

Spring 2024 Newsletter
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The Permissive Will of God

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.’”

Jeremiah 9:23, 24 (English Standard Version)

The permissive will of God refers to His allowing man to take his own direction even though He knew it would bring pain and hardship, because He had also planned that ultimately, He will overrule the experience for man’s blessing.

Among earth’s billions about one third accept the Bible’s God. Of these there is a small slice of Judaism (.2%) with the rest claiming Christianity. However, among them, there is little harmony and little confidence in the power of God to help man. In fact, most Christian sects paint a bleak picture of God as a deity waiting to punish wrong doers. Few see God as one who “practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.” God left a comprehensive record of his teachings and works of old in the Bible, so surely all who claim to worship Him agree. Clearly, they do not.

The Bible is not a book easily understood. Both Jews and Christians find their roots in the “Judeo-Christian” Scriptures. Apart from the history of the Jewish nation and its people, and the record of the establishment of the early Christian church, much of the Bible is written

in symbols and poetic images and all of it in ancient languages, the exact meanings of which scholars often disagree upon. Most frequently disputed is whether God has a plan for man and whether that plan involves blessing or cursing. The imposition of traditions adopted from people whose gods were not the God of the Bible, has led to doubt and confusion so that only those truly seeking God will be able to discern Him.

To “understand and know [him]” as the prophet Jeremiah wrote, would indicate a fervent desire to learn the words of the Lord as well as the desire to conform to His will. God has been supplanted by speculative theories such as evolution and various modern philosophies. This modern world has little inclination to search the words of God or to conform to them. For most, God is all right for a Sunday service, but in the way the rest of the week.

The prophet Isaiah recorded God as saying: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your

ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isa 55:8-11)

God has been imagined as a vengeful deity carrying out his diabolical plan of an eternity of torture for countless numbers of human beings while Jesus is the personification of love. Those who see God in that way, must wrestle with the contradiction of all the scriptures in which God has affirmed his concern for mankind.

Jesus said, “...**God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**(John 3:16) [Are you thinking “there’s the caveat, one must be a believer,” but Jesus himself said, (verse 22) ‘**For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.**’] **For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him.**” (John 3:16,17) He also said that God loves even his enemies and sends them daily blessings. (Matt. 5:44-48)

When God created the first human pair, could he not have sheltered them from any evil influences? God could have made mankind devoid of the ability to discern between right and wrong or made them able only to discern and do right, but that would simply have degraded humanity to the level of mere robots. Without a moral sense, an outbreak of disobedience and disorder might always have been a possibility. It is a self-evident truth that for every right principle, there is a corresponding wrong principle as, for instance, love and hatred, justice and injustice. We distinguish these opposite principles as right and wrong by their effects when put into action.

God made man “a little lower than the angels” and set him up to rule the earthly creation. (Psalms 8:3-9; Hebrews 2:6-9) As such, He was entrusting man with everlasting life and the rule of earth. (Gen 3:22) It was therefore necessary for God to place a test upon the human pair.

The test was a simple one. God had forbidden the pair to eat from one particular tree in the middle of the garden. (Genesis 2:16,17) He had also allowed the angel Lucifer to have free access to Eden. But Lucifer had ambitions. (Isaiah 14:12-14; Revelation 20:2; 12:9) Taking the form of a serpent, Lucifer (later also called

Satan) enticed the woman to eat some of the fruit from the forbidden tree. She ate, and by doing so, failed God’s test of obedience.

The man (Adam) probably fearing loneliness once again (Genesis 1:18) decided to cast his lot with his wife and join in her sin. He failed because **he was not** deceived. (1 Timothy 2:14) Thus, the human race lost perfection and their continuing life (Gen.3:22,23) and God sent them out of their perfect garden home into the “unfinished” earth to out serve their sentence—**death.** (Genesis 3:17-19,23,24) Ever since, mankind has been learning the lesson of the “wages of sin.” (Romans 5:17,18; 6:23)

The Apostle Paul told the Athenians, “God made from **one man** every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth...” (Acts 17:24-26 Eng. Std. Ver.) Since all of humanity has the same father, we have all inherited the only legacy he had to give, the **sentence of death.** Therefore, we are all part of his dying race.

The time of our demise differs, but we all die. Some die young, some die old. Some are killed in wars or revolutions. Others live a peaceful life and die in their sleep. Some suffer from painful diseases. Others keep their strength and vigor until the end. Some may be killed by accidents or by natural disasters, and some may die young because they have lived recklessly and abused their own bodies. Some even end their own lives, finding the pain of life around them too much to bear.

That God could have given Adam such a vivid impression of the many evil results of sin as would have deterred him from it we need not question, but we believe that God foresaw that an actual experience of the evil would be the surest and most lasting lesson to serve man for eternity. The principles of right and wrong as principles have always existed and must always exist and all perfect intelligent creatures in God’s likeness must be free to choose either. For that reason, God did not prevent the experience, but permitted man to make his own determination and to feel the consequences of his choices.

God seeks such to worship him as “worship Him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23 24) He desires intelligent and willing obedience rather than ignorant mechanical service. His design in making man was to make a nobler, more intelligent creature in His own image and

likeness (Genesis 1:26)—a lord for earth whose loyalty and righteousness would be based upon an appreciation of right and wrong, of good over evil. However, the scriptures inform us that when the usefulness of the evil principle has been permitted long enough to accomplish God's purpose, it will forever cease to be active, and all who continue to submit to its control shall forever cease to exist. (1 Cor. 15:25,26; Heb. 2:14-17; Rev. 20:12-15)

Although God has power to force men into either sin or righteousness, his word declares that he has no such purpose. He would not consistently force men into sin for the same reason that “he cannot deny himself.” (2 Tim. 2:13) Such a course would be inconsistent with his righteous character and, therefore, an impossibility. He seeks worship and love only from such as have developed an appreciation for righteousness. (John 4:24) To this end he has given man a liberty of will like his own and desires him to choose righteousness.

God foreseeing the course men would take if left free to choose for himself did not hinder him from tasting sin and its bitter results experimentally, but he began at once to provide a means for his recovery. “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires **all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth...the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all...** (1 Tim. 2:3-6) By giving himself as a ransom for the perfect man Adam who sinned, Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all who would return to God through him. To this end, that men might have a free will and yet be able to profit by this first failure in its misuse, God has provided not only a “ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6) but also that a knowledge of the opportunity thus offered of reconciliation with himself shall be testified to all “in due time.” (Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:21,22)



However, God had a purpose in allowing Satan to try to deceive. He has been the instigator of inquisitions, wars, and the oppression of mankind. He is at the heart of idolatry and the God denying philosophies in “science falsely so called.” (1 Timothy 6:17-20) His was the influence that prompted Dante Alighieri, to write his poem, “The Inferno.” Dante’s poem with Gustav Dore’s illustrations left sickening impressions and fear in the

unschooled peasant. The twentieth century historian, Will Durant, has rightly called this poem, “**the crowning indecency of medieval theology.**” (Durant, Will, The Age of Faith, p.1071)

People are not so credulous today, so why do these images continue to influence the minds of so many Christians? Satan’s lie (Gen. 3:4) has proven very effective. Therefore, life after death concepts have been able to thrive and permeate the religions of earth so even Christian preachers assume the dead live on in some sort of afterlife.

However, the Jewish scriptures consistently describe death as “sleep” (2 Sam. 7:12; Job 7:21; 14:12; Psa. 13:3; Dan. 12:2; 1 Kings 2:10; 11:43; 14:31; 15:8,24) The Scriptures are plain: “For the living know that they shall die: **but the dead know not anything,** neither have they any more a reward. (Eccl, 9:5.6; Job 14:13-15)

Jesus himself used the word “sleep” when he declared that he was going to **wake** his friend Lazarus **who he knew had been dead for four days.** (John 11:11,13,14) So, if Jesus is to be believed, our dead loved ones are “asleep” awaiting the resurrection. Jesus said, ...“**the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth...**” (John 5:28,29)

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”(1 Cor. 15:21,22)

*To the mothers of Bethlehem’s babies, God said...” Hold back your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears...**They shall come again from the land of the enemy.**” (Jer. 31:16)*

*“**And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads:---and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.**”*(Isa 35:10)

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WHY GOD PERMITS EVIL

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