

THE EQUIP INSTITUTE

Theme: Baptist Beliefs

Topic: BF&M (2000): Article V: God's Purpose of Grace

Fall 2025

Introduction

The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and his Word for the sake of living rightly before God in his world. The topic this week is Article V in the Baptist Faith and Message (2000), which is on God's purpose of grace.

Article IV

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6, 12, 17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

Key Biblical Texts

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. (John 10:27-28)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved

us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:28-39)

¹²For 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. ¹³For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? (Rom. 10:12-14)

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him. ¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Eph. 1:3-14)

¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 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. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:1-10)

¹³But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 2:13-14)

Observations

Exposition of Article V

Historical Context

The article was revised only minimally between 1925 and 1963, and no changes were made between 1963 and 2000. It is intended to be a general statement of God's grace in salvation that can be affirmed by nearly all Southern Baptists. It affirms God's sovereignty in salvation and the necessity of human free will, without speaking to particulars of how to reconcile these two biblical themes. It affirms the doctrine of election conceptually but it doesn't take a position on the particulars. The statement steers a broad middle course on these issues in hopes of focusing on consensus beliefs rather than committing to a particular position regarding Calvinism.

The BF&M (2000) is far clearer on the matter of eternal security. It affirms the perseverance of the saints and rejects the belief that true Christians can fall from grace and forfeit salvation. While the confession doesn't commit Southern Baptists to consistent Calvinism, it does rule out the possibility of classical Arminianism.

Because the confession wasn't revised in 2000, there are no controversial changes to this article. The article itself is mostly uncontroversial because it is so broad. However, it is broad precisely because the doctrine of election is controversial among Southern Baptists. There is no official Southern Baptist position on election besides agreement that the Bible teaches the doctrine of election—however we might interpret it.

Key Ideas

God's election is rooted in his sovereign grace

God's election is purposeful rather than arbitrary

God's election precedes our personal regeneration

Our regeneration precedes our justification, which precedes our sanctification, which precedes our glorification

Our election doesn't negate our human free will, but is consistent with human freedom—this allows for what is called compatibilism or a simple appeal to mystery

Election includes not just the moment of our regeneration, but every means the Holy Spirit uses to bring us to faith—the same God who ordains the end ordains the means

Election is consistent with God's moral attributes of goodness, wisdom, holiness, and unchangeability—in fact, these attributes are displayed in God's election

Because God chose us for salvation, we have no grounds for boasting, but should be humble

Those who are saved will remain saved—real belief persists to the end of our lives and beyond

Our perseverance is based upon God's acceptance of us through our union with Christ and positional sanctification by the Holy Spirit

Believers cannot fall away from a state of grace and become unbelievers

While believers cannot fall from grace, we can fall into persistent patterns of sin through either neglect or temptation

When we drift spiritually, there are numerous negative consequences

Our sin grieves the Holy Spirit

Our sin makes it difficult for us to sense God's grace and comfort, distorting how we experience our relationship with God

Our sin can undermine the cause of Christ in various ways

Our sin can result in earthly judgment

Yet, even when we sin, God keeps us by his divine power—we cannot become lost again

God graciously doesn't allow our faith to fail, but our faith endures through the completion of our salvation