

The true nature of God

1Jo 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.(verse 16).

Exodus 34:5-7 5 And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. (Eze 18:2-4; Jer 31:29-30; Gal 3:13)

In the Bible we can see at many instances, different characteristics of God. But the true nature of God is – LOVE. There are many instances recorded in the Old Testament, where God gave sickness, diseases, plaques, severe punishments, curses, death sentences, judgments, droughts, destructions...etc.

But in the New Testament we see Jesus totally opposite. He did not do anything as in the O.T, but always acted against sickness, curses, diseases, punishments etc.

Why it looks like a change of character? Are there two Gods in the Bible? Why this change of mind? Did God change His nature? (God cannot change...He is same yesterday, today and forever *Heb 13:8*).

Often, God is portrayed as the one who is responsible for all the tragedies, destructions and punishments. He is also portrayed as angry and ready to punish. Yet he is also portrayed as a loving and gracious God. What is the real nature of God? To have a good relationship with God we should have a proper understanding about His real nature. Without a proper understanding of the true nature of God, there will be always flaws in the relationship with Him. This is also very important to understand the works of the devil and the works of God. A misunderstanding of the nature of God may lead to obedience to devil and his plans, and disobedience to God and his plans. Once we know the real nature of God we can live in the full potential and according to *John 10:10*, in the “abundant life”.

The Bible says that God dealt with mankind in different ways at different times.

Heb 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

For many years, God was patient towards man's trespasses and sins. But a time came, He commanded everyone to repent. (*Acts 14:16: Rom 3:25; 5:13*).

Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:

In 2 Kings, chapter 1, Elijah brought the ‘fire of God’ and killed 102 soldiers, because they came and called him according to the king's commandment.

When the Samaritans rejected Jesus, James and John asked Jesus permission to bring fire God and destroy the Samaritans. But Jesus rebuked them (*Luke 9:51-56*).

In *1 Samuel 15:3*, God commands “*1 Samuel 15:3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.(Deut 7:2; 12:2; 20:17; Josh 11:11-14; Num 31:1,2; 9-35; Judg 21:11; Jer 50:21; 1 Sam 18:26; Psalm 136:10)*.

But Jesus says in *Math 5:44*, “*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*” (*Math 22:37-39*)

At one time God did not punish people for polygamy (*Gen 16,26; 29:16-30:24; 1 Sam 25:39-44; 2 Sam 3:25; 5:13; 1 Chr 14:3; 1 Kings 11:1-8*).

But Jesus Christ and the Apostles have commanded clearly not to marry more than one wife (*Math 19:4-9; Mark 10:2-8; 1 Tim 3:2,12; Tit 1:6*).

The Law of God says life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand and foot for foot (*Ex 21: 23,24; Lev 24:20*). *Deut 19:21"Thine eye shall not pity"*.

But in *Mathew 5:38-39*, Jesus says “*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also*”.

(*Deuteronomy 28 and Rom 3:20. Exodus 20:8 and Col 2:16*)

The judgment of the Old Testament and the Grace of the New Testament

It is imperative that we learn some of the fundamental things of the Bible, before attempting to preach doctrines from the Bible. Why there are two Testaments called Old and New in the Bible? What is the difference between God given Law and Grace? We are under Law or Grace? Why in the Old Testament God gave severe punishments? Then when Jesus came why he didn't do that? Why was he even telling “Go and sin no more “to the women who was caught in the very act of adultery? What is the meaning of “Covenant” mentioned in various places of Bible? Why there are so many dispensations (*Heb; 1; 1*) in the Bible? It is better to touch the doctrinal issues of the Bible after knowing the answers for the above questions. When someone do not know these, it is better for him to speak only about the Grace, Love, and Mercy of Jesus Christ. This will bring many people to Christ.

Why severe punishments and judgments were given in the Old Testament?.

The bible tells us that there are times that God do not impute sins and give punishments accordingly. This may be a total surprise to those who don't know Bible.

Romans 5:13 ; For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

2 Cor. 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Acts 14:16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:(“wink at something” - to pretend that you have not noticed something, especially something bad or illegal - Oxford Dictionary.)

Under the Old Covenant, God dealt with His people through the **outer man**. He did this because an Old Covenant man (who was not born again) could not perceive the spiritual truths revealed in the New Covenant by the Spirit (*1Co 2:14*). This difference between the old and new covenants is the reason why there had to be two covenants.

The Old Testament man was comparable to a child in his ability to grasp spiritual **truth** (*Mt 11:11; Ro 16:25; 1Co 2:14; Col 1:26-27; 1Pe 1:10-11*). It's impossible to explain spiritual truth to a young child, and yet a child must be restrained from submitting to evil. So the Word of God teaches us to use the "rod of correction" (*Pr 13:24; Pr 19:18; Pr 22:15*). The child may not understand resisting the devil, and yet, when the devil tries to entice him to steal, he will say "No!" because he fears he will get spanking if he does steal.

Likewise, Old Testament saints were restrained from sin by a fear of the wrath and punishment of God. God executed this through his Law. (Note; If you want to know more about Law, Purpose of Law, Use of Law, Kindly read our Bible study, "**We are not under Law, but under Grace**"). God, when he gave the law has to implement the law. Otherwise the law becomes useless. That is why many punishments, God's judgments, diseases, and deaths, famine, and draught were given. This curbed sin but it also hindered them from receiving the goodness and love of God (*1Jo 4:18*). Yet, this is not the will or wish or nature of God. That is the reason, God did not give the Law immediately after Adam and eve sinned. He gave nearly about 2000 years later.

Some of the Old Testament Judgments and the reasons

Many people think that in the Old testament God was so terrible and in the New Testament he is little relaxed. No, it is not true. These statements are made by people who do not know the true nature of our loving father. In the bible the decisive word which mentions about the true nature of God is... **1 John 4:8; He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.**

He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is always "LOVE". (*Heb;13;8, Mal; 3;6*). In the Old Testament in some places we can see severe destructions. For example "The Great Flood" of Noah's time and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Before entering the Promised Land, the command given by God to the leaders of Israel was "kill all the people of the land including children, old, young, pregnant women, even the animals are to be killed".

1 Samuel 15:3 ; *Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. (Deut; 7;2. 12;2. 20;17. Joshua; 11;11-14. Num; 31;1,2. 9-35. Judg;21;11. Jer;50;21. 1 Sam;18;26. Ps; 136;10)*

When we see *Genesis 6; 1-6*, God is explaining the reasons for sending the Flood.

Genesis 6:5 ; *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.*

In Gen 18:20 God says the reason to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

Genesis 18:20 ; *And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;*

Before completing 6 chapters in the bible, the sins of the people increased to such a state, that we haven't seen like that yet. Basically man became so corrupted. Sin increased to a stage, that it grieved God at his heart.

God as Omniscient, kept the plan of redemption ready even before man committed sin. Jesus Christ has to come to this world through a virgin birth, and has to redeem that which he lost in the Garden of Eden. This was God's plan. God didn't have plan no; 2. (*Genesis 3:15 ; Rev. 13:8 ; Acts;15;18. Tit;1;2, 1 Pet;1;20*)

The bible says in **Rom;5;13**; (*For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.*

God did not impute sin. So men compared themselves with others and plunged into sin more and more. Because of this, they became slaves to Satan (*Rom; 6; 16*), and were destroyed by him. They did not know this.

Sin became so terrible that at one time (*Gen; 6; 5*), there were only eight people left in the whole world who would listen to God. Sin became so terrible that it grieved God that he created man. God was sending the Flood to destroy this corrupted people. **Had God not done this, in the later time there would be nobody left who obey God, and God could not have executed the Redemption plan for us.** God out of his great love kept this plan for all the human beings. Jesus Christ is the one who is going to execute this plan. He has to come through a virgin who is

not from a corrupted lineage. The virgin who is going to bear Jesus Christ in her uterus, has to be a virgin, blameless, obedient to God, and allowing the Holy Spirit to work upon her. **Had God not sent the Flood, there would have been no Virgin left in the whole earth to bear Jesus Christ in her uterus.** Because sin has grown to that extend.

This is the reason that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and was commanding to kill whole people at many places. The sins of these people were so horrific. Had God left them like that there would have been no virgin left in the Promised Land. God was thinking about me, you, and us all. He was thinking about the millions of people who will be saved and adopted as His children. If all of us are to be saved, He had only one option that is to destroy this people. They were executing the plan of Devil to stop the Redemption plan, and becoming slaves to Devil's plan. Bible in many places explains the sins they did, and the corrupted life they lived. When we read some extra commentaries we can understand that they lived in such a state that we haven't seen yet. Men, women, boys, girls, even their animals were all demon possessed. They could not become born-again. If the world has to be saved, they have to be destroyed. **So God destroyed them. This is like removing a gangrenous part of the body to save the other parts of the body.** (*Math; 5; 29-30*). The removal of that part of the body is judgment shown on it, but it is an act of mercy shown on the whole body. All the destructions, killings, judgments which God did during the Old Testament were judgments upon those people, but He did that to redeem you, me and the whole human kind. All these acts were expressions of His love which had for the whole world.

Our God is love. He did not want to destroy even sinners. He wants them to repent. He did not like the deaths of sinners as well as the deaths of righteous people.

Ezekiel 33:11 ; Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

2 Peter 3:9 ; *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

John 10:10 ; *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

1 Tim. 2:4 ; *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

God does not punish under New Covenant

Under the New Testament, the punishment for our sins was laid on Jesus (2Co 5:21; 1Pe 2:24, John; 1;29, Isa; 53;6, John; 4;14,42. 3;16-17, 6;33. Rom; 5;19, 1 Tim; 2;6, 4;10. Heb; 9;28; 1John 2:2). God does not have to punish a person, country for their individual acts of sin. Men will punish, this world, government, nature and the devil (John; 10; 10) will punish. We no longer do not sin out of fear of punishment as when we were "children" under the law (Ga 3:23-26), but we are not sinning out of love, because He has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts (Ga 4:1-6) making us His sons. We do not sin because our nature has been changed through the new birth (Joh 3:3). Now as the law was fulfilled, God does not have to give the punishments, destructions, deaths, earthquake, diseases and tsunami, which he gave because of the law. He would not give. Our God is Omnipotent; I am not telling that "He could not". As His son Jesus Christ took upon Him all the punishments of the whole world, God cannot give those punishments again to an ordinary man. If God gives like that, it will mean that Jesus Christ did not take all the punishments of the whole world properly. The death pain of the whole world is not equal to the One strike fallen on the body of Jesus Christ.

Jesus did everything as His father

John 5:19 ;Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

John 8:29 ;And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

Jesus does always that which the Father likes. He was seeing eternally what the Father was doing and does the same. **During the time, when Jesus was in the earth, did he at any time give disease to anybody? Did he ever send tsunami, draught, famine, earthquake, and deaths upon any country?** So from the actions and words of Jesus we can understand that our God's true nature is LOVE.

Second coming and today's incidents

Many people are preaching and writing that, many of today's incidents and destructions as tribulation events and second coming judgments. It is a great fact that the coming of Jesus Christ is near. Nearer than any other time in history. Nobody can deny this. I agree with this fully, and I teach and preach this. But when we look in the bible, we can understand that many of the bible verses which people quote to point the incidents which are happening today, are really not so. Many of those verses are really part of some fulfilled prophecies and future prophecies.

Let us take for example two verses which people use to point about the tsunamis and earthquakes which are happening now.

Ezekiel 26:19 ; For thus saith the Lord God; When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee;

If we read *Ezekiel; 26;1- 28;20*, anybody can understand that this prophecy is about the famous commercial city of "Tyre" in the Mediterranean coast. This was in two parts, one in the shore, and one in the sea. This prophecy was fulfilled long ago. In B.C 572 the part in the shore was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, after a long siege for 13 years. In B.C. 332 that part in the sea was destroyed by Alexander the Great. This is a desolate place for many centuries. (except some improvements). Tell me now please, how can we take these verses - which are the fulfilled prophecies about a particular place - to say that these are about the tsunamis and earthquakes which are happening now?

Ezekiel 14:13 ; Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it:

The whole 14th chapter is a prophecy of God rebuking the idolatrous people of Judah and Jerusalem. This is a fulfilled prophecy. (Dakes bible commentary). This prophecy is not about any other country or state. The 21st verse clearly states this.

*Ezekiel 14:21 ; For thus saith the Lord God; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon **Jerusalem**, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?*

Tell me now please, how can we take these verses - which are a fulfilled prophecy about Jerusalem - and say that they are about the tsunamis and earthquakes of today?

In the bible there are clear verses which speak about past incidents, present incidents, future incidents, rapture, incidents between rapture and second coming, second coming of Jesus, millennium incidents, the great white throne judgment, new earth and the incidents that will happen in the new earth. Before using a certain verse, we should study clearly the whole chapter, book, and if possible some commentaries. Above all these, we should have a clear revelation

from the Holy Spirit about a particular subject. After that if we teach, preach, write, that will be good.

The sovereignty of God

Omnipotence: The noun "omnipotence" is not found in the English versions, nor is any noun exactly corresponding to it in the original Hebrew or Greek. The adjective "omnipotent" occurs in *Rev 19:6*.

Pantokrátœr "all-powerful." This word (RSV always "almighty") appears also in *Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7,14; 19:15; 21:22; and 2 Cor 6:18*.

Omnipresence: Neither the noun "omnipresence" nor the adjective "omnipresent" occurs in Scripture, but the idea that God is everywhere present is throughout presupposed and sometimes explicitly formulated.

Omniscience: The term itself does not occur in Scripture, either in its nominal or its adjectival form. (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

God is Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent

(*Job 26:6; 28:24; 34:21; Ps 139:12; 147:5; Prov 15:3,11; Isa 40:26; Acts 1:24; Heb 4:13; Rev 2:23; 2Chr 16:9; Psalm 139:7-12; Pro15:3; Amos9:2-3. Zec 4:10; Deut 4:39; 10:14; Ps 139:6-16; Jeremiah 23:24 Prov 15:3; Jer 23:23; Amos 9:2*).

So one of the traditional doctrines made about the nature of God is **“God is responsible for all that happens (good or bad). He either allows it or does it”**.

Can anything happen without God doing it or allowing it? Does God know everything which happens in the world? When God is Omnipresent, Omniscient and omnipotent why he is not stopping evil? Does God know Adam and Eve are eating the fruit? If he knows why He did not stop it?

In the Bible, there are verses which show God **does not** exercise His Omniscience and Omnipresence **“always”**.

Genesis 3:11 *And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?*

Jeremiah 7:31 *And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.*

Jeremiah 19:5 *They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind:*

Jeremiah 32:35 *And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.*

Mar 5:30 *And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? (Luke8:45).*

God came down to see the Babel city and tower (*Gen11:5*). God sent two angels to Sodom and Gomorrah to see if their actions were really as bad as had been reported to Him (*Ge 18:20-19:29*). The Lord tested Abraham (*Ge 22:1-10*). After the test He said, *"For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me"* (*Ge 22:12*). The Lord repented for choosing Saul to be king when He saw the way he turned out (*1Sa 15:11*). There are many other examples in scripture (*Gen 6:6,7; Jud 2:18; 1 Sam 15:35; Ps 106:45; Jer 26:3,13; Luk 17:3. 2 Pet 3:9*).

It is most probable that the Lord has the ability to know everything and to be everywhere, but He simply doesn't choose to exercise that ability in every situation. He told us to be wise

concerning that which is good and simple (or innocent) concerning that which is evil (*Ro 16:19*). He also told us to think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, and things that have virtue and praise (*Php 4:8*). That's the way He desires us to be because that's the way He is. This doesn't limit God's almightiness. Also He gave the authority about the matters of the world to man (*Ps 8:6; 115:16; John 5:26-27; Matthew 28:18; 2 Cor. 5:20*). We are joint heirs with Jesus(*Romans 8:17*). This reveals the nature of God.

God's will does not happen automatically in our lives

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (John 3:16,17).

God's will is '**no one should perish**'. Jesus died for the salvation of the whole world (*John 1:29, 2 Cor 5:14-15, 1 John 2:2*). Yet, we know that many are not saved. Jesus said about this in **Math 7:14** *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* Jesus himself knew that many would not receive this salvation. This is because people have a choice (*Deut 30:19*). God cannot or will not impose His will upon them. They have to respond with faith.

Mark 6:5 *And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.*

This verse says that Jesus could do (not would do) no mighty work, showing that He was hindered in doing what He willed to do by "**their unbelief**" (*Mt 13:58*). Some degree of faith must be present in the person receiving the miracle in order for God to do the work (*Lu 7:13; Lu 8:45; Lu 8:50-51*).

It is God's will that we all are healed (*3Jo 2; Mt 8:16-17*), but not all are healed because we fail to believe (*Heb 4:2*). It is God's will that His children are rich(*2Cor 8:9, 3 Jo 2*). But, because the people do not believe it hinders God from making them rich.

Deut. 7:17 *If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them?*

The Lord told the children of Israel that if they doubted in their heart, He could not perform His promises to them (*Nu 33:53*) of dispossessing the nations in the Promised Land.

Psalms 78:41 *Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.*

We can limit God! God Himself is limitless regardless of what we think. God's will does not come to pass automatically in our lives without our express cooperation. Our unbelief can hinder Him and limit Him.

God does exceeding abundantly...according to the power that work in us.

Ephes. 3:20 *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,*

The power of God could also be referring to all the operation of God in our lives including Christ, the power of the Holy Ghost, faith, the Word, love, etc.

It is not that He cannot do anything without us; He would not do anything without us.

The vine and the branches

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Regarding the relationship between Jesus and believers, Jesus said that the relationship is like a "**vine and its branches**". The branches need the continued support and nourishment from the vine, and all that the vine has is displayed to the outer world through the branches.

Evil Figs, Evil Spirit

1 Samuel 16:14 But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.

Jeremiah 24:3 Then said the Lord unto me, Whatseest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

These bad figs were called evil figs here and naughty figs in the previous verse. It is obvious that they were not demonic, but this is simply describing rotten figs. Indeed, the word "evil" means "harmful or injurious." It doesn't only denote demonic things. That's the way it is used in 1Sa 16:14, where an evil spirit from the Lord troubled Saul. This was not speaking of God using the devil, but rather this was an angelic spirit that was harmful or injurious to Saul.

There are some instances in the Bible when it looks like God was using Satan and evil spirits (*1 Kings 22:19-22 Job 1:6*). These were punishments and trials to which a N.T. believer would never be subject because our punishment has been placed on Jesus. God loves us not because of what we do, but because of what Jesus did.

God is not respecter of persons (impartial)

Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

Romans 2:11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

Ephes. 6:9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

1 Peter 1:17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

James 2:9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

Our God is not a partial God. He is not a respecter of persons.

There are some instances in the Bible where God is misinterpreted as being partial and as if He predestines everything.

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

God can extend mercy to an individual without treating others unjustly. However, if He chose not to extend mercy to anyone and He called all of our accounts due, He would be completely justified in doing so. It's His choice. God has never brought judgment on anyone without being righteous in doing so. Likewise, He has never extended mercy to any individual that made His treatment of someone else unfair.

Hardening of the pharaoh's heart

Romans 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

The word "hardeneth" is skl̥run̥ce, "to make hard, to harden" metaphorically, "to render obstinate, stubborn (the hardness as foolhardiness, infatuated insensibility to danger.)"

In Exodus the hardening is represented as self-produced (8:15,32; 9:34), and as produced by God, (4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:20,27; 11:10). Paul here chooses the latter representation. We are not to understand in the latter instance that God arbitrarily and directly forced upon Pharaoh an obstinate and stubborn resistance to Himself. Evil cannot be laid at the door of God. God not only does not solicit a sinner to do evil (*James 1:13*), but He also does not cause man to do evil. When man does wrong, that wrong comes from his own totally depraved nature (*James*

1:14). Therefore when Pharaoh acted in stubborn rebellion against God, all of that rebellion came as a result of his own depravity, not directly from God.

When God is said to harden Pharaoh's heart, it means that by demanding the release of Israel, God confronted him with an issue which he did not wish to meet. It is like the case of a naughty boy whose violent temper is incited to greater effort by the demand of his mother that he behave himself. It is like an angry fighter, when receive a blow becomes more angry and violent. It is like the heat which can harden the clay and melt the wax. The quality of the clay and wax determines the reaction.

Paul says, "Whom He will, He hardeneth." "Will" is *thelœ*, "to be resolved, to determine, to purpose." The Bible scholar Vincent says that the word is used here in the sense of a decree. God's resolve to use Pharaoh as an example of His sovereignty issued in a decree that he be so used. Pharaoh was incorrigible, and God simply used him as He found him fit to demonstrate His power to the human race, in the last analysis, an act of mercy to the larger number, while also an act of perfect justice toward Pharaoh, for God's demands were just.

The potter and the clay (One vessel unto honor and another vessel unto dishonor)

Rom 9:20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? [21] Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? (Jer 18:3-6)

First of all, the potter started to create a good vessel but the clay was marred. Whose fault was that? It wasn't the potter's fault. The clay was faulty. So, the potter took this imperfect clay and, instead of discarding it, he refashioned it into another vessel that may not have been worth nearly as much as his original design, but was still useful.

The doctrine of predestination

Romans 8:29 *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

This verse limits God's predestination to only those who He foreknew. This means that only those people who God knew would accept his offer of salvation have been predestined. He does not predestine people to be saved or lost. Those who He foreknew in Christ have been predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ.

God is bound by His word

Psalms 138:2 *I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*

Psalms 89:34 *My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.*

(*Math 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33, Is 55:11, Heb 1:3*)

If God changes His word the universe will self-destroy itself, because the universe is upheld by His word.

Yet, in His dealings with man, God had changed His plans sometimes.

Genesis 6:6 *And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.*

1 Samuel 15:11 *Itrepenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night.*

In Exodus 32, when God wanted to wipe away Israel and make Moses a great nation, Moses requested God to change His mind. The word of God says He repented of the evil.

Exodus 32:14 *And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.*

The above are some verses which talk about God changing His plans.

Then, are verses Ps 89:34 and 138:2 contradictory? No, not at all. The key verse to understand this is the following one.

Jeremiah 18:7-10 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; [8] If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. [9] And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; [10] If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

If God had promised to do something He will do it accordingly. Some instances may look like as if he has changed His word. But if we look again we can see that His changing a plan also is according to His word. If He has said so, He will do accordingly. This shows His love and mercy toward His children. He shows His mercy without violating His own word.

God will not tempt anyone

James 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 1:15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

In the Bible, the word ‘**temptation**’ is used to denote various meaning. Trials and sufferings, physical infirmities, solicitation to that which is evil, challenging God, exam – test – refine etc.

God is never called the tempter; the devil is the tempter (*Math 4:3; 1 Thes 3:5*).

In *Gen 22:1* “God did tempt Abraham”, but the meaning here is “**test**”. That is how it is translated in many other Bible Translations (AMP, NLT, NIV, NKJV, GNT, THE MESSAGE BIBLE).

God never ‘**tests**’ a New Covenant believer and accepts him. We are accepted in Jesus Christ, and God corrects us with **His word**, not with tests, sickness and punishments. (*2Tim 3:16-17, Eph 1:6; John 1:12; 3:16,36; Math 3:17; 17:5, Luke 3:22; 2 Pet 1:17-19*).

We are advised to watch and pray so that we by our own carelessness and disobedience will not enter into temptations (*Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 22:40,46*). In all these cases God provides “the way of escape (*1 Cor 10:13*).

Then why to pray as “*Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*” ?

This is the model prayer and this is a request for guidance so that we can be delivered from evil. In this prayer we have to ask “give us our daily bread” and “lead us not into temptation”. Our heavenly father will not withhold “daily bread” and “will not lead us into temptation”. Both these requests are our faith declaration and appropriation of what has been already provided. We have to ask (*James 4:2; Math 7:7*).

The true nature of our God is always “LOVE”. Live in that LOVE.

Amen. Be blessed, You are a blessing,

Bro.D.Verginkumar.

If you need any clarifications kindly contact me in deeveekumar@yahoo.com www.liwog.org

Resources; The Amplified Bible, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Dakes bible commentary, Andrew Wommack bible commentary, Adam Clarke’s Bible commentary, Vine’s expository Dictionary of Bible words, Strong’s Bible concordance, Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon, The Power of Sin – by Bill Gillham, The Spiritual man – By Watchman nee, Webster’s Dictionary, etc.. All bible quotes are from King James Version bible, unless mentioned otherwise.
