Three Hard Questions (for free-will believers)

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1. If God loves all men, including those who receive eternal life and those who suffer eternal damnation, what does the love of God have to do with anyone's salvation?

2. If God wills for all men to be saved, including those who receive eternal life and those who suffer eternal damnation, what does the will of God have to do with anyone's salvation?

3. If Christ shed His precious blood for all men, including those who receive eternal life and those who suffer eternal damnation, what does the work of Christ on the cross have to do with anyone's salvation?

These three questions go to the heart of the Arminian or freewill predicament. Arminians want all of God's blessings to be freely available for everyone. Even some who call themselves reformed and Calvinistic stumble at the idea that God's love for sinners is particular and His desire to save sinners is distinguishing.

Yet it is clear from Scripture that the gifts of God are not distributed indiscriminately. The mercies of God are not bestowed on all alike. This can easily be proved. Take, for example, the Gospel itself. There are literally millions who have never even heard the Gospel. No missionary ever reached their shores, no radio broadcast was ever detected in their village, no portion of scripture was ever written in their language.

Fact: millions have never heard the gospel

During the Old Testament times prior to the coming of Jesus Christ there were many who never were blessed to hear a prophet foretell of the coming Messiah. Whole continents never were witnessed to. Nations rose and fell without a message from the Lord. Individuals lived and died without ever hearing of God's way of salvation.

In the New Testament era believers have carried the Gospel message from Jerusalem and Judea to the ends of the earth and in the two thousand years since the death of Jesus Christ there has not been a part of the world were the Gospel has not been conveyed by one means or another. Yet in no way can we imagine that every single individual has been personally presented

with the Gospel of salvation and the message of Jesus Christ.

God's judgement is constant

Some people have suggested that those who never hear the Gospel will not be judged by the same criteria as those who heard but rejected it. That is to imagine that God's wrath against sin is variable and contradicts the Scripture that without the shedding of blood there can be no remission for sin.

Therefore we conclude that God's purpose has not been to provide everyone with the opportunity to hear words of eternal life. And since, in the providence of God, the Gospel has not been sent to everyone, we must conclude that the mercies of God are not available to everyone, for there is no other name under heaven, given amongst men whereby we must be saved.

A limited audience for the gospel

Furthermore, those who live in places where the Gospel has been preached cannot be said to have equally received the mercy of God. There are natural barriers to hearing. Some are steeped in the false religion of their family, bound in darkness and superstition. Some have heard the word faithfully preached but the devil, like the birds that follow a sower, has come quickly down and snatched away the good seed. Even where the gospel is freely proclaimed the power of God must be particularly applied for any to receive its merits.

What universal love?

We believe that those who promote the notion of God's universal love are attacking foreknowledge and the core reason for God's gift of saving grace. Salvation is founded on God's love. He chose Israel because He loved them. He chose Jacob because He loved him. He calls those whom He has foreknown in love, Romans 8:28. He commends His love to the elect alone by sending His Son to die for them, Romans 5:8.

What universal desire?

We believe that those who promote the notion of God's universal desire to save are promoting a message undermining God's revealed purpose to save His elect and only His elect. To teach that God wants to save everyone but is prevented by some higher restriction or constraint upon His will is to question the whole basis of sovereign grace.

What universal atonement?

We believe that those who promote the notion of universal atonement misrepresent the substitutionary nature of our Lord Jesus Christ's death. They empty the blood sacrifice of power, make ineffectual the death of the Saviour and deny that our Lord actually saved anyone. This teaching makes

the ability of Christ's blood to cleanse dependent on some additional factor, the atonement conditional and available on application, the gift of salvation initiated by human effort.

Three evident answers

If God does indeed love all men, including those who receive eternal life and those who suffer eternal damnation, then that love can have no bearing on securing salvation, or hell is empty and God's wrath is a shout in the wind.

If God desires all men to be saved, both the elect and the reprobate, then that desire cannot itself secure salvation for any but must be subject to the will of man.

If Christ shed His precious blood for all men, the elect and the reprobate without distinction, then the work of Christ on the cross cannot itself have anything to do with actually accomplishing salvation and men must be saved by their own efforts and the blood of Christ made of none avail.

Let freewill believers wriggle all they will with claims of universality. The clear teaching of Holy Scripture is that God has a distinctive love for a particular people. He has manifested that love in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 The purpose and the accomplishment of that purpose go hand in glove.

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