

If Hell is Real . . . – Part 2

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If Hell is Real . . . – Part 1

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This lesson is an apologetic addressing the heresy of Universalism which teaches that there is no place called “Hell” and that everyone will ultimately be reconciled to the LORD God. The lesson begins to address the arguments put forth in the article “Honest Questions and Answers about Hell” by Mercy Aiken and Gary Amirault of Tentmaker Ministries in Missouri.

Unwanted Answers – Part 1

NOTE: In dealing with Calvinist/Reformed doctrine, there are some questions the proponents of that theology like to throw at people to silence them as the Calvinist believes there is

no legitimate answer to the question. However, as I, and many others have found out, the Calvinist doesn't actually want a valid answer, and will either try to shut down any proper response, or belittle the answer given. The following question and answer is just one such example:

1) Paul if you hold to position 1, that Christ died for all sins of all men, if this is true, then why are not all men freed the punishment of all their sins? Are there not people in Hades or Hell that are being punished for the sin of unbelief, that Jesus died for?

This conclusion/question presupposes a doctrine: that doctrine being the doctrine of Universal Salvation, which is taught nowhere in Scripture. It does not follow that "if Christ died for all men, then all men will be saved." That is a fallacy that attempts to negate the fact men have a choice to make. This "question" leaves no room for man's choice in the matter, as if men cannot choose one way or the other. In this way, the Universalist and the Calvinist walk the very same path of logic and come to radically different conclusions. This ought to scream loud and clear that something is wrong with the logic.

The problem with the logic is that it is assumed that men have no choice in whether they are saved or not. The Universalist claims that men will be saved regardless of whether they want to have anything to do with God or not. The Calvinist claims that only the elect will be saved because God particularly chooses to "regenerate" some and pass others by without criteria, rhyme, or reason.

Both systems of logic ignore Scriptures that are not favorable to their particular theology, and that would indeed set aside both systems as being invalid. The reason for this is that both systems contain inherent contradictions that cannot be overcome. For instance, in the listing of the points of

Calvinism that you sent me, (for which you did not cite the source) the following two points are given:

14) Calvinists do believe that men can resist the Holy Spirit. They believe that even the elect can resist the Holy Spirit, and do – but only up to the time when the Spirit regenerates their heart so that resist Him no more.(sic) The non-elect effectively resist Him all their lives.

23) While Calvinists believe that saving grace and repentance are the gifts of God, given only to His elect, they do not believe that God exercises faith for them or repents for them. The elect sinner, enabled by the power of God, actually repents and believes for himself.

However one chooses to dissect this, it is inherently contradictory. One cannot repent and believe for him/herself, and yet have their heart forcibly regenerated so that they resist no more. No matter how this is examined it is either totally contradictory, or one is being made compliant to the will of God by force. You cannot say that one is able to resist, but only up to the point where “the Spirit regenerates their heart so that resist Him no more” and then blithely claim that this is not forced conversion of the will. On its face it is, and it is undeniable.

Of course, to cover that the word “regeneration” is redefined:

19) Calvinists do believe that regeneration precedes faith in Christ. We do not confuse the term regeneration with that of justification or salvation. The Spirit of God regenerates the elect sinner enabling him to forsake the deadness of his sin and willingly embrace Christ and so be justified by faith and saved for eternity. Regeneration therefore is not synonymous with justification or salvation any more than conviction of sin is synonymous with conversion to Christ.

The problem with article 19 is that “regeneration” is not defined in Scripture the way that article 19 claims it is defined. In Scripture, the word “regeneration” only appears twice. In both instances, the term is clearly defined by the context of usage. Once it is defined as the new heavens and new earth time frame, and once it is defined as expressly salvation:

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (*Matthew 19:28*)

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (*Titus 3:1-6*)

Very plainly, the reference in Matthew is to the time when there will be the new heaven and new earth, after this heaven and earth are gone, and after the resurrection has occurred. The second reference in Titus is plainly concerning salvation, and describes salvation as “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” which states nothing about which, or what comes first in the process of salvation. That is left up to other places in Scripture. What the passage does tell us is the following:

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, . . .
(*Titus 3:3-4*)

Which is to say that every one (even the “elect”) were wicked and evil before they were saved, and that the kindness and love of God is toward man, without qualification or limitation. This can be easily seen as the statement “toward man” appears without any limiting or qualifying language. Thus, by definition it is open-ended in application. Moreover, application cannot be “general” without also being “specific.” By that, I mean that it is pointless to say salvation is generally available to all men, but not specifically available to any particular person, because they were predetermined to be “passed by” without them having any say in the matter.

Thus by the Scripture, the word “regeneration” is salvation and is such a part of salvation that without it, there is no salvation. Moreover, the phrasing is constructed in such a way as to indicate, by the passage in Titus, that regeneration happens after faith, repentance, and belief, and not before those are evidenced. This is directly contrary to what is stated in article 19 quoted above. However, there is further Scriptural evidence as to the error of article 19, which I will address later in my response.

Now, the fact that salvation is available to all is demonstrated in the following passage from I Timothy:

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. These things command and teach. (*I Timothy 4:10-11*)

Unless one does gymnastics with the English language, verse ten gives us two defined groups of individuals here, the first

listed is "all men" and is inclusive of everyone, everywhere, at all times. This larger group identified as "all men" necessarily includes the sub-group "specially of those that believe." The second or sub-group of individuals is listed as "those that believe," which is that group some identify as "the elect," but most simply identify as "believers" meaning they have been born again in Christ Jesus. The common umbrella that includes both groups is the statement "the living God, who is the Saviour of" in which the apostle Paul states "because we trust" indicating plainly why "we both labour and suffer reproach." This view is also consistent with the general call to salvation expressed in the Old Testament:

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (*Isaiah 55:1-7*)

And in Isaiah 45:

Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no

God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. (*Isaiah 45:21-22*)

Not only do we find that the LORD calls every man, but he also works in the lives of everyone to bring them to the point of understanding certain basic truths. This is what Elihu speaks of when he testifies to Job and his three friends about the working of God in the lives of men. Please note there is no implicit reference to the "elect" as defined by Calvinist doctrine. This passage, like the passages in Isaiah, simply include all men.

For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth: He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness. He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.

Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, To bring

back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. (*Job 33:14-30*)

Here now, both Isaiah and Elihu's testimony to Job match the testimony of Psalm 107, the entirety of which is about the working of the LORD God in the lives of all men everywhere to bring down their pride, and humble them to see that they need a Saviour. In Psalm 107, the term "they cried unto the LORD" has the same meaning as the statement in Romans, chapter 10:

For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (*Romans 10:11-13*)

The use of the word "whosoever" and the phrase "all that call" do not carry any limitation, or qualification such as Calvinist/Reformed doctrine places upon them. There is no context in any of the above passages that would give any idea of this call, and subsequent answering of the call by anyone, to be confined to only the "elect" as Calvinism defines the "elect." For that to be there, one must overlay the passages with a doctrine and interpretation that inserts "only the elect" into each and every passage, thus forcing it to fit Calvinist/Reformed doctrine. Plainly, the call is to every person, and every person is capable of responding to the call, and is responsible for their rejection of the call. Their failure to heed the call will keep them in condemnation, and will not allow them any recourse if they die having refused to accede to the call.

What has been done here by Calvinist doctrine is to render meaningless some very significant passages of Scripture that specifically address how the LORD God chose to deal with man:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately

wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. (*Jeremiah 17:9-10*)

The above passage from Jeremiah tells everyone four very important things that we all need to know:

1. *The heart is deceitful above everything else out there. Since the statement is framed "The heart is deceitful above all things . . ." and does not limit application, except by the context of the passage which is dealing with all men, it necessarily applies to all men, even the "elect" as Calvinist/Reformed theology defines the "elect." Hence, all men are on a level playing field, with the law of God equally applicable to all.*

2. *We cannot know our own hearts. The rhetorical question "who can know it?" presupposes the answer "No one, save the LORD God only." The only conclusion one can then come to is that we are never really certain what we really are unless we are shown what we are. This then leads to the third item:*

3. *The LORD God searches the hearts of every man, and tries the mind of every person, regardless of where on earth, or time in history. In this, we are confirmed by the verse from Proverbs which states:*

The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly. (Proverbs 20:27)

Hence, we can safely determine that the LORD God has a purpose for this, even though in His foreknowledge He already knew what each and every individual would be, how they would think and what they would think. This ought to cause us to consider the why of the next statement.

4. *Here the purpose is revealed, but not in its entirety. The LORD tells us "even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." This would have a*

certain effect upon man, and that effect would be to cause individuals, to a greater or lesser degree, to question who and what they really are. After all, when things seem to blow up in one's face, or life doesn't seem to go "right," it does cause the normal person to question whether they are really right about what they are doing and what they believe.

What then is the rest of the purpose for this? If we return to the passages of Isaiah 45 and 55, Job 33 and Psalm 107, we can see that the LORD God has issued a call to all men, and tries to get men to respond to the call. We find that some men respond not at all, some respond to a greater or lesser degree, but fall short of actually heeding the command to repent and believe the gospel, and a few do obey the command and are actually born again in Christ. Which leads us to the point of Romans, chapter 10:

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (*Romans 10:16-17*)

In this, we find the rest of what is wrong with the redefining of "regeneration" by Calvinist/Reformed theology: its place in the sequence of events that leads to salvation. Quite plainly in Scripture, faith is not salvation, but is indispensable to salvation. It is the same for repentance. One cannot be saved without repentance, but repentance alone, and even with faith, is not salvation. Salvation is the culmination of the sequence of three events (so to speak). Faith, then repentance, then belief. As the passage from Romans 10 tells us, faith comes only when one hears the word of God in a certain way.

It is this certain way that throws people off. The reason for this is they ignore the call of the LORD God in Isaiah, chapter 1:

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;

though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.
(*Isaiah 1:18*)

It is manifestly impossible to reason about something if one never hears about it. However, merely hearing it spoken, or reading it without taking it in and considering it, is equally as bad as not hearing it at all. In either case, it is impossible to reason anything about the subject at hand. The LORD God's call here is beyond simply hear my word, but rather, attend to it, consider it, let it sink into your heart, and I will reason with you about it. The context here is to all the wicked in Israel, and those who were contrary to the LORD. Plainly, this call is a call to the wicked for the purpose of effecting their salvation, if they will indeed hear, consider, be reasoned with, turn and believe. This is where the role of faith comes into play.

When the Scripture states that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," it is plainly a promise of God that if one hears the word, takes it in, and considers it, the LORD God will grant the faith necessary to perceive the truth of what He states. We can know that faith is a thing that must be granted, as Hebrews, chapter 11 describes faith as specifically an object, a noun:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. (*Hebrews 11:1-2*)

"Substance," "evidence," and "it" all are specific to objects or things we describe as nouns. The only thing that would possibly confuse someone is the fact that this object, and the use of this object are both described with exactly the same word – faith. However, this usage is not all that unusual in language, as we do the very same with the word "truck." For instance, the statement "I will use my truck to truck it across the country." is not an uncommon application of the word "truck." In the first instance "truck" is plainly the

object, the noun, and in the second instance “truck” is the verb usage meaning the specific method of movement, or conveyance. Hence, having faith, and the use of the faith that one is granted upon consideration of the word of God, are described by exactly the same word – faith.

Upon this, we should understand that the sequence is:

- 1. Hear and consider the word of God.*
- 2. The LORD God grants faith, the instrument necessary for perceiving the truth of His word.*
- 3. Either accept or reject what faith shows.*

What we then encounter is the necessity of repentance. The Scripture is also plain that it is the LORD God that grants repentance, as we are incapable of repenting on our own. In Acts, we are clearly told that repentance is a gift that the LORD God grants. Please note that repentance is necessary for the regeneration that occurs with salvation, and does not occur after the regeneration that is described as salvation in Titus, chapter 3, verses 1-6:

Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. (Acts 11:17-18)

As can be plainly seen by the phrase “repentance unto life,” repentance must precede salvation. Without citing all the Scriptures that apply, this should be without question.

Hence, the sequence of events is now:

- 1. Hear and consider the word of God.*
- 2. The LORD God grants faith, the instrument necessary for*

perceiving the truth of His word.

3. Either accept or reject what faith shows.

4. Exercise the repentance granted, having a change of heart and mind about your sin.

5. Believe the gospel.

6. Be regenerated by the Holy Ghost, which is to be "born again."

Now where in any of this does any man have anything to boast of, or claim any merit before God?

Yet, the answer of the Calvinist/Reformed theologian is that believing is an act that man can claim as meritorious.

This is directly contrary to Scripture, which teaches that believing is not meritorious, and in fact, is what we are required to do. After all, the command is "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Moreover, if we have done so, we are told:

Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do. (Luke 17:9-10)

There is a principle stated here that transcends all contexts: That is, doing one's duty, as one is commanded, is no cause to say "I have done anything worthy of merit, or boasting, or that is profitable to whose I am." Hence, when one does all they are employed to do, they should not receive any recognition, as they have only done that which they were supposed to do. So likewise, all men everywhere, at all times are commanded to repent and believe the gospel, if they do so, of what special significance is that? If they do not, then

they are in violation of the commandment, because they have not believed and obeyed the commandment, and are set for destruction.

Above all, we must remember what we are told in Ezekiel, chapter 18:

Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. (*Ezekiel 18:4*)

Thus, the burden lies upon man to make the choice, which man is fully capable of doing. Man is capable of believing the truth, especially since the LORD God has provided everything else man needs to see and believe that truth.

To be continued . . .