

With Jesus We Can All Be Winners!

by David Lee Burris



Not long ago, I received a notice in the mail—an attention-catching announcement that we had been selected to receive a special invitation to enter one of our nation’s largest sweepstakes. It came with a large, eye-catching envelope with lots of cool stuff inside. There were plenty of colorful stickers and stamps, along with info about the sweepstakes. Of course, the most attractive feature was the prize money. But, then, in plain print, they disclosed the chances of winning: 1 in 1.7 billion. It hurts my brain to think about those kinds of numbers, so I set aside the envelope and, in a few days, threw it in the trash. People say, “Well, somebody’s got to win and it might as well be me!” But, is it really worth the stamp or even the effort of putting it in the mail? What if, for some reason, the chances of winning improved by 1.69 billion to 1 chance in .01 billion, what then? There would still be a much greater chance of getting hit by lightning. So, for that reason, I’m out.

For centuries, God had repeatedly announced, through the prophets, His intention of blessing all nations through His Son, Jesus (Genesis 12:1-3). Many waited with expectation for the coming Messiah. In many ways, the overall message of the Old Testament is “Christ is Coming!” But, Jesus didn’t arrive in “a large, eye-catching envelope with lots of cool stuff inside.” His coming wasn’t marked by the kind of fluff many of the religious leaders of the day required. Instead, in keeping with prophecy, He was born in a little town called Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). And, while angels heralded His birth, He wasn’t born in a palace, but in a stable—and for his crib, Mary chose a feeding trough. But, then, the plain print, says, “you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Mt. 1:21). We look for the fine print. What are the chances that He might save us from our sins?

A surprising “all” is found throughout the pages of the New Testament. “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). **The offer is extended to all, not to just a select few.** Our God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Quoting Old Testament prophecy, Jesus said, “And they shall all be taught of God.” Then He adds, “Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me” (John 12:45). The invitation of heaven is encapsulated in a single word, “Come.” Near the end of the Bible, in the very last chapter, is the following invitation: “And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost” (Revelation 22:17). What are the chances that I can be saved from my sins? 1 in 1.7 billion? Not at all. In **obedient trust**, relying on the grace of God and the blood of Jesus Christ, **my chances are 1 in 1.** – *Greenbrier Church of Christ Edit*

Not Everyone Will Make A Conscious Choice!

Will Everyone Go to Heaven?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

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A letter from a courteous reader asserted his belief that all people will be saved ultimately. He felt there is Bible support for this position, though he failed to cite a solitary passage in defense of the theory.

It is becoming more popular in this day of widely diversified religious views, and a growing tendency to excuse or justify every conceivable ideology.

What Is Universalism?

Universalism is the idea that everyone will go to heaven, eventually and regardless of their conduct on earth — good or bad.

The dogma isn't new. It has roots back into the post-apostolic age. A few of the "church fathers" (e.g., Origen) laid the foundation for this teaching.

John Murray, a former Calvinist, introduced the doctrine in America in about 1770. It has had its relatively prominent defenders from time to time.

Harper Publishing Company of San Francisco published book titled, [If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person.](#)

Authors Phillip Gulley and James Mulholland assert that everyone will be saved, regardless of his religious persuasion — or even if he has no religion at all.

Professor Ty Inbody of the United Theological Seminary has characterized universalism as "one of the hottest burners on the Christian stove today."

But the dogma is a wistful fantasy with no biblical support or logical underpinning.

The doctrine of universalism is entertained only by a fractional element of those who loosely identify themselves with the Christian movement.

In addition to Gulley and Mulholland, a few others more prominent than they have sought to establish this concept. John Hick, former professor of philosophy of religion at Claremont University (California), has written the following:

"We must thus affirm the ultimate salvation of all mankind" (1976, 259).

Scottish theologian, William Barclay, took a similar position. This view is espoused, of course, by the Unitarian/Universalist Church.

What Does the Bible Say About Universalism?

For the informed Bible student, there does not need to be an elaborate defense of the proposition that multitudes will be lost eternally. The scriptural affirmations are too profuse and definitive to assert otherwise.

Sheol

David declared that “the wicked shall be turned into hell **Sheol**, and all the nations that forget God” (Psa. 9:17).

Sheol is used some sixty-six times in the Hebrew Old Testament. While the term sometimes is generic (i.e., the depository of the dead generally), it is also used for the realm where the wicked receive their punishment (Job 11:8; Psa. 9:17; 139:8; Prov. 23:14).

Everlasting shame and contempt

The prophet Daniel declared that a segment of those who “awake” from “the dust of the earth” (i.e., they are to be resurrected from the grave) will experience “everlasting shame and contempt” (Dan. 12:2).

A clear distinction is made between the saved and the lost.

Hades

Hades is the New Testament term for that state between the death of the physical body and the day of judgment. In some New Testament passages, **Hades** stands for the abode of the wicked, i.e., the environment where they are punished before their ultimate banishment into the final domain called hell (**gehenna**) (Mt. 11:23; Lk. 16:23; Rev. 20:13).

Gehenna

Jesus taught that there is a “hell” (**gehenna**) into which the wicked will be cast. In this horrible realm, they will suffer eternally (Mt. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; Lk. 12:5; Jas. 3:6).

Christ also taught that **many** would enter this condition of “destruction” (Mt. 7:13-14). This is not a state of extinction, but of punishment and affliction (cf. Mt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:6-9, ASV).

The Lost

The apostles affirmed that some would be lost.

Paul spoke of those who will not escape the “judgment of God” and the awesome “day of [his] wrath” (Rom. 2:3, 5). Elsewhere he wrote of the **punishment** of the wicked in an **everlasting** abode of separation from the Creator (2 Thess. 1:9).

He spoke also of the terrible slaughter of spiritual rebels at the time of the Lord’s coming (2 Thess. 2:8). He cataloged those who will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21).

These references assert the very **opposite** of universalism!

Peter similarly took note of the wicked’s ultimate accountability to God. He spoke of “lusts, which war against the soul” preliminary to the “day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:11-12). He listed egregious sins for which men will be held responsible by him who “is ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Pet. 4:3-5).

His question “What shall be the end of them who obey not the gospel?” is clear enough in its implication (1 Pet. 4:17-18). The apostle spoke of “heresies” that will “destroy” the wicked person (2 Pet. 2:1ff; cf. 3:7).

How could anyone possibly survey such a variety of sacred texts (in concert with numerous others of similar import) and then contend that everyone will go to heaven?

Only by a complete disregard for the plain meaning of the inspired narratives could such a conclusion be drawn.

The natural inclination of humanity is to deny the doctrine of punishment for those who rebel against God. Yet the idea of ultimate and eternal retribution for sin has been virtually universal among those who identify with Christianity.

This is inexplicable on mere naturalistic grounds. It concedes the compelling biblical case.

Arguments Used to Prove that Everyone Will Go to Heaven

Those who advocate the dogma of universalism occasionally appeal to the Bible in support of their misguided ideology. We will comment briefly upon a couple of these rationalizations.

“God is Good”

It is alleged that the idea of some being lost is **contrary to the goodness of God**. Supposedly, as a perfectly good being, he simply could not allow that. Two things may be said in response to this idea.

First, the Lord’s goodness must not be interpreted in such a way that conflicts with the affirmation of his **justice** (Psa. 89:14; cf. Gen. 18:25). Justice demands punishment for sin.

Do we suppose that a good government should provide no penalty for robbery, rape, and murder?

Second, the fact that suffering is tolerated (and even used) by God within our earthly environment is a forceful demonstration that Jehovah’s goodness is not compromised by the negative consequences of human rebellion.

We cannot foist our own jaded sense of goodness on the Lord, contrary to clear scriptural revelation.

Bible Verses Abused

It is contended that the **Scriptures actually affirm universal salvation**. Peter declares that God doesn’t wish that “any should perish” (2 Pet. 3:9).

Yes, but this phrase represents the **ideal** will of God; he does not want anyone to be lost. That is why the Lord made adequate provision for the redemption of anyone who “wills” to accept salvation (Rev. 22:17).

The real issue is this: what if men **do not** repent? (2 Pet. 3:9b). What if they have no interest in salvation? In that event, those who have rejected divine grace, by means of their disobedience, will receive the terrible consequence of such.

And remember this: just two verses earlier Peter had spoken of the “destruction of the ungodly.”

But did not Paul declare that God wants “all men to be saved”? (1 Tim. 2:4). Yes, he did.

But again, one must discern between what Heaven wills ideally and the reality that the Lord also honors human volition (i.e., free will).

When godless people **choose to reject divine grace** as expressed through Heaven’s plan of salvation, they bring upon themselves “destruction and perdition” as the apostle revealed in this same epistle (1 Tim. 6:9; cf. Acts 13:46).

Conclusion

If the doctrine of universal salvation were true, it would make no difference what anyone believed, taught, or practiced however bizarre, untrue, or destructive. The consequence of all religious and moral activity would be identical ultimately.

Who can live with such an irrational conclusion? The doctrine of universalism has no basis in either the Bible or logic. It must be rejected summarily by those who esteem the Scriptures as a revelation from God.

Calvinism Teaches Heaven Is Not Our Choice:

CALVIN ADOPTS CLASSIC FATALISM

- ❖ **Greek philosopher Leucippus claim assuredly –**
”Nothing happens at random, but everything for a reason and by necessity.”
- ❖ **Fatalism is a doctrine that’s tied to the idea of fate. It maintains that certain events are bound to happen no matter what one does, that the outcome is inevitable.**
- ❖ **Fate plays a central role in Homer’s epic poem the Iliad, dating back to about 750 BC. In the Iliad, the fatalistic worldview begins to get personified as fate, and fate determines things. This is somehow separate from the gods who are discussed elsewhere in the poem.**
- ❖ **Greek Gods Versus Fate. The Syrian philosopher Lucian exposes these tensions in his wonderful satire *Zeus Catechized*. The first thing he does is point out how strange it is to make sacrifices to the gods if everything is already set in stone by fate. The work precedes the dialogue between his characters Cyniscus and Zeus.**
- ❖ **Cyniscus says to Zeus: *If the Fates rule everything... why do men sacrifice to you gods and make you great offerings of cattle, praying to receive blessings from you?***

I really don't see what benefit we can derive from this precaution, if it is impossible for us through our prayers either to get what is bad averted or to secure any blessing whatever by the gift of the gods.

- ❖ Lucian goes on to point out that there are implications for responsibility and he even questions the propriety of punishment. “If a man slays, it is [Fate] who slays, and if he robs temples, he only does it under orders.”
- ❖ The Reach of Fate. The Greek notion of fate is that for the Greek theologians and philosophers, the gods and fate didn't dictate every little behavior of the mortals. Instead, it was the major life events like death, marriage, and injury, and the outcome of a war that were fated.
- ❖ Fate Versus Free Will. In Greek cosmology, in the Greek's view of the universe, fate is probably just local fate. It's fate for a particular life event. There can be an element of free will in the choices that somebody makes on the path to achieving their fate. There is, however, a lurking worry here about control. If my action – if my outcome – is fated by the gods, do I really have control over the action? Does that really count as free will?

- Shaun Nichols Free Will & Determination Lecture

CONCEALED CALVIN: Double Predestination and The Abominable Fantasy -

“God hereby indirectly glorifies his grace on the vessels of mercy. — The saints in heaven will behold the torments of the damned: “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.” Isa. 66:24, “And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.” And in Rev. 14:10 it is said, that they shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. So they will be tormented in the presence also of the glorified saints.

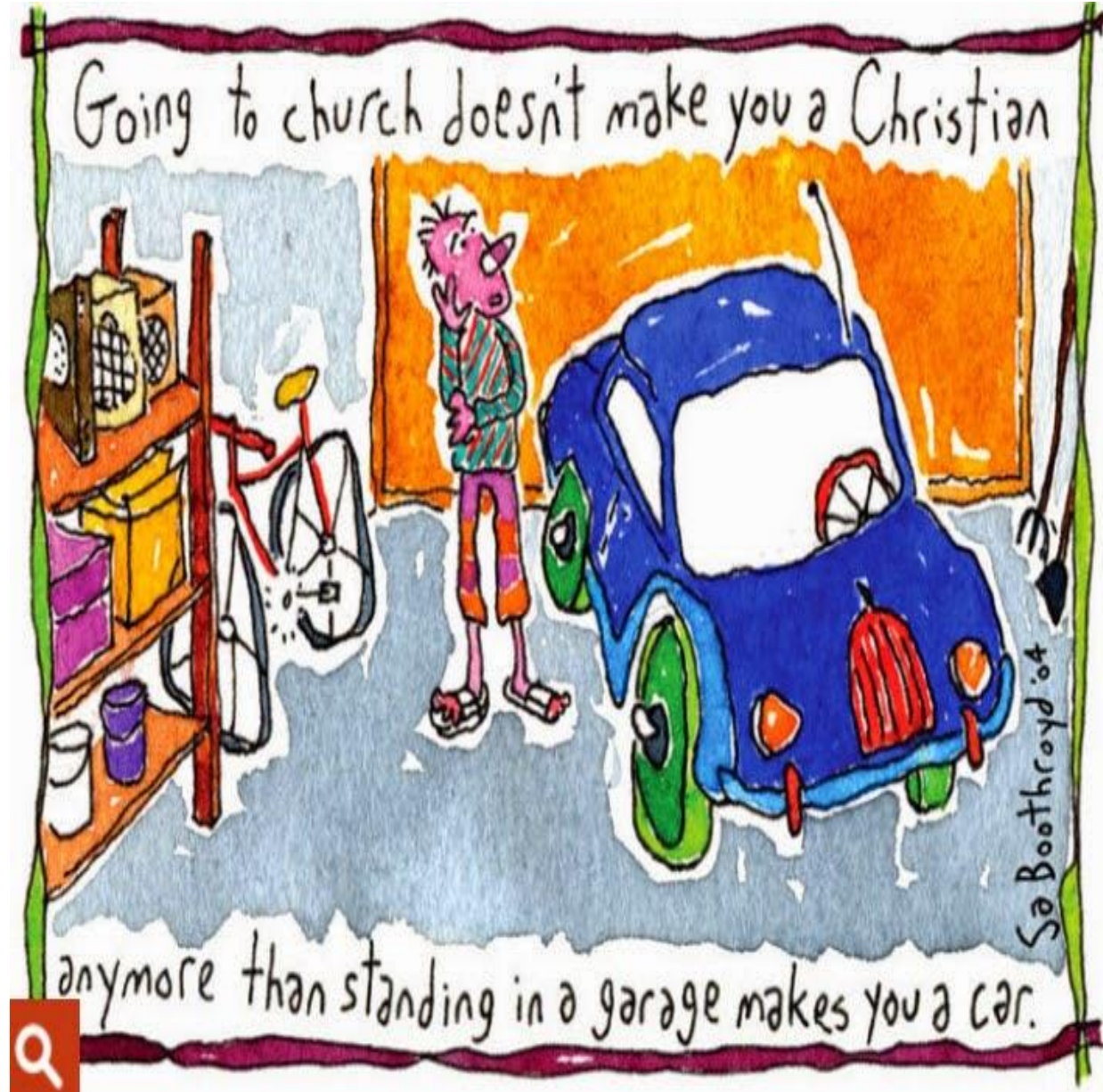
Hereby the saints will be made the more sensible how great their salvation is. When they shall see how great the misery is from which God has saved them, and how great a difference he has made between their state and the state of others, who were by nature (and perhaps for a time by practice) no more sinful and ill-deserving than any, it will give them a greater sense of the wonderfulness of God’s grace to them. Every time they look upon the damned, it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of God, in making them so to differ. This the apostle informs us is one end of the damnation of ungodly men; Rom. 9:22-23, “What if God willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering 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?” The view of the misery of the damned will double the ardor of the love and gratitude of the saints in heaven.

The sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever. It will not only make them more sensible of the greatness and freeness of the grace of God in their happiness, but it will really make their happiness the greater, as it will make them more sensible of their own happiness. It will give them a more lively relish of it: it will make them prize it more. When they see others, who were of the same nature and born under the same circumstances, plunged in such misery, and they so distinguished, it will make them sensible how happy they are. A sense of the opposite misery, in all cases, greatly increases the relish of any joy or pleasure. The sight of the wonderful power, the great and dreadful majesty, and awful justice and holiness of God, manifested in the eternal punishment of ungodly men, will make them prize his favor and love vastly the more. And they will be so much the more happy in the enjoyment of it.” — JONATHAN EDWARDS

Calvinist Pre-destination Isn't Supported by Scripture.

Scripture: God Foreknew Those That Would Self-Select.

Heaven Isn't A Church Attendance Participation Prize!



Obedience isn't passive-assent or standby-observer.

While it's an exercise – it's not a competition.

Is It Edge or Angle – Or Is It Both?



Life's Leg-weights Worldly Disadvantage Versus Blinder Handicap Edge of Our Spiritual Life:

verseoftheday.com



Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders & the sin that so easily entangles.

Let us run with perseverance the race marked

fixing our eyes on Jesus out for us.
the pioneer

& perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he

endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right

hand of the throne of God... so that

you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Edge & Angle – Vertical & Horizontal

While We Run Blinded To Distraction

God's Blind To Our Blood Covered Sin



Applying The Lessons of Competition:

The Right Finish Depends on The Right Start

The Right Finish Depends on The Right Turns

JUDGEMENT PREPARED

FIVE STATES FIVE STEPS

Five States of the Soul:

- **EXEMPTION:**
- **Ezekiel 18: 20; Matthew 18: 1 – 3**
- **CONDEMNATION:**
- **Galatians 3: 22**
- **JUSTIFICATION:**
- **Romans 5: 1, 2; 8: 1, 2**
- **DAMNATION:**
- **Matthew 23: 3; Mark 16: 16**
- **GLORIFICATION:**
- **Romans 8: 17, 30; II Thess. 1: 7 – 12**

JUDGEMENT PREPARED

FIVE STATES FIVE STEPS

Five Steps For Saving:

- **HEARING:**
- **Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27**
- **BELIEVING:**
- **Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16**
- **REPENTING:**
- **Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3**
- **CONFESSING:**
- **Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37**
- **BAPTISM:**
- **Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 - 38**

