

SOTERIOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

PART 48

KEY TERMS: ELECTION, PART 9

Calvinists, in order to maintain the doctrine of election, also misunderstand and misinterpret the word “all” in the same way they misinterpret “world.” The meaning of the word has to be changed because Christ died only for the elect.

Romans 5:18 ¹⁸So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all [πάντες] men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all [πάντες] men.

“The purpose for which Christ died was to make justification available to all mankind. Although the Greek construction is difficult, Paul’s intent is clear—a provision for all mankind. Hyper-Calvinists overlook Paul’s logic, just as Adam’s integral connection with the whole human race condemned all mankind, just so Christ’s identification with all mankind as the Son of Man had as its goal bringing justification of life to all mankind” [C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism & Arminianism: An Inductive Mediate Theology of Salvation*, p. 289].

We are going to examine the treatment of this verse by a prominent Reformed pastor and theologian named Donald Grey Barnhouse. In many ways, he was a very conservative biblical theologian but in exegeting the Scriptures, Calvinist doctrine was given priority. He pastored the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia from 1927 to his death in 1960. Through radio and later television, he became one of the most well-known and influential pastors in the mid twentieth century. “Barnhouse’s theology was an eclectic mix of dispensationalism, Calvinism, and fundamentalism. As a dispensationalist he developed elaborate eschatological schemes, yet he departed significantly from much dispensationalist teaching. His fearless and brusque attacks on liberal Presbyterian clergymen led the Philadelphia Presbytery to censure him in 1932, yet he opposed the fundamentalist concept of separation and in his later years gradually grew mellow in his relations with the Presbyterian Church and the National Council of Churches” [*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. “Barnhouse, Donald Grey”]. There is much to admire about this man but he did allow his theology to trump Scripture and, while I would not say he capitulated to liberalism, he certainly played footsie with it in his later years by remaining in a liberal, nearly apostate Presbyterian denomination and by cooperating with the National Council of Churches.

Barnhouse is typical of the Calvinist interpretation of Romans 5:18; he makes the claim that “all” does not mean “all.” “Let us note, in passing, that the phrase ‘all men’ may not be interpreted to mean every member of the human race....For if our text were taken without respect to the rest of Scripture, and if the simple meaning of the dictionary were applied to the words here, we would conclude that our text is teaching universal salvation....In many passages of the New Testament the words *any man*, *every man*, *all men*, most surely mean *any believing man*, *every believing man*, and *all believing men*....In 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 [the passages concerning believer's rewards] it cannot be doubted that the expressions *any man* and *every man* refer to believers only. For all those mentioned in the passage are saved, some receiving rewards in addition to salvation, others without the reward but nevertheless saved, yet so as by fire. So must we understand the phrase ‘all men’ in the present text [Romans 5:18]. Surely we must comprehend from the rest of Scripture that the free gift of God's grace and righteousness brings justification of life to all who have been born again through the work of the Savior...” [Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Romans: Chapters 5:12-16:27*, 89-90].

Barnhouse presented several significant errors in his assertions about Romans 5:18. He simply denies that “all men” means “all men” in the verse. As we have seen, he does that in order to maintain his theology concerning the doctrine of election. Certainly, context does determine meaning but his denigration of the dictionary definition of words is out of line. We have to use the lexicons to at least establish our basic understanding of the meaning and use of the words; context is then the final determining factor. He changes the meaning of “any,” “every,” and “all” to mean believers only. That's not only false, it is deliberately deceptive. This is not how the Bible is to be studied and interpreted. Words have meaning in context and we dare not change that meaning as it regards the inspired, inerrant Word of God simply to suit our theology. When Barnhouse says this verse cannot be interpreted without respect to the rest of Scripture, what he really means is Scripture as interpreted according to the Calvinistic, theological hermeneutic and presuppositions rather than according to literal hermeneutics.

Barnhouse exhibits the usual Lordship salvation confusion about the three tenses of salvation in his use of 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 as a Scripture used to assist in the interpretation of Romans 5:18. The problem is Paul was teaching the doctrine of justification salvation in Romans and in 1 Corinthians, he was teaching about sanctification and glorification salvation. Sanctification and glorification are truths only for believers so of course the mention of “any man” in connection with them in 1 Corinthians can only refer to believers. That is determined by context. All people have the opportunity to avail themselves of justification salvation just as Paul wrote in Romans 5:18 but that isn't the issue in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. These Scriptures in Romans and 1 Corinthians are teaching different things about different issues involving different tenses

of salvation and to use one to determine the meaning of the other is a hermeneutically invalid practice. It can only lead to error. The truth is this isn't just error; it is a deliberate misuse of the Scriptures in order to sway people to adopt a particular theology. The contextual differences between the two Scriptures are very clear. It's a cliché, but equating these two Scriptures is like trying to equate apples and oranges; they don't go together thus the argument is invalid from the beginning.

Romans 5:18 is simply presenting the truth that just as condemnation resulted from one act, so justification results from one act. Justification is available to all and accessed through belief. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 is presenting the truth that all those who are already counted among the believers will undergo a judgment, an evaluation, of their work for Christ Jesus in this life and they will be rewarded or not based on their works as believers. Works have no place in justification salvation but they are important in sanctification salvation and they will have a lasting impact on glorification salvation in terms of the believer's position and degree of responsibility in the Kingdom.

Universal salvation is the falsehood lobbed by Calvinists, as Barnhouse did, at anyone who interprets the Bible to be saying Christ died for the sins of the world even though the Bible says exactly that in several places most notably in 1 John 2:2. Christ's death on the cross did, in fact, pay mankind's sin debt and satisfied, or propitiated, the Father. Their theology makes the claim that if Christ died for all and if Christ died for the sins of the world, then His sacrificial death failed in the appointed task because not all are saved and many remain dead in their sins. This is strictly a theologically based presupposition. The Bible is clear that Christ died for the sins of the world., The Bible is equally clear that Christ's work must be personally appropriated by each person in order to be applied to them as specifically saved individuals. The sacrifice Christ made on behalf of mankind and its application to individual members of the race are separate issues. Salvation is available to all men but it must be appropriated by each individual and applied by God in order to be effective. Vance says it this way, "...the Bible differentiates between the *universal provision* and the *individual application* of the Atonement. The work of Christ is *complete* but *conditional*; the Atonement is *actual* but *potential*" [Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism*, p. 428]. Olson adds that, "His death is provisional, potential, and conditional in its application. In and of itself it saves no one apart from the subjective application of redemption-liberation and reconciliation conditioned upon repentant faith. Christ's death fully satisfied (propitiated) the offended holiness of God so that God can be declared as propitious. The only obstacle now remaining is man's unresponsiveness to God" [C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism & Arminianism: An Inductive Mediate Theology of Salvation*, pp. 295-296]. Salvation does not occur until belief is exercised even though Christ paid every person's sin debt two thousand years ago on the cross. It is simply a false, theological presupposition deliberately used to claim that claims Christ's payment for the sins of the

world must result in universal salvation for all. This is an accusation designed to shame those who disagree, to hide the real issue, and to shut down the discussion. After all, no Bible believing Christian wants to be called a universalist.

You might surmise from the Barnhouse denigration of the dictionary definitions of "all," that they are no help in defining the word in a restrictive sense to the elect and you would be correct. In other words, the lexicons do not support the Barnhouse, Calvinist position at all. That's why he denigrates the use of the dictionaries in this instance; they do not support his theology for this verse. The word "all," ἅπασαν, in the plural simply means all; that cannot be debated. The only place Calvinists try to restrict the meaning of this word is in the soteriological context. That is not exegesis and it is a deliberate, gross error in the interpretation of the Scriptures to slip in the word "elect" before "men" when the original text doesn't have it and even if it was present in the text, it wouldn't mean what they want it to mean.

By way of comparison, Zane Hodges interpreted this verse in a much more biblical manner. "This gift (*justification sourced in life*) in fact is made available for all men by means of the cross of Christ, that is to say, through one *righteous action*....In contrast to Adam's sinful 'action' (his *one offense*) stands the *one righteous action* of Jesus Christ in laying down His life for sinners(cf. vv 6-8). This supremely righteous deed of unselfish love has made God's gift available *for all men*. Paul is here playing on the variability of the sense of the Greek preposition *eis*. In the first half of the verse *eis* refers to an actual universal reality, while in the last half it refers to a potential universal reality, since Christ actually died *for all men*....The real points of contrast may be said to be (1) *one offense/one righteous action*; (2) *to all men/for all men* (*to* and *for* both render *eis*), and (3) *to produce* (*eis* each time) *servitude/justification sourced in life*....In sum, Paul's statement in this verse points to two diametrically opposite experiences traceable to two 'men' whose single actions result in widely varying outcomes. On the one hand, Adam's single offense produced universal *servitude to sin*. On the other hand, Christ's *righteous act* on the cross is efficacious *for all men* so that they can now possess, by faith, *righteousness sourced in life*, in consequence of which they will be able to live (1:17)" [Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, pp.157-158). It is obvious between the two men that one interpreted the verse using literal hermeneutics (Hodges) and one man used theological hermeneutics to interpret the verse (Barnhouse). It is equally obvious that one method is biblically accurate and one is not biblically accurate.

It makes me sad to say that a revered and respected pastor like Barnhouse can make so many egregious errors in exegeting one verse of the book of Romans simply to support his theology. Changing the definition of words is not only an error; it is deceitful

and designed to “sell” a theological viewpoint rather than to allow the Bible to speak for itself.

In one of the letters Paul wrote to Timothy, he said that God desires all men to be saved and that Christ was the mediator between God and men who gave Himself as the ransom for all.

1 Timothy 2:3–6 ³This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires [θέλω] all [πάντας] men [ἄνθρωπος] to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men [ἄνθρωπος], the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave Himself as a ransom for all [πάντας], the testimony given at the proper time.

We’ve previously discussed the use of the word “all” but suffice to say in this context it means everyone. The word can be used in a figurative sense but context determines meaning and it is not used in a figurative sense here. It simply means everyone. God desires, θέλω, all men to be saved and by His grace through faith all men are savable. We’ve also previously discussed the truth that the lake of fire was not made for people; therefore, this fact also informs us that all people are potentially savable. Also as previously discussed, it is a false argument to claim that because God desires everyone’s salvation, that everyone must be saved or else God has failed. “God’s desire is that the gospel invitation be extended to all people. While the atoning death of Jesus is provisional, potential, and sufficient to save every person, it is experiential, actual, and efficient only for believers....The gospel is inclusive in the scope of its offer but exclusive with respect to its means” [John Koessler, “1 Timothy” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, p. 1898]. In other words, all people can hear and respond to the gospel call but eternal life is contingent on any individual person’s response through belief. It is noteworthy that this commentator did not say it was “efficient only for the elect” as Calvinist theology demands and as they interpret this verse.

While, on the one hand, some Calvinists recognize that God desires all people to be saved, on the other hand, they take that possibility away with a theological differentiation between what they call the external or outward call and the inward or effectual call [for a more complete explanation of their theology see Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*, pp. 564-577]. “Reformed theology understands the divine call in terms of an *outward call*, by which God summons the whole world to Christ through the preaching of the gospel, and an inward or *effectual call*, as the Spirit illumines our hearts and gives us faith through the gospel” [Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*, pp. 566-567]. The problem is what they affirm on the one hand, they take away with the other hand. They say the whole world is offered the gospel, but their theology

does not allow for that to be a real possibility because only the elect can be granted eternal life. And even that is not by way of a volitional faith response to the gospel. God must first give the elect person the faith to believe, regenerate the person, that is, make them spiritually alive, and then they can believe and be regenerated and counted as a believer. Once again, this is an example of theological sleight of hand; you cannot reasonably claim the gospel is freely offered to all people in all places of all nations and races, if only the elect are given the faith to believe it. In effect, their theology nullifies the plain biblical truths of Scriptures such as John 3:16 and 1 Timothy 2:3-6.

In the past, Calvinists were more honest about this situation. The doctrine of election as they understood it clearly prevented them from preaching the gospel to a lost and dying world. At least some of them didn't play word games about an external call to the world and an effectual call to only the elect. I'm going to read a lengthy quote but it perfectly illustrates the problem with election as the Calvinist branch of Protestant theology understands it. This will serve to illustrate why we need to know the true biblical basis for understanding election. These quotes are from a self-proclaimed Reformed Calvinist theologian and seminary professor which makes his observations all the more authoritative.

“We should, however, take a closer look at how election threatened the very possibility of preaching the gospel. If election means that the gospel is good news only for the elect, how can it be preached in that distinctive and authentic manner which distinguishes preaching from mere lecturing? Eminent Scottish Reformed theologians contended that the doctrine of election precluded the preaching of a gospel offer of salvation to all men. Some of these theologians held to an indiscriminate offer of salvation—but only to the membership of the visible church. This localized the problem, but did not solve it. Left unanswered was the question how a church loyal to the truth of election [notice he did not say “a church loyal to the truth of the Bible”] could preach the gospel to the world outside the church.

During the eighteenth century the same problem arose in the Reformed churches of the Netherlands. Election again challenged the addressability of the gospel to all men. One side in this Dutch controversy contended that the gospel as the good news of salvation could be preached only to men whose lives gave evidence of an operation of divine grace. Only these could safely be regarded as numbered among the elect, and the good news of salvation was for the elect only. Thus identification of the elect became an indispensable condition for proper proclamation of the gospel. A person's election had to be established *to the satisfaction of the judgment of others*, and established *apart from the gospel*, before his eligibility to hear the good news could be determined. Until the trustees of the gospel were satisfied that he was elect, it was not permissible for them to proclaim and for him to hear and believe the gospel was good news for him....

On the other side of the controversy were those who recognized this position as theologically absurd and religiously impossible. They contended that the nature of the gospel is such that it can and must be preached as the good news of salvation to all men. It is interesting—and theologically significant—that the theologians on this side of the controversy were dubbed ‘new lights,’ that is, liberal theologians bringing a new, strange light to fall upon the relation of election and preaching. And the theologians who opposed these ‘new lights’ and muted preaching in the name of election by making identification of the elect an indispensable condition for the addressability of the gospel were designated as ‘old lights,’ that is, conservative theologians faithful and loyal to the Reformed tradition [again, notice he did not say “faithful and loyal to the Word of God”].

Notice that in both these controversies the central question was not whether or how *election* could be preached, but whether election, as it was understood, allowed the *gospel* itself to be preached. When the conservative element conceded that the gospel could be preached, but only to the ‘visible church,’ or only to persons who could indicate their eligibility by demonstrating their election, they did not demonstrate that their position had biblical sanction. How could they? They had filtered the gospel through their doctrine of election and thereby created the problem. And they could appeal to nothing in the gospel to support their position because the gospel in the biblical record nowhere describes itself as good news only for the elect. On the contrary, the Scriptures contend that the gospel must be preached to every man. These ‘old light’ conservatives offered only a compromise that neither Scripture nor their theology sanctioned. Membership in the visible church is no guarantee of election, nor is the ability of any person to convince others that he is elected by God and therefore has the necessary credentials to hear the gospel. The self-styled conservatives in both Scotland and the Netherlands recognized a contradiction between the gospel and their doctrine of election. What they offered was only a compromise, not a solution, and their compromise was a compromising of the gospel, not an amendment of their view of election” [James Daane, *The Freedom of God: A Study of Election and Pulpit*, pp. 22-24].

Dr. Daane, a Reformed theologian, has precisely identified the problem. To the Calvinist theologian, theology is more important than the Bible. They were willing to ignore biblical truth and forgo telling people the good news simply to maintain a theological system. If election had been correctly defined from the beginning, this problem would never have occurred, but having said that these theologians now know the biblical arguments against their doctrine but they opt to maintain it despite sound biblical evidence refuting it. They have developed arguments to deny the Scriptures that refute their system and, at the same time, they make their theology sound biblical so those who are indoctrinated into the system seemingly embrace it without question. It is more than noteworthy that Dr. Daane has identified the loyalty to these men to the doctrine

of election and to Reformed theology rather than to the Word of God and the Lord it reveals. It is more than noteworthy, they preached the doctrine of election but they would not preach the good news of eternal life to all who believe. It is more than noteworthy they would compromise the gospel of grace but not their doctrine of election.

One of the primary methods Calvinist theologians use to convince people they have the correct system of theology is to claim they are the only theologians who honor the Bible as the Word of God and accordingly interpret it. However, as I've noted time and again, their hermeneutic is a theological hermeneutic and not a literal hermeneutic. Most of them will admit they do not literally interpret prophecy because they don't believe Israel has a future in the plan of God; therefore, they use allegory and theology to interpret unfulfilled prophecy. It is also interesting to note that those who better understood the gospel offer as a bona fide offer to all people were called "liberals." We tend to think of theological "liberals" as those who deny biblical truth, but these men regarded others who denied the truth of Calvinist theology as "liberals." Even then, these so called "liberals" or "new lights" didn't go all the way back to using the Bible as the basis for preaching the gospel but at least they moved in that direction. Twice in this quote Daane implied, perhaps unwittingly, that Calvinists are loyal to their system of theology and to the doctrine of election over and above their loyalty to the Lord and to the Word of God, and his comments were a very strong, implicit condemnation of that mindset. He also admitted they did, in fact, compromise the gospel but they did not compromise their definition of the doctrine of election.

Peter wrote that God did not desire for any person to perish.

2 Peter 3:9⁹The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish [ἀπόλλυμι] but for all [πάντες] to come to repentance.

The context of Peter's Scripture is the last days, the day of judgment and the destruction of ungodly men at the return of Christ. In light of this, Peter was counseling the believing recipients of his epistle to live godly lives. In verse 9, Peter presented the truth that God was patient with mankind because it is not His desire that any person perish in this approaching day of judgment. Perish, ἀπόλλυμι, means to destroy or to cause the destruction of persons, objects, or institutions. Peter was describing a judgment that was going to be complete and catastrophic in the same way the flood was a complete and catastrophic destruction of planet earth and its inhabitants save for eight people. This future judgment will not be by water but by intense heat and the only way to avoid this judgment is in Christ Jesus.

There is no need for and it is neither God's desire nor His decree that any human being perish. All people have been afforded the opportunity to believe in God and be saved from judgment. Most grace oriented expositors understand this verse to be saying that God is patient and wants people to be saved. "The words not wanting anyone to perish do not express a decree, as if God has willed everyone to be saved. Universal salvation is not taught in the Bible. Instead those words describe God's wishes or desires: He longs that all would be saved (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4) but knows that many reject Him" [Kenneth O. Gangel, "2 Peter" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, p. 876]. "God is in no way anxious to begin the judgments following Christ's return. Instead, He is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish. The Greek word rendered *perish* might equally well have been translated *be killed*. God is reluctant to see sinners *killed*. What God seeks from men while His judgment tarries is repentance. God's wish therefore is that all should come to repentance. This statement should not be read as though it indicated God's desire that all men should be saved from hell, though that desire is expressed elsewhere in Scripture (John 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 5:19-20; 1 Tim 2:4-5). What is suggested here, however, is that if men would repent, the judgment of the Day of the Lord could be averted. But this repentance would need to be universal; that is, *all* would have to come to repentance (cf. Luke 13:3, 5). God's compassion is real and man's opportunity to repent is equally real. Peter is not talking about everyone getting saved, but about everyone turning to the true God in one way or another. The point is simple. God delays in order to give all men a genuine opportunity to repent. The opportunity is real because the mercy is real" [Zane C. Hodges, "2 Peter" in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, pp. 1185-1186].

Some expositors believe the "you" in verse 9 refers to believers but this seems to be untenable because believers are delivered from this wrath of God and not destined to undergo it due to unfaithfulness or sin. Peter is writing to believers but the context suggests that the totality of mankind is the subject here.

In order to maintain the doctrine of election, Calvinists fall back on the secret will of God to support the doctrine. Their theology maintains that God has a revealed will and a secret will. His revealed will is His desire that all people would be saved; His secret will is only the elect will be saved and He chose the elect in eternity past. A representative example for this argument was presented by Wayne Grudem. "Another objection to the doctrine of election is that it contradicts certain passages of Scripture that say that God wills for all to be saved. Paul writes of God our Savior, '*who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*' (1 Tim. 2:4). And Peter says, '*The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance*' (2 Peter 3:9). Do not these passages contradict the idea that God has only chosen certain people to be saved? One common solution to this question (from the Reformed perspective

advocated in this book) is to say that these verses speak of God's *revealed will* (telling us what we should do), not his *hidden will* (his eternal plans for what will happen). The verses simply tell us that God invites and commands every person to repent and come to Christ for salvation, but they do not tell us anything about God's secret decrees regarding who will be saved" [Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 683-684]. This is more doublespeak. What kind of God does Grudem have that "commands every person to repent" and be saved all the while knowing that His sovereign decree to only save some of His own choosing will result in most people being damned? This theology does not describe the God of the Bible and it is not true to the revelation provided in the Bible by the God of the Bible.