

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRIMITIVE BAPTISTS AND OTHER BAPTISTS?

By Elder Buddy Abernathy

Primitive Baptists believe that man's disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden brought sin into the world and separated everyone from God (*Rom. 5:12*). Therefore, they believe that everyone is a sinner (*Rom. 3:23*). They believe that, before the foundation of the world, God chose to love a multitude of people (*Eph. 1:3-4*). They believe this choice was based on God's grace (*Rom. 9:11-16*). They believe this multitude is innumerable (*Gen. 24:60*) and comprised of people throughout all ages (*Job 19:25*) from all over the world (*Rev. 5:9*). They believe God predestinated them to be with him in heaven (*Eph. 1:5 & Rom. 8:29-30*). They believe that Jesus came to save them (*Mat. 1:21*) and that he did save them (*Heb. 1:3, 9:26, & 10:14*). They believe the Holy Spirit gives them spiritual life (*Gal. 4:6 & 2 Tim. 1:9*). They believe that all of those whom God loves will go to heaven (*Mat. 25:34*) and all of those whom God does not love will go to hell (*Mat. 25:41, 7:22-23, & John 8:42-44*).

Most other Baptists believe that man's disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden brought sin into the world and separated everyone from God (*Rom. 5:12*). Therefore, they believe that everyone is a sinner (*Rom. 3:23*). They believe that God loves everyone without exception. They believe this love is based on God's grace. They believe that Jesus came into the world to die for everyone's sins and offer them salvation. They believe that those who choose to accept him or receive him as their savior will be saved. They believe this choice determines whether they will spend eternity in heaven or hell. God loves everyone, Jesus offers salvation to everyone, and the Holy Spirit will save anyone who accepts Jesus as Savior.

If someone has always been taught that God loves everyone without exception, it may be difficult for them to accept the doctrine of election, i.e. that God chose His people before the world began. This is completely understandable because we tend to think that God's thoughts are like our thoughts. We think everyone should be treated "fairly". In our opinion, it would not be fair to love only a portion of humanity. Therefore, God must love everyone. Without realizing it, we have made God's ways subject to our standard of fairness. It is difficult for us to accept the implications of God's sovereignty. Nevertheless, God does what pleases Him (*Isa. 55:8-9, Ps. 115:3, Dan. 4:35*). God purposed to elect a people and He's not seeking our approval (*Rom. 9:11-13*). God could have loved everyone, no one, all but one, or only one. By considering the holiness of God (*Isa. 6:1-5*) and the sinfulness of man (*Rom. 3:10-18*), we can understand why it would be perfectly just for God to banish everyone to hell. In reality, it is not fair that Jesus was punished for our sins (*Isa. 53:6, 1 Pet. 2:24, 2 Cor. 5:21*).

If God loves everyone and salvation is based on our decision to accept Christ, what are the implications with regard to “fairness”? First of all, is it fair that Jesus suffered indescribable agony to save someone who will not accept what he did for them? Secondly, since they don’t have the intellectual ability to understand the gospel and accept Christ, is it fair that those who die in infancy will not be saved? What about those who have a severe mental handicap or those who lived and died in parts of the world where the name of Jesus was never mentioned? Some would say, “God saves them because they were not given the opportunity to accept Christ as their Savior.” If that’s the case, should we then place them in jeopardy by giving them the opportunity to reject the offer of eternal life? Are we to conclude that God has the same love for the people he carries to heaven and the people who suffer eternally in hell?

I encourage every sincere Christian to consider what I have said in light of the word of God (2 *Tim.* 2:7, *Acts* 17:11). Jesus said, “...*the truth shall make you free.*” (*John* 8:32). I believe the freedom He had in mind was a deliverance from thinking we must meet certain requirements in order to go to heaven (*Acts* 15:10, *Gal.* 5:1). Jesus met all the requirements to save His chosen people from their sins (*Heb.* 9:26, 1:3). Jesus is not offering salvation to us. He offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of His people (*Mat.* 1:21, *Heb.* 10:14). God accepted His offering (*Eph.* 1:6). When we come to understand that Jesus secured our salvation, it will bring rest to our soul (*Isa.* 40:1-2).