, Jesus didn't die for John Doe.

The only biblical way out of this muddled thinking is to conclude that Jesus didn't die for John Doe's sins. In fact, Jesus didn't die for the sins of anyone who never accepts Him as Savior, and Scripture clearly tells us that God determined before the foundation of the world to whom He would give the faith to accept Jesus as Savior: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; see also Ephesians 1:3-7 and 1 Peter 1:2-5).

There are some people, some of them pastors, some of them heads of large radio and publishing ministries, who believe the doctrine of limited atonement; but they believe it should not be preached or published. They believe that while it is true, it is unnecessary, and it could even be dangerous. I have heard one of these people say that it should be kept as a family secret, apparently to be understood by only a few "in the know" Christians. For reasons I will shortly explain, I could not disagree more.

There are also those who call themselves Calvinists, but flatly deny the doctrine of limited atonement. They call themselves four-

point Calvinists. When I was first coming to understand the doctrines of grace, I too thought of myself as a four-point Calvinist. It took me a few months to realize that four-point Calvinism is completely insupportable.

No doubt some people avoid the doctrine of limited atonement, finding it disturbing because they wrongly think it means that people might seek salvation through Jesus Christ but be denied because God has not predestinated them to be saved. But such is not the teaching of Calvinism. No one can seek salvation through Christ unless he or she is called by God (John 6:44). Everyone who responds to God's calling and seeks salvation through Christ alone will be saved (John 6:37); not one will be denied. Those who are reprobate do not seek salvation through Jesus Christ alone.

The doctrine of limited atonement is an integral part of the doctrines of sovereign grace (also called the five points of Calvinism). The first and second points teach that man is totally depraved, unable to do anything to save himself, and that those who are saved are saved unconditionally (salvation is not dependent on human works). But if this is so, man is utterly hopeless unless and until God sovereignly chooses to save him. And since not everyone is saved, it must be that God is sovereignly saving only some. Thus, the third point is limited atonement. The fourth point is the doctrine of irresistible grace, that is, no one can resist God's will in saving whom He desires. But again, since only some are saved, and no one can resist God's will (God is not desperately trying to save people and being thwarted by their resisting Him), it must be that God wills to save only some. The fifth point is perseverance of the saints, the teaching that God will not lose any of those whom He is saving. But the fact that people are lost means that God has not set out to save them. And if God is not saving everyone, then Christ did not die for everyone.

But why is it so important to know this? Besides being taught in the Bible, a book that Christians have a responsibility to know, and besides being a part of "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), I believe that not understanding this doctrine (as well as the other doctrines of sovereign grace) has caused much confusion and heartache for Christians.

For example, not comprehending the doctrine of limited atonement inevitably leads to believing that many for whom Christ died are lost; that His death—instead of effectively redeeming everyone for whom He purposed to die—was largely ineffectual and in vain.

It distorts one's understanding of God by creating doubts as to God's omnipotence. Not discerning that it is God who is in charge of

their salvation, and not themselves, has caused some people to live in continuous doubt of their salvation. Often, they try to get rid of these doubts through works, leading to a legalistic mindset that is contrary to grace.

Also, not perceiving God's sovereignty, large numbers of people have strayed into the false teaching that God is somehow duty bound to respond to man's commands. This belief is sometimes called "word of faith," but it has also been dubbed "name it and claim it religion." Whatever it is called, it is a detestable deification of humans. In short, not understanding and believing all five points of the doctrines of grace results in weak or distorted faith. (You can learn more about these five points by reading all of our five "TULIP series" books.)

### **Who Is "All" and "the World"?**

But aren't there Scripture passages that teach that God wants to save everyone? In fact, there are not; although there are Scriptures that appear to teach this.

It is important to realize that the very early church, composed entirely of Jews and those who had earlier converted to Judaism, did not think it possible for Gentiles who had not first converted to Judaism to become Christians. This is particularly evident in Acts 10, 11, and 15. Notice the astonishment of the Jewish Christians in Acts 10:45, and how in Acts 11:18 the Christian leaders in Jerusalem resolved to accept this unexpected turn of events. But some of the Jewish Christians did not accept that this was what God was doing and continually bothered the church by trying to force Jewish circumcision on the Gentile converts.

This is important to understand because it helps us see the perspective from which the early church saw things. The fact that the early church saw God's offering of salvation to the Gentiles, as contrasted with salvation for the Jews only, as astonishing and upsetting to their view of the world, helps us understand some of the Scriptures in which "the world" or "all men" or similar terms are used in connection with salvation. In these passages, "the world," "all men," etc., do not mean every individual, but they merely mean all races and classes of people as opposed to only the Jews.

It is also helpful to look at Scriptures not having to do with salvation in which terms such as "all men," "the world," and even "the whole world" are used. In doing so, we see that they do not always, or even usually, mean every individual of the human race. In fact, these terms are often used to describe very limited groups of people.

Arthur W. Pink writes,

The fact is that "the world" is used in a *general* way. When the brethren of Christ said, "Shew Thyself to *the world*" (John 7:4), did they mean "shew Thyself to *all mankind*"? When the Pharisees said, "Behold, *the world* is gone after Him" (John 12:19), did they mean that "*all the human family*" were flocking after Him? When the apostle wrote, "Your faith is spoken of throughout *the whole world*" (Rom. 1:8), did he mean that the faith of the saints at Rome was the subject of conversation by every man, woman, and child on the earth? When Rev. 13:3 informs us that "*all the world* wondered after the beast", are we to understand that there will be no exceptions?... These, and other passages which might be quoted, show that the term "the world" often has a *relative* rather than an *absolute* force.

—Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (1930; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1984), 203

### **1 Timothy 2:3–4**

With this in mind, let's examine a few Scriptures relating to salvation. 1 Timothy 2:3–4 is a passage that seems to say that God wants everyone to be saved: "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Some people say this verse means that God *desires* everyone to be saved, but doesn't *decree* it. But can this explanation be correct? As humans with limited power, we may desire something but not have it. To say this of the all-powerful God, however, makes no sense. If the omnipotent God really wants everyone saved, why would He allow billions over the centuries to die unsaved? The Bible tells us it is not possible for God to desire something and not have it (see, for example, Psalm 135:6). The explanation of this verse lies not in limiting God, but in understanding what Paul meant by "all men."

In verse 1 of this same chapter, Paul writes, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." Notice that Paul uses "all men" in this verse also. Is he urging prayer for every individual in the whole world? The next verse shows us that the answer to this question is no: "For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." So the "all men" in verse 1 is referring to types or classes of people, such as kings and others in

authority. Paul is saying that we Christians should pray for kings and others in authority so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life.

Notice that these verses don't say, as they are sometimes misinterpreted as saying, that we should simply pray that those in authority will leave us alone. No, Paul says to pray for those in authority. Paul anticipated that this might seem odd to Timothy and the other Christians in the church at Ephesus, who were fully aware that the civil authorities were hostile to Christianity. Therefore, he wanted to impress on his readers that they must not think that God cannot save people from among any class of persons He wishes—even the scoundrels in authority. They were to pray for those people because it is certainly not beyond God's power to save all manner of men and to have them come to a knowledge of the truth. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (verses 5–6).

In short, the "all men" in verse 4 refers not to every person but to all classes of people, even the tyrants who were persecuting Christians in the Roman Empire because even they are not beyond God's reach *if God has elected them to be saved*. Christ ransomed people from among not just the Jews, but also the Gentiles, and from all classes of people, even rulers whom it would be very easy to despise.

Anyone who might still think that these verses must mean that God wants, and wanted at the time Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, everyone to be saved (or even that everyone should have a chance to be saved) should consider that for centuries after Paul wrote these words, God sent no one to preach the Gospel to the people in eastern Asia, the Americas, the Pacific islands, etc. There is simply no way that is consistent with the Bible to reconcile this fact with the belief that God wants every person to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. Any explanation of 1 Timothy 2:3–4 that forces "all men" to mean "every person" contradicts other Scriptures and history.

### **Acts 17:29–30**

Acts 17:29–30 is another Scripture used by some against the doctrine of limited atonement: "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."

Before the coming of Jesus Christ, God did not issue a general call to repentance to all people. He dealt only with Jews (including some few Gentiles who became Jews, such as Ruth). After Christ, that

general call began to be preached with the Gospel. Even today, it does not go to every person (some live their entire lives without hearing it). But while every individual does not hear it, the Gospel is preached to people without regard to nationality, not only to Jews (Luke 24:47). All who hear the Gospel are indeed commanded to repent, but not all do repent because not all are ordained to eternal life (Acts 13:48). Yes, God commands to repentance those to whom He does not grant repentance (2 Timothy 2:24–25; Romans 9:17–24). Many are called to repentance by the Gospel, but few are chosen to repent (Matthew 22:14).

Why, then, does God command everyone to repent? The very next verse answers: "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained [Jesus Christ]; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). Although repentance is a gift of God that He grants only to some, everyone is a sinner who is commanded to repent. Those who fail to repent because God has not granted them repentance receive just condemnation for their sins.

You might then ask the question posed by Paul:

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

Romans 9:19–21

Even though we have no choice in the matter of whether we are elect or not elect, we cannot accuse God of being unfair. God can do with His creation as He sees fit, for it is all to His glory (see verses 23–24). It is man who has sinned. Everyone brings condemnation upon him- or herself. God is under no obligation to save anyone. He would be gracious even if He saved only one person. It is utter foolishness to say that it would be unfair for God not to try to save everyone when, in fact, He does not have to save anyone.

## **2 Peter 3:9**

But you may wonder about this statement made by the apostle Peter: "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" (2 Peter 3:9). Surely this teaches that God wants everyone to be saved, doesn't it?

Looking at this passage in context, the verses surrounding this verse reveal that Peter is writing about the second coming of Jesus Christ. Specifically, Peter is refuting those who were spreading the false teaching that things will always continue as they have (uniformitarianism) and Christ won't return (see especially verse 4). In verse 9, Peter is saying that Christ promised to return, and He will fulfill His promise. Some people may consider that He is taking a long time. But what Christ is doing is showing His patience because He doesn't want "any" to perish, but "all" to come to repentance (once Christ returns, those who have not repented and been saved will perish—see Luke 13:3, 5; 2 Corinthians 6:2).

If, however, Christ is waiting for *everyone* to repent before He comes, He will never return. This is obvious because most people in the world have lived and died without ever repenting. Every day, people die without having repented. Therefore, if Christ is waiting for everyone to come to repentance before He returns because He is not willing for anyone at all to perish, He will wait forever.

The only way this verse can make sense is for the "any" and "all" to be limited to a certain group of people. That group is specified in the verse. Notice: "The Lord is...longsuffering to us-ward." Some Bible versions say "you" instead of "us-ward," but it makes little difference. The group Peter was writing to (and of which he was also a member) is the group toward whom the Lord is patient, and of whom the Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. From other Bible passages (some of which are cited in this book, and some of which are cited in other books in this series, especially Book U) we know that the only group of people that fits that description is the elect. None of the elect die before they repent, none of them ever perish. No one who is elect has died without first repenting. Christ is simply waiting for all the elect, through however many generations God has determined they should be born into the world, to come to repentance. He is not willing that any of the elect should perish.

Further proof that the group Peter was addressing is the elect is found in the first chapter of this epistle. In 2 Peter 1:10, Peter gives them this admonishment: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." To make their election sure (which the context shows means to act in a way that gives them confidence or assurance of their election) requires in the first place, of course, that they be elect. (By the way, the elect who are not diligent to make their election sure can fall into sin for a time. God may then chastise them

to get them to change their ways, but they can never fall from salvation. For more information about this, read Book P of this series.)

## 1 John 2:2

Another Scripture often cited to support universal atonement is 1 John 2:2: "And he [Jesus Christ] is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." By saying that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins, John not only means that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, but also that He appeased God's wrath. So those for whom Jesus Christ died have the penalty for their sins paid, and God is no longer angry with them. They are at peace with God.

If this verse refers to everyone in the world, then everyone's sins are forgiven, there is peace between everyone and God, no one is lost (Adolf Hitler and other unrepentant mass murderers included), and no one will suffer in hell. This cannot be so because it contradicts numerous Scriptures that teach that the wicked will suffer in hell (Psalm 9:17; Matthew 11:23; 13:41-42, 49-50; 22:13-14; 25:30; Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 14:9-11; and so forth).

Bible commentator Matthew Henry has this to say about 1 John 2:2 (only the words in brackets are mine; the words in parentheses are Henry's elaboration of the verse):

It [Christ's propitiation] is not confined to one nation; and not particularly to the ancient Israel of God: *He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only* (not only for the sins of us Jews, us that are Abraham's seed according to the flesh), *but also for those of the whole world* (v. 2); not only for the past, or us present believers, but for the sins of all who shall hereafter believe on him or come to God through him. The extent and intent of the Mediator's death reach to all tribes, nations, and countries. As he is the only, so he is the universal atonement and propitiation for all that are saved and brought home to God, and to his favour and forgiveness.

—Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, one vol. ed. (reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 2444

What Henry describes is clearly limited atonement and propitiation. Writing this somewhere between 1706 and 1721, however, he seems not to have imagined that his calling Christ's atonement and propitiation "universal" could be misunderstood. By

universal, he meant that Jesus' atonement applies to the elect in all nations, not just one nationality, such as the Jews. Today, universal atonement is used to mean the unbiblical belief that Jesus died for the sins of every human, something Henry did not at all mean to suggest.

"Our sins" is a reference to the sins of Jewish Christians; John was an apostle to the Jews, "the circumcision" (Galatians 2:9). Matthew Henry correctly understood John's intent as stressing that Jesus Christ's atonement and propitiation extend to people of all nations and races beyond just Abraham's seed according to the flesh (the Jews). John 11:49-52 is a parallel passage. Notice that it concerns Christ dying for the Jewish nation and for the children of God scattered in the other nations. It says nothing of Jesus dying for everyone.

There are other Scriptures that people have twisted to try to make them say that Jesus died to atone for the sins of every person. I can't possibly address all of them in this little book, but I hope those I have reviewed will give you an idea of how to correctly understand the others. Pink advises that a correct understanding "may be ascertained by a careful study of the context, by diligently noting *what is predicated* of 'the world' [or 'all' or any other term in question] in each passage, and by prayerfully consulting other parallel passages to the one being studied" (*Sovereignty*, 255).

### **John 3:16**

There is a Scripture, however, that because of its popularity, must be examined. It is 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." It is important to notice that Jesus spoke this to "Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews" (verse 1). Like his peers, Nicodemus no doubt believed that God was saving the Jews only. Therefore, it would be natural for Jesus to explain to him that God's love is international in scope, and with the death of the Son, God would save people from among all nations ("the world").

Notice also what this verse does not say. It does not say, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *everyone* should not perish, but have everlasting life. It says, "that *whosoever believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life." Just twenty verses later, Jesus clearly says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (verse 36).

Since the Bible specifically says that only believers have everlasting life and that unbelievers do not have everlasting life but have the wrath of God on them, it is plainly absurd to say that "the

world” John 3:16 says God loves includes everyone, believers and unbelievers alike (God does not love those upon whom He has wrath). We must conclude that “the world” of John 3:16 is the world of believers. Accordingly, God “gave his only begotten Son” for believers and not for every person. John 3:16 teaches limited atonement.

### **The “Us All” of Romans 8:32–33**

Having examined these Scriptures, our question concerning Romans 8:32–33 posed at beginning of this book can be answered. Who is the “us all” in this passage? The answer is revealed in the context.

Verse 28 is a favorite passage for Christians suffering trials: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” This Scripture is about those who are called by God. Who the apostle is writing about comes into even sharper focus in the next two verses:

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

verses 29–30

Paul is writing of those whom God foreknew, predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, called, justified, and glorified. Unmistakably, Paul is writing of the elect, of whom he was one. So when he writes the following verses, the “us” and “us all” mean the elect. He even calls them “God's elect” in verse 33.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

verses 31–33

Jesus Christ died for the elect and not for every person in the world. His atonement was limited to those whom God has predetermined will (not might) be saved. For if Christ’s atonement were not limited, and He died for everyone but everyone is not saved, then His atonement and propitiation must be weak and largely ineffective, and I as a Christian can never have assurance that I will be

saved. But if you will read the remainder of Romans 8, you will see that it drives home the point that the "us" is the elect whom God will surely save.

### **No Salvation Apart from Faith in Christ**

Many preachers teach the unbiblical doctrine that salvation depends on a sinner exercising his or her own free will. And now another deceitful message is being popularized among some well-known preachers. This false gospel claims that people can be saved apart from faith in Jesus Christ as Savior simply because they are good people. Scripture never says this. In fact, it specifically says that no one is good, and that good works will save no one (Romans 3:10–12; Ephesians 2:8–9). To have eternal life, one must know the Father and Jesus Christ whom He sent (John 17:3).

Salvation is always connected with believing the Gospel, believing on Jesus, and other synonymous phrases referring to God's freely given gift of faith. Those who espouse the false gospel of salvation apart from exercising faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ often do so because there are so-called "good people" even in places where the Gospel has not been preached. These false teachers and those who believe them are being deceived by their own subjective ideas of fairness. The Bible says hearing and believing the Gospel are necessary to salvation:

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 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. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias [Isaiah] saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 10:9–17

In discussing this subject with a pastor and a deacon who have swallowed and preach this false gospel of salvation apart from belief in Jesus Christ, I began quoting the above verses from Romans 10. One of them interrupted me and said, "We don't believe like that!"

Don't be deceived by those who shamelessly replace the Word of God with teachings from their own imaginations and their own perverted sense of fairness! There is no salvation apart from believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who did not die for everyone but for His people only, every one of whom He will surely save.

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

John 6:37-39



Am I satisfied with the Gospel? Is my heart content with Christ himself and my conscience with what he has done? If not content, why? What bothers me about him and his work? Would I have something added to that work, or something taken from it? Is it not, at this moment, exactly the thing for me; exactly the thing which contains all the peace and rest I need? And am I not, at this moment, exactly the person whom it suits; to whom, without any change or delay, it offers all its fulness?

The propitiation and the righteousness finished on the cross, and there exhibited as well as presented to me freely, are such as entirely meet my case: offering me all that is fitted to remove dispeace and unrest from heart and conscience; revealing as they do the free love of God to the sinner and providing for the removal of every hindrance in the way of that love flowing down; proclaiming aloud the rent veil, the open way, the gracious welcome, the plenteous provision, and the everlasting life.

Horatius Bonar, *The Everlasting Righteousness*, (1874; reprint, Hobbs, N.M.: The Trinity Foundation, 1994), 93

## Who We Are

I hope this little booklet has been a blessing to you. I was a member of and writer for the Worldwide Church of God until 1991. My wife, Mary, was also a member and a production assistant in the church's television department. But then God began revealing to us the truth of His glorious Gospel of the free gift of grace by Jesus Christ. So, in 1991, we left the Worldwide Church of God, our friends, our worldview, and our employment.

In the mid-1990s, I began writing articles that exposed the heresies and spiritual abuses that were continuing in the Worldwide Church of God even after the death of its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong. These articles appeared in *The Quarterly Journal of the Personal Freedom Outreach*, a well-respected Christian apologetics journal. Many people who read the articles wrote asking for help for themselves or loved ones exiting Armstrongism, to ask doctrinal questions, or to share their experiences in Armstrong-type sects.

I soon came to see that cults and unbiblical teachings are flourishing because too many people are ignorant of the basics of biblical Christianity and only give lip service to following the Bible alone. Toward the end of 2000, I launched *Word of His Grace* to address these issues through both print and our website, [wordofhisgrace.org](http://wordofhisgrace.org).

The website has since grown in impact and respect. Our increasing number of articles are reproduced and favorably cited on websites around the world. We publish Gospel tracts and small books that have been widely requested and used by a number of missionaries and other Christian teachers. We also publish an email newsletter. Everything we write is centered on Jesus Christ and our commitment to take the Bible alone for our doctrine.

We are family-based. Mary and I are truly a team and always thank God for having given us to each other. We try to be good stewards of the resources God provides. To this end, we have recently put all of our literature on our website. This has enabled us to scale-back our print publishing, which had been growing increasingly expensive as costs rise. We now send printed materials only to those who do not have access to the internet.

We trust that as long as we continue to please God in what we teach, and we remain good stewards of what He supplies, He will provide everything needed to continue these activities. We do not ask humans for money, or anything, but bring our needs in prayer to God.

This does not mean that God has not used people to provide our needs. He has. It means that we make our needs known to God, and if He then makes them known to you, well, that is between you and Him. This is a lesson in faith. You can trust in God's promises found in Scripture: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). If you are like-minded with us, we would love to fellowship with you. Email us.

By His grace alone,

Peter Ditzel

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Our TULIP series of booklets have been read by Christians around the world and have been used by missionaries and other teachers to disciple their brothers and sisters in Christ.

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