

GOD'S FIRST PRINCIPLES

Q1: Why is the Bible called the word of God?

A: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). As the Ten Commandments were “written with the finger of God” (Ex. 31:18), so too, every word of the Bible, even “one jot or one tittle” (Mt. 5:18), is as God has perfectly crafted it. In fact, the phrase “given by inspiration of God” literally means, “God-breathed.” In other words, what we have in the original texts of the Old and New Testaments are the very words, pure and divine, of the Creator Himself.

It is true that different men were utilized in penning God’s word, yet the Bible is clear that these men “spoke” being “moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pt. 1:21). An example of God causing words to be uttered that in turn would be recorded is found with David: he was the shepherd-king who is credited as being responsible for more than 70 of the 150 Psalms. Were these David’s own works? The Bible gives the answer: “The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and His word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). It was God Who gave David the words; it was God Who was breathing, speaking through this man.

Whether men spoke by the Holy Spirit, or received direct communications from God, ultimately the precise message God desired was written down, and has become the Bible as we have it today (Is. 30:8):

Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee.... Jeremiah 36:2

...I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book.... Rev. 1:11

Therefore, with the completion of the book of Revelation, the Bible became the full record of the will of God, the only means by which God would speak to man:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: Rev. 22:18

Thus, all truly supernatural extra-biblical communication forms - tongues, visions, dreams - are the deceiving works of the Antichrist, the Devil himself.

Q2: What is pleasing to God?

A: “...This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:17). The Bible is boldly uncompromising in declaring what it is that pleases God - absolute perfection:

Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God.... 1 Kings 8:61

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Mt 5:48

Thus, all that God thinks, plans and executes is pleasing to Him, since He is Himself of “truth and without iniquity,” “just and right,” and His works - “perfect” (Deut. 32:4). God does **all His pleasure** (Is. 46:10): His work in creating the universe and all that is therein, electing those whom He would save, reprobating those whom He would not save, justifying the elect in Christ, and demanding penalty for every last sin on the Day of Judgment, to name a few.

That God is so High and Lofty, that His name is even “Holy” (Is. 57:15), renders any and all attempts of fallen, corrupt, filthy man to please God completely unacceptable, unpleasing in His sight. Indeed, of His absolute standards all men “come short,” for “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23). In one sweeping statement, God categorizes mankind as an “unclean thing”; and all man-wrought, man-invented forms of holiness “filthy rags” (Is. 64:6). Yes, the Bible states that God hates “all workers of iniquity” (Ps. 5:5b).

This indictment is especially alarming for those who call on His name (Mt. 7:21), who believe they are His children because they have done some work they believe to be good: “accepting Christ,” belonging to a church, being water baptized, regularly participating in the Lord’s Supper, or any such like. No matter how one views himself, God sees the inward part of man:

For the word of God...is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Heb. 4:12, 13

When someone’s inner man, the soul, is “full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (cf. Mt. 23:23-39) - i.e., unregenerate - is it any wonder that God “delightest not” (Ps. 51:16) in any of the person’s outward form of worship? [see Joel 2:13; Amos. 5:21-23]

The solution to the dilemma lies with the Savior Christ Jesus, the Lamb offered “without sin” (Heb. 4:5), Who declared, “I do always those things that please Him” (Jn. 8:29). Unsaved man “cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8), but if anyone is in the Lord Jesus, having been saved by His work, then he can be assured that he is of those in whom God takes eternal pleasure:

I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. 1 Chr. 29:17a

Q3: I clearly remember accepting and making a decision for Christ - why then do I keep falling back into sin?

A: “So then it [salvation] is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Rom. 9:16). To properly understand anything the Bible teaches, it is essential to first face the truth that God is the Prime Mover of all creation. He does not merely react to changing circumstances. Rather, He is the Master Architect of all things that come to pass:

The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: Is. 14:24 (comp. Ps. 135:6)

All men are accountable to Him, and all creation is His (Ps. 50:9-12). Truly, “...of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are **all things**...Amen” (Rom. 11:36).

This is also true of the miracle of salvation. God plainly declares that like everything else, “salvation,” too, “is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:9; cf. Is. 43:11). No, this does not simply mean that He is the sole holder of salvation, like an exclusive, faraway location to which men must travel to find priceless treasures. This means that God is the *initiator*, the *cause* of salvation for those whom He is pleased to transform (Rom. 12:2), to create anew (2 Cor. 5:17).

The Bible tells of a man, Simon, once a sorcerer in Samaria. We read that when he heard the gospel of Christ, he “believed” and was even “baptized” (Acts 8:13). Amazingly, Simon later reveals his still corrupt, unsaved nature when he attempts with money to buy what he thought was the power of salvation (v. 18, 19). In the parable of the sower (Lk. 8:5-15), Christ teaches about those who “hear,” and “receive the word with joy,” and “for a while believe” - yet “in time of temptation **fall away**” (v. 13). There had never been any work of God in their hearts.

Are you one of the eternally *Blessed*, the *chosen*, whom God has *caused* to approach Him (Ps. 65:4; cf. Eph. 1:4, 5), *caused* to “walk in,” that is, “do,” His laws (Eze. 36:27)? Or will you be of the countless many whose cries of, “Lord, Lord” will be answered by the declaration, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt. 7:23)?

Q4: Since God would never violate man’s will, those who reject the gospel will never become saved, right?

A: “Turn Thou us unto Thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned” (Lam. 5:21a). Since unsaved man does not seek after God nor receive the “things of the Spirit of God” (Rom. 3:11; 1 Cor. 2:14), that some truly become born from above demonstrates the fact that in spite of man’s hatred for the truth (Rom. 8:5-8), God *irresistibly* saves those upon whom He wishes to have mercy and compassion:

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Rom. 9:15

All things come to pass, without fail, according to the perfect plan of God (cf. Is. 14:24). No imaginable force can “stay His hand” as He executes all His “pleasure” (Dan. 4:35; Is. 46:10). That God inclines the heart of man and turns it as He desires is the sure testimony of the Bible (Prov. 21:1):

That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways...to keep his commandments.... 1 Kings 8:58

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. 2 Thess. 3:5

When it pleased God, He intervened wonderfully in the life of a Jew named Saul, and “called [Saul] by His grace” (Gal. 1:15). According as He had purposed, no other being but God mightily “opened” the heart of Lydia of Thyatira (Acts 16:14) - His word had perfectly accomplished in this woman that which

pleased Him (*Is. 55:11*). Indeed, *all* of God's elect children are those "predestinated according to the purpose" of God Himself *to become saved* (*Eph. 1:11*).

This miracle of salvation is not a violation of anything; rather, it is *the* expression of infinite, perfect love for those who rightfully deserve hell. It is God's "unspeakable gift" (*2 Cor. 9:15*).

Q5: If God has to do the entire work of salvation and I cannot participate in anyway, how then can I know if I really am saved?

A: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (*Ephesians 2:10*). The Bible makes it crystal clear – salvation is *the* miracle of miracles. Thus, a person who is saved is not merely nudged into some positive lifestyle changes, like that of quitting smoking. Rather, with salvation, the person, once a "child of the devil" (*I Jn. 3:10*), is now a child of "light":

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: *Eph. 5:8*

In his soul essence, the saved person is, in the most real sense, made alive (*Eph. 2:1*), "transformed" (*Rom.12:2*), and has been "delivered...from the power of darkness," and "translated...into the kingdom of his dear Son" (*Col. 1:13*). Fundamentally, the child of God is a "new creature" (*2 Cor. 5:17*).

This means that **every** aspect of the now-saved person's life, without fail, must be dramatically affected, changed. Further, these changes will not be short-lived, quickly evaporating away when difficulties arise. After all, the thrice-holy God now *indwells* the believer (*John 14:23; I John 3:9*), and continually *works* in His child "that which is well-pleasing in [God's] sight" (*Heb.13:21*). Since he has been born of God, the believer now declares to his Heavenly Father, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God" (*Ps. 40:8*).

What is God's will? The Bible is the full record of what He has revealed. Thus, the child of God now has a most intimate relationship with the *whole* Bible, not just some "comforting" passages, and deeply desires to *accurately* know more about God:

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly...But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Ps. 1:1, 2 (see also Ps. 119:11; I Pt. 2:2; 2 Pt. 3:18)

In practice and in doctrine, the child of God's love for his Savior will be made manifest in his actual conformity to God's will, not in empty profession. After all, the Lord Jesus declares, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (*John 14:15*).

Q6: I live as a Christian, not like the world. Does this not prove that I am truly saved?

A: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection" (*Heb. 6:1a*). The Bible teaches that God personally *indwells* every person He saves (*Rom. 8:9*), constantly working to cause the child of God to "will and to do" according to God's will (*Phil. 2:13*). This means that the Christian knows neither backsliding nor mere maintenance of

form. Rather, progressive, ongoing growth must be the hallmark of each and every truly saved individual.

As the Christ child "grew, and waxed strong" (*Lk. 2:40*), so every person born of God is to grow by the "milk of the word" (*I Pt. 2:2*), the Bible. Not only will the Christian increase in the **knowledge** of his God (*Jer. 24:7; Col. 1:10; 2 Pt. 3:18*), **faith** (*2 Cor. 10:15; 2 Thess. 1:3*) and **love** (*Phil. 1:9; I Thess. 3:12, 4:9, 10*), but also **all the fruits** of true salvation (*Gal. 5:22, 23; 2 Pt. 1:5-7*), to varying degrees, will be evident in his life – and be growing:

Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

2 Cor. 8:7 (see also I Thess. 4:1, 9, 10)

Thus, the Bible strongly rebukes and also exposes those who display no evidence of this positive, continual change as unbelievers (*I Cor. 3:1, 2; Heb. 5:14, 6:1-12*):

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine....

Eph. 4:14

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. *Heb. 5:12*

Are you, dear reader, daily becoming "conformed to the image of His Son" (*Rom. 8:29*)? Do His fruits "abound" in you? Or are you rather of those who are "barren" and "unfruitful," "lacking these things" (*2 Pt. 1:8, 9*)?

Q7: What is the "abomination of desolation"?

A: "...God knoweth your hearts...that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (*Luke 16:15*). The above verse actually states, "...that which is **high in** men is abomination," identifying the "high" with men's corrupt "hearts" – haughty and exalted against the absolute sovereignty of God. This is "abomination" to God.

The prideful heart of unregenerate men identifies with Satan, the devil, whose condemnation was "being lifted up with pride" (*I Tim. 3:6*). Satan is the master deceiver, transforming himself "into an angel of light" (*II Cor.11:14*). The Bible shows him at work as he beguiled Eve (*Gen. 3:1-13*). This historical event finds its prophetic fulfillment with the New Testament church:

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted.... *II Cor. 11:3*

Satan's driving desire is revealed when he said, "...I will **exalt** my throne above the stars of God: I will sit...upon the mount of the congregation...I will be **like the most High**" (*Is. 14:13, 14*). In judgment against His apostate people (*Heb. 10:30*), God foretold that He would grant Satan's wish one day: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation ...**stand in the holy place**..." (*Mt. 24:15*). The Bible is clear that the "holy place" is that which identifies with God: the Old Testament temple (*Acts 7:33; 21:28*), and the New Testament churches (*I Cor. 3:16; II Tim. 2:20*).

We are living in that day when the abomination of desolation "sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (*II Thess. 2:4*). Judgment has indeed begun at the "house of God" (*I Pt. 4:17*).

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