

Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

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Thoughts on the Sovereignty of God and the Responsibility of Man

Does God elect those who are to believe and, thus, quicken them to enable them to respond to the gospel? Or does God offer salvation to all and, thus, waits upon man to respond? I believe the latter, for the following reasons:

It is the clear, revealed desire of God that all (not some) men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth – 1 Timothy 2:4. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance - 2 Peter 3:9. Our Lord grieves over those who are unwilling to come to Him - Matthew 23:37-39. Our Lord takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their way and live - Ezekiel 33:11. God is not partial. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ is for all those who believe. There is no distinction with God - Romans 3:22; 2:11; Galatians 2:6; Acts 10:34. God so loved the world (not only the elect) that He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus, to save the world - John 3:16-17; 1 John 2:2.

Through the creation God enlightens all men who enter into the world - Romans 1:20; Psalms. 19:1-6. Further, He brings light to all men through His Word - Psalm 43:3 - and through His Son - John

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1:7-9. The purpose of this light is to bring men to faith - Romans 10:17; Titus 2:11-14. Obviously, the choice is in the contact men have with the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, which Satan labors to keep men from seeing – 2 Corinthians 4:3-6. Today we have much more light than those prior

to the completion of God's Word. Therefore, we are all the more responsible. See Matthew 13:17, Romans 16:25-27, Luke 12:48b.

God has created man in His image. This includes the ability to know, communicate, and rule - Genesis 1:26. In regard to the will, God being omniscient, is perfect. However, man being finite is only

"perfect" when following God's revealed will to him. Both Lucifer and Adam made choices with limited knowledge. Their only hope for choosing right was to remain in humble submission to God's revealed will for them. In this both Lucifer and Adam failed miserably. Being created in

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His image they both had wills that could choose, but being a creature and not the Creator gave them a limited ability to choose correctly. The same is true of men today. God has willed by creation and in redemption that men be responsible for their choices - Genesis 2:17; John 3:36. Yet, man

can only make right choices when humbly submissive to God's revealed truth (This is the obedience of faith - Romans 1:5; 16:25-27). Thus, as the gospel comes forth from God to man, man is given light that enables him to choose life as opposed to death - John 6:68; Romans 1:16-17. In the garden, it was just the reverse. There Adam had a single choice to death but many choices to life. Now, man has many choices to death but only one choice to life, i.e., Jesus Christ.

Thus, the gospel itself carries to man the opportunity of choice – 1 Corinthians 1:21. Any man that repents before God and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ after hearing the good news of his salvation is saved by the will of God - Acts 20:21; John 1:11-13; Ephesians 1:13-14. This, of course, is all according to God's choice, for He determines the Way. Left to themselves, all men would perish in their sins, but God, Who is full of mercy, will not allow men to go their way without an appeal to return to Him. He draws all men to Himself both in this life (John 6:44) and in the next (John 12:32). However, in the first draw, not all will come. In the second, all will come. Now, Jesus appeals to us as Redeemer. Then, Jesus will appear to us as Judge - Acts 10:42; Revelations 20:11-15. Please, come to the Light!

Who then are the elect? Every spiritual blessing for the believer is received when God puts Him in union with His Son - Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Peter 1:1-4. When we believe

on Christ we are put in union with Him and, therefore, elect in Him. The elect then are all those who believe in Christ, God's Elect One - Isaiah 42:1. That is God's choice, for He has determined this to be true from before the foundation of the world - Ephesians 1:4. For those who believe, He has predestined them to be His adopted sons, heirs with His Son and conformed to His Son's image! For those who do not believe, He will banish them from His presence forever - Matthew 7:23; John 3:36; 5:28-30.

In three out of the four New Testament uses of the word "predestined" the word points forward to the future end of those who are believers in Christ, i.e., to be like Him, adopted in Christ as sons of God, and heirs in Christ. This should not be confused with election. Predestination seems to have more to do with His plan for His people than with His choice of His people. We are not predestined to be His people, but we are predestined as His people to be ... - Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:5, 11.

The following thoughts are written to further support from Scripture the position of this paper and to help the reader understand some of the verses related to this subject:

If God does elect those who are to believe and then quickens them so they will believe, but the rest will not be able to respond to the gospel message, then Jesus only died for some, the elect, not the world. If this were

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true, we could not tell someone while witnessing that Jesus died for them because we would not know who the elect are until after they believe? The historical fact that He died for all, purchasing all men by His death, is essential for the resurrection and the judgment. Since He has

purchased all men by His blood, all men will appear before Him in the flesh to be judged by Him (the Man in flesh in glory) - Romans 3:10-26; 14:9-12; Acts 10:38-43; 2 Peter 2:1; Revelations 20:11-15. Jesus died for the world, not merely for some of the world - John 3:16.

In 2 Peter 3:9 God says that He is patient for men to repent. But, if He must quicken them so they can repent (as some say), then it is man who must be patient with God, not God with man! The word "quicken" is the

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action of God where He gives a person a new heart, nature, spirit, life, and makes him His child. Some say that God must quicken a person so that he has such a means to love God and respond favorably to the gospel message. But, John 1:12 tells us that those who believe are made by God His children,

not, he makes a person His child so that he will in turn believe. Also, Ephesians 1:13 conditions receiving God's Spirit upon faith in Christ ("believing the good news of your salvation") not the other way around - Galatians 3:14, 22.

Some would also say that if man believes without God first quickening him that this makes faith a work. But, since inherent in faith is a humble admission that all our works are as filthy rags and we are in a helpless state to save ourselves, with nothing to offer God except the finished work of His Son, faith is clearly not a work but a trustful dependence on the Person and work of Another - Jesus. See Romans 3:27-

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28; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 4:5. These verses in Romans make it clear that the work which Jesus has already completed for our salvation and our faith in Him are two separate things entirely. God accomplished all the work for our salvation and then pleads with us to look away from ourselves in self-judgment to Christ alone for our salvation. See 2 Corinthians 5:20, John 3:3-18, Numbers 21:4-9.

Further, it is also said by some that Romans 9 proves that God elects some and, therefore, quickens them to be able to believe the gospel, but Romans 9-11 is primarily about another subject altogether. It is about the fact that Israel is God's chosen earthly people and nothing can change that, not even the fact that they rejected their Messiah.

Our Lord takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their way and live - Ezekiel 33:11.

Therefore, God is temporarily setting them aside to form one body out of both Jews and Gentiles who believe on the Lord Jesus. God is reminding Israel and us in Romans 9-11 that He has not replaced Israel with the

church, He is not finished with Israel, and all His promises to Israel will be fulfilled after the completion of the church age. Note also from these chapters that the Jews were chosen, yet many still refused to believe.

In closing, Jesus, our Great God and Savior, Who humbled Himself to take on flesh and die so we could be reconciled to God, has been exalted by the Father. It is God's desire to exalt His Son in every way since He humbled Himself to the extent of death to redeem God's creation - Philippians 2:5-11; James 4:10; Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:16-20. It is exalting to Christ for Him to be chosen by God as His Elect One. Also, God's sovereignty is magnified, not diminished, by the fact that although He is the Almighty, He lets men choose life in Christ or death apart from Him. Therefore, in His sovereignty and in man's responsibility God is glorified! To Him be the glory forever. Amen—Revelations 1:5-6.

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