

The Baptist Examiner

A nation-wide, independent paper, standing foursquare for the distinguishing doctrines of Baptists, and shunning not to declare all the counsel of God.

"To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 3:20).

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Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

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"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10).

"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah 46:9, 10).

"What his soul desireth, even that he doeth" (Job 23:13).

"And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and no one can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan 4:35).

"Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast annointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together,

For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:27, 28).

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY are parallel lines of truth, running through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. He who rejects either of these truths is a "whittler of the word," and has a mutilated Bible. It is a terrible price to pay in order to escape apparent contradictions. It is infinitely better to have a whole Bible with its paradoxes, than to have a mutilated Bible which meets the requirements of human reason. Of what account is a Bible that must be passed upon by man? Better have man give us a Bible to begin with. A Book that must be subjected to scientific investigation cannot be an infallible guide in matters of faith and practice. "FOREVER, O LORD THY WORD IS SETTLED IN HEAVEN" (Psalm 119:89).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY means that God does as He pleases. It is the exercise of His supremacy. There cannot possibly be but one supreme being; if men or angels should thwart the purposes of God, they, and not He, would be supreme. To reject the sovereignty of God is to deny the supremacy of God. The sovereignty of God means that God is upon His throne, directing the affairs of the universe, making the wrath of man to praise Him, and restraining that which does not. The question might be asked, "Does the sin of man praise God?" In answering this, we will take a concrete case of the sin of men, namely, the crucifixion of our Lord. This is the greatest of all sins. Did it praise God? Most certainly, and in many ways. It praised Him by fulfilling His purpose that His Son should die. It praised Him in that it was the fulfilling of His prophetic word. It praised Him in the magnifying of many, if not every one, of His glorious attributes. It was to the praise of His justice as well as His grace. At the cross the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10). The sovereignty of God means that God's will is done in the army of heaven, and

among the inhabitants of the earth. Right here we would make a distinction between God's will of purpose, and His will of command. His will of purpose is supreme everywhere and in everything. His will of command is often disobeyed. To illustrate: God purposed the death of His Son, but He did not command it. God's will is done in heaven intelligently and voluntarily; His will is often done on earth ignorantly. See 1 Cor. 2:8.

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY means that man is accountable to God for all his actions. He is responsible to do what God commands, and to refrain from doing what God forbids. Let it be remembered that man's duty is not determined by what God has decreed, but by what God has commanded. See Deut. 29:29. Had God commanded men to slay His Son, they would not have been responsible for doing so. Abraham would have been guilty of murder in his heart if God had not commanded him to slay Isaac. The Israelites would have been guilty of dishonesty, in borrowing from the Egyptians jewels of silver and gold, if God had not commanded them to do so. See Ex. 3:22; 12:35. Uzzah's touching the ark was a sin only because God had forbidden it.

THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

1. IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY. How can man be considered as blameworthy in doing that which God has purposed? How can man be charged with sin in doing that which God has decreed? To be more specific, how could the slayers of Christ be held responsible for doing what God had determined to be done? (Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28). How was Judas responsible for betraying our Lord, when it had been prophesied he would do it? (Ps. 41:9; John 6:64, 71; 12:4; 13:11, 21). How were Joseph's brethren responsible for selling him into slavery if they were doing what God intended they should do? (Gen. 45:7, 8). How could the Egyptians be charged with sin for the affliction of the Israelites, when God had told Abraham his seed should sojourn in a strange land and be evil entreated? (Gen. 15:13). Let us keep these questions in abeyance, while we notice the problem of human responsibility from another angle;

2. IN THE LIGHT OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY. Total depravity means that man is depraved and ruined in every faculty of his being. The carnal mind is enmity against God (Rom. 8:7); the heart is deceitful and wicked (Jer. 17:9; Matt. 15:19; Eph. 4:18); the will is enslaved (John 5:40; 6:44; 2 Tim. 2:24-26). Total depravity does not mean that a man is necessarily as mean as the devil, nor that any man is as bad as he may become. It is a question of extent (the whole man is depraved), rather than of degree. With this brief explanation of depravity, we will consider some more questions. How can man be held responsible for doing that which he cannot do? The reader will probably answer that man is not responsible to do what he is not able to do. But the Bible refutes such an answer. Most of us have been subjected to a "chimney corner theology," which has no backing in the word