

The Impossible Command — Endnote

Endnote A

Here we may find an objection by some who would say that God commands everyone (particularly the lost) not to sin. However, the Scriptures make very plain; it is not possible that anyone cannot sin. There are numerous places in Scripture that insure we understand that by our works and our power we will not maintain nor regain righteousness at all. This applies across the board to everyone who has ever lived since Adam (excepting the Lord Jesus Christ) and that ever will live. It is interesting that the following passage occurs three times in Scripture. Truly, the LORD God is very aware; man cannot help but sin.

The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one. (Psalm 14:2-3)

Now, God does command all men everywhere to repent and obey the Gospel. What may not be well understood is what is implicit in the command to repent and obey the Gospel. However, in posing the following questions what is implicit within the command should be come clear.

- What are we repenting of?
- Why do we need to repent anyway?
- Why do we need to believe, or obey the Gospel?

The answer is clear: **WE ARE SINNERS!** And, we sin because we are sinners. Moreover, we know that we are sinners because God put the knowledge of His law in every one of us, as it is written:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) (*Romans 2:14-15*)

Now, who wrote the law into the heart of each and every one of us? Is it not the very same one who created us? The Scripture also reveals that we know the wrath of God is against us for our sin.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (*Romans 1:18-20*)

Thus, without God commanding us to not sin, He reveals that we are sinners and in need of redemption. Moreover, by commanding each and every one to repent and obey the Gospel, the Lord is implicitly stating that we are contrary to His express will and in sin, and thus condemned.

We must understand that inherent in the command to repent and believe the Gospel is a condemnation if we fail to follow this positive command of the Lord. Just as a negative command such as 'Thou shalt not steal.' incurs the condemnation of God, likewise the failure to repent and obey the Gospel. It is essential that we fully understand; all that is required to condemn us to Hell for all eternity is a single sin, regardless of how 'minute' it may be, or what it even is. Failure to do is just as much sin as failure to not do.

Additionally inherent in the command to repent and believe the

Gospel is the fact that if we fail to comply, we condemn ourselves and reveal that we are indeed sinners. Thus, the simple act of giving this express command reveals that, whether anyone complies or not, they are guilty just because the command is given. The issuance of the command carries the presumption (which is entirely true) that everyone is a sinner and guilty before God. Else He would have never issued the command. If it were possible that someone throughout man's history could stand against their nature and not rebel against God, then God would have commanded that we not sin. After all, what is the point of sacrificing oneself for a creature that could be righteous, if only he would try? Why suffer to make man righteous when he could be righteous by his own merit and effort?

Therefore, God's righteousness is manifest in the structure and issuance of just such a command as repent and believe (or obey) the Gospel. Hence it is unnecessary for God to command the lost (in fact everyone) to not sin as it has been encompassed and superceded by the command to 'Repent and believe the Gospel.'

Now, there are those who will point to the Old Testament and to the Lord's commands to Israel and show where He told them to not sin, and to abide by the covenant He had with them. If we are careful to note, we find that the context of this command to not sin is strictly within the covenant God had with Israel and was not applicable generally. In other words, it applied to the outward requirements Israel was to fulfill in the covenant. If we study, we find that a majority of Israel was probably never saved, but when they were obedient to the covenant and honored the Lord, He blessed them. Thus, the issue is not one of sin in the sense of justification before God; rather, it is sin in the sense of failing to uphold a covenant they had with the Lord.

Thus it is plain in Scripture: It would not be reasonable to assert that God demands of everyone on the earth that we not

sin. Since we are born with a nature to rebel against God, and we follow that nature and openly rebel as soon as we have cognizance of God's commands, God would be asking of us the impossible. Rather, God commands everyone to 'repent and believe the gospel,' which is an entirely attainable command for everyone.

A Final Thought

The following is an item to consider concerning the nature and character of any person in a position of authority.

What does it state about the character of a person who gives a command to those under him, knowing full well that it is entirely impossible for those under him to accomplish the command – and then destroying them for failure to keep the command? Would this not be entirely cruel? Of a certainty, it would be. It would be a monstrously cruel joke that would not be funny at all to those creatures subject to it. It certainly would be worse than muzzling the ox that is used to tread out the corn. We would think it entirely cruel of an owner to muzzle his beast of burden while it is being used to grind the grain he eats, and thus tempt the animal every moment, but make it impossible for the animal to taste even one single grain. Rather, we find an illustration of part of the character and nature of the Lord in the command the Lord gave to the children of Israel concerning their beasts of burden:

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out *the corn*.
(Deuteronomy 25:4)

Now, this command is tied in the New Testament to rewarding the laborer for his labor. However, the same kind of character that commands that the laborer enjoy the fruits of his labor, is the same kind of character that would *not* delight in giving an impossible command and then condemning those who cannot fulfill it. The character of the LORD God is such that He would never demand of us something we could not do. Incidentally, we see this same character trait in the commands

the Lord gives His children, as He always makes a way for His children to fulfill His command to them.

Why then would the Lord command all men to repent and believe the Gospel, and deny any number of them the ability to fulfill that command (except for egregious cause, such as blaspheming the Holy Ghost) when the Lord cares far more for man than for an ox?

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