

# Fair 101

There is no more common cry of young people than “That’s not fair!” What they mean is that they are not receiving what they *want* – they see everything in relation to themselves and their desires. Hopefully (though not always), as people mature they begin to understand the nuances of fairness – making it more objective rather than simply personal.

To look at a couple of examples:

- 1) A father gives (for no special reason) one child \$20 and the other \$1 – this is not fair.
- 2) The same man gives \$20 to one charity and nothing to another (having earlier received nothing from either) – this is not unfair.

The difference? In the case of children, parents have a responsibility to them, a duty to treat them equitably (and even then, they will hear “Unfair!”) while to those for which they are not obligated, in any way, they are free to do or not do as they choose.

One of the big divisions between professing Christians is over the doctrine of *election* or *predestination*:

- Historically, those of the Reformed persuasion have taught that some people are predestined for salvation and others are not. And that God fully, for those elected, fulfills the faith requisite based solely on their selection by Him. They believe no individual can believe or will choose God unless God gives them the faith.
- Traditionally, the non-Reformed (those Protestants who broke away from the person of the Pope, but not his doctrines – or who may have who broken with Catholic doctrine, but have “slid” back into them so, in doctrine, they are more similar to Catholics than those of the Reformation) believe God gives everyone a chance to “accept Jesus” and to be saved. They say God, based on His ability to see into the future, elects those who He sees at some point will accept Him.
- Many (either by being ignorant or rejecting the *Bible*) deny election and predestination altogether. They view God as rewarding those that, through their actions while alive, deserve His approval.
- A minority think that God saves everyone (except maybe Hitler, Stalin, George W. Bush and others they view as really evil like them).

Each of these positions can be fair *depending on* God’s obligation or responsibility to them.

The Reformed belief is that election and predestination are fair because God is not obligated in *any* way to *any* person while the other 3 groups believe God is, in one way or another, duty-bound – to them predestination and election are not fair. Who is right – who is wrong!

3 against 1 – the majority versus the small minority – claim God cannot be fair if He elects and predestines some to salvation and others to damnation because (depending on which voice you listen to) all people are God’s children, He loves everyone, He made everyone like they are . . . any

Did not deserve

Do not merit

Will not warrant

Cannot earn

Are unable to pay for

Powerless to work for

I only believed because  
God gave me the faith

My continuing faith is  
solely by grace

one of which (much less two or all three of them) oblige and compel His treating everyone in the same way and giving everyone an equal opportunity for salvation – this is very logical and rational.

But are these simply majority opinions and popular clichés – are they supported or refuted by the *Bible*? To argue with anyone's personal opinion is seldom beneficial to either person. However, it is possible to have a reasonable and beneficial conversation with those who are open to evidence, basing their thinking on the expertise of a knowledgeable and objective third-party. In other words, those who “just believe” all people are God's children, He loves everyone, He made everyone like they are . . . are entitled to *their* opinions, but they are of little help to those trying to discover a real truth!

Those who appeal to the *Bible* for answers, on the other hand, may disagree, but at least the disagreement is not coming from the dark within – if they are honest and objective (still not easy) there is hope of them learning from the dialogue. So to those who, while they do not claim to understand everything, believe the *Bible* is the final answer to any question:

- Are all people God's children? *John* 8 (beginning with verse 31) is undeniably clear that Jesus divides people into children of God and children of the devil – all people are not God's children!
- Does God loves everyone? This is one point *most* liberals and conservatives believe and are quick to tell others. Yet, *Malachi* opens clarifying this issue – “Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated . . .” God does *not* love everyone!
- Repentance is a key doctrine in **every** credible religion; the difference is how this repentance is accomplished – based on self-will or only by the power of God. So whether God takes credit for making everyone like they are or not, the *Bible* is clear there must be a change – repentance. God is not obligated to those who do not listen to Him or accept His power of repentance.

And all three of these issues are *major* themes of the *Bible*.

The *Bible*, therefore, removes these issues from the fairness “equation.” And if a person slowly and *open-mindedly* reads *Romans* 9, Paul summarizes the case for election and predestination succinctly. God is not obligated in any sense to anyone because all people are His children and since He loves everyone – the *Bible*, in many places, refutes these clichés! Therefore, Paul is free to summarize how election and predestination work within the background of the *Bible* (*Genesis* through *Revelation*).

“But . . . but . . . but . . . this changes everything!” I can hear. Yep – you are right. Evangelism has been hijacked by too many people to mean “getting people saved” when, in fact, it means to alert and direct those God is saving to what is happening so they can more fully grasp the grace available to them and find their specific purpose and place in God's plan. God has not and will not relinquish his sovereignty in the critical area of salvation because if He did the devil would win every time and everyone!

And this understanding also changes the way we look at the *Bible*. The main focus of the *Bible* is **not** evangelizing the lost, but encouraging the chosen how to live – what is expected of them – the purpose and power of grace. “Keep Christians from understanding the *Bible* as it is vital to their **everyday** life,” the devil will say, “and we minimize its potential damage!”

God does not leave the issue of election, predestination and His purpose in them as mysteries – for those who objectively ask and seek will find His answer; while those who start with preconceived denominational traditions will continue in their ignorance and error. The answers are not hidden, but are clearly in the open:

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But **God chose** the foolish things of the world **to** shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world **to** shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – **to** nullify the things that are, **so that** no one may boast before him. 1Co 1:26 - 29

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, **in order that** in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>Eph 2:1 – 7</sup>

Unless caught in the “underbrush” of confusion or focusing on the trees (singling selected verses out of context to suit an inflexible preconceived doctrine) rather than the forest (the key themes – the sovereignty of God being the foundation), we know:

• • • everything related to salvation is of grace based on the sovereignty of God; and for those who love God this makes His grace *more* glorious, not less!

So is God fair – certainly! For no one deserves, merits, or will, in the future, warrant His blessing. We cannot earn, we are unable pay for and are powerless to work for salvation. A person only believes because God gives them faith and their hope of continuing in this faith is solely by grace!

That He should choose to save any is a wonder. But, again, He tells us why:

in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the  
wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,  
and his paths beyond tracing out!  
“Who has known the mind of the Lord?  
Or who has been his counselor?”

“Who has ever given to God,  
that God should repay him?”

For from him and through him  
and to him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen. <sup>Ro 11:33 – 36</sup>

Yes, God is fair is retaining and maintaining His sovereignty over salvation because we:

Did not deserve
Do not merit
Will not warrant
Cannot earn
Are unable to pay for
Powerless to work for
Only believe because God gives faith
With any continuing faith being solely by grace