

Things God cannot do #1, Truth

Hi all,

"Can God create a ball so big that not even He can lift it?", my fellow 8 year old friend, Pam, asked. (I didn't know the answer) That was part of the first conversation about God with someone outside my family that I remember. She also asked if the chicken or the egg came first, and things such as that. We never got those questions answered that day, but Pam and I are still friends, and she knows the Lord.

Later I learned Hebrews 11:3 says the spiritual world created the physical world, making the physical world a lower level of creation. That means any ball the Father created in the physical would be of a lower creation than the spiritual world, thus subject to Him, making the answer to her question about whether He could lift it, yes. And the second answer according to Genesis 1: 11-12, 21-22 is the chicken came first. But to our inquiring 8 year old minds, these were serious questions to consider as we waited for the school bus to arrive.

Many of us unconsciously carry childhood formed beliefs such as the above into our adult walk with the Lord. One of those flawed foundations can be revealed if we try to answer Pam's question; Can God do anything?

Today we might quickly say something like "He cannot lie", or "He cannot break His Word", but beyond that we've not thought it through, and childhood error seeps into modern formulas we think are of 'faith', and how we view Almighty God.

Here is a case in point

I was with a group of people praying for a woman concerning her business deal in which she said, some of the people involved were dishonest. Their behavior was delaying a closing of the contract which would be a big financial blessing to her. A woman standing next to me started shouting loudly as she prayed, in which she alternatively addressed the Lord and then the devil and back again in a confused prayer or rebuke or command or declaration or plea - take your pick.

Her requests included asking the Father to judge the dishonest people by giving them sickness until they repented, praying accidents would happen to them until they gave in to do what was right, and somewhere in there commanded angels to send the devil to the bottom of the Grand Canyon (I immediately felt sorry for the river rafters on the Colorado River at the bottom of the Canyon, as I stifled a chuckle).

This woman believed that God could and would do anything for His kids, probably something she carried with her since a child, the idea that God can do anything. It carried into her formulas of faith, and resulted in a life in which she knew the Lord, but was more wrapped up in formulas than knowing Him.

Like anyone you know when you hear something someone claims they said or did and you respond, 'That doesn't sound like them', so too can we know the Father and Lord well enough to say 'That doesn't sound like Him.' Additionally, we have the Spirit of truth within us as a 'fact checker', and if you work at becoming sensitive to Him and learning to immediately measure what you see and hear against what you sense in your spirit, you'll stay in balance and truth.

The woman above lacked any real power in her life as a result of her jumbled theology, nor did she know Him well enough to know what He would and would not do.

The Spirit of Truth - God's limits

In John 16:13 Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Truth. He said He would guide us into all truth. That is the first limitation of the Holy Spirit. He is Truth so He can present nothing else. The Greek word for truth here is 'aletheia' and means 'that which cannot be hidden.' Jesus said the same thing of Himself in John 14: 7:

"I am the way, the 'that which cannot be hidden', and the life: No one comes to the Father but by Me."

Truth is impartial

Truth just states the facts without any judgement, without any emotion, without accusation nor excuse. It is just 'that which cannot be hidden.' An example can be found in Joshua 5: 13-14:

"Now it happened when Joshua was near Jericho he lifted up his eyes, and behold, he saw a man opposite him with a sword drawn in his hand. Joshua approached him and asked, 'Are you for us or for our adversaries?' And he said, '**No (neither)**, I come as commander of the Lord's armies.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped and asked, 'What does my Lord (adonai in Hebrew) say to His servant?' And the Commander of the Lord's (Yahweh) army said to him: 'Take your sandals off your feet for you are on holy ground.'"

Many have wondered about these verses, and some have even taught error, that this was an angel appearing to Joshua, but that is incorrect, it is the Lord: Angels do not receive worship. And the only instances in which a person is commanded to remove his shoes when talking with a divine being is when they are in the presence of God Himself, such as when Moses was before the burning bush in Exodus 3: 5.

The reason man in the Old Testament had to remove shoes when in God's presence is that shoes are man made, and we cannot in any way come to God on the basis of what we have done to get us there. He created the earth and He created our bodies, and there can be no man-made fabrication between the two - when we come to God it is on His terms and by His grace alone. Today, Christ lives in us which is our basis for coming to Him, so there is no requirement to remove our shoes.

It is the same reason they were told when they build an altar for sacrifice to the Lord they could not chisel or shape the rocks in any form or fashion (Exodus 20: 25), but had to use them as they were found - the way God made them. No sacrifice to God is of our doing, and we come to Him by His grace and can never involve anything we did on our own to get there.

Truth is this: Coming to Him just as we are, warts and all as they say. That is transparency, nakedness before Him. He knows our thoughts before we form them in our minds and when we pray, when we commune with Him, He is only Truth - that truth is life - but it requires in us an honesty and transparency not often found in the heart of man. To be willing to expose our innermost thoughts to Him, if they are not love, if they are not pure, is a bit scary were it not for the fact we know He loves us and wants us with Him forever.

He is truth, He cannot go beyond Truth. He cannot shade the truth nor twist it to His benefit. Truth is just there. The issue is how we respond to truth.

To have or to be Truth without Him being love would be the end of us all. But truth in the hands of a Being of love, a benevolent and good Being, is grace.

But why did the Lord answer 'no' or 'neither' to the question, 'Are you for us or against us?'

That is for next week, until then, blessings,

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Things God cannot do #2

Hi all,

I closed last week asking:

Why did the Lord answer 'no' to the question: Are you for us or against us?

I was sharing about Truth and Joshua's experience before the Lord at Jericho. When asked if He was for them or against them, He answered "No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord." Why didn't He say, "Yes, I'm for Israel, yahoo, yippee, I'm your biggest fan!"?

The answer is simple: It was up to Joshua and Israel to follow Him or not. He is Truth, and truth doesn't take sides, it merely presents itself as truth. If Joshua wanted God's will, then He was for him. If he didn't want God's will, then He was against him. He is Truth, and truth takes no sides, it just is that 'which cannot be hidden.' It is up to us to respond to truth, to make a decision, to go one way or the other.

Some decide for veiling themselves from the light of truth, while some are willing to humble themselves like a young child and be open and naked in their hearts and minds before Him.

Don't lie against the truth

James 3: 14 says, "If you have envy and bitterness in your hearts, don't glory in that (don't protect it), don't lie against the truth."

That means you know what is in your heart, and you know it isn't God that you harbor such things, so don't lie against the Truth who lives in you - admit it, repent, get it out. Don't reinforce the sin through denying it is there. That transparency with self and Him requires humility and results in growth in the Lord, when we admit to Him and if needed, others. Growth in Him is what life is all about.

Positive confession versus the Truth

People are taught formulas: Speak 'declarations' with their mouths while being in fear in their hearts, for instance. Back in the 80's it was the 'positive confession' - I remember being sternly corrected when I said to someone as they left our house after a meal, 'Take care!' They stopped in their tracks, turned around to look me squarely in the eye and said; "I don't take care. I rebuke that. Jesus said not to take cares upon us."

You would have thought I'd just kicked their dog by the way they snapped at me and corrected my wayward ways. Words are containers of intent and emotion, and they, burdened by their formula and therefore caught up in form and appearance, took my 'take care' wish as if I was wishing burdens and worries upon them.

What makes this hypocrisy so foolish is they were good friends and knew we would never wish them ill, but they were caught up in the fad formula of the day. To Barb and I they were being silly and not walking in Truth, but we loved them so overlooked it.

Over the years...

There have been dozens of fad formulas that in reality 'lie against the Truth' - they lie against the Spirit of Truth within each believer. In the late 1970's and early '80's I remember the 100 fold return. Then the positive confession. A decade later it was shaking and crawling on the ground like a reptile and calling it God. Still later came going to a meeting where they hoped there would be an open heaven (ignoring the fact Christ lives in us, and heaven is constantly open to us, which is why we are told to come boldly to the throne of grace.).

In more recent years there has been everything from people charging money for those who call a phone number to get a prophecy, to classes people charge for to interpret the spiritual meaning of their tattoos, and so much more. How many have fallen for these money making gimmicks? Most are so dull to the Spirit of Truth in them they haven't a clue of their error.

Most people eventually are brought back to balance; maybe there is one thing that is just too much, maybe a friend calls it what it is, maybe something goes too far over the line and their head is finally able to agree with that little grievance they felt in their spirit, and they return to the core in balance.

God is truth, and He cuts like a knife if there is anything in you that isn't Truth. But He will let each go their way in the hope they will at some point return to Truth when they are ready to receive it. Remember Mark 4: 33 says Jesus taught them as they were able to hear it. He hasn't changed. He will let people go off chasing spiritual butterflies, Truth standing alone waiting for them to tire of the fad in the hopes they will return to Him and Truth.

Know of what Spirit you are

In Luke 9 Jesus came down off the Mount of Transfiguration in a very different mood than He went up. On the Mount both Moses and Elijah appeared to Him and talked to Him about his impending death in Jerusalem. Moses spoke of patterns of things in the Law, and Elijah from prophecy, steering Jesus to the destiny He knew He came into this world for. When He came down He asked rhetorically in v41: "Of faithless and perverse generation; How long will I be with you?"

Because Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem rather than take some side trips to which He was invited, some got offended. In verses 54-55 James and John asked if they should call down fire upon them like Elijah did in II Kings 1: 10-14. Jesus responded: "You don't know what manner of spirit you are of." (KJV ends the sentence with a preposition, I know, I know, so let the quote to stand, lol)

James and John were clueless - they were using scripture to try to justify what they wanted to do, but didn't know the Truth of the Spirit of Jesus' purpose in this earth. He came not to condemn, but to save. These 'sons of thunder' were so caught up in themselves and their own offense at people being offended when the Lord didn't take a side-trip to stay with them, they lost sight of the Truth of the situation.

And that brings me to the final point today - our prayer life

Because He is Truth He isn't going to honor prayers that stray from truth. Praying in tongues we are told in Romans 8: 26-27, allows the Spirit to join our spirit to pray God's mysteries for those we are lifting up. I tend to pray very little in English, my native language, very little. It isn't efficient.

When I want to pray for my sister in Florida, I don't know what is going on in her life at that moment. On my own I may pray she have a good day at work when in fact she took the day off to go to the beach. So instead, after I say 'I lift up my sister to you Father', the rest is in tongues because I know I'm praying for her according to His will. Often I'll sense a general topic that I'm praying about, and sometimes I'll call her or she will do the same and call me asking, "What's up? I had a need to pray for you, I felt it was in x area."

The ramifications of having the Person of Truth in us touches every aspect of life it we will let it. If you tune your mind to your spirit you can know instantly whether what you hear is right or not. It will either resonate in your spirit or it won't. He is Truth; He cannot not lie, cannot shade the truth to His favor, cannot be anything but just state things the way they are. He can only present Himself to us, and He is Truth. When we give account of our lives to Him, there will be no escaping the truth - but that's a good thing for those who love the truth.

One thing I've said since I was a teenager: I race to the judgement, I run to the light. That's how I've lived, that's my heart. I'm sure not perfect, and the road has been exceedingly difficult at times, but also very spiritually rewarding.

Next week, more things God cannot do...until then, blessings,
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Things God cannot do #3, Change grace

Hi all,

Another thing the Father cannot do is change His grace towards us. Grace is much more than just unearned favor. It is a quality in the heart of one towards another that rests completely in the heart of the one giving the grace. There is therefore nothing the recipient of grace can do to change or influence the grace given them. Grace is totally dependent on the one who holds grace in their heart towards another.

God the Father so loved the world - that is grace. That He gave His only begotten Son - that is the action confirming that grace in His heart towards us. When the angels appeared to the shepherds in Luke 2: 14 they said: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will towards men."

That isn't good will among men, like we are to play nice with each other. But rather God in the highest saying 'peace, (I have) good will towards men'. The grace is in His heart, and His action of sending Jesus proved it.

If we were talking about you or I we might have argument that we can have grace in our hearts towards someone one moment, but then because they misuse the grace given them, we change our minds and revoke that grace. That is true of us in what we might say are 'lighter' examples of grace.

For instance, a child doesn't do the yard work we told them to do, and we give them grace. But then we learn they also didn't empty the trash nor clean their room nor put the dinner in the oven to warm up like we told them to do, and grace is revoked and punishment follows. We extend grace, we retract grace. That's a lighter example.

But deeper than that is the grace of the heart that never changes, even in we humans, like the love of a mother for her child. The Father asks in Isaiah 49: 15: "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" He says here is love and grace is deeper than a mother's for her child.

I've done a lot of prison ministry, holding Bible studies and services in penitentiaries among murderers and others who are there for life. I've also known some mom's of murderers and those locked up for life. Each mom has said something like 'I hate what he did, but he's my son and I love him. I can't help it.' That is grace.

God the Father's grace towards us He says, is deeper than that of a mother who loves her child no matter what that child has done.

He so loved the world that He gave. The fact He already acted by sending Jesus is proof He cannot change from that. He cannot take back His love because He already acted on it. And more than that, He is proving His continued grace by His love towards us to this day. We cannot change what is in His heart. Fortunately His nature is set as well. He never changes, though being Sovereign He can change His mind, but His nature and therefore His intent towards us never changes.

James 1: 17: "But every good endowment that we possess and every complete gift that we have received must come from above, from the Father of all lights, with whom there is never the slightest variation or shadow of inconsistency. By his own wish he made us his own sons through the Word of truth that we might be, so to speak, the first specimens of his new creation." J.B. Phillips NT

Can't He change His mind?

I've been talking about the heart, the very nature of God the Father who is we are told, Love. Light. Goodness. That never changes. Grace is part of love and light and goodness. But to look at His mind, His intent. To do that let's look at the word 'repent'.

There are two words translated 'repent' in the New Testament. The first is what we think of as repentance. It is 'metanoia' (metanoeo) from 'meta' which means 'after', 'noeo' which means 'to perceive', and 'nous' which means 'the mind', so literally, 'to perceive in the mind after'. This is the used in the repentance John the Baptist preached. It is a complete change of mind and direction brought about after a sin or error is perceived. It is this change that John the Baptist said required proof; that proof provided by a change in habits and lifestyle.

The other word is 'metamelomai' and the adjective form, 'ametameletos'. This uses 'meta' as before, which means 'after', and 'melo' which means 'to care for'. It is used to describe regret rather than a change of heart. This is the word used of Judas who after he betrayed Jesus, Matthew 27:3 says 'repented himself', meaning he was not repenting to God, but was sorry within himself, regretting his plan didn't work.

So the difference between these is this: The first is repentance, and the 2nd is 'regret'. The adjective form of 'regret' puts that little 'a' in front which changes it to a negative. This word, 'ametameletos', means 'will not regret' or 'without a change of purpose' or we might say, 'does not regret an action taken'.

This is important to us because we often think we have so missed God, so sinned, so lived our lives doing our will rather than His, that we think He is angry with us or hurt with us or regrets saving us even. When we miss God it is natural to think He regrets saving us and we are sure we will have His wrath to experience one day as a result.

But this same word used to tell us Judas was sorry his plan didn't work out, in adjective form is used in this verse from Romans 11: 29: "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

In other words, this is saying God will never regret giving you His gifts and calling. God will never regret His first plan for you didn't work out. He will never be sorry within Himself that He called you and gifted you.

He will never regret gifting you and calling you and loving you. His gifts and calling on your life He will never regret, never be sorry it didn't work out. He is in it for the long haul. Ephesians 2: 6-7 reveals He saved us and seated us in Christ in the heavenly's so that in the ages to come He can continue to show the riches of His grace towards us.

He therefore does not regret in this life His call of us because He is already looking at the ages to come. His character and now we see, His mind, is set towards us. Grace. There is nothing you can do to change that. He not only loves you, He likes you. He created you and I with His own personality, so to hate us would be to hate Himself, for we came from Him. He will never be sorry He called and gifted us.

So His character and mind (intent) towards us is grace - and He cannot change that about Himself and proves that by His past, present, and future actions towards us. He is already planning the ages to come to continue to show us that love. Amazing grace. We cannot fast enough, pray enough, give enough, or impress Him or change it to the negative.

As Paul said in Romans 8: 32: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" We've received His highest and best, and nothing can change that. There isn't any more. He gave His only Son. His grace is set, and He will never regret His actions and plans for us even if they don't work out in this life - for there are ages to come in which His perfect plans for us will indeed come to pass! Amazing grace.

Until next week...blessings,

John Fenn

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