



Scriptures and Doctrine :: Accountability for Conscious Rejection of God's Mercy

Accountability for Conscious Rejection of God's Mercy - posted by makrothumia (), on: 2018/11/24 7:57

Continual, persistent, conscious rejection of God's mercy makes men accountable to God's wrath.

"The wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." The Greek word for "disobedience" is ἀπειθήματα - "to be unpersuaded" Here is the definition copied from Bible Hub - (literally, refuse to be persuaded.)

The writer's use of ἀπειθήματα underscores the willful aspect of the hearer's refusing to be persuaded by the word of the Lord. Accountability for persistent refusal to be persuaded is carefully documented whenever God declares His wrath upon any people, and especially when He sends judgment upon His own chosen people.

This accountability is thoroughly established in the New Testament. Men will be condemned and will suffer God's wrath because of their conscious, persistent rejection of the gospel. Having heard the word of truth, they refused to be persuaded by the word they have heard and are thus categorized as "those who refused to be persuaded."

This conscious rejection of God's word, His law, and even God Himself is carefully documented in the history of the prophets and the people of Israel. The writers of the New Testament employed the specific language found throughout the prophets. Our Lord came to fulfill the words of the prophets and He Himself used the same language to establish the accountability for rejecting God's mercy.

One example of this can be found in a thorough study of the word ἀποστήσειμι - "to set aside"
This word is used by our Lord in these key passages:

Luke 7:30 - "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him"

Luke 10:16 - "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me".

The same word is used as a summary of the rejection of the Jewish people who witnessed the glory of the Lord's works done in their very midst.

John 12:48 - " He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."

To fully appreciate this "rejection" and to soberly contemplate the implications of Jesus using this term, one needs to understand how often it is found in the prophets' summaries of Israel's persistent refusal to be persuaded to return to the Lord. Our Lord KNEW how and where this word was used to describe Israel's persistent, prolonged stubbornness. The Lord was always careful to document His reasons for sending devastating judgments.

If you desire to research this yourself, allow me to suggest one method available to those with access to the digital bible helps that are readily available and free.

If you download esword, a bible software program, and you download the Apostolic Polyglot into esword, you can use the search engine feature to access every use of a particular Greek word in both the Old and New Testament. The Apostolic Polyglot version is displayed in an interlinear format with the Strong's number affixed above the words. When you "right click" upon the Strong's number, a box will appear that allows you to choose a search for that specific word in either the Old Testament, New Testament, or both.

This feature will allow you to locate and study the use of any Greek word in the New Testament so that you can see how it was used in the Old Testament. The writers of the New Testament would have been keenly aware of these words and would have had them in their minds when they chose to use them in their own admonitions.

As a sample of this method, and in order to minimize the space required for posting every scripture in its entirety, I have listed several examples of the Greek word ἀμετανοήτως for those who desire to look into this further.

ἀμετανοήτως strongs #114

Isaiah 1:2
II Chronicles 36:14
Jeremiah 5:11
Jeremiah 15:16

I Thessalonians 4:8
Hebrews 10:28

If anyone has questions about how to use the method that I put forth, please ask me and I will attempt to help clarify.

I have only provided one such word to study. For those who desire to look further into the idea of man's accountability for conscious rejection of God's mercy, there are many other words that establish the continuity of this truth in their Old Testament and New Testament settings.

If there is an interest shown to look into this further, I will provide more examples using these other words.

mak

- posted by BranchinVINE (), on: 2018/11/24 9:03

Isa. 26:9 ἀμετανοήτως
For when the earth experiences Your judgments
The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

Re: Accountability for Conscious Rejection of God's Mercy - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2018/11/26 13:38

Great stuff Mak: I love esword and Ive used it for the last 20 years when it first came out.

You might also find it interesting that without the inworking of God himself, the sinner always rejects, he always goes astray, his heart though moral in his own estimation is estranged and alienated through wicked works.

This truth of 'conscious rejection' highlights the depravity of sinful humanity. In the face of all that God has said and done by way of judgments, man ignores it and says "I have made a better plan than others, I have prepared better than others, I have secured myself better than others, I shall not suffer the same fate".

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2018/11/26 14:25

There seems to me that there is a subtle difference between what Mak wrote and what Marvin is saying. Subtle, but huge in import.

If God makes it impossible for some (actually, the vast majority) of humans incapable of responding toward Him, then how are they in truth accountable? It's a logical absurdity. As Mak points out scripture is clear that man IN FACT is accountable because he, himself, rejects God.

How would my son be accountable to me if I command him to do the impossible, particularly if only I have the means of making it possible? If I tell him to mow the grass but I have locked up the lawnmower and hidden the key, how is he accountable for not cutting the grass?

Re: - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2018/11/26 16:05

Hi Todd:

Thanks for using such an excellent example for me to further clarify.

It is true Dad locked up the means in which to obey him in his own place. The Son, is accountable to Dad to mow the yard, without the mower the son will fail to mow the yard and the Father will not receive from the son the obedience and good works he was assigned. What is the solution?

For many, it seems there is no solution. The son is powerless, the son is going to fail his duty, the Father is going to be given nothing for his command to duty.

For many, the answer lay in the Father's cruelty, it lay in the Father's giving a command to the son and not giving the son the power/enabling/tools to offer the obedience the Father required.

To others, there is a solution. What is the solution? The Father said "ask of me", "pray to me", "seek me", The very thing that God will give to the son in order for him to obey starts with the son returning to the Father and saying "give to me what I need to fulfill your will". Father, open the door, unlock the lock, show me how to use the mower that I might do your will and mow the yard".

In this analogy there is an implied relationship between the father and the son, whereby the son has access to the father and by petition access to all the Father has.

But the darkened sinner, the alienated, the estranged, the outcast and the unholy do not have that relationship whereby all that the Father would give is able to be received. For them, they do not know there is a mower, they do not know God has provided a means to satisfy his own commands.

But we also know that the sinner is not simply incapacitated, he is at war with God, in his heart there is enmity against God. In the sinners heart he stays away from God because if he comes his deeds will be reprovved.

Not only does he not mow the yard, he refused to know of any mower, any offer to open the locked door, any kindness that the father has offered to him.

The kind of person that is rejecting the God, is rejecting the means of God, the people of God, the gospel of God, God's providences.

It would be a gross mischaracterization to say "oh I would have happily obeyed God if he had only done his part". To assume something like that would be to make an assumption the whole of scripture never assumes, it in fact substantiates the very opposite.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2018/11/26 19:36

Hi Marvin-

I appreciate your response and I do follow it, but I do not see how your clarification solves the problem. The exceedingly large majority of persons that God does not reach out to first are still going to be punished for not doing the impossible.

You may be saying, in essence, that it is not unfair that God only chooses a few to reach out to; rather it is "super-fair" that he chooses any at all.

I have never been a fan of that argument, even when my youth pastor tried to make it when I was in the 7th grade.

Re: - posted by makrothumia (), on: 2018/11/26 19:50

Hi Todd and Marvin,

We do not need to create our own analogies, we have the analogies the Lord Himself gave to the prophets.

Consider this analogy in Jeremiah 2 "Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?"

Note: God calls Israel "noble" and "a seed of highest quality" The question is how did that which was so good become corrupt?

God gave Jeremiah another analogy in Chapter 13, the analogy of the "flaxen linen cloth". You are likely already familiar with what Jeremiah was told to do. Here is God's summary:

"Thus says the Lord: "In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. 10 This evil people, who do not purpose to obey My words, who follow the dictates of their hearts, and walk after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be just like this sash which is profitable for nothing. 11 For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me," says the Lord, "that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear."

Notice what the Lord charges - He focuses on their CHOICE

"This evil people NOT PURPOSING TO OBEY My words...."

LXX - Septuagint ἡ ἀπειθήνη ἡ ἐκείνη ἡ οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσασα τὸ ἰσχυρῶς ἀκούειν τῶν λόγων τοῦ κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ ἡσυχασαμένη

Refusal to hear, not purposing to obey, is the basis for the devastating judgment and statements like "My eye shall not spare, I will show no mercy." All this from the God who "desires mercy" and "does not will the death of the wicked."

Over and over again, the Lord recounts His attempts to turn the hearts of Israel back to Himself, and He leaves no doubt in any reader's mind that Israel's refusal to hear, is DELIBERATE, PERSISTENT, and HARDENED. It is their rejection of His attempt to be merciful to them that provokes Him to pour out His full rage upon them.

This "refusal to hear", "Deliberate rejection of God's call to return" is best summed up in a word that gives a clear picture of prolonged unbelief.

That word is "ἀπειθήνη" - the refusal to be persuaded

Consider how it is used in the New Testament

John 3:36 - He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and the one refusing to be persuaded by the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Paul chooses the same word to summarize all who will experience the wrath of God coming upon them.

Ephesians 5:6 and Colossians 3:6 - " Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of

God comes upon the sons who refuse to be persuaded."

This same word is the main word used to summarize the reason for God's judgment in the following passages. For the sake of space and time, I will simply list the verses. If you study the context, you will understand why the New Testament writer chose to use ἀπειθειᾶς.

God does not destroy men for being fornicators, liars, adulterers, murderers, idolaters, covetous, drunkards, gluttons, etc. He is willing to forgive all such sins, if men will hear His word, repent and believe. Many of us are guilty of these same sins and yet we have received mercy. Judgment comes upon men not because God is unwilling to forgive their sins, but because they persistently refuse to hear, believe and be reconciled to Him. They refuse to be persuaded to be corrected and reconciled to Him.

Here are other passages where ἀπειθειᾶς makes men's accountability for refusal to hear abundantly clear.

Romans 2:8
Romans 10:21
Hebrews 3:18
Hebrews 4:6
Hebrews 4:11
I Peter 2:9
I Peter 3:20
I Peter 4:17

In case you have questions about the translation "refuse to be persuaded". I have taken this directly from scholars who assigned this meaning. For your convenience I have copied this directly from Bible Hub

Original Word: ἀπειθειᾶς, ἀπειθειᾶς, ἀπειθειᾶς
Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine
Transliteration: apeitheia
Phonetic Spelling: (ap-i'-thi-ah)
Definition: disobedience
Usage: willful unbelief, obstinacy, disobedience.

543 apeitheia (from 1 /A "not" and 3982 /peitho, "persuaded") properly, someone not persuaded, referring to their willful unbelief, i.e. the refusal to be convinced by God's voice. This is the core-meaning of the entire word-family: 543 (apeitheia), 544 (apeitho), 545 (apeithos). All these cognates focus on man's decision to reject God's offers of faith, i.e. refusal to be persuaded in their heart concerning obeying His will (Word).

mak

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2018/11/26 20:34

Mak-

Do you see the refusal to be persuaded as an issue of will, or an issue of inability?

Re: - posted by CofG (), on: 2018/11/27 8:13

I think all would agree that we are born with a selfish sinful nature. Therefore, Todd's question is the ultimate question. How can I be accountable for sin that I commit by virtue of a nature I inherited and did not personally and freely choose? And if we, before coming to Jesus, are freely able to fight sin and defeat sin because of prevenient grace, then why have none been able or successful? Clearly, there remain some sins, maybe a lot, that billions of people will be accountable for if they die apart from Christ that are due to a sinful nature we did not ask for, agree to or voluntarily accept.

It really is a huge question. One which no one will find a Biblical answer for other than simply that God allowed Adam's nature to continue on through his descendants for His own mysterious reasons; an inherited nature that will cause those descendants to resist God, be hostile to God and ultimately to be accountable to God in spite of the fact that the sinful nature was inherited.

Personally, I wish there were a Biblically explicit answer. We can't bootstrap one by a fairness argument from our own minds though.

Paul makes it clear in Romans 7 that the man of the flesh has a conscience that has some desire to do the will of God but he has a much stronger flesh that desires the sin and that man is unable to resist the desires of his own flesh, desires that are inherited, of his own nature, and that are stirred up by sin but desires that nonetheless belong to the man. The freedom from the desires that cause us to sin comes when we die with Christ, not before. The man of the flesh is unable to please God by the doing of His will until the flesh and sin is condemned in the man by being joined to and indwelt by another...Christ.

Re: - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2018/11/27 11:25

This Christmas season we will no doubt hear or see the movie "Its a wonderful life"...and oldie and a goodie.

No, I wouldn't start a study on angels by its presentation of an angel...so lets get that out of the way.

But the one pervasive message the movie delivers is
"One mans life can make a huge difference in others lives"

So, said Robert..."that billions of people will be accountable for if they die apart from Christ that are due to a sinful nature we did not ask for, agree to or voluntarily accept."

We all know Adam was the culprit, now because what He did, and what Eve did, everyone else suffers. One man affected the lives of countless others.

So, too, Jesus Christ who being one man, affected countless others by what he did.

I appreciate the candor in which Robert addressed this issue. There is nothing worse than ignoring the elephant in the room, or attempting to paint the elephant the same color as the wall and say "well, I don't see any elephant here".

We can yell loudly all day about man's choice and his hard heart and that's why God judged man. But that's not the whole story and anyone reading scripture knows this.

I've never denied the sinful nature of man nor his accountability before God as a moral creation, made to know God and his word and obey and love both. But the "elephant" is that God has a choice too in the salvation of man, you cannot paint it out with greek or with human reasoning or with scripture quotes...which are used to nullify other scripture quotes.

Our whole lives are predicated upon God's decisions we have no input into, nor do we have veto power if we did think we could nullify his decision.

Scripture presents both of these important aspects of God's person and working in the world, denying them by reason of their inconvenience to our way of thinking is useless and in fact becomes a stumbling block to knowing God as scripture presents him.

I don't hear anyone bring up the Romans 9 analogies? I don't read anyone willing to admit to God's choice? Why? Are we so hateful toward God that to admit his role in the salvation of man must mean we take a disliking to him?

When you can write the same quantity of insights into God's choices in the matters of men as you do the failings men, chances are, you can offer a more biblical perspective. But, until then, it's an uncertain sound a distorted vision.

Re: - posted by CofG (), on: 2018/11/27 11:47

Brother Marvin.

Thanks for your reply. There is a Puritan quote I often refer to. It is...."If I had the power of God I would change everything. If I also had the wisdom of God I would change nothing." I embrace God's grace in salvation and I was only focusing on the issue being discussed which I saw as the condition of man.

Re: - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2018/11/27 13:48

Hi Robert: it was a great post, I appreciate summaries and I appreciate both aspects being taken into consideration.

I realize the men and women I am responding to are well versed and articulate, they hold contrary views but we do not hold a contrary gospel, our gospel is a gospel to be preached to all men in all nations with the expectancy of God's answer to bring in the lost until God has all of his Elect.

When we go out to preach the precious promises of God contained in the gospel, we do not know who will respond or who will reject, we do not know how God will work among the peoples who hear that message, we also do not concern ourselves with who is Elect and who is not. Our concern is with being faithful to our Savior and faithful witnesses of his Spirit and word as he has worked in our own lives.

No gospel-minded preacher says "well, he didn't believe my message he is not the elect of God". Can we be sure we are the last witness of God to that man or woman? There may be some who answered the call of God to be saved upon their first hearing. I for one, didn't answer for years, I heard and refused, heard and refused and heard again and still refused...with blasphemies, cursing, mocking. Yet God in his goodness sent another messenger. God pursued me, I didn't pursue God at any time. I was an atheist, my parents were atheists, my family were mostly atheists or agnostics.

Yet, I do not hold my beliefs from reverse-engineering my own conversion and thereby make scripture to fit my experience. To the contrary, what I learned from scripture is that God seeks, God calls, God works, God appears, God speaks...all to wicked men who didn't seek him or want him.

I found my own conversion unnecessary to substantiate God's pursuit of men, I have abundant testimony from God himself as to his own willingness to save.

I would have needed little more than one single sentence from one verse to prove my sinful heart and failings...it was easy to be persuaded as to my own condition, what took me by surprise was a God who by his own will and purpose chose to reveal Jesus Christ to me. I had nothing, no family, no religious feelings, no Christian interest, no heart whatsoever toward anything having to do with the bible, Church or God.

I am saved, I am exactly like multitudes that have gone down to the pit and will eventually be cast into the lake of fire. It would be no shock to me if I found out vastly better men, more educated, more moral, with godly families, with a godly heritage, without mocking, blasphemies and disrespect toward God...and they are yet in hell.

Who would choose me over them? No one, no one would with a right mind. To me, salvation has nothing to do with fair/unfair or super-fair, to me it has to do with the God who gives grace to sinners. There is no other plausible reason for my own salvation than that.

I take my own doctrines for a spin, I know God has granted me grace and kindness...and it sure wasn't because I made the choice to believe. I found out I believed because of grace and kindness which God gave to me while I was a blasphemer.

Re: - posted by makrothumia (), on: 2018/11/27 13:49

Hi Todd,

You asked - "Do you see the "refusal to be persuaded" as an issue of will, or an issue of inability?"

I can share with you my considerations of that question, but I am not claiming to have an answer. I am intrigued by some of the mysteries in the scriptures and I am learning that they are too deep for me to claim to fully know a matter prematurely. "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, and the glory of kings to search it out."

I will share with you my present thoughts, so that you and others on the forum can consider them along with me. Perhaps contemplating them together, we can all benefit from one another.

There is a passage in Hebrews that has Greek word for "not persuaded" and "ability" in the same context.

Hebrews 3:18-19 "And to whom did He swear by oath not to enter into His rest if not to the ones who refused to be persuaded. And we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief."

Here we have the people categorized as "those who were not persuaded." We are also given the cause of their "inability". The reason for their "inability" was THEIR OWN UNBELIEF."

Indwelling sin was not named as the reason for their "inability", rather their "inability" was due to "unbelief"

Does "indwelling sin" prevent men from believing? No, we have an entire group of men who obtained witness that they "believed" God. All of these men had indwelling sin. It is evident then that "indwelling sin" does not prevent men from hearing and believing God.

Sin does enslave men, and corrupt them, but does it prevent men from "being able" to believe? The scriptures do not seem to indicate that sin prevents men from hearing and believing God.

For example, Cain was warned that "sin was crouching and desiring to master him". Cain was being shown the way of escape, but he failed to embrace the help God offered and gave in to sin.

There are other men listed in scripture who were not controlled by sin in the same way that Cain was. Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Hannah, Samuel, Naomi, Ruth, David, and many of the prophets. All of these men and women had the same sinful nature that we are born with and yet - "indwelling sin" did not prevent them from believing, and following the Lord. None of them were "perfect" and never sinned, but God Himself called many of them "perfect, upright, and righteous".

We are also aware of Zachariah and Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, and Cornelius in the New Testament. All of these had one trait in common, they were approved by God as people who were devout.

"Total depravity" did not prevent them from finding favor with God, despite the reality that every one of them still needed God's mercy and forgiveness. Their lives were contrasted as different from the other people of their time.

Lack of faith, is more the cause for men's disability than "indwelling sin". Consider the testimony of Abraham. When faced with a body almost 100 years old and the deadness of Sarah's womb, he did not waiver in unbelief but was "ENABLED BY FAITH". Yes, he was enabled by faith to come to a "full assurance" and this is why it was accredited to him as righteousness.

Furthermore, Joshua and Caleb had the same "indwelling sin" as the other 603,498 men over twenty years old that died in the wilderness. That entire generation witnessed the same miracles, ate the same manna, saw the same cloud and pillar of fire, but two men out of that entire generation entered into the promised land - because "they mixed what they heard with faith."

"Indwelling sin" was not the cause for God's judgment upon their generation. God called out their "unbelief" as sinful because He had provided every opportunity for them to have faith.

These are some of my own thoughts about your question. I realize we have all been corrupted by "indwelling sin", but I do not believe that "indwelling sin" prevents us from hearing the word of truth and believing.

Another thought comes to mind, regarding our responsibility for the sinfulness of our condition. Paul taught that we participated in our own enslavement. We "offered our members as instruments of sin unto slavery." We are not entirely passive victims in our total depravity. No, we were willing participants.

It is a mystery that not all men yield to sin to the same degree. These men are held out as our godly examples that we are to imitate. And it was "their faith" that enabled them to overcome the same "indwelling sin" that we all have to deal with.

I hope these thoughts offer some benefit for this topic. My present understanding of the scriptures is that God regards unbelief as evil, not an inability.

mak

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2018/11/27 14:53

Thx Mak

I really enjoying this thread. Thanks for starting it.

Re: - posted by CofG (), on: 2018/11/27 15:05

Jesus says in John 3 that men will not come to the light because they love the darkness. The "inability" that the NT speaks of for the man of the flesh is one of desire or love (which is spirit) more than incapacity. You will not do that which you hate and you will do that which you love most. That is why new birth is so essential. It is the nature of the sinful nature to hate the things of God. The new nature loves and desires the things of God. It is an inability of nature not an inability to hear or see or understand in the intellectual sense or to say yes with the mouth. The old nature is at natural enmity with God.

As to the saints of the OT, a circumcised heart is the description Paul gave of those who are "true Israel" for not all Israel is Israel. And that heart was not circumcised by human hands. So it is simple enough to conclude that God circumcised the OT saints' hearts.

Re: - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2018/11/27 17:14

One could draw some pretty unbiblical conclusions from mak's post on 'indwelling sin'.

What Mak seems to minimize and it does really cause me to question...Mak says "indwelling sin didn't stop" such and such a person.

But...what made the change? I hear only crickets. Its as if the person just 'obeyed God' without God's aid.

So, when God does aid the sinner in coming to faith, is it simply a happenstance, or maybe an unnecessary encounter? Because if man is able to fix himself along the way...since his own sin doesn't get in the way and God is definitely not to be mentioned as the causal agent, why should we not all become Pelagians...deny sinful human nature altogether and think like Finney, we hear the right words, believe the right doctrines and poof we change our minds and we are saved.

It can be easily construed that the new birth is just a human-willed decision away. The real problem is not indwelling sin, its just bad surroundings, bad doctrines, bad parents, bad religion...because we are the answer to our own demise.

So, while Mak is right about human accountability and sin-guilt...he consciously leaves God's Spirit, God's election, God's interventions, God's providences and God's divine plans completely out of the picture.

It's as if I am listening to a cult...a Mormon telling me how to know God, not sin, serve God and yet leave God's Spirit and his workings totally out of the message.

Re: - posted by makrothumia (), on: 2018/11/27 17:38

Now Marvin,

"So, while Mak is right about human accountability and sin-guilt...he consciously leaves God's Spirit, God's election, God's interventions, God's providences and God's divine plans completely out of the picture."

Please know that I did not leave out what is innately understood. All those who obtained the witness that they pleased God did so by faith. We KNOW that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

None of those who are mentioned in Hebrews 11 could believe except that God had made Himself known. That is so foundational that I assumed it is understood. God called them, He spoke to them, He commanded them, and they "believed" unto righteousness.

My focus was upon how all of these believed having the same sin nature that you and I are born with. I have no issue that you believe they were all the elect. In fact Israel is called the "elect of God over and over again" and look at their history. God's election did not guarantee them righteousness. They were called and chosen, just very unfaithful.

That is why men are "broken off", not because of "indwelling sin", but because of unbelief. We are not to boast that we are standing, but to remember that we are standing by faith. It is wise to consider the kindness and severity of God. Severity to those who did not believe, but kindness to us provided that we continue in His kindness, otherwise we too shall suffer their fate.

And marvelously, those who were broken off because of unbelief can be grafted in again, as long as they do not persist in the same unbelief that caused them to be broken off in the first place.

Faith or unbelief is far more determinate than the "sinful nature" that is common to both the believer and unbeliever.

mak

Re: - posted by CofG (), on: 2018/11/27 19:06

It appears that according to our brother and sister "Mak" and those very sincere and many that hold the view that those who have faith determine their election into new birth and the family of God. Seems upside down just a little bit.

I presume everyone agrees that faith is a gift of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 22) and that not all have faith. Peter addresses those who are in Christ as those who have "received" a similar faith as his own. ! Peter says that we have been chosen unto sprinkling with blood and obedience to Jesus. If Jesus commands us to believe it would seem that election preceded that obedience. It does not conversely suggest that we have been chosen because of our obedience to believe in God and His Son whom He sent.

I recognize these arguments are not new. I just don't understand how they are ignored. I'm not being argumentative or dismissive of other opinions. I am so thrilled for all who have believed and truly wish all were so. Truly! Like brother Marvin essentially said, we long for all to have true faith and explain the few who do by the mercy of God.

At the end of the day, we preach Christ, a pleasing aroma to the Father which means whether all or a few are saved, our preaching is a victory because the Father is well pleased by the exaltation of His dear and beloved Son. Make the supremacy of Christ your aim in evangelism, worship, justification, sanctification and glorification. Praising Him for the glory of His grace in Jesus Christ!

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2018/11/27 21:14

//If Jesus commands us to believe it would seem that election preceded that obedience//

Why?

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands ****all**** men everywhere to repent, Acts 17:30

Are you saying God calls all men to repent but only enables some to do so?

Again, a logical absurdity.

Re: - posted by makrothumia (), on: 2018/11/27 21:14

I doubt that any of us would deny that God's decisions are "at times" based upon how men respond. God Himself declares that He is willing to change His mind from the destruction He has planned and instead give blessing and peace, if men will hear his words, humble their hearts, turn from their ungodliness and walk in His ways. And most certainly it is His grace to even give men this opportunity, but since He Himself has consistently acted this way, it should not trouble anyone that there are those who believe men's response determines God's response at times.

There are too many passages in scripture where this principle is so clearly stated that it leaves no doubt that God is willing to reconsider what He has declared and will indeed withhold either good or bad based upon the response of men.

Jeremiah 18 is one such passage where the Lord affirms His right to change His mind about whether a vessel will be unto one purpose or another and explains that this principle is true for any nation or kingdom.

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 6 "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the Lord. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel! 7 The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, 8 if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. 9 And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, 10 if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

11 "Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, "Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

Some of the sincere people who believe that men's response to God's word will determine their fate with God appear to have been biblical writers.

It was while reading the bible that I became aware of this principle.

mak

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2018/11/27 22:43

Quote:
-----I doubt that any of us would deny that God's decisions are "at times" based upon how men respond. God Himself declares that He is willing to change His mind from the destruction He has planned and instead give blessing and peace, if men will hear his words, humble their hearts, turn from their ungodliness and walk in His ways. And most certainly it is His grace to even give men this opportunity, but since He Himself has consistently acted this way, it should not trouble anyone that there are those who believe men's response determines God's response at times.

There are too many passages in scripture where this principle is so clearly stated that it leaves no doubt that God is willing to reconsider what He has declared and will indeed withhold either good or bad based upon the response of men.

Jeremiah 18 is one such passage where the Lord affirms His right to change His mind about whether a vessel will be unto one purpose or another and explains that this principle is true for any nation or kingdom.

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11 "Now therefore, speak against the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, "Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

Some of the sincere people who believe that men's response to God's word will determine their fate with God appear to have been biblical writers.

It was while reading the bible that I became aware of this principle.

mak

Amen. At times, when it comes to the plethora of "conditional" promises made by God to man in Scripture, our sincere brethren appeal to two supposed wills of God. They say God has a "revealed" will and a "secret" will. They say that God's revealed will is that all sinners without exception should respond to Him in repentance and faith and that He takes no pleasure in the death of any wicked person. And they say that His secret will on the other hand is that only the elect respond in repentance and faith and that the rest be doomed and damned forever in hell, without hope neither in this life nor the next.

In other words, according to our sincere brethren, God has two wills which seem to contradict one another. They usually appeal to Deuteronomy 29:29 "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Yet that verse does not teach that God has two contradictory wills. It simply teaches that there are some things that God has not deemed fit to reveal to us, and that He has revealed certain things to us for our own good.

In other words, the fact that certain things of God remain mysteries does not mean there are any contradictions between those mysteries and God's "revealed" will in Scripture. If that were the case, we would not be able to really trust anything God says explicitly in His Word.

Imagine trying to apply that to anything else taught in Scripture. We'd have to always second-guess and say, "Is that really true or does God have a "secret" will which contradicts this seemingly explicit "revealed" will?"

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2018/11/27 23:07

By the way, thanks Mak for the OP article and for the recommendation regarding esword and the Apostolic Polyglot Bible version. I went ahead and downloaded both. I've been using a few word study books as well as Blue Letter Bible (a free online tool) for that type of functionality, but it's cool to have something like that installed on my pc.

Re: - posted by CofG (), on: 2018/11/28 3:19

Brothers and Sisters,

I'm honestly not mocking anyone's intelligence or firmly and sincerely held beliefs. You are my brothers and sisters. I previously read the Bible with the same understanding as you do about this topic. All of you may be far above me in many spiritual respects. So, please hear this not as condescension but as an attempt to present what is being asserted in its simplest form. At the bottom of salvation according to this position, is this statement:

"God chose us because we first chose Him."

I know that those in the thread are well versed. Doesn't that sound strange to say as a simple proposition and matter of Scripture?

Re: - posted by passerby, on: 2018/11/28 5:30

It is obvious that some camps, hold that there are human beings that are destined by God for reprobation and damnation and nothing can be done about it.

To the other camps this a clear absurdity and a blasphemy to the character of God. Only wicked beings will let it happen

How sure are the adherents of this doctrine that this is actually true without reasonable doubt, this is a very serious matter.

Re: - posted by makrothumia (), on: 2018/11/28 7:59

Dear Brother,

Your "simplification" is in reality a distortion.

If you insist that every time faith is discussed, we must specify that God gave the faith, then you will be at odds with our Lord Jesus, His apostles, Paul, James, Jude, and the writer of Hebrews.

Their words and writings are filled with precise grammar that actually direct the reader's focus to the importance of the subject's participation in the action being described. This grammar has come to be known as "subject focused" verbs, also known as deponent, because they always appear in the form of the Greek Middle Voice. Any reader familiar with the original language would have known that the writer was underscoring the importance of the participation of the subject in the action being described.

You on the other hand, seem to be insisting that faith only be spoken of as God's gift to man. The writers of the New Testament did not share your concern. They deliberately chose grammar to direct their readers mind to the importance of the human response. They did this repeatedly and no one on this forum would accuse them of such a conclusion as you have put forth. They intentionally directed the reader to the importance of carefully hearing, considering and responding to the word of truth.

One such grammatical tool that they employed to do this was the Greek word ἑπιλαμβάνω. This is "subject focused" (deponent verb) that is defined in this way on Bible Hub:

ἐπιλαμβάνω properly, to receive in a welcoming (receptive) way. ἐπιλαμβάνω is used of people welcoming God (His offers), like receiving and sharing in His salvation (1 Thes 2:13) and thoughts (Eph 6:17). ἐπιλαμβάνω ("warmly receptive, welcoming") means receive with "ready reception what is offered" (Vine, Unger, White, NT, 7), i.e. "welcome with appropriate reception" (Thayer).

Throughout the Septuagint and the New Testament, this word is employed to convey exactly what the above description unbiasedly asserts.

Here are a few examples where its use underscores the dynamic element of the human response

II Thessalonians 2:9-12

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive (ἐπιλαμβάνω) the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Paul uses ἐπιλαμβάνω to focus our attention on why men are perishing. He intentionally directed the readers mind to consider that men did not receive, embrace, welcome the truth.

Matthew and Luke, (Jew and Gentile) used the same word in our Lord's instructions to the disciples when he sent them out to preach.

And when you go into a household, greet it. 13 If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14 And whoever will not receive (ἀποδομαί) you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. 15 Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!

I encourage you to study this out and ask yourself, if the writers of both Old and New Testament consistently used grammar that directed the reader's focus to the human response to God's initiative, then this focus is a GOD BREATHED - inspiration.

mak

Re: - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2018/11/28 9:45

Hi Mak: Well a couple of things.

You said..."Please know that I did not leave out what is innately understood"

Seriously Mak? I'm going to toss a little water on your sleepy head. Mak you are a razor-sharp student of the word, what you consider 'innate' is NOT innate to a great many others. What is old-hat and everyone-knows-this is not the level of everyone's knowledge that comes to this forum.

There are plenty like yourself who are equally razor-sharp in knowledge and articulation of their doctrinal position...but for the rest of us butter-knives you've left out a valuable part of the story.

The other is, I do so enjoy your greek insights, I really like it.

I don't think for a moment that I am at odds with Jesus or Paul, though obviously not an equal, I am their brother and a son-in-the-faith. I do not expect God's sovereignty is a necessary 'inclusion' with every statement where human responsibility is mentioned, nor would I expect the opposite.

It takes all the ingredients of God's divine plan clearly shown to give the student of scripture the best understanding of God's love toward his Son and his Church.

And because of your lack of consideration of God's sovereign workings, God gives me the opportunity to share that portion and for that I give thanks.

As to believing God has two contradictory wills, that would be a concoction for my dissenters, not my own views.

It takes little to no time at all to accept the fact that God knows who are going to be saved and who are not, so it does not matter in the slightest whether you are calvinist or arminian or none-of-the-above. Because as soon as you ascribe omniscience to God and God's declaration of only one way one truth and one life...all in Jesus; you have God knowingly commanding us to preach to people God knows will never come to him. Then for some reason the calvinist gets the mud-slung at him for even mentioning the fact that God is only going to take what he will take...and he knows who they are.

I am saying all orthodox theological persuasions fall into this category and therefore all have this truth intrinsic to a coherent theology.

There are others who are heterodox and get slippery when it comes to hell and God's omniscience so they fall into an un-orthodox position that is not under consideration here.

Re: - posted by makrothumia (), on: 2018/11/28 9:54

Thanks Marvin,

Actually you have stimulated me many times to consider the sovereignty of God. I have become aware that you will likely be there to make sure that His sovereignty will not be overlooked.

Thanks for the water and your contribution to this forum. Your own focus has been used to sharpen mine. There are two sides to most good knives.

I feel you and I come very close to meeting at the junction point.

mak

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2018/11/28 10:49

Thought I'd share this pertinent A.W. Tozer quote:

"God sovereignly decreed that man should be free to exercise moral choice, and man from the beginning has fulfilled that decree by making his choice between good and evil. When he chooses to do evil, he does not thereby countervail the sovereign will of God but fulfills it, inasmuch as the eternal decree decided not which choice the man should make but that he should be free to make it. If in His absolute freedom God has willed to give man limited freedom, who is there to stand by His hand or say, "What doest thou?" Man's will is free because God is sovereign. A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creatures. He would be afraid to do so." -from Tozer's book, The Knowledge of the Holy (Authentic Media, 2008), pp.144-145

Re: - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2018/11/28 11:07

Hi Oracio: you are another razor that frequents here, and that Tozer quote...well, you and I could have some real dialog with that one. I do love Tozer.

Im going to get my wheelbarrow full of books just in case you open a thread on that subject.

Either way...thanks for jumping in.

Re: - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2018/11/28 11:35

Mak I think we are closer than it might appear.

Do you want to know an ugly truth?

It's tough to find a calvy that will go out and street witness with me, I turn to my armin brothers/sisters and they will go. Tell me what's wrong with that picture?

Anyway I make better friends with my dissenters than I do with my back-slapping calvies, I don't know why. That's not true of everyone of course, but I wanted you and others to know my conflicts/discussions/debates with others do not hinder my appreciation for them.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2018/11/28 23:33

Hi Robert (CofG), you wrote:

Quote:

-----Brothers and Sisters,

I'm honestly not mocking anyone's intelligence or firmly and sincerely held beliefs. You are my brothers and sisters. I previously read the Bible with the same understanding as you do about this topic.

Many of us would argue that a plain, child-like reading of the scriptures will lead one to see explicitly that God has given every person the capacity to choose to either receive or reject God's offer of salvation. Imo it is mainly and mostly after one professes faith in Christ, and after one encounters your perspective being taught, that one is convinced against what they once plainly and clearly saw taught in God's Word.

Quote:

-----At the bottom of salvation according to this position, is this statement:

"God chose us because we first chose Him."

I know that those in the thread are well versed. Doesn't that sound strange to say as a simple proposition and matter of Scripture?

That's actually not our position at all. What we are saying is that God has first offered salvation to all the world without exception. It is God who first reveals Himself to all sinners via various ways, and it is He who first seeks after all the world via various ways, so that all are without excuse (Rom. 1:20; Acts 17:26-28). We can wholeheartedly declare as 1 John 4:19 declares, "We love Him because He first loved us."

As God says regarding unbelieving Israel (which is also true and applicable regarding unbelieving Gentiles), "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people" (Rom. 10:21; Isa. 65:2).

God stretches out His hands to all sinners without exception and invites all to be saved. He says, "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other" (Isa. 45:22)

God sincerely pleads with sinners to be reconciled with Himself (2 Cor. 5:20). The question then becomes, is that appeal to be reconciled with God directed toward all sinners or only toward the elect? A plain and child-like reading of all those appeals to sinners in scripture leaves the impression that they are directed toward all and are invitations to all.

If those appeals and invitations from God are directed toward all without exception, and if God truly and sincerely desires for all without exception to be saved, how is it that He would "pass over" or "pass by" the vast majority of sinners and leave them without hope of ever being saved? How is it that He would grant the ability to respond positively to His appeals only to a selected number of sinners?

That proposition seems to clearly go against so much of the scriptures, which is why many of us reject it. For us to accept it would mean denying what we see clearly and plainly taught throughout God's Word, and it would mean checking our God-given reasoning capabilities at the door imo, with all due respect.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2018/11/29 0:05

Hi Marvin, you wrote

Quote:
-----Hi Oracio: you are another razor that frequents here, and that Tozer quote...well, you and I could have some real dialog with that one. I do love Tozer.

Im going to get my wheelbarrow full of books just in case you open a thread on that subject.

Either way...thanks for jumping in.

Thanks again for the encouragement, although I'm nowhere near yours and Mak's writing skill levels.

Regarding the Tozer quote, didn't mean to open up a can of worms, or books.

Re: - posted by CofG (), on: 2018/11/29 6:05

Thanks for all the thoughtful replies. Sorry for distorting the viewpoint. I think we may be talking past each other.

I don't speak for all who hold the sovereign grace view of salvation by a long shot.

Clearly, Scripture says God calls all men to repent and He desires that none would perish. He has a love for all mankind who are by Scripture His enemies.

Clearly, men must turn and believe in Jesus if they are to avoid certain judgement. Men must exercise that change of mind and they must exercise the faith required.

The only question for me is does Scripture teach that God must give them the ability to do that. Without His intervention that exercise of faith is impossible. All who read the Scripture would agree with that. Man cannot believe alone no matter how often or clearly God reveals His love for them, does miracles in front of them or rises from the dead before them.

So, theoretically, before God actually intervenes, God gives an invitation, a command, a pleading that man is theoretically unable to do.

At this point the divide on Scripture begins. Man is unable without God's help to obey or respond rightly to God's pleadings or commands.

One side argues He gives help to all and that help is sufficient for all. By help, I do not mean He merely invites or commands. Help in this sense means some form of grace that enables a man, every man to obey God not just in salvation but in every respect. I don't think any Scriptural support has ever been provided for that position. What is said, I think, is that logic dictates that God would never love someone or command someone to do something if He didn't give them the grace they needed to do the thing commanded. It is an argument from logic and reason. I don't think we should check logic at the door. However, we should always check logic against any contrary explicit Scripture and if there is clear Scripture, then we should reconcile toward Scripture being true.

Mak, I'm not ever going to say or argue that man doesn't do the believing or the responding. Of course, it is the man who responds according to his heart, his decision, his will and his exercise of faith. No one says otherwise. What is said is that all men are unwilling to believe because they prefer the lie because of their evil hearts and their desire for unrighteousness. It's a heart issue that dictates the response to God. The only heart that bears the life and fruit of true faith and faithful obedience is a pure and noble heart (Luke's parable of the soils), one which natural man does not possess.

What God's word says is that He "grants" repentance, He gives the Spiritual fruit of faith. No man can come to Jesus unless the Father draws Him and all that HE draws come, He grants men to believe in Him, HE distributes faith to some men and not all have faith (that is the ability to believe, not the exercise of that belief), men receive a love of the truth, men obtain a faith like ours. Scripture says that before the New Covenant that, generally, the Gentiles were without hope and separated from the covenant of promises, even the one made to Abraham that because of His faith, he would be the father of many nations. God gave mankind apart from the Jews the access to the new covenant in Christ, a new covenant that purchased a new birth.

What is being asserted is that Scripture says man is unable to perceive, understand or discern the things of God until he is born again, has the Spirit, is renewed in mind. That is what Scripture specifically says and seems to say many times.

Jesus says, people do not believe because they love the darkness. Jesus says people do not believe because they are not His sheep. God says we have a sinful nature. It does not say we have a sinful nature but every time God commands something, He temporarily eliminates or suspends the sinful nature so we can obey and then He reinstates it after we obey or disobey. He says that prior to the new birth, we love our sin and enslave ourselves to Satan because we are of our father the Devil and do as he does according to his nature and ours. That is what God says about men prior to the new birth. That is very clear in the Gospels and in 1 John 3.

All men are guilty of refusing God if they do so. None go to Hell because God made them disobey or reject Him. God gives a certain mercy to all everyday. He loves them everyday. Gives them a constant witness of Himself. Gives families, crops, rains, human joy. He strives by His Holy Spirit with their conscience constantly. He, however, does not share the news of Jesus with all. Over the centuries there have been billions of people who have perished in their sins without

hearing of Jesus. None can deny that simple fact. Why does God offer salvation in Jesus to some and leave billions over centuries, entire continents of people, without that witness and without that offer? This is a question for those who argue that God's desire for all must include access for all.

God in fact created billions of people whom He foreknew would die in their own sin. He did not have to create them having this foreknowledge, so we are all in the position of having to ask why? All must have an answer for that question as well if we are going to argue logic. Logic would say, God, whether free will or enslaved will, why did you create so many people who would suffer forever? I think that is a legitimate and logical question. I've heard some argue He did that so that love could be a free choice. That is wholly inadequate. HE could have created only those men and women who would freely choose Him. That He didn't clearly do. So the great mystery remains. I'm trying here to address this double predestination nonsense. It is a red herring. Men who go to Hell predestine their own fate. They are responsible.

So, why would God give commands and pleadings to men who are spiritually unable to obey? I did not say physically unable. Men have a conscience and a will and the law written on their heart. I think the argument is He wouldn't by logic do that. Don't mean to oversimplify. Just repeating what I read. What does God say about that?

God commands all kinds of things that men are unable to do perfectly. He always has. Even under a prevenient grace argument, we have to concede that. Man is unable to love God with all His heart mind and soul. No amount of prevenient grace or salvific grace has been given to surmount this sinful nature problem except for Jesus. Why? He had no sinful nature.

In order to overcome the sinful nature in His people, God's solution was not prevenient grace. It was the New Covenant in His blood where He forgives us our sins, cleanses our hearts, gives us spirit life, and puts His Holy Spirit in us. That is the grace God gives to "cause" us to obey His commands. That is God's solution to the sin nature problem. He circumcises the heart. Man's heart is the problem. He loves what God hates and abominates and he hates what God loves. A change of nature is in order and that is God's logical solution. His wisdom.

Am I sure about the Scriptures that teach that man is unable apart from God's intervention to do the things God commands in a way pleasing and acceptable to Him? Yes. Am I sure that God's intervention is to change man's nature and make Him a new man who though still fighting the flesh, His old man, He now is a son of God and able to please His Father? I say yes to that as well. I am convinced totally by direct explicit Scriptures.

This is not a debate on some theoretical plan of salvation theology to me. We are talking and discussing the heart of God and of man. I left the theoretical debating far behind me in my walk, so winning an argument is a waste of time to me. Like you, I just want to know God's word and His ways and His works. I'm not against everybody being saved. I wish it were so. Our desires are irrelevant though in this. The only issue being discussed is how they are saved. We can't argue on the basis of preferences, human logic or our own view of what is best, fair or loving.

Again, I have always wanted and pleaded with someone to show Scripture that explicitly says that God gives sufficient grace to all men to obey His commands. Not a logical argument based on indirect references. The question is so huge that it would be "logical" that God would say directly He gives prevenient grace to obey.

God desires a lot of things to be done that men don't do and can't do. To suggest that He gives sufficient grace to do those things because He desires they be done is an argument, not a Scripture.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2018/11/29 9:06

//Am I sure about the Scriptures that teach that man is unable apart from God's intervention to do the things God commands in a way pleasing and acceptable to Him? Yes.

.....

This is not a debate on some theoretical plan of salvation theology to me. We are talking and discussing the heart of God and of man.//

I appreciate your tone Robert. But honestly, the scriptures are not as clear as you suggest; otherwise this debate would not have raged on for the number of years that it has.

The end result of one view is to portray God as monstrous; the other does not. Why choose a view that paints a monstrous view of God? Because a Being who creates persons with eternal souls in order to torture the vast majority of them mercilessly for all eternity when there is nothing they can do about it because He chooses not to help them is not the God revealed in scripture. That is a monstrous hateful parody of the God revealed in scripture.

Re: - posted by TrueWitness, on: 2018/11/29 9:17

Yes, nobody is saved without God first "drawing" them unto Himself and opening their blinded eyes to see their lost condition and need for forgiveness and salvation. He grants them the ability to humble themselves and repent and avail themselves to the new life He has for them in Christ. This is a work of grace that happens before salvation of course. We are saved by grace (God's doing) through faith. This pre-salvation work of grace is God's way of giving us the ability to believe (have faith) in order to be saved. He bids us to believe but He won't believe for us. We must do it ourselves. And believing is not a meritorious act that earns us salvation. We are simply receiving a free gift from God. The Bible is clear that faith is never a work, the two are opposed to each other. So let's be clear that we aren't saved before we believe. The idea that God has to regenerate us first in order for us to believe is not scriptural. The Philipian jailer asked Paul, what must I do to be saved? Paul said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. He didn't say, You have to wait for God to save you so that you can believe. This question of "Does salvation precede faith?" has come up before here and I have found an article that is a thorough treatment of the subject found here:

<http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/regenera.htm>

-Daniel

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2018/11/29 11:21

Hi Robert, I too appreciate your tone here. You wrote a lot in your last post and it would take quite a bit of time to reply to all your post. You quoted certain scriptures which to you and many, support your view. We would argue that there are different, valid interpretations of those scriptures; valid interpretations which reconcile well with other explicit portions of Scripture dealing with God's own character, particularly His holiness and justice and love.

But you would have to be willing to take off the particular "lenses" through which you've been seeing those scriptures in order to begin to see the biblical validity of those interpretations. That's what I had to do when I held to your theological position at one time in my walk with Christ. When I did that, I found that there were indeed solid, robust biblical answers to what you pointed out as counterarguments and proof texts.

I'll see if I may have time to reply to certain of your points soon. For now, I'll briefly reply with Scripture to this statement of yours:

Quote:
-----Again, I have always wanted and pleaded with someone to show Scripture that explicitly says that God gives sufficient grace to all men to obey His commands. Not a logical argument based on indirect references. The question is so huge that it would be "logical" that God would say directly He gives prevenient grace to obey.

1 Corinthians 10:13 teaches, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

It may be pointed out that Paul is addressing Christians there, which is true. However, I would encourage you to consider the context of that chapter and the Old Testament examples Paul gives before verse 13. Paul exhorts them, and us through the Holy Spirit, to consider how Israel during Moses' time failed to resist the temptation to commit idolatry and how they chose to rebel against God. They could have resisted that temptation with God's aid. God provided everything they needed to resist it, but they chose rather to give in instead. And they suffered both temporal and eternal consequences as a result of their own willful rebellion and refusal to submit to and trust God. Mak pointed out earlier in this thread the similar example of Cain. God told him that sin was lying at his door to overtake him but that he should rule over it. Again, God provided everything Cain needed to overcome his temptation, but he refused to go God's way and chose rebellion against God instead. Again, that's the same basic choice God has placed before all humanity throughout all time.

Again, God has provided sufficient revelation and aid for all to seek Him and find Him, though He is not far from any, being that in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:26-28). We hear of many instances of people in other countries coming to faith in Christ through dreams and visions as well as through other means via missionaries. Scripture seems to teach explicitly, and experience seems to show, that if any person responds to the "initial revelation" God provides them with, God will provide them with more revelation and will allow Himself to be found by them. The problem is that many who never hear the gospel don't want anything to do with the true God, and God knows it, therefore God does not provide them with more revelation.

Yes, it is certainly true that before coming to Christ we are enslaved to our sin and that we cannot keep God's law due to our bondage to sin. But the fact that one is a willing slave to sin does not mean one cannot acknowledge their bondage and their desperate need for deliverance; it does not mean one cannot accept the deliverance that is offered to them by God Himself. God is more than willing and able to deliver any and all sinners to the uttermost, but we must acknowledge our need and receive that offer via repentance and faith/trust in Him. That is the picture which the Bible over and over paints of God and of His heart toward all.