

How God Thinks: It Isn't Like We Tend To Think!

“Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.” [John 14:28]

The above verse presents some questions for us that we would do well to delve into. Because if we endeavor to know God better and to know how He thinks and what He likes and what is important to Him, then we will be far better able to walk the walk that is pleasing to God and we undoubtedly will be better able to understand the very purpose for our existence, which ultimately - if we are true believers in Christ - is to spend eternity fellowshiping with a Holy God and all His elect children. To accomplish this goal of gaining a better understanding of how God thinks, we will not only examine John 14:28 but also a closely related verse in Ephesians chapter one:

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself” [Ephesians 1:9]

We cannot comprehend the mind of God if we don't even know that He does things according to His good pleasure and not because of the reasons we do things. Although we do many things for our own pleasure and not to please God, we expect God to do things to please US and not necessarily for HIS own GOOD pleasure. But there is a BIG difference between God doing things for His pleasure and us doing things for our pleasure, simply because God is the ultimate Good and He is perfectly sinless and monumentally holy, while we are sinful, unholy, weak, frail, unreliable, undependable, biased towards ourselves and against others and a far cry from such a perfect and omnipotent Being.

Due to a lot of bad preaching and teaching in the Christian arena of our day and age, we tend to have a very WRONG picture of who God is. We tend to think that He is some “sugar daddy” who NEEDS to do everything He does simply to make us happy, healthy, prosperous and comfortable. And when those things don't happen, we look for excuses for ourselves and for God as to why things “went wrong” - when instead, we should perhaps be examining our views of who God is and why He does what He does in our lives and in the world around us.

Once we clearly understand and fully grasp what the apostle Paul was saying in Ephesians 1:9 (shown above) we can then be ready to start on that road that leads to a deeper understanding of Almighty God. Here are some helpful insights from John Gill's commentary into the two major portions of verse 9:

Ephesians 1:9

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will

The Gospel, which is a mystery, a hidden mystery, the mystery of God and of Christ, and the mystery of the Gospel; the various doctrines of it are called the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; such as those concerning the trinity of persons in the Godhead, the union of the two natures in Christ, his sonship and incarnation, the saints' union and communion with him, the work of the Spirit of God upon the soul, the calling of the Gentiles, and the conversion of the Jews, the resurrection of the dead, and the change of living saints: **and the Gospel is the mystery of the will of God; of his will in saving sinners by Christ; and it declares that he does all things in salvation, according to his sovereign will and pleasure; chooses, redeems, justifies, pardons, and calls whom he pleases; and this is made known by the ministry of the word, and by the Spirit**, as a spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ and his Gospel: the discovery of which is,

according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself; both with respect to the persons to whom it is made known, and with respect to the time when he makes it known; both these are as he pleases, and as he has purposed in his own breast; **the Gospel is sent when and where he has determined within himself it shall go; and persons are called by it according to his purpose and grace.**

As you look at the above commentary, consider your own reckonings about salvation and the sowing of the seeds of the Gospel. The only correct view of salvation is to view it as completely and totally orchestrated by God, using the preachers He chooses when He chooses, putting those preachers in the path of sinners whom God chooses when He chooses, applying conviction of sin and conversion of the soul to WHOM GOD CHOOSES WHEN HE CHOOSES.

If instead, we think that salvation is primarily in the hands of the preacher and the spiritually dead sinner, with God waiting upon the sinner to choose Him, to accept Christ, to see His need for Christ before turning to God, then we have a WRONG view of God, wrong view of the Gospel, and wrong view of the complete and utter lostness of man. For God to be God, He NEEDS TO BE sovereign. To be sovereign, God NEEDS to be the final and ultimate decision maker in all things, especially concerning whom He intends to spend eternity with and how He intends to get ungodly sinners ready to spend eternity with Someone so holy.

If we look at how the adoption process works in our earthly sphere, ***the parents choose the child*** whom they are going to adopt... ***the child is not chosen for them nor does the child choose the parents.*** Even if there is only one child available at any given point in time, an adopting couple still has the option of saying, "No, not this one. - We will wait". Why should we think the adoption process is any different with God? Why should we think that God has to adopt whom we think He should adopt or that He should adopt sinners on THEIR terms or that it is the sinner who adopts (chooses) God? But modern evangelism has degenerated to this state of affairs. Many misinformed or self-deceived sinners recite some "sinner's prayer" and then

they think that now God needs to automatically adopt them. They are still dead in their sins, blind to their sinfulness, ignorant of God's holiness, apathetic towards God's commandments and God never even intended to save them, for they are the vessels of wrath Paul mentions in Romans 9:22.

Are you starting to see what the Sovereignty of God means? Does it scare you... to think that YOU could be THAT MUCH at the mercy of God? Perhaps it should scare you because this IS the God with whom we all have to do...

“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” [Hebrews 4:13]

So now that we addressed the central issue of God's sovereignty, we can start examining John 14:28: *“Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.”* We will see an excellent example in this passage of how we tend to think versus how God thinks. Again, I refer to John Gill who brings some good insight to several portions of this scripture verse. Note, a few words in the commentary were added or changed for clarity sake:

John 14:28

if ye loved me, ye would rejoice;

not ... that the disciples did not truly love Christ, ... their concern for the loss of his bodily presence is a proof of it; ... but this was not a pure expression of love to him, **it showed too much a regard to themselves, than to the object loved;** whereas had they considered things aright (had they looked at the situation from God's point of view), **since it was to Christ's greater advantage to leave, they should rather have had a willingness to it, and should have rejoiced at it; this would have shown pure love and unbiased affection towards him.**

Two reasons our Lord gives why they should have rejoiced at his departure; one is:

because, I said, I go unto the Father;

who was not only his, but their Father also; at whose right hand he was to sit, an honour which no mere creature ever had; where he was to be glorified and exalted above all created beings; and besides, his glorification would secure and bring on their glorification; as sure as he lived in glory, so sure should they; yea, they should immediately sit down in heavenly places in him, as their head and representative, and therefore had good reason to rejoice at his going away.

The other reason is:

for my Father is greater than I:

not with respect to the divine nature, which is common to them both, and in which they are both one; and the Son is equal to the Father, having the self-same essence, perfections, and glory: nor with respect to personality, the Son is equally a divine person, as the Father is, though the one is usually called the first, the other the second person; yet this priority is not of nature, which is the same in both; nor of time, for the one did not exist before the other; nor of causality, for the Father is not the cause of the Son's existence; nor of dignity, for the one has not any excellency which is wanting in the other;

"The father is greater than I" in the sense of order and manner of operation: these words are to be understood, either with regard to the human nature, in which he was going to the Father, this was prepared for him by the Father, and strengthened and supported by him, and in which he was made a little lower than the angels, and consequently must be in it inferior to his Father; or with regard to his office as Mediator, in which he was the Father's servant, was set up and sent forth by him, acted under him, and in obedience to him, and was now returning to give an account of his work and service; or rather with regard to his present state, which was a state of humiliation: he was attended with many griefs and sorrows, and exposed to many enemies, and about to undergo an accursed death; whereas his Father was in the most perfect happiness and glory, and so in this sense "greater". That is, more blessed and glorious than he; **for this is not a comparison of natures, or of persons, but of states and conditions: now he was going to the Father to partake of the same happiness and glory with him, to be glorified with himself, with the same glory he had with him before the foundation of the world; wherefore on this account, his disciples ought to have rejoiced, and not have mourned.**

The commentator Matthew Henry does a good job of expounding on the message Christ was giving His disciples - that they needed to view the situation from His (Christ's) perspective:

... his state with his Father would be much more excellent and glorious than his present state; his returning to his Father would be the advancing of him to a much higher condition than that which he was now in. Or thus, His going to the Father himself, and bringing all his followers to him there, was the ultimate end of his undertaking, and therefore greater than the means. **Thus Christ raises the thoughts and expectations of his disciples to something greater than that in which now they thought all their happiness bound up.** The kingdom of the Father (our future heavenly kingdom), wherein he shall be all in all, will be greater than the mediatorial kingdom (i.e. the present world).

So we see in John 14:28 that Jesus was not going to stay with the disciples even though that is what they wanted and that is what would have made them happy at that point in time and that may have been how they wanted to be loved by Christ at that time. He was going to His Father, by way of the cross, even if it meant public humiliation, torture and death for himself and even if it scared his disciples to death and dashed all their hopes they had for Christ to continue on with them, blessing them and healing multitudes to a ripe old age. Theoretically, Christ's ministry could have lasted until he was ninety or a hundred and far more people could have been healed and saved (become born-again). But it was the Father's decision to do what He did when He did, to fulfill prophecy and to accomplish His good pleasure as declared in Isaiah chapter 53 and elsewhere:

“He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for **he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. **Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him;** he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, **and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.**” [Isaiah 53:8-10]**

The fact that God does things for His good pleasure FIRST AND FOREMOST does not detract from His love for His people. It should serve to remind us that He is God and therefore He has a right to do with his own what he pleases.

“Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?” [Matthew 20:15]

Who are we to tell the Almighty what He should do? He is the Potter, not us.

“Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” [Romans 9:21-24]

This mindset we have that is inherent (totally ingrained) in our fallen nature, causes us to think that we are the final arbiter of what is fair and what is not, what is just and what is unjust. We think we can even sit in judgment on God, deciding if we think His decrees and His choices are what they ought to be.

So in conclusion, we need to be careful not to assume that we know how God thinks or what God is doing or why He is doing it. We need to remind ourselves that God does not have to do what we think is fair. We also need to be aware that God's plans for our lives and for the world at large are far more

complex than we could ever imagine. But we can know God better, as we study the scriptures, taking note of how the Bible reveals to us the nature and attributes of God. If we neglect to seriously study those things, how can we expect to even come close to knowing God's thoughts and His ways in our lives?

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.” [Isaiah 55:8]
