

E-mail from John Steven Brown, with my response below that:

My little children, these things write I unto **you**, that **ye** sin not. And if any man sin, **we** have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 And he is the propitiation for **our** sins: and not for **ours** only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1, 2.

Some have used verse 2 to show that salvation is determined according to man's "freewill." Of course that must be read into the text, because it is not there. Those that propound that position teach that Christ's death was potentially available for all but contingent upon one's will to receive or reject it. Thus, a potential salvation is offered in that system of thought. However, the LORD Jesus Christ did not shed HIS blood in vain. Jesus accomplished HIS purposes as He declared from the cross: "It is finished!"

Audience relevance

To whom was the apostle John writing? John wrote believers, not the unregenerate; he wrote to encourage them in holy living in the face of pseudo professors. Notice these verses that demonstrate that fact:

1 John 1:3,4, That which **we** have seen and heard declare **we** unto you, that **ye also may have fellowship with us**: and truly **our** fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And **these things write we unto you**, that **your joy** may be full.

John is writing believers telling them not to sin. But if they sin they have an advocate, a helper with the Father -- Jesus Christ. As *Easton Bible Dictionary* says: "**Christ is 'the propitiation,' because by his becoming our substitute and assuming our obligations he expiated our guilt, covered it, by the vicarious punishment which he endured.**" *Obviously John reminds the believers of Christ tremendous sacrifice.*

Now for the controversial phrase:

"And not for **ours** only, but also for the sins of the whole world." It is assumed that the world at large has "freewill" and can come to Christ on their own. "Ours" is juxtaposed with "the whole world." "Ours" is referring to John, a Hebrew believer, and those Hebrew believers to whom he was addressing. In the older, strict Jewish religion it was wrongly thought that non-Hebrews were excluded from God's mercy and salvation; they were considered the world. After all Jesus had said, "for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). Peter had his bias challenged and was taught the lesson that God has a people beyond the confines of Israel (See: Acts 10, 11).

So, when John says of Jesus our advocate: "And he is the propitiation for **our** sins: and not for **ours** only, but also for the sins of the whole world" he is showing his Hebrew audience that Christ was for non-Hebrews as well. Christ's sacrifice was made available for the whole believing world -- both Jewish and Gentile believers have the benefits of Jesus.

Believers regardless of their ethnicity should not sin. If sin however is committed, we -- all believers regardless of their ethnicity -- have an advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, who willingly paid the high price for sin by HIS precious blood. Jesus came to "**save HIS people from their sin**" (Matthew 1:21).

May God be glorified in each of our lives!

Sincerely,

Pastor Brown, an unworthy servant of a very worthy Sovereign LORD.

My Response to Bro. Brown:

Dear Bro. John,

Ben Townsend here. I do not respond to many emails, especially those sent to encourage (?) many people. I really do not care to engage in any controversy: I am much too busy.

However, there are several of your recipients whom I count as dear friends, and I do not wish my silence on a particular issue to be construed as agreement. I will be brief.

We are probably in agreement over most of your position concerning your subject. Although "freewill" seems like a manmade term used to solicit precious time from people doing the will of God, as in, "Do I have the freewill to challenge the doctrine of 'freewill'?" (That question should keep the younger men on your list busy pondering for a while.)

First, I like reading what you have to say. It is a good thing to keep in touch with brethren. I don't mind much. Its OK.

But, I simply cannot believe what you have tried to do with a portion of the Word of God. We all have verses that can be used to tear a hole in our theology. I usually say, “Wow, that’s a tough one,” and leave it at that.

There is something greater at stake than “me-ology”, and that is proper handling of the Word of God. I believe in verbal (every word), plenary (all of it) inspiration. Because of this, I believe in interpreting the Word literally, which Hermeneutically includes the Grammatical sense. In your Controversial Phrase, there is nothing anywhere in the context that presupposes John “addressing” “Hebrew believers”, and so therefore “non-Hebrews” must conveniently become “the whole world.”

On the contrary, John uses the same phrase in 1 John 5:19 “And **we** know that we are of God, and the **whole world** lieth in wickedness.” To use your logic, “we” Hebrew Christians “are of God”, and non-Hebrews “lieth in wickedness.” I am sorry, but I cannot go there and do that.

It just so happens that “we” is in the subjective case, meaning John and those to whom he is writing. The words “our” and “ours” are in the objective case, also meaning John and those to whom he is writing. You used the same objective word in your closing when you said, “May God be glorified in each of our lives!” You, of course, meant yourself AND those you had written, correct? The phrase “whole world” means those in the inhabited cosmos. If it does not, then we need to change many verses.

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world (non-Hebrews?), and lose his own soul?”

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world (non-Hebrews?).”

“Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world (non-Hebrews?)?”

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world (non-Hebrews only, proving the Tribulation tests Israel): he was cast out into the earth (only falling upon the non-Hebrews, ouch!), and his angels were cast out with him.”

Having taken the freewill to change those Scriptures, let me just say that I disagree with your method of interpretation of the verses in 1 John. Much bigger problem texts for you would be Titus 2:11 “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,” 1 Timothy 2:4 “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,” and 1 Timothy 4:10 “For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.”

Actually, our biggest Achilles heal is 2 Peter 2:1 “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

Again, I trust no offense is taken here. I’ll probably never respond again, but I wanted to present my differences to your interpretation. Sometimes, to prove ourselves right, I fear we go too far in supplying our meaning to difficult verses. I try to remember that the Bible is not a book to prove I am right, but a book to show me I am wrong.

For His Glory,

Ben Townsend

P.S. You have the freewill (as opposed to “costly-will”?) to delete this email. Or DO you... hmmm... (causing the young men to ponder a while, systematically keeping them from doing God’s will)