

Sin, Freewill, Determinism

(Gist of a sermon)

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June 26, 2005

My thoughts this morning are on a subject greater than I can deal with adequately. Greater minds than mine have stumbled all over it. To begin, let me read a portion of my text, found in Romans 6:17. I will do as many; I'll read it as if it has a period after what I read, but it does not. However, I will get back to the full text later. Paul wrote to the Church at Rome: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin." Can you imagine him reading this in the Bethany PBC in Atlanta, Georgia! All over the house, a gasp of breathless madness would seize the congregation! "Paul! You made God the author of sin! You are an Absolutist! Away with that heretic!" and letters would be addressed to the deacons of the church at Antioch to build a firestorm under his feet to get him excluded! Did I read that passage wrong? Listen carefully: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin." (long pause) "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin." (Pause) My subject is sin.

It is believed by some, including we here in this body, that God is all-powerful. That He created all things from nothing. That He is infinitely "good." The Lord Jesus said, "There is none good but God." Now, let me ask you something very thoughtfully: "Did an all-powerful and good God cause, determine, allow, permit, or refuse to intervene and sin entered into His creation? Is He all-powerful? Then could He not have prevented it? Is He infinitely good? Then why did He allow it - or will it, if He did? Can God be both all powerful and at the same time be infinitely good? My subject is sin. What about it?"

The pastor of the church mentioned says that the "all things" that work together for good to them that love God is really only five things.

Preachers want to exonerate God to protect His honor, lest He be defamed because sin entered into the world and death by sin. Did it sneak in? Was He not looking? Or was He powerless to prevent it? But does the eternal God need some puny man to defend His name? I doubt it.

Sin. The greatest philosophers, pagan or "Christian," or "secular" all admit that there is a problem with sin in the universe. It is here, it is there, it is all around us, indeed it "is us" - "sinful flesh." None have written anything without including that "problem" in their analysis. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, all tried to find an answer to that "problem." Augustine introduced the gosh-awful theory of "free will" in an attempt to answer the question "How sin entered into the world." Even today, even though Augustine realized his mistake, and opposed it in latter life, Presbyterian students will throw it up, that "even Augustine believed man had a free will."

Augustine had once been a dualist. That is, He had subscribed to the theory that Daniel Parker "the Two-Seeder Primitive, had held, that both God and the Devil were eternal and co-existent. That seemed to solve the problem: "The devil did it." But when one realizes that God's word affirms that God created "the crooked serpent," and "the waster to destroy," and "the wicked for the day of evil," Dualism was no help at all. The "problem" still existed. So with freewill: The "problem" still existed. In fact, Freewillism aggravated it to the highest degree. Freewill was set up as, and above God Himself. It has led to the almost complete paganization of "Christianity."

So sin exists. If we did as the late governor of Alabama, and put God's influence out of our "daily lives," and God has nothing to do with sin or wickedness, then we have virtually excluded God from the earth altogether. Sin is far more prevalent in our society than righteousness; evil abounds far greater than "good." In fact, "there is none good," but all men are "evil." "There is none righteous, no, not one." So to exclude God from any consideration of our subject is to practically endorse atheism.

The problem is that sin is pervasive in everything. Our economic system would collapse immediately if men were not covetous. We all want more, and more. If a man could own the whole world he would not be satisfied. He would attempt to own the moon to plant his garden on! We call it the law of supply and demand," but the Bible calls it "covetousness." There is none that do not recognize that sin is a problem - at least for that other fellow. We all, including Predestinarian Old School Baptists, pick and choose what the Bible says that we should or should not do. We all are highly selective. I like this sin, this sin, and this one; but that one, and that one, is a "no-no." My sins are better than your sins. You ought not to do those that you do. But mine isn't all bad - they are little "white ones."

But, in all this, none seem to care to thoughtfully engage in looking at the problem. I sometimes think the public schools have failed by not teaching children to think "critically." They are too busy playing ball, or learning "sex education", and other important stuff like that! But, how did sin enter into Adam's paradise? Let's examine it a little.

The apostle John wrote: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." (I John 3:8). It appears to me that John is placing the emphasis upon the Devil, whom God created. Then he adds this: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." So, here is one of the purposes for Christ coming into the world, to destroy the works of the devil. Since Christ was set up "as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," it then seems obvious, that it was God's purpose that

- **(1) He should create the devil,**
- **(2) that the devil have works in this time world to destroy, and**
- **(3) that Christ should destroy them.**

Thus, we cannot escape the conclusion that sin entered into the world by the devil, and man, and its entrance into the world was according to the

will, or purpose of God. If it was God's PURPOSE that the Son destroy the devil's work, then it must also have been His will that sin exist. The fact that provisions were made to answer the problem of sin before He created the world, is the loudest argument for His having a purpose that it enter. For surely He could have prevented it if His purpose was otherwise. To dispute it is to destroy the concept of God's sovereignty over all His works; rob Him of His dominion; and substitute something else - some duality - as co-equal to God.

Now, I promised not to take the text out of its context. We read the rest of the verse in Romans 5:17, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you."

It is not a matter of thanksgiving that men are sinners, per se. It is so that they are made to be feeling sinners, for Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The word "were" profoundly changes the subject to a gospel doctrine for an individual called by grace. Without that sinnership, there is no salvation. Without the entrance of sin into the world, there could be no salvation! There may not have been any of us either! So did God will that sin enter the world?

Does God have a "free" will? By "free" will, I mean can God choose between two opposite things, good or bad? That is what the Freewill Baptists say is "freewill." They say that the sinner is free to choose or not to choose to let Jesus save them. There is no other influence except their will in making that choice. So, again, Does God have a "free" will? Can He freely choose to tell a lie? No. "God, who cannot lie, promised, etc." Can God steal? The law says, "Thou shalt not steal." Can God violate that law? No. How can one steal from Himself? He made all things Himself and FOR Himself! So He is under no law, and hence He can do no wrong. Anything He does is "good," because He does it.

So, by the definition of the theory of "freewill," the corrupt man has elevated himself ABOVE his Creator. He has a "freewill" but God does not! But, does man have a freewill? Is his will free to choose either good or bad without any outside force, motive, or power influencing him? I don't think so! You know I don't! There is always something influencing my will, or if not my will, my choices. You can't make me willing to eat a 'possum. Unless you come up with a definition for "eating," different from mine. If I swallowed it, it would come back up. So I doubt that is "eating." Now, I know people eat 'possums. My Dad ate 'possums. I had a 'possum-eating role model sitting at the head of the table as a child, but I was not "free" to eat that baked 'possum and taters. I really did "will" to eat some - just to "taste" it; but alas, my will was not free. To this day, I've never tasted 'possum and sweet taters. I can't eat road-kill. So, if God made man in His own likeness and image, then man never had a freewill, because God has no freewill. He can ONLY choose that which is good. Man can only choose that which is evil, now that he is fallen in Adam. So, if sin entered into the world, and God can only choose that which is good, then from God's standpoint - not from man's - the entrance of sin into the world could not have been "bad."

What has made it "bad," is that the same God that willed that sin enter into the world to magnify Himself in all His holy attributes, placed man under a LAW. That law establishes a "moral" standard of measurement of good or bad. Now, I'm sure we will agree that had God not placed man under a law, man could not have sinned. "Where there is no law there is no sin," or transgression. So, the fact that God put man under a law demonstrates that He willed for him to sin. Did that make God the "author of sin"? Not at all. God didn't violate the law. Man did. God could not violate the law. Man could and did, and God knew that he could and would. You asked, but why would He do this. I answer: "to magnify Himself; to reveal Himself to man." In the case of Pharaoh, why did God harden his heart that he would not let the people leave Egypt? The Bible answers this "why". "For this same purpose have I raise thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My name be declared throughout the earth." Was God the "author of Pharaoh's sin"?

Does God not have a right to do what He will with His own? I say yes! Whatever He does with them is right, just, and good.

In the beginning, the great almighty omnipotent God spoke this vast and amazing universe into existence. What a demonstration of raw POWER! None can dispute that it was one most powerful thing to create the earth, seas, mountains, sun, moon, stars, galaxies! Wonder of wonders! What PERFECTION; WHAT POWER! But, where is God's love, His mercy, His longsuffering, His great grace, etc.? What little could feeble man know of God, if sin had not entered the world! They could not know His love; for there would be no contrasting hate. The word "mercy" itself, would have never been a word, until sin entered the world and justice demanded a penalty for the transgression. Ah, my soul, tell me: Did God not deliberately and willfully ordain that sin enter the world, and that justice with unflinching eyes frown angrily upon the transgressor. No pity in Justice to cowering man sneaking away into the brush to hide his ungodly rebellion from His Creator God! Yet, tender-hearted mercy stood betwixt the two, with lovingkindness in her arms. Don't tell me that God didn't know! That He could care less! That sin was an "accident." May I suggest that if God had not put the tree in the garden to test man, would man have even be able to prove his faithfulness to his Maker by anything that he could ever do? I reverse the order often charged against us; That is, if the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not placed in the garden, man would have only been a puppet! A robot! Without sin, the whole system of salvation by free and sovereign grace crashes to the ground, and Adam man is left worse off than if he had never been created! Adam in his original state was never made to be a heavenly or spiritual creature. He was higher than the beast only in that he was made a rational being. But with salvation, the elect are raised higher than they ever could have been in the original creation. But hear this, poor trembling soul: Sin brought the very condition needful to display the shining glory of God's grace in the sacrifice of His darling Son.

Ah, Me! How can words be uttered to express it! That God willingly, deliberately, on purpose, ordained simultaneously, that His Son be the sacrifice for sin, and that sin enter into paradise, and God would thereby display His glorious attributes. Some men will know God as He is. Some men will bow in willing acquiescence before Him in adoration and praise. Some men will rebel and defy the God of heaven, their Maker, and beg for the mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the face of the severity of His Justice; some men will know the everlasting love of God; and some men will understand what it is to feel the hatred of His wrath and vengeance against their willful rebellion.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (Romans 6:16). If sin had not entered, there would be no dominion of sin. Had righteousness not entered, there would be no kingdom of righteousness. The two diametrically opposites are, in fact, mutually agreeable. You can't have the one in the absence of the other.

Thus, the mercy of God is seen in the Son bearing the penalty of sin in His body on the tree, and imputing His righteousness to guilty sinners, made to know their real status before the Holy God. Brethren, even among our own churches, few will go as far as some even fewer to say, that when God demanded the justice of God for our sins, Christ paid the full price due because of our sins. The Father did not let Him off the hook easily because He was His Son. No! No! No! Regardless of what others think, we feel sure He paid the full price, and went into hell, and suffered the eternal hell due for all our sins that were actually imputed to Him. Some want have this thought; but some want have Him deliberately purposing that sin enter into the world to magnify His grace, either. But He was our Jonah. "As Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, even so the Son shall be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." And as the Son, Jonah cried: "And I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and Thou heardest my voice. (You

should read the whole 2nd Chapter of Jonah) "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." How the fullness of God's grace supplies nourishment for our poor souls. Brethren, "I thank God that you were the servants of sin, but have obeyed from the heart the doctrine" of God's sovereign grace and despised the deified idol, "free will." It isn't worth bowing down before. It never solved the problem of sin to begin with. It has ever been an utter failure in its supposed utility. God only is to be praised.

Thank you for your attention.

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