

Foreword

The basis for this is to show that one cannot base their theology on one or two key verses. Rather, we must base our theology on what we know about God as a whole: what we know that the Bible teaches as a whole; and always look at the context and who the author was originally writing to and writing about.

You see, if we know that God is love, but something in our theology doesn't match up, then maybe our theology is skewed. If a verse seems to be telling us that God hates certain peoples or groups then maybe we should look at context or original audience etc.

I'm uncertain as to why people will take one concept or verse and run with it basing most of their theology on it, but I have a feeling that they somehow feel inadequate in their faith. God tells us that "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV) There are some things that we just have to trust God on. There are some things that require faith and there are some things that we need to understand that we are not God, and we will not comprehend everything this side of eternity. We don't always have to be right or have the right answer because we are supposed to have faith and trust in God. Do we fully know how he created the heavens and the earth? No. Do we fully understand what it's like to live outside of time and space? No. If we understood and knew everything God knows, that would make him less of a deity, and would make us more like gods.

There are points that I argue in this that you may disagree with. I don't know everything, but I've tried to tackle these subjects, by looking at the context, the original language, and by looking at who the original intended audience was. (In some cases with election and God choosing, knowing that the original audience was Jewish makes all the difference when the author refers to them as being elect.) Whether you agree or disagree with my positions on any of these subjects doesn't matter if you don't do your own homework and form your own opinion. Don't be "that guy" who bases his theology on his favorite teacher or some internet troll. Look it up for yourself; put in the time to study and see for yourself. Don't just take one verse that you like and run with it.

"Dead In Sin"

Many people quote Ephesians 2:1 in defense of Calvinism *"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins."* (ESV) They say if we are dead in our sins, how could we possibly respond to God. Dead people can't do anything; they are dead.

1. Genesis 3:1 *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"* 2 *And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,* 3 *but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"* 4 *But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."* 23 *Therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.* (ESV) Now satan was correct in part of this. Adam and Eve did not immediately die a physical death; they died a spiritual death, they no longer enjoyed fellowship with God. Paul in Romans 5:12 writes, *"Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."* (ESV) The death that is spoken of in Genesis and specifically in Ephesians 2:1 is a spiritual death and, yes, it is true that we are all dead in our sins and trespasses.

2. So can a dead person respond? The apostle John in John 5:24&25 writes the words of Jesus, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the*

voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” (ESV) Jesus himself said that when the dead hear the voice of the son of God... wait I thought the dead cannot hear? Jesus says otherwise, the dead will hear the voice of the son of God, and whoever hears my word and believes has eternal life.

3. John writes in John 3:16-18 *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”* (ESV)
1. Whoever believes in him is NOT CONDEMNED, but whoever does not believe is CONDEMNED ALREADY, ie and you were dead in your sins and trespasses. We were as good as dead spiritually until we believed or until we put our faith and trust in Jesus for salvation.

The “Whosoever”

There is a line of thinking that is going around that says that the whosoever will believe of John 3:16 doesn't really mean whosoever...

1. I cannot find a major translation that renders it anything other than whoever, whosoever, and everyone who believes. They all translate this verse (and 18-21)
2. “Whoever believes” literally means,
 1. Whoever = all, every, the whole, every kind of - each
 2. Believes = believe, trust, put faith in, think to be true, - to trust in Jesus
3. Paul in Romans 10:9-13 writes, *“if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* (ESV)
 1. Everyone = all, every, each, any
 2. All = every, each, the whole
 3. Everyone = all, every, each, any
4. The Bible teaches that God doesn't turn away those who seek him nor does he desire that anyone should perish which is why it only makes sense from what we see throughout scripture that the whosoever can and does mean anyone.
 1. The Psalmist writes *“a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”* (Psalm 51:17 ESV)
 2. In Jeremiah 29:13 *“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”*

3. In 2 Peter 3:9 Peter writes, *"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."*
5. What about the thief on the cross all he did was plead with Jesus to remember him One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, *"So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!"* But the other criminal protested, *"Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong."* Then he said, *"Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."* And Jesus replied, *"I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

“Faith Is Not A Work”

In Ephesians 2:8-9 Paul writes, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* Now some would say that anything we do to earn, merit, or work for salvation is a cause for our boasting and not true salvation, and I would agree because that is what Paul is stating here. But, many would also include faith into that equation, to which I strongly disagree. Faith is not a work, rather faith is a response. In fact, in light of Hebrews 11:6 (*And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* ESV) I believe that faith is not a work rather it is the required response in order to be saved and forgiven of our sins.

1. The greek literally says that, apart from faith no one is capable of being resolved with God, for whoever would attempt to approach God, it is necessary or obligatory to put one’s trust in him. Those who seek out God, and try to search for him in a diligent manner will be rewarded. To put it in simpler terms, God is a rewarder or the one who pays wages of the one who believes in him. If faith is a work, then why does God require us to believe?
2. The better part of Hebrews 11 talks about people responding to God in faith and, how as a result of their faith they did mighty works for God, and as a result of their faith they were commended by God. *For by it (faith) the people of old received their commendation.* Hebrews 11:2
3. God requires continual faith in order for salvation, Peter writes, *“So that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* (1 Peter 1:7 ESV)
In each of the seven letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, Jesus, speaking of eternal salvation, repeats this same line

over and over again, “to the one who conquers.” And in 1John 5:4-5 John writes, *“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”*

4. If faith was a work that we could boast about, why is it required for salvation? Let's breakdown those 2 verses in Ephesians. *“For by grace (because of God's grace or his favor upon you) you have been saved (you have been rescued from sin) through faith (on account of faith; trust, strong confidence in and reliance on, what is believed). And this is not your own doing (out of or by means of); it is the gift (offering) of God, not a result of works (duty or obligation), so that no one may boast (show off).”* What we see is that salvation and grace is the gift of God. We didn't deserve it; we couldn't earn it so that no one could boast, but rather you have been saved, through faith, by the grace of God.

Does God Choose Some To Be Saved

Matthew 22:1-14 (ESV) **1**And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, **2**"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, **3**and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. **4**Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.'" **5**But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, **6**while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. **7**The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. **8**Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. **9**Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' **10**And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. **11**"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. **12**And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. **13**Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' **14**For many are called, but few are chosen."

1. First and foremost this was written to and about the Jewish people. The invitation first went out to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. That is the context of this passage.
2. It is verses like verse 14 that causes many people to claim that God chooses those whom he desires to be saved, but if we look at the parable which Jesus said "the kingdom of heaven may be compared to..." We see that the king chose many to come in the first place who decided not to come.

1. The invitations went out and many would not come. Many rejected the call, ie the Jewish people. Then a second more generalized invitation went out, inviting the good and the bad, as many as they could find, and we see that many decided to come, ie the Gentiles.
2. Salvation is for all or in keeping with this parable, "the servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found" and "many are called". Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:4, (God) *"who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*
3. People had the choice whether or not to respond to the invitation or the "call." The call went out to virtually everyone and unfortunately many did not accept the call.
4. One person did try to get in and was rejected, *"but when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?'"* This interesting side note addresses the impossibility of coming to the wedding feast on one's own terms. God has laid out the way to the wedding feast ie the way to eternal life, Jesus said I am the way. There is no other way to the father except through the son. We cannot get there on our own merit, on how much money we have or how good of a person we thought we were or anything else.
5. "Many are called but few are chosen." We see in this parable the delicate balance of being chosen, and the personal decision to answer the call. Jesus laid it out perfectly. Many are called; (salvation is offered to all); few are chosen (ie those who accepted the call to come vs those who try to get in on their own and those who rejected the call).
6. The chosen are those who accept the invitation and show up to the wedding prepared, the chosen are those who accept God's free gift of salvation and who adorn themselves with the proper wedding garments.

7. One other point to make is that when God chose Jacob over Esau. It wasn't in regard to salvation but still many use this to say that God chooses those to be saved. In Romans 9:13 when the apostle Paul refers to this, he is using it to illustrate how God chose Jacob to be the father of the people group that he would use to bring forth the messiah. *"They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's adopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are their ancestors, and ultimately Christ himself was an Israelite as far as his human nature is concerned..."* *"In order that Gods purpose of election might continue."* Romans 9:4-5&11 In order that Gods purpose of election (choosing Israel to be the nation he uses to bring forth the law, the prophets, and ultimately the Messiah) God's choice and his purpose in electing wasn't to exclusively save some and not others but that he wanted to use these people to fulfill his plan.
8. Some will also use 1Peter 1:1-2 as well to say, *"see it is God who chooses,"* *"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance."* First and foremost context is key. Who is Peter writing to? The Jewish people. If you were to refer to a large gathering of men you would use terms they understand, right? That is the same thing Peter is doing here because the Israelites are Gods chosen people. They are his elect, chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. God chose Israel from which to bring forth the messiah, and so Peter is addressing them as such.

A Gift Freely Accepted Or Rejected

Ephesians 2:8-9 *8For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* When someone hands you a gift it is up to you to accept it, right? I have people always wanting to give me a cold drink or some coffee when I'm out working, and very seldom do I accept their gift, mostly because I'm leery of what might be in it, but as they offer me a drink it is totally up to me whether or not to accept said drink. There are no laws that say I must accept every gift ever handed to me. When God created mankind, he created us in his image, which incidentally doesn't just mean our looks. No he endowed us with a brain and with the ability to reason and to think for ourselves and to make our own choices based upon those thoughts. As image bearers of God we have the ability to decide for ourselves how we want to live our lives, which includes accepting or rejecting gifts.

1. I actually love how the New Living Translation renders verse 8, *"God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God."* Salvation is a gift from God. You accept his gift of grace when you believed. No, we cannot take credit for salvation for it is because of the grace of God that anyone is saved in the first place, but salvation and Gods grace is only realized in our lives when we believe.
2. Paul says not a result of works so that no one may boast, is faith the work? No, clearly if you look at this in context you see that we did nothing to earn salvation. It was a gift, and solely by God's grace that we are saved. Ephesians 2:4&5 (NLT) *But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)*

1. But God so rich in mercy...
2. Though we were dead (condemned already John 3:16-21) because of our sins, he gave us life...
3. It is only by Gods grace...
4. We have done nothing to earn Gods mercy and grace, no work, no wealth, no position, we bring nothing to the table, but God offers us a gift, life...
3. The gift is accepted through faith or by believing in Jesus, the gift can still be rejected. Revelation 9:20-21 (NLT) *"But the people who did not die in these plagues still refused to repent of their evil deeds and turn to God. They continued to worship demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that can neither see nor hear nor walk! And they did not repent of their murders or their witchcraft or their sexual immorality or their thefts."* Throughout the Bible we see that mankind has a choice, to accept or to reject Gods gift. God doesn't force those in the book of revelation to accept nor does he force any of us.