

Chapter 6 – The Case of God's Gift

A Familiar Verse

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Fourth gospel 3:16). Most churchgoers have heard this verse quoted many times. However, familiarity with a passage should not keep us from doing our due diligence (a temptation more likely to occur when it comes to frequently quoted verses).

Get your Bible and read the verse in its context. Apply your normal study method and write down your thoughts about what you think the verse is saying. Afterwards, come back to this study and see if your current method of assessing truth on biblical issues led you to miss insights on the verse that God's word has to offer.

###

The Case of God's Gift

"For God So Loved"

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Fourth gospel 3:16). Two ideas are often emphasized when teachers cite this verse. Almost without exception they will say something like, *'the verse teaches God loved the world so much that it moved him to send Jesus to die for the world.'* They also typically add, *'this tells us God's love is unconditional.'* A version of one or both of those ideas will usually be included when this verse is taught in churches today.

If "For God so loved the world" is the most well-known Bible verse in our era and *if* it is routinely taught incorrectly, then this might make it the most misunderstood verse of scripture (in quantity terms at least). If this is true, then it raises another question: why is this verse not taught correctly? There is no reason to consider the second question unless scripture can show the verse is routinely misunderstood and taught incorrectly, so this is what we will look at first.

God's Unconditional Love?

A Better Bible Study Method, Book One offered these comments on the verse in question:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When this verse is quoted, it is common to hear comments like, *'This speaks of God's unconditional love for you.'* But why would people allow this claim to go unchallenged when it is contrary to the plain reading of the text? To say the verse informs everyone about God's unconditional love for them is to twist the verse beyond recognition – since it is a conditional statement and the condition is clearly stated in the verse.

Should a person conclude the blessing of "not perish, but have everlasting life" applies to those who do *not* "believe in him?" Not according to the verse. We are not talking about whatever scripture says elsewhere, but about faithfully communicating what this verse actually says. It tells us the reason God "gave his only begotten Son" was "**that**" those who meet the condition ("believeth in him") should "not perish." So, the condition is vital to the verse.

People may get various insights from the verse, but it does not say God's love is unconditional. So, linking the idea of unconditional love to the verse undermines the authority of the words of the verse itself.

What about the "Whosoever?"

Many assume the word "whosoever" makes the verse unconditional. While many claim the word "whosoever" means the verse is directed to everyone without condition, what happens if one puts this claim to the test? Consider the following sample of five verses where the word "whosoever" was used:

- "I [Aaron] said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break *it* off" (Ex 32:24);
- "Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever *he be* of thy seed in their generations that hath *any* blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God" (Lv 21:17);
- "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine [Jesus], and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock" (Mt 7:24);
- "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have" (Lk 8:18);
- "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 Jo 4:15).

Does "whosoever" refer to any and every person without condition?

Let Scripture Light the Way

If we want to learn the meaning of a word in scripture, we should be careful not to let the opinions of others prejudice our view of scripture. Rather, we should let scripture teach us the meaning of the words, phrases, and word pictures used in the Bible. If we let scripture show us how to view the word "whosoever" here is what we can learn from the verses cited above:

- "I [Aaron] said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break *it* off" – In this verse the word "whosoever" introduced a condition that defined a specific subset of people (those with "any gold");
- "Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever *he be* of thy seed in their generations that hath *any* blemish..." – "Whosoever" cannot include everyone in this case, for not everyone was of Aaron's seed. Rather, the word introduced a condition that defined a subset of people among the seed of Aaron;
- "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them..." – "Whosoever" refers only to those who meet the condition (i.e., hears Jesus' sayings and does them) and it excludes everyone else;
- "whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not..." – It is impossible for everybody to be in both groups! Here the word "whosoever" was used twice in order to define two distinct groups, based on two distinct conditions (the condition "hath" defines one group and "hath not" defines a different group);
- "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God..." – Here only those who "confess that Jesus is the Son of God" are included, since this is the specified condition.

In each verse the word "whosoever" introduced a condition. So, those who claim "whosoever" makes a verse unconditional are leaning on their own understanding and ignoring biblical evidence. A quick look shows similar terms like, "whoso," "whomsoever," "whatsoever," and "soever," are all tied to a condition:

- "Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD" (Ps 107:43);
- "he [Judas] that betrayed him [Jesus] gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he" (Mt 26:48);
- "Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, *and* whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark" (Gn 8:19);
- "And he [Jesus] said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into a house, there abide till ye depart..." (Mk 6:10).

In the Bible those words always designate a grouping based on some condition(s) or trait(s) that define who or what is included in the group being discussed. The word "whosoever" appears 163 times in the KJV and it **always** introduces a condition or set of conditions. It is not specifying who can or cannot meet the condition. All it does is define a set (and the set includes those who meet or have already met the condition(s) that are specified in the verse or passage).

How to Verify the Meaning of a Word

Now we will venture beneath the surface data to further establish how scripture itself clarifies the meaning of the words we find in the Bible. It takes a little time to look into the words, but knowing how the writers of scripture used a word can reveal things we might otherwise miss.

Our English Bible is a translation of the Hebrew or Greek words used by the writers of scripture. When we are uncertain about the meaning of a word or passage, those Hebrew or Greek words can help us to clear up or prevent misunderstandings *even if we do not speak those languages*. How? By looking at other verses that have the same word and letting scripture's use of a word teach us things about that word.

While this may sound difficult, it is surprisingly easy to do thanks to a numbering system that helps us identify those words. A tool called Strong's Concordance has assigned different numbers to the Greek and Hebrew words. This lets us see how each word was translated in every verse where it was used.

For example, if three Greek words are translated by a single English word, then the three different Strong's numbers for those words call our attention to this fact. Or if we are unsure of the proper meaning of a particular word in our Bible, then the number of the original word lets us identify all of the other verses where the same word was used – and we can gain insight about a word by seeing how it is used in other verses. [Numerous free online Bible study tools make it easy to access the Strong's number for any word.]

That said, only one Greek word number will be cited in this case, and it will show how scripture itself can establish the meaning of a word. Seeing how a word was used in scripture helps us to understand what was written, and the time it takes to look at the original words is well worth it. [The format ^{G####} will be used so you can easily follow the Strong's number of the Greek word being discussed.]

So?

Many English words have multiple meanings. If we associate a word with the wrong meaning when reading scripture, it will skew our view of God's word until we realize and correct our mistake. The word "so" has multiple meanings and here are a few examples:

- indicates a quantity; i.e., a large amount or extreme degree
(he so loves the smell of coffee; he has so much money);
- indicates a quality; i.e., the way a thing is or was done
(he takes his coffee like so; it happened just so)
- consequently, therefore
(he had too much coffee, so he is unable to sleep)
- in order that
(he drinks coffee so he can stay awake)
- indeed, certainly
(he does so drink coffee)

In these two examples the word "so" refers to a quantity:

- "When Jesus heard *it*, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Mt 8:10);
- "his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?" (Mt 15:33).

In these two examples the word "so" refers to a quality:

- "But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled" (Acts 3:18);
- "they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain" (1 Cor 9:24).

In the four verses above, the word "so" translates two Greek words, one refers to quantity, the other refers to quality. Quantity and quality are different ideas. If we assign the wrong meaning to the word "so," we will misunderstand scripture. Looking at the Strong's number for the word which was translated as "so" gives us an easy way to verify the correct meaning of the word, because quantity and quality were expressed by different Greek words (with different word numbers).

In the verses just cited, the phrase "so fulfilled" (Acts 3:18) does not refer to the amount of fulfillment. Rather, it refers to the manner in which "those things" were fulfilled. Likewise, the phrase "so run" (1 Cor 9:24) was not urging a lot of running. It referred to how one runs and urged running in a way that resulted in victory.

In those verses the word "so" is translating the Greek word with the number ^{G3779} and this word always refers to a quality. For example, "if then God so ^{G3779} clothe the grass" (Lk 12:28) and "for so ^{G3779} is the will of God" (1 Pt 2:15) are speaking about the quality of the design that is seen in the grass and a quality of God's will, not the quantity of those things.

Let Scripture Light the Way Once Again

"Let every one of you in particular so ^{G3779} love his wife even as himself" (Eph 5:33) refers to the way a husband should "love his wife," not how much love he should send her way. Similarly, "Beloved, if God so ^{G3779} loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 Jo 4:11) is a reference to a quality, not a quantity – the "beloved" were urged to "love one another" just as God loved them – and this refers to **how** God loved them, *not how much*.

In those verses the context lets us know what meaning is attached to the word "so," but this is not always the case. Sometimes the context does not clearly establish whether the word "so" refers to a quantity (intensity) or a quality (manner). However, today there is no reason to be confused because we can verify if the word "so" is translating a Greek word that refers to quantity or quality.

The easiest way to confirm scripture's use of word number ^{G3779} is to look at the first ten verses where this word appears:

- "the birth of Jesus Christ was **on this wise** ^{G3779}" (Mt 1:18);
- "**thus** ^{G3779} it is written by the prophet" (Mt 2:5);
- "**thus** ^{G3779} it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Mt 3:15);
- "great *is* your reward in heaven: for **so** ^{G3779} persecuted they the prophets" (Mt 5:12);
- "Let your light **so** ^{G3779} shine before men, that they may see your good works" (Mt 5:16);
- "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men **so** ^{G3779}" (Mt 5:19);
- "if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans **so** ^{G3779}?" (Mt 5:47);
- "**After this manner** ^{G3779} therefore pray ye" (Mt 6:9);
- "if God **so** ^{G3779} clothe the grass of the field" (Mt 6:30);
- "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even **so** ^{G3779} to them" (Mt 7:12).

Anyone who looks at just the first ten uses of word number ^{G3779} will have to admit this Greek word refers to a quality, not to a quantity.

How Much? Or How?

The foregoing evidence exposes a view of the word "so" that leads many to misunderstand the phrase, "God so ^{G3779} loved the world." When we are taught a verse means one thing, but scripture can prove otherwise, it proves those who unknowingly teach the erroneous view have relied on a method of assessing truth which is not reliable.

An interlinear KJV Bible has a literal translation of the words and word number ^{G3779} will be translated as 'in this manner,' 'thus,' etc. because this **is** what the word means. This is confirmed by the way it was used elsewhere in scripture. Moreover, the New Testament writers had Greek words to use if they wanted to designate a quantity or intensity, and they did so many times. (Search for words like "much," "many," "exceeding(ly)," or "great(ly)," for examples of such verses.) However, none of those Greek words appear in the verse in question.

If we bought into the false view of "for God so loved the world," then we need to change our method of assessing truth on biblical issues. When we have believed something and it turns out not to be true, we need to ask, '*why did I believe the Bible said something it never said?*' Gaining a right understanding of "for God so loved the world" is good, but if we were wrong about this verse, then we must also figure out why we thought the verse said something it does not say.

Do Not Pass the Blame

Since the word "so" has multiple meanings, quantity (i.e., '*so much*') is one possible meaning. But why would a person assume that was the right meaning? With all the Bible study tools available in our day, there really is no good reason for associating the wrong meaning with the word "so" in this verse.

Those who assign a wrong meaning of the word "so" cannot blame the Bible translators, since "so" is a perfectly proper way to translate word number ^{G3779}. While people can read a wrong meaning into the word "so," scripture always indicated the correct meaning of the word "so" in the phrase, "for God so loved the world."

"Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prv 30:5-6). In this case, scripture can correct us if we have a wrong view of the word "so" and all it takes is a simple word search. Moreover, the Bible offers other evidence against the common misconceptions about the verse in question.

Still More Evidence

Now let us consider what scripture says immediately before and after the words, "God so loved the world":

"as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (Fourth gospel 3:14-18).

The condition "whosoever believeth in him" appears twice (before it shows up in verse 16, it shows up in verse 15). Unless one reads only verse 16 or hears it quoted out of context, it is clear the author meant to focus his readers on the condition since he repeated it. In addition, verse 15 has to do with **how** people get saved. When "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," it provided a means by which men who had been bitten by a serpent could be saved (cf. Nm 21:7-9). Also in verse 17, the words "that the world through him might be saved" refer to **how** the world "might be saved" (i.e., "through him").

The word "so" in verse 14 refers to the manner in which "the Son of man" would "be lifted up" and this is the very same Greek word (^{G3779}) translated "so" in verse 16. Thus, the way the word "so" was used in verse 14 testifies against those who falsely claim the same word has a completely different meaning in verse 16.

Look for Similar Verses

Finally, if we want to see if our belief about a passage is true, then we should see if the same idea is expressed elsewhere in scripture. If "for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" is about the way God expressed his love, then this idea will line up with other verses on the same topic. Do any other verses explicitly tell us how God expressed his love? Yes. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 Jo 4:9).

"**In this was manifested** the love of God" refers to the way "the love of God" was expressed. How was it "manifested?" "God sent his only begotten Son into the world" – this is how God's love was expressed. Why did God do it? "That we might live through him" (and the "we" is those who believe in Jesus, the condition spelled out in all the verses where phrases like "whosoever believeth in him" appear).

Moreover, the term "God so loved" was only used in one other verse: "Beloved, if God so ^{G3779} loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 Jo 4:11). This verse details an obligation for the "beloved"/"brethren" (cf. 1 Jo 3:13, 4:7), and it was not about the *amount* of love they "ought" to have for "one another." Here is 1 John 4:11 in context:

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 Jo 4:7-11).

Here too, scripture provides a check against a commonly promoted misunderstanding of the phrase "so loved."

Is It a Big Deal?

Because correction requires us to admit we have been wrong, many people downplay their mistakes by saying things like, *'it's no big deal,' 'what difference does it make,' 'it doesn't really matter,'* etc. Doing so serves to downplay one's misunderstanding of God's word by acting as if the truth is sometimes unimportant. Acting as if false beliefs are inconsequential is something people do to avoid having to deal with a bigger issue: errors are symptoms, they indicate and are caused by a false measure of truth.

Think about the common teaching of "for God so loved the world" and ask yourself if switching the meaning of the word "so" from a quality to a quantity is no big deal or a critical mistake? While many problems are caused by adopting a *'God loves you so much'* view of the verse, let us look at just one such problem and, hopefully, this will show why it is never a good to ignore truth in order to hold on to error.

Consider the focus of the verse. If the verse means, *'God loves you so much that if you were the only person in the world he still would have sent his son to die for you,'* then where is the focus? It is on you (i.e., *'God's love for you is so great he just had to rescue you'*). But is this what the verse means? No. If we do not twist the words to fit the teachings of men, where is the focus of the verse? It is on the gift! "For God **so** loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" puts the focus on Jesus, not us. Seeing ourselves at the center of the verse and thinking it revolves around us boosts our ego. While such themes may 'win friends and influence people', those people will be influenced in a way that inflates their self-esteem at the expense of the truth.

When the verse is understood correctly it presents Jesus as the way a person can experience the love of God. This aligns with the words of Jesus, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Fourth gospel 14:6). The condition set forth in the verse ("believeth in him") makes it clear that believing in Jesus is **how** one can "have everlasting life." Here too, the proper understanding of the passage is confirmed by other verses like, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life" (Fourth gospel 3:36) and "He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1Jo 5:12).

When "God so loved the world..." is rightly understood, it is consistent with what is said elsewhere in scripture. But the harmony is ruined if we say a conditional statement is unconditional or if we put ourselves at the center of a verse instead of realizing how it focused on Jesus. If that is not enough to make this a big deal, consider what this says about the Bible study practices of today.

Being Faithful to God's Word

In Jeremiah 23:28 the LORD said, "he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully," and there is no reason to think this admonition is less important now. We should never say scripture says something it does not say. So, the next time someone talks to you about *'God's unconditional love'*, ask them to cite a verse that has no condition.

One way to avoid being deceived by teachings that are not faithful to scripture is to heed this advice: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Th 5:21). Put this to the test on "for God so loved the world." If a teacher says, *'that verse teaches God loves you'* or *'that means God loves you, he always has and always will,'* what would you see if you compare their words to the words of the verse? Besides the fact the words are strikingly different, did you catch the tense change?

The word "loved" is in the past tense because it referred to something that already occurred (i.e., when God "gave his only begotten Son"). Notice "gave" is also past tense. The verse says "loved," not *'loves,'* and we should not reword scripture to make it conform to our beliefs. The benefits of God's gift are still available to anyone who satisfies the condition ("believeth in him"). However, the past tense was used because the verse told of a love that had already been expressed through a gift already given. For the same reason the past tense also shows up in this verse, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 Jo 4:9). The terms "was manifested" and "sent" let us know the manifestation of God's love occurred prior to the time the verse was written.

Bumper Sticker Theology

'Warm-and-fuzzy' may sell bumper stickers, but it usually fails the test of scripture. *'God loves everybody'* is an idea promoted frequently by teachers, broadcasts, and books. Yet, if it is right for someone to say *'God loves you'* to anyone and everyone, then why did Jesus and the apostles not do so?

Scripture records many times when Jesus, and later the apostles, spoke to crowds. Not once did they ever declare *'God loves you'* to those in attendance! Therefore, if we were to judge using the method of Jesus and the apostles as our measure, what would we conclude? We would have to conclude making indiscriminate and unconditional public declarations of *'God loves you'* is a practice that is **not** in line with the public messages delivered by Jesus and the apostles.

Moreover, if a verse does not support the *'God loves everybody'* idea, what do we do? Can we pretend verses like Psalm 5:5 do not exist? In speaking of the LORD it says, "thou hatest all workers of iniquity." When ideas are promoted which are contrary to the whole counsel of God's word, it undermines the effect and authority of the word of God.

Also, Jesus once said, "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mt 7:23). Does this suggest those workers of iniquity were once loved by Jesus, but later fell out of favor? If not, then it cannot be right for preachers to say things like, *'God loves you, he always has and he always will'* as if this is true for anybody and everybody, regardless of if they "work iniquity" or not.

Bad Methods Corrupt Good Data

Scripture **is** profitable for correction. It can set us straight, if we will submit to the authority of God's word. Yet a false view of the verse in question is not the only thing we need to correct. Health problems are best resolved by dealing with the root cause rather than suppressing the symptoms. In the same way, we need to deal with the cause of our false beliefs.

If our method of assessing truth has led us to think something is true when it is not true, then we need to correct both what we believed (the false idea) and why we believed it (the error-prone methodology). Unless we deal with the flaw in our method of assessing truth, our faulty approach to God's word will lead us to fall prey to other errors.

If biblical evidence can prove the popular teachings about "for God so loved the world" do not come from scripture, then those ideas are founded on something else. It is this problem (i.e., relying on a source other than God's word) that must be dealt with if the body of Christ is going to be best served.

The difference between quality and quantity is no little matter. So why do so many who claim to know Greek still teach this verse incorrectly, especially since the Greek is *not* ambiguous?

The difference between conditional and unconditional is also not a little matter. So why do many teachers link this verse to the notion of 'unconditional love' when the verse itself has an explicit condition?

Of course, holding a wrong belief about "for God so loved the world" does not mean everything else a person believes is wrong. However, when a verse as well-known as this verse is routinely misunderstood and/or misrepresented by those who read the Bible, it suggests the source of the problem has a common link. That link is the practice of promoting the teachings of men.

Think Inside the Book

We do not need to understand everything about a passage to see if an idea fails the test of scripture. When we are considering any idea, belief, or teaching we should ask ourselves things like: Is it contrary to anything in God's word? Does it line up with the life and the words of Jesus? Would it apply to the apostles? In other words, we should get in the habit of letting scripture serve as a litmus test for truth.

The term 'think outside the box' is used to encourage thinking that is not limited by assumptions which may be untrue. This kind of thinking is needed for us to receive biblical correction, because we have to be willing to have our assumptions challenged. Yet people can also be creative in finding ways to make scripture seem to mean what they want it to say. So, we need to make sure we do not deceive ourselves with such thinking. How can we avoid falling into that trap?

Think inside the book!

Obviously, the book in this case is the Bible. The point is to remind us to make sure our standard for assessing truth on biblical issues is what God's word has to say on the matter (and not what is said by our favorite teacher(s) or some group).

The Conclusion to the Case of God's Gift

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This tells us **what God did** ("gave his only begotten Son") and **why God did it** ("that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"). Therefore, telling people the verse means '*God loves everyone, 'God loves you so much and he loves you just the way you are,*' etc. turns them away from the verse's true meaning.

If people judged teachings only by what scripture says, then the most commonly taught errors would be rejected. When we let the words of scripture lead us to the truth (and note the context so we do not read a wrong meaning into them), then the truth presents itself.

The real danger of the teachings of men is their power to blind people to the truths in the word of God. As this case proved, truths that are set forth in the plain text of scripture can become hidden to us when we base our understanding of scripture on the teachings of men.

Not long before his death, Jesus told his disciples:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (Fourth gospel 15:13-14).

Notice two things:

- (A) Jesus indicated he was laying down his life for his friends, and
- (B) he told them what it takes to be his friend.

Scripture does not suggest everybody is going to be a friend of Jesus and we need to take account of this fact.

Proverbs 30:5-6 says:

"Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

This passage is repeated here because it points to the right standard and it warns us against being careless and/or getting creative when it comes to God's word.

A final word on the problem of assuming God is unconditional in his grace, mercy, love, etc. The LORD said, "[I] will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy" (Ex 33:19). To/on "whom I will" is a condition, and Romans 9:15-18 proves this limiting factor still applies. Also, Proverbs 14:26 says "In the fear of the LORD *is* strong confidence." But, people have nothing to fear if the LORD accepts everyone unconditionally, and if fear is eliminated, then people are cut-off from the benefits of the "the fear of the LORD."

The end of the Case of God's Gift