

# Whose Doing Is It? God's or Man's

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Whose Doing Is It – Part 1

August 8, 2010

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- I. Preparatory Information
  - A. **Romans 11:33-36** . . . Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! [34] For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? [35] Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? [36] For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.
  - B. Today is our fourth teaching on the Bible and Theology. So far, we have looked at the differing theologies, their place in the three tiers of theology, and the influence they have on the Church today. Along the way I have stated that what we have looked at does not include all the varied beliefs and practices that are found among God's people today.
  - C. Prayer
- II. Three important foundational truths pictured in the OT, supported in the NT, and applicable to us today:
  - A. We cannot be victorious over our flesh, the world, and the devil apart from the empowerment of God within – though the work of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit – any more than the Israelites could be victorious over the inhabitants of the Promised Land – with its walled cities, giants, and well equipped armies, without the empowerment of God for victory. Yet at the same time, we cannot be victorious over our flesh, the world, and the devil without doing our part – that is, the part God has given us – any more than the Israelites could be victorious over the inhabitants of the Promised Land without going to war against them and driving them out.
    - 1. We see God's power and assistance along with Israel's part in **Deuteronomy 31:3-6** . . . It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and **you shall dispossess them** (*put them out so they no longer possess the land*). Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken. [4] "The LORD will do to them just as He did to Sihon and

- Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He destroyed them. [5] "The LORD will deliver them up before you, and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you. [6] "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."
2. In fact, God puts the onus on Israel should they not drive out the inhabitants. Numbers 33:55-56 . . . 'But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you let remain will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will trouble you in the land in which you live. [56] 'And as I plan to do to them, so I will do to you.' "
  3. What is my point here? As for Israel going into and taking the Promised Land, so for the Christian entering the sanctification side of the Christian life – God’s empowerment for victory is an established, trustworthy fact. Therefore, our responsibility today is the same as Israel’s then – act in faith on God’s empowerment by doing our part in putting off the old nature and putting on Christ. (NOTE: Matthew 5:6; Romans 6:12-14, 8:12-13, 12:9-20; Ephesians 4:17-24; Colossians 3:1-10, 12-14; I Timothy 6:9-12; II Timothy 2:22; Hebrews 12:12-17; James 4:7-10; I Peter 1:13-16, 3:8-12, 4:1-3)

B. Just as God’s purpose in bringing Israel out of Egypt was to bring them into the Promised Land – to be a holy people for His own possession and a light to the nations, so God’s purpose in saving us and leaving us here on the earth is to bring us into the sanctified life and into the Body of Christ where we become a holy people for His own possession and a light to the nations.

1. **Ephesians 1:3-4** . . . Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, [4] just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.
2. **Titus 2:11-14** . . . For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, [12] instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, [13] looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, [14] who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

C. The Law and Self-Discipline Unto Holy Living Is Good. Love For God Unto Holy Living Is Better.

1. Living according to the will of God by the empowerment and assistance of God coupled with self-discipline – be it the OT Law or the NT grace that calls us to a holy life that goes beyond the Law – is truly good. However, driven to live according to the will of God out of a deep and abiding love for God and His righteousness – empowered and assisted by God – is best. Therefore, love motivated righteousness is our goal even though we may need self-discipline to get there.
2. **Deuteronomy 6:4-5** . . . "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! [5] "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.
3. Psalm 119
  - a. **Psalms 119:47-48** . . . I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love. [48] And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, which I love; and I will meditate on Your statutes.
  - b. **Psalms 119:165** . . . Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble.
  - c. **Psalms 119:167** . . . My soul keeps Your testimonies, and I love them exceedingly.
4. And in the New Testament we read in **Hebrews 1:9** that Jesus loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. And in **I Timothy 1:5** we read that the goal of Paul's teaching among those in the church was love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

III. Whose Doing Is It? God's or Man's

- A. Most of the following arrangement of the scriptures comes from John Cassian's Thirteenth Conference. It was spoken by Chaeremon, who was over one hundred years old at the time he spoke it to Cassian. The scriptures that he quoted were quoted from memory, for at that time it was the goal of the devout Christian to memorize the entire Bible. I have edited this conference and in places, paraphrased what Cassian wrote. The scriptures that I will quote come from the NASB, 1995 revision.

In the realm of the Christian life, and especially in the arena of sanctification – where we are being conformed to the image of Christ through God's gracious work within us, what is the value of human effort? Though we strive with all our might and toil with the perseverance of the most saintly saints, would we be able to possess the great good of godliness, or the provision of our most basic physical and spiritual needs, or the protection necessary to continue on in life, without

the generosity of God's gracious giving? And yet, shouldn't the laborer's reward, that is, the perfection of the Christian life or the accumulation of food, clothing and shelter, which requires a daily intensity of one's own efforts, be attributed to the laborer? For example, when we see a farmer day-by-day hard at work toiling in the soil, shouldn't the harvest be attributed to his diligence?

Let us consider this example of the farmer for a moment. It seems it should be obvious that the farmer's toil can accomplish nothing without the help of God. For a farmer, when he has expended all his efforts in working the field with a view toward harvest, would not be able to attribute the produce of his fields, or even the abundance of the yield to his own toil. Consider, his toil would be useless if adequate rainfall and the absence of damaging winds, hail, or flooding had not played their part. In fact, we are aware of ripened, ready to be harvested crops that have been destroyed a day or two before harvest simply because the farmer had not been assisted by the Lord's gracious giving in some area that the farmer could not control.

My point here is simple. Working day and night will not be profitable to the farmer if his work is not assisted by the Lord's mercy.

Again, consider that the diligent, hard-working farmer can live so sinfully as to set the Lord against himself. When he does this, the scripture says that the heaven becomes brass and the earth iron (Deuteronomy 28:23). The swarming locusts eat what the cutting locusts leave behind, and the caterpillar devours what the swarming locust leave, and the blight consumes what the caterpillar has left (Joel 1:4).

Yet if the weather, the soil and the insects cooperate together to provide the hard-working farmer with a good crop by the generous mercy of God, it only takes a single debilitating accident to disable the farmer and keep him from harvesting his crop.

From these examples it should be clear that all of these things – being outside the farmer's control – depend upon the gracious involvement and abundant power of God. For as the scripture says, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). And again, "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness" (II Corinthians 9:10).

Now some will say that this understanding of God and His ways stands in opposition to the scriptures which teach free will. After all, it is said, even unbelievers, who do not deserve the grace of God's assistance, show in their actions good deeds beyond what some Christians display. Does not this prove that the free will of even those who do not want to believe on Him, is sufficient to perform good deeds?

Although these questions are worthy of the asking, they nevertheless display a shortsightedness in the ways of God as He deals with man. Upon clearing up the assumptions raised by these questions, I believe you will see – from the holy scriptures – the unmatched glory of God as it relates to His empowerment and gracious assistance toward us, and the responsibility of man as it relates to doing the will of Him whom we serve.

First, it should never be believed that the unbelievers who do good deeds have attained to the kind of purity of mind that is demanded of Christians in the scriptures. We are not just called by God to do good deeds. We are called by God to think good thoughts (Philippians 4:6-8) and through the renewal of our mind, come to live a holy life (Romans 12:2). For example, we are to go beyond the good deeds of moral behavior and faithfulness in marriage to not even casually conversing with each other about immorality, impurity, or greed. And beyond that, we are to turn away from silly talk and vulgar joking (Ephesians 5:3-4). The point is, even though unbelievers discipline themselves in certain ways to do good deeds, they show by other words and deeds that inwardly they still desire and delight in evil things. Therefore, though they have an outward good that is commendable, the roots of evil have not been cut out from their hearts.

Their way – outwardly good, inwardly still desiring what is evil – is not God's way for His people. But who of us can be unified inwardly and outwardly without the assistance of God? Who will deny himself day after day, take up his cross each and every day, and live for Christ without the assistance of God (Luke 9:23)? Who will fight the good fight of faith: submitting to God in hard times as well as in good, resisting the devil when his temptations are at their strongest, and drawing near to God while being sorely tempted to draw near to earthy or personal pleasures or the praise of men or financial gain, without the empowerment of God (I Timothy 6:12; James 4:7-8)? Who will humble himself before God and his fellow men – labeling his sin as God labels it, speaking of his failures as the scripture speaks of them, weeping over his sin with a broken and remorseful heart, confessing openly and thoroughly, and making right with God and men whatever wrong he has committed – without the help of God? Who will forgive his brother

seventy times seven without the inward strengthening of God (Matthew 18:21-22)? And so I ask again, who of us can be unified inwardly and outwardly without the gracious assistance of God?

Have you not been distracted from an ardent pursuit of holiness by conflicting interests, so as to feel an urgent need to ask God for help in securing sufficient time to carry out your longed for pursuit? Have you not experienced sickness or tribulations that seem so overwhelming as to plead with God for the grace and strength in the midst of such times to still commune with Him and continue growing in the grace and knowledge of our Savior? And so we see that having the ability is not enough if God does not assist with sufficient time to satisfy our longing for holiness. Yet it is also true that lacking the ability is not a deterrent for those who rely on God to empower them in accomplishing what their heart so strongly desires (I Thessalonians 2:18; II Corinthians 12:8-9).

Truly, God's purpose from the beginning is our salvation not our damnation. When His kindness sees the slightest glimmer of goodwill in us – which He himself has in fact sparked from the hard flint of our heart – He nurtures it, stirs it up and strengthens it with his grace because He “desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4). For, He says, “it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:14). And again he says, “God does not take away life, but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from him” (II Samuel 14:14). And once more we read God's own oath when He says, “As I live!” declares the Lord God, “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezekiel 33:11a).

Therefore, the grace of God – passed on to us through Jesus Christ our Lord – is at hand and available to us every day! It calls out to everyone, without exception, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). And so we see that those who perish or lack God's empowerment for holy living do so against His will – and because of unbelief or laziness or a lack of hunger and thirst for righteousness.

#### IV. Conclusion

##### A.