

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 13- Luke 13:31-34

253- O Jerusalem, Jerusalem- Part 2

August 31, 2014

Luke 13:31-35

31 Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, "Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You."

32 And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I reach My goal.'

33 "Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next *day*; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem.

34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it*!

35 "Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*; and I say to you, you will not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, '**BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!**'"

To the Glory of God

Now as we began to learn last week- here we see Jesus weeping over Jerusalem and speaking tenderly about this great city, and yet- as God- Jesus knew full well that at this very moment- as He cries about how He would have gathered this great city into His Arms to save her- the rulers of Jerusalem were plotting the horrific Death of the sinless Lamb. And Jesus also knew- as God Incarnate- that at this very moment- God the Father was sovereignly working events in causing a man- who had not yet been born- to cause this man- to rise through the ranks and become the Emperor of Rome- and who- about 42 years from this very date- would command over 80,000 soldiers to utterly destroy Jerusalem.

And history reveals that this destruction would be complete as it would make all other attacks and sieges and wars against Jerusalem up to this one- pale in comparison. Because this destruction would end all Temple worship- to this day, and it would remove the Levitical Priesthood from existence, and it would stop all animal sacrifices, and it would bring to a cataclysmic end the entire function and operation of the Old Covenant upon the earth along with the entire Jewish way of life. And let me be clear about this- after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD- there was not one shred of doubt that God Almighty had poured out His Divine Judgment upon this city.

We need to understand that in 70 AD- all records in Jerusalem were destroyed, and today there is not a single Jew on earth that can trace his lineage back beyond this date, and so in reality- no Jew actually knows what tribe they're from or who their ancestors were beyond this date.

And yet Jesus cries over her and He talks about what He wanted to do; what He longed to do when He said,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!*

And so we are in the midst of trying to understand what- on the surface- *seems* to be contradictory or conflicting positions. On the one hand- we have Jesus here seemingly wanting Jerusalem to repent, while on the other hand we know it was not God's Will to save her.

Now I trust that you are already convinced in your mind and heart like me that the 66 Books of the can of Scripture does not contain any errors nor contradictions as it is perfect and complete- both in part and in whole in the original autographs. And yet we have this paradox with Jesus here in this Passage.

And so I seek to employ the concept of Sola Scriptura and use the Bible itself to interpret what the Bible is saying here in **Luke 13**, and so I want to use other areas of the Word of God to help us better understand this one.

And two of the most compelling examples of God being willing for sin to occur, or for Him to sovereignly *allow* or *permit* sin to be manifested while at the same time condemning the sin itself- is found in

God *willing* the horrific Death of His Perfect, Divine Son- Jesus Christ, and the wicked Sebeans killing Job's slaves and stealing his livestock. So let's examine both issues.

Luke 22:3 tells us that the betrayal of Jesus by Judas was a morally evil act inspired immediately by Satan when Dr. Luke wrote:

And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.

... and that would be clear enough- except that the good doctor also quoted Peter in **The Acts 2:23** who said that Jesus was,

... delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God...

So the betrayal of Jesus was sin and that sin involved the instrumentality of Satan- yet it was all part of God's ordained Plan- not only for Jesus but for all who would be saved. So from that we know that there is a sense in which God *willed* the delivering up of His Son- even though that act of betrayal was sin.

Moreover, Herod's contempt for Jesus in **Luke 23:11** and Pilate's spineless expediency in **Luke 23:24** and the Jews' "*Crucify! Crucify Him!*" in **Luke 23:21** and the Gentile soldiers' mockery in **Luke 23:36** were also sinful attitudes and deeds. Yet in **The Acts 4:27&28** Luke expresses his understanding of the Sovereignty of God in all these actions by recording the prayer of the Jerusalem saints who prayed:

27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

So Herod, Pilate, the soldiers, and the Jewish crowds- willingly and wickedly lifted their hand to rebel against the Most High only to find that their sinful and willful rebellion was unwitting service in the inscrutable Designs of God. Another way of understanding this is that God sovereignly *allowed* their rebellious sin because it furthered His Good and Holy Plans. So while it is true that God didn't *create* or *initiate* sin- it is also true that God *used* their sin- for His Glory.

So from this- we need to ask several questions:

- ✓ Was it God's Will for Jesus to be crucified? *Yes.*
- ✓ Why? *To satisfy God's Justice against Sin (Righteousness), and thereby provide Salvation to all whom God chose to save*
- ✓ Was it God's Will to allow satan to hurt Jesus? *Yes, but only to the extent that God's Will to glorify Jesus was accomplished.*
- ✓ Was it a "good thing" for satan to hurt Jesus? *Not in human terms. But God sovereignly allowed it and He worked that "bad thing" together with everything else that God either caused or allowed to come into Jesus' Life to bring about a very "Good thing".*
- ✓ Was it God's Will for Judas and the others to sin against Jesus? *God hates sin and God is always opposed to sin. Sin offends God. God never causes sin. But God allowed that sin to be manifested- but only to the degree that by allowing it- God's Greater Good is brought forth.*
- ✓ Does that makes God complicit in sin? *Not in any way. God uses the sin that already exists but He in no way causes or creates it.*
- ✓ Did God force Judas and the others to commit sin? *No, but He didn't stop them.*
- ✓ Did satan force Judas and the others to commit sin? *No, but he provided them with the opportunity to act on their own internal lust to do so (temptation).*
- ✓ Why did Judas and the others sin against Jesus? *Because they wanted to.*
- ✓ Did God judge them for committing sin? *Eventually, yes.*
- ✓ Did God love Judas and the others at all? *Yes, but not in the same way that He loves His elect.*

So from this we can see two ways in which God's absolute Sovereignty is manifested in the created Universe:

1. God actively *causes* or *creates* good/godly things
2. God passively *allows* or *permits* evil/sinful things

And the sovereign active "Causing" is always "Good", while the Sovereign "Allowance" that God passively allows or permits- can be

terribly evil, and yet both are in full accord with His overall "Will". So is God's active "causing" a manifestation of God's Will? Yes. Is God's passive allowance for other sinful things to occur- God's Will as well? Yes.

So we must understand that the active Sovereignty of God in causing certain things is in full accord with God's Will, and the passive allowing of evil and sin is endured by God- to the extent that that evil furthers and promotes God's overall Plan.

So in this case- the appalling Death of Christ was the Will and Work of God the Father in perfect accord with His Predetermined Will, while the evil of the individuals involved in Jesus' Execution was sin and was carried out because these people fully desired to do so, and, thus, their acts could be rightly condemned and judged by God.

So God receives full credit and Glory for all the Good that is done, and Mankind is held entirely responsible for all the Evil that is carried out. The prophet Isaiah wrote about this Paradox and displayed both parts when he said,

Isaiah 53:4b

... we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

and

Isaiah 53:10a

But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief...

God's Will was very much engaged in the events that brought His Son to Death on the Cross. And in the words of **Hebrews 2:10**- God considered it "fitting"...

... to perfect the Author of their salvation through sufferings

Yet, as Jonathan Edwards points out, Christ's Suffering...

"could not come to pass except by sin. For contempt and disgrace was one thing he was to suffer."

So it goes almost without saying that God wills obedience to His Moral Law. Yet God wills this in such a way that His Moral Law can be

and is rejected by most all of humanity. And this is evident from numerous texts such as:

Matthew 7:21

Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the *will (thelema) of my Father* who is in heaven.

Matthew 12:50

Whoever does *the will of my Father* in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother

1John 2:17

The one who does the will of God abides forever

Now in each of these texts- the phrase **"The Will of God"** refers to the revealed, moral instruction of both the Old and New Testaments- which *always* and in all ways- condemns sin. Therefore, in that sense- we can say that it was *not* the "Will of God" that Judas and Pilate and Herod and the Gentile soldiers and the Jewish crowds disobey the Moral Law of God by sinning in betraying Jesus and in delivering Him up to be crucified.

But we also know that in another sense- it *was* the Will of God that these horrific sins be carried out because had they not been carried out- Jesus would not have died and we would not be saved. Therefore, we can say this:

In one sense- God *wills* what He does *not* will in another sense

Another way of understanding this would be:

There are times that God *allows* that which He condemns and judges

And the second example of this is found in the OT in the Book of Job. And in **Job 1:8-11** we read:

8 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."

9 Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?

10 "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

11 "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."

And so in verse 12 we read where God said:

Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.

So God *allows* for the hedge about Job to be dropped and permits satan to take away from Job all that he has- even though he is still- at this point- prohibited from touching the flesh of this servant of God.

And so God sovereignly *permits* an "evil" to occur- in this case- God *allows* satan to attack Job and take from Job that which God had blessed Job with. And as we study this OT Book- we see that the only reason why God allows this evil to occur is so that by *allowing* or *permitting* this evil to occur to a very measured degree- God's "Greater Good", or God's Will, is brought about "in" and "through" Job's life.

Now the *way* that satan attacks Job is by stirring up the inward, sinful lust that already abides in a group of fallen, evil, and unsaved people called "The Sabeans"... in order to bring about God's Will in Job's life.

Now the first time the hedge is removed or dropped or lessened allows satan to "take all that he has only touch not his flesh", while the second removal or dropping of the hedge allows for Job's flesh to be touched by evil but "spare his life".

So from this- we can see several Biblical Truths:

- ✓ Satan can only do what God *allows* him to do
- ✓ Satan *cannot* cross over the hedge of protection that God has around His people unless God sovereignly wills to drop or remove that the hedge
- ✓ The only reason why God removes the hedge and allows evil to come to His Own children is that by allowing that evil to that degree- a greater Good is brought forth

- ✓ Life is always firmly in God's Hands

Now one of the manifestations of satan being allowed by God to "take all that he has" is the sudden death of the seven sons and three daughters of Job by a storm. And that is fairly easy for us to grasp because it has to do with an inanimate object- a storm. So God *actively* removed the hedge of protection in order to *passively* allow satan to wreck havoc in Job's life through what we call "a natural disaster".

But another manifestation involves God passively allowing other people- sinful and evil people- to do harm (evil/sin) to God's chosen man- and that is much harder for us to understand. Look at **Job 1:13-15:**

13 Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house,

14 a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them,

15 and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

So these unsaved and pagan people- the Sabeans- were *allowed* by God to steal Job's oxen and donkeys and kill Job's slaves. Now at this point- we need to ask several questions:

- ✓ Was it God's Will for Job to be tried? *Yes.*
- ✓ Why? *Job was saved and it was God's Will to sanctify him.*
- ✓ Was it God's Will to allow satan to hurt Job? *Yes, but only to the extent that God's Will to sanctify Job was accomplished.*
- ✓ Was it a "good thing" for satan to hurt Job? *Not in human terms. But God sovereignly allowed it and He worked that "bad thing" together with everything else that God either caused or allowed to come into Job's life to bring about a very "Good thing".*
- ✓ Was it God's Will for the Sabeans to commit sin? *God hates sin and God is always opposed to sin. Sin offends God. God never causes sin. But God allows for sin to exist- but only to the degree that by allowing it- God's Greater Good is brought forth.*
- ✓ Does that makes God complicit in sin? *Not in any way. God uses the sin that already exists but He in no way causes or creates it.*
- ✓ Did God force the Sabeans to commit sin? *No.*

- ✓ Did satan force the Sabeans to commit sin? *No, but he provided them with the opportunity to act on their own internal lust to do so (temptation).*
- ✓ Why did the Sabeans steal and kill? *Because they wanted to.*
- ✓ Did God judge them for committing sin? *Eventually, yes.*
- ✓ Did God love the Sabeans at all? *Yes, but not in the same way that He loved Job.*

So from this we can deduce that the Sabeans wanted to attack Job's possessions and kill his servants way before now- but they were sovereignly prevented from doing so by the hedge that God had placed around Job. In fact- they probably wanted to kill Job, too- but were never allowed to act out on that part of their evil and sinful hearts. So even in allowing sin to exist- we can see that God is in complete and total control- even to the most minute detail.

So, is it God's Will for people to sin? No. Is it God's Will for sin to exist? Yes, but only to the degree that by allowing sin to exist- God's greater Good is manifested. Now please go to **The Revelation 17** for two verses:

The Revelation 17:16&17

16 "And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.

17 "For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.

Now there are two reasons that we need to read and understand this Passage:

1. We need to see that the war against the Son of God- which reached its sinful climax at the Cross- comes to final consummation in a way that confirms what we have already seen about The Will of God.
2. This text reveals John's understanding of God's active involvement in fulfilling prophecies- whose fulfillment involves sinning.

And without going into all the details of this Passage- we see that the Apostle John has a vision of some final events of history:

- ❖ The beast "comes out of the abyss" (**The Revelation 17:8**)
- ❖ And he is the personification of evil and rebellion against God
- ❖ The ten horns are ten kings (v. 12)
- ❖ They "wage war against the Lamb" (v. 14).

Now waging war against the Lamb of God is sin and sin is contrary to the Will of God. Nevertheless, look again at what the angel says here,

For God has put it in their hearts [the ten kings] to execute His Purpose [to do God's Will] by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.

Therefore, we see that God willed to *allow* the hearts of the ten kings to do what they wanted to do anyway and join together in war against the Lamb. And so God *permitted* them to do that which is against God's Will. And what does John say is the reason *why* God allowed or permitted this evil to be manifested?

... until the words of God will be fulfilled.

So the ten kings will be allowed to collaborate with the beast "**until the words of God shall be fulfilled**". This implies something very crucial about John's understanding of the fulfillment of "the prophecies leading up to the overthrow of Antichrist." It implies that (at least in John's view) God's prophecies are not mere predictions which God knows will happen, but rather prophecies are actually "Divine Intentions" which God means to assure will actually happen.

And we know this because verse 17 says that *God is passively allowing that which is against His Will (sin) to occur*- which in this case is that the ten kings make league with the beast and make war against the Lamb.

And so the Apostle John is not exulting in the marvelous Foreknowledge of God to simply *predict* a sinful event that will come

about at some point in the future- but He is rejoicing in the marvelous Sovereignty of God Who makes sure that the sinful event is allowed- but only to the degree that God's Word will be fulfilled. So, in John's mind- prophecy is not merely a prediction- but also a Divine Promise of future Performance.

And this is hugely important because John tells us in his Gospel Account that there are Old Testament prophecies of events surrounding the Death of Christ that involve particular acts of sin. And that means that God intends to passively allow those sinful events that involve things that He actively forbids and will damn. And those events include acts like:

- ✓ Judas' betrayal of Jesus (**John 13:18; Psalm 41:9**)
- ✓ The hatred Jesus received from his enemies (**John 15:25; Psalm 69:4; 35:19**)
- ✓ The casting of lots for Jesus' clothing (**John 19:24; Psalm 22:18**)
- ✓ The piercing of Jesus' Side (**John 19:36-37; Exodus 12:46; Psalm 34:20; Zechariah 12:10**).

And John expresses his understanding of God's Sovereignty with statements like:

These things happened *in order that* the Scripture might be fulfilled.

... in other words the events were not a coincidence that God merely foresaw- but rather a pre-determined Plan which God *purposed* to bring about that involved Him allowing some aspects of sin to be manifested in order that a greater Good could come about.

Now another evidence to demonstrate God's allowing one state of affairs to exist that He disapproves of is the testimony of Scripture that God wills to harden some men's hearts so that they become obstinate in persisting in their sinful behavior- which behavior God disapproves of.

Of course- the most well- known example is the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Back in **Exodus 8:1** the Lord says to Moses,

... Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

In other words- God's Command (which is just another way of saying "God's Will") is that Pharaoh let the Israelites go. Nevertheless, from the very start- we also see that God allowed or permitted that Pharaoh *not* let the Israelites go. In **Exodus 4:21** God says to Moses,

... When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

Now that is the equivalent of God telling us today,

"Go and speak my Word to this person- and by the way- I have hardened his heart so that he will not listen to you."

And at one point- in **Exodus 10:17**- even Pharaoh himself freely acknowledged that his unwillingness to let the people go was sin when he said:

... forgive my sin...

... so what we see is that God commands that Pharaoh do something that God Himself doesn't allow him to do. So the "good thing" that God commands- God works to prevent. And the thing that God *does* bring about or that God *allows* to be brought about in Pharaoh's life- is sin.

Now listen. I am well aware that most people would not touch this issue with a twenty-foot pole. It is just too deep to comprehend at times. But I suggest to you that these paradoxical verses are in the Bible for a reason and that reason is not so that we will not at least *try* to understand them. And I also suggest to you that it is the unwillingness on the part of almost everybody in the modern Church to tackle hard issues like this as to why we invent silly and shallow doctrines to try to explain this stuff that- amazingly- almost always have to do with some form of the supremacy of human self-determination- which I refuse to agree with.

Now some have tried to avoid this implication by pointing out that during the first five plagues- the text does not say explicitly that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, but simply that it "was hardened" (**Exodus 7:22; 8:19; 9:7**), or that Pharaoh hardened his *own* heart (**Exodus 8:15,32**),

and that only in the sixth plague does it say explicitly "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" (**Exodus 9:12; 10:20,27; 11:10; 14:4**).

For example, two Anglican writers, R.T. Forster and V.P. Marston say that only from the sixth plague on- God gave Pharaoh a...

"supernatural strength to continue with his evil path of rebellion"

But even if Forster and Marston are right that God was not willing for Pharaoh's heart to be hardened during the first five plagues- they concede that for the last five plagues God *does* will this- at least in the sense of not stopping Pharaoh in continuing on in his path of rebellion.

So there is a sense in which God *does* allow Pharaoh go on refusing to let the people go- even while in another sense- desiring that Pharaoh release the people or else He would have never said,

"Let my people go."

And this illustrates why theologians talk about:

- The "Will of Command" ("**Let My people go!**")
- The "Will of Decree" ("**God hardened Pharaoh's heart**").

But I want you to understand that this account in **Exodus** is not a unique instance of God's acting in this way. For example- in **Deuteronomy 2:26&27**- when the people of Israel reached the land of Sihon- king of Heshbon, Moses sent messengers...

26 ...with words of peace, saying,

27 'Let me pass through your land, I will travel only on the highway; I will not turn aside to the right or to the left.

Now even though this request should have caused Sihon to treat the people of God with respect- since it was God's Will for His people to be blessed rather than attacked- nevertheless, verse 30 says:

But Sihon king of Heshbon was not willing for us to pass through his land; for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, in order to deliver him into your hand, as *he is* today.

In other words- God *allowed* Sihon to act in a way that was contrary to God's Will. Likewise- the violent and bloody conquest of the cities of Canaan is due to the fact that God was willing to allow the kings of the land to *resist* Joshua rather than make peace with him.

Joshua 11:19&20

19 There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle.

20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

In view of this, it is difficult to imagine what people are reading when they say that the "will of God" is always to be thought of in terms of loving desire and intention rather than in terms of God's effective Purpose of Judgment. What seems more plain from the Bible is that when the time has come for Judgment- God *permits* the guilty to do things that are against His Will- like cursing Israel rather than blessing her.

And this hardening Work of God was not limited to non-Israelites. In fact, it plays a central role in the life of Israel in this period of history. In **Romans 11:7&8** Paul speaks of Israel's failure to obtain either the Righteousness or the Salvation it desired:

7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

8 just as it is written, "*GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.*"

So even though it is the Command of God that His people see and hear and respond in faith (**Isaiah 42:18**), nevertheless God also has His Reasons for sending a "spirit of stupor" at times so that some will *not* obey His Command.

Jesus expressed this very same Truth when He explained that one of the purposes of Him speaking in Parables to the Jews of His day was to bring about this judicial blinding or stupor. As we have already studied in **Luke 8:10**- Jesus told His disciples,

To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is* in parables, so that *SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND.*

Here again, God wills that a condition prevail which he regards as blameworthy. His will is that they turn and be forgiven (**Mark 1:15**), but he acts in a way to restrict the fulfillment of that will.

Paul pictures this divine hardening as part of an overarching plan that will involve salvation for Jew and Gentile. In **Romans 11:25&26** he says to his Gentile readers,

**25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;
26 and so all Israel will be saved...**

Now the fact that this "hardening" has an appointed end—

"until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in"

... shows that it is part of God's Plan rather than a merely contingent event outside God's Purpose. Nevertheless, Paul expresses not only his but also God's Heart when he says in **Romans 10:1**,

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.

So God holds out His Hands to a rebellious people (**Romans 10:21**), but ordains a hardening that consigns them for a time to disobedience. This is the point of **Romans 11:31&32** where Paul speaks to his Gentile readers again about the disobedience of Israel in rejecting their Messiah and says:

31 so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

32 For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

So when Paul says that Israel was disobedient "**so that**" the Gentiles might get the benefits of the Gospel- exactly *Whose Purpose* does he have in mind? It can only be God's. For Israel did not in any way conceive of their *own* disobedience as a way of blessing the Gentiles or of winning mercy for themselves in such a round- about fashion. So the point of **Romans 11:31** is that God's hardening of Israel is not an end in itself- but is simply a part of an infinitely greater saving Purpose that will embrace all the nations!

But in the short run- if we are to be Biblical- we are forced to say that God *allows* a condition (a hardness of heart) which He commands people to strive against. (**Do not harden your heart- Hebrews 3:8, 15; 4:7**).

Another line of Biblical evidence that God sometimes allows what He patently disapproves of- is His choosing to use or not to use His "Right" to restrain evil in the human heart. **Proverbs 21:1** says,

The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.

And a perfect illustration of this "Divine Right" over the king's heart is given in **Genesis 20**. There Abraham is sojourning in Gerar and says to king Abimelech that Sarah is his sister. So Abimelech takes her as part of his harem. But God is displeased and warns him in a dream that she is married to Abraham. Abimelech protests to God that he had taken her in his integrity. And God says (in verse 6),

... Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.

Now what sticks out here in this verse is that God has both the "Right" and the "Power" to restrain the sins of secular rulers. And when God chooses to act on that Right and exercise that Power- it is His Will to do so. And that part is fairly easy to understand. But then we also must say that when God chooses not to exercise that Divine Right and He chooses *not* to restrain the sins of secular leaders and He allows or

permits the evil or some of the evil that is in their hearts to be manifested- then it is in those difficult times that we also must say that it was God's Will as well. Which is simply to say that sometimes it is God's Will that He interfere with Man's plans and that He inserts Himself into the situation to sovereignly restrain or hinder or minimize or reduce or outright eliminate the evil that is in the heart of Man to be manifested while sometimes God passively permits or allows that their wickedness increase more.

And regardless of how hard this may be for us to grasp- we must acknowledge that this is not an unjust infringement on human accountability that the Creator has the Right and Power to forcefully restrain the evil actions of His Own creatures and that we remain fully accountable for what we do, and we *can be* and we *will be* judged for not doing the right thing. **Psalm 33:10&11** says,

10 The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples.

11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.

So what are we to say about all this? I suggest that as we comprehend the vastness and mystery of God's Will that- at a minimum- we join in with Paul and cry:

Romans 11:33-36

33 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.

... and that we join in with the sinful tax collector who prayed...

Luke 18:13b

... God, be merciful to me, the sinner!

Amen. Let's pray