

SOME MISTAKEN
SCRIPTURES
SINCERELY EXPLAINED

In Answer to One Infected With Some Pelagian Errors.

BY

BENJAMIN COX

When He Was First Prisoner in Coventrie.

Now Published by the Author for the Clearing of the Truth.

1 Corinthians 2:14

*The Natural Man Receives Not the Things of the Spirit of
God, for They Are Foolishness Unto Him, Neither Can He
Know Them, Because They are Spiritually Discerned.*

Licensed and Entered According to Order.

LONDON
PRINTED BY THOMAS PAINE, LIVING IN RED-CROSS-STREET IN
GOLD-SMITHS ALLEY, OVER AGAINST THE SUGAR LOAF.

1646

Copyright (Public Domain)

www.reformedontheweb.com/home/.html

(Reformed on the Web)

Some Mistaken Scriptures Sincerely Explained, in Answer to One Infected With Some Pelagian Errors

Whereas you say that some Scriptures seem to hold forth unto you that a man has a free-will, I desire you, for your better information, to take notice of these two Propositions:

Proposition 1.

We do not simply deny that a man has any freedom of will, but only do hold that no natural man, not any man of himself, has a sufficient power, or freedom of will, unto the choosing of that way, which is good and right, and acceptable in the sight of God. To the choosing of evil ways, we grant that every natural mans has freed enough, if so be this may be termed by so good a name as Freedom. Consequently, we do not hold that any man is compelled or enforced by violence to choose the evil, or to refuse the good, but that through the corruption of nature man unrenewed does willingly and willfully refuse the good way and chooses the evil way. Whereas the unregenerate person can do no otherwise, this is not the fruit of any force or compulsion laid upon him, but only of the obstinate wickedness, or wicked obstinacy of his own corrupted and depraved will. The truth hereof appear by these Scriptures, Gen. 8:21; Eccles. 9:3; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19; Romans 3:9, 10, 11; Romans 8:6-8; James 1:13-15; John 8:44.

Proposition 2.

The elect do indeed, with unfeigned willingness, obey *the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, and choose *the Lord to be their God*, but this they do *when they are effectually called*, and *not before*. This they do, *not of themselves*, not only by the well using of an ability or power *given to all men*, but by the special grace of God, afforded to them, *Who works in them both to will and to do and this according to the good pleasure of His own will concerning them from all eternity*. The truth of this *appears* in these places, Isaiah 54:13; compared with John 6:44, 45, 64, 65; Ezek. 36:26, 27; Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4, 5, 11; Phil. 1:29; Phil. 2:13; James 1:18.

These Propositions *being thus laid down and cleared*, I come now to consider those Scriptures which you name to prove that a man has free will or free choice, Deut. 30:19; Joshua 24:15, 22; Judges 10:14; Isaiah 65:12; and 66:13;

I Kings 3:5-11; Psalms 119:30; Luke 10:42.

Deut. 30:19

*I call heaven and earth to record this day against you,
that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing,
therefore choose life, &c.*

Answer

This place shows what was the *duty of the Israelites* to do, but it does not prove that they had any ability of themselves *to do it*, or that God gives any such ability *to all men*. Compare this place with 2 Corinthians 3:5 and Deut. 29:4.

Joshua 24:15

*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord,
choose you this day whom you will
serve, &c.*

Answer

Here I somewhat question what part of the verse you would have especially to be opened, whether this: "*Choose you this day whom you will serve,*" or this "*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" The first implies that Idolaters do freely choose those Idols, with which they commit spiritual whoredome. *Freely*, that is to say, *not being enforced or compelled thereunto by any violence constraining them to this motion of their will*. This is not denied, but *acknowledged and held by us*, as you may see in the first proposition. The last part of the verse holds forth the free and constant resolution of the Saints to serve the Lord. *This also is taught in my second proposition*. But there you must likewise remember, that this is the fruit of the special grace of God afforded to the Elect, Who works in them both to will and to do, Phil. 2:13. *This work is wrought by the infinite power of God*, Ephesians 1:19 and 3:10.

Joshua 24:22

*You are witnesses against yourselves that you have
chosen you the Lord, to serve Him.*

Answer

This is meant directly and only of that which went before in verse 21. "*The people said unto Joshua, Nay, but we will serve the Lord.*" They who were

Israelites indeed, *did in truth and sincerity make this promise and choice*, but they did not this of themselves, but *through the special grace of God*, as has been proved already.

Judges 10:14

Go and cry unto the Gods which ye have chosen.

Isaiah 65:12

*When I speak, you did not hear,
but did evil before mine eyes and did chose that
wherein I delighted not.*

Isaiah 66:3

*They have chosen their own ways,
and their soul delights in their abominations.*

Answer

These *three places* imply no more than what we clearly hold, as you may see in my first proposition.

1 Kings 3:5, 6, 9, 10

*God said, ask what I shall give thee,
And Solomon said, Give thy servant an
understanding heart, and the speech pleased the Lord,
that Solomon had asked this thing.*

Answer

This places seems to you to import, that Solomon did freely make choice to ask of God for an understand to here judgment. *This we deny not.* But consider also that *this choice and petition was the fruit the wisdom and grace which God had already given him.* Compare this place with Zech. 12:10, "*I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabits of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of supplication,*" See also Romans 8:26.

Psalms 119:30

I have chosen the Way of Truth.

Luke 10:42

Mary has chosen that good part.

True, but it was the special grace of God, the *special, gracious and powerful work of God's spirit*, which caused David and Mary to make that good

choice, as also has been already proved. Thus, I am done with your first catalogue of tests of Scripture. Your second catalogue contains certain places, in which (as you conceive) the promises of God do depend upon our doing of His commands. Hereto I answer first more generally:

Second Catalogue of Scriptures

The Scripture promises eternal life to those who *obey the Gospel of Christ*, Hebrews 5:9; and threatens eternal destruction *to the disobedient*, John 3:36; 2 Thess 1:8. Thus we acknowledge and thus we teach. But consider that which I have also already proved, that *the elect of God perform this obedience through God's special Grace*, and that *this special grace is freely given to them of God according to His own purpose concerning them from all eternity*, and that *God has freely promised this grace to His elect*. All this appears by places of Scripture already alleged for the confirmation of my second proposition.

Thus I descend to consider more particularly the places of Scripture that you here present unto me, viz., Lev. 26:3; and Isaiah 1:19; Proverbs 1:23; Jer. 7:13; Matthew 19:17; Matthew 11:28; Matthew 11:21; Matthew 23:37; Luke 16:16; Jeremiah 3:22.

Lev. 26:3

*If ye walk in my statutes,
and keep my commandments, and do then,
then I will give you, &c.*

Answer

Here we must remember:

1. That since Adam's fall no mere man either did or could keep God's commandments and do them according to the rigor and strictness of the Law, Eccles. 7:20.
2. That where as the Elect among the Israelites did truly believe in the promised Messiah, and did show the truth of their faith by the sincerity of their obedience to God's revealed will in every thing, this was the fruit of God's special grace to them afforded, Numbers 14:24; Psalms 119:22,36. These clear truths may also free you from your doubts that seem to arise from the next place by you mentioned, viz. Isaiah 1:19.

Proverbs 1:23

*Turn you at my reproof, behold I will pour out my spirit unto you,
I will make known my words unto you.*

Answer

The former part of this verse is an exhortation. It is the *conceit of some* that *such exhortations do always imply that the persons exhorted have a sufficient ability in them to obey the exhortation directed unto them*. But *this conceit is a mere presumption*, not only without ground, but also *against the Scripture*, as in John 6:65, and other places. It is demanded, *why then are such exhortations used*, I answer,

1. To mind the persons exhorted of their duty, and to leave them the more inexcusable in their willful disobedience.
2. Because the Lord is pleased to work powerfully upon the Elect by such exhortations.

The latter part of this verse contains a promise. You (as it seems) conceive the promise to be here made only unto those who obey the exhortation afore going. *Be it so*. Only remember then, *that they which obey the exhortation, do obey the same through God's special grace, and that the promise serves to assure them of the continuance and increase of grace*.

Jeremiah 7:13

*And now because you have done all this work,
said the Lord and I spake unto you,
rising up early, and speaking, but ye heard not,
and I called you, but you answered not.*

Answer

If you consider this verse only, and read no further, it only holds forth the goodness and patience of God, in admonishing and exhorting the stubborn Jews and their willful and obstinate disobedience to God's Word. If you read the verses following also, this Scripture minds you that the disobedience and obstinacy of the Jews was the cause of their destruction. All these things we readily acknowledge neither do they make any thing at all against us.

Matthew 19:17

If you will enter into life, keep the commandments.

Answer

Here you must consider to whom our Savior spake this, viz., of one who sought to establish his own righteousness, and to get Heaven by his own doing of the good works which the Law required, who accordingly had propounded this question, "*What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?*" The meaning of our Savior's answer is this, *if thou wilt think to get eternal life this way, you must keep the commandments, that is, you must be found as a person not any way guilty of any transgression against God's commandments.* This was a thing of mere and utter impossibility and our Savior's scope in returning to him this answer, was to discover unto him the vanity and madness of his proud and foolish imagination. Thus, this place rightly understood has not in it the least show of opposition against our doctrine.

Matthew 11:28

Come unto me all you who labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Answer

Here Christ promises to give rest, not to all persons whatsoever, but only to those laboring and heavy laden ones who come to Him, namely by *a true faith in Him.* This makes nothing against us. It still remnant true that they, and only they, *do thus come unto Christ, in whose hearts God works lively faith. This God works in His Elect and only in them.*

Matthew 11:21

Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, &c.

Answer

The manifest scope of our Savior in this place, is to show the open inexcusable essence of the impenitence and unbelief of Chorazin and Bethsaida. The last words of the verse, from which your doubt arises, may be understood to be a figurative speech, like unto that in Luke 19:40, "If these should hold their peace, the stones should immediately cry out." Otherwise the words may be thus rendered, "They had possibly repented, or, They would possibly have repented." This translation would be found well to

agree to the signification of the potential particle which is here used in the Greek. Then this will be the true and easy interpretation of this passage, viz., "A man would think they should have repented." Beyond this, this place must not be stretched, For no interpretation must be given of any place of Scripture, which shall indeed make it to contradict the Scripture itself in other places.

Matthew 23:37

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a Hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not.

Answer

The meaning is this, How often have I graciously afforded unto the people of Jerusalem excellent means of salvation? But the stubborn people of Jerusalem have willfully refused to accept of those means of salvation, and to profit by the same. This is all that this place does import, and this makes nothing at all against us.

Luke 16:16

The Law and the Prophets were until John, since that time the kingdom of God is preached and every man, &c.

Answer

The words in this verse which you would have to be opened are thus commonly rendered: "The kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it," suppose this translation to be right and the meaning to be the same that our common expositions have held forth in this ensuing interpretation; "Every man, that is to say, many men or every order and degree of men presseth into it," that is, with willingness and forwardness receives the doctrine of the kingdom and so entering into the kingdom of God. Suppose I say that this were indeed the meaning of this place, yet it would be found to make nothing at all against us. For still it will remain true, that the Elect do this through God's special grace. But the truth is, that this interpretation does not teach our Savior's meaning in this place. The words should thus be rendered; "every man offereth violence unto it." The meaning is this, "every man," that is, the whole world of ungodly men, offered violence unto it, that is, makes a violent opposition against the kingdom of God and the preaching thereof, See Matthew 11:12, compared with verse 16-18, &c.

Jer. 3:22

Return ye backsliding children, &c.

Answer

In this verse is contained:

- 1.** An exhortation, Return ye, backsliding children;
- 2.** A Promise, I will heal your backslidings.

This promise you understand to belong only unto those who obey the aforesaid exhortation. Even so this makes nothing against us, but perfectly agrees with our doctrine. But let me here mind you that this promise may be understood not only to be a promise of pardon to them who repent, but also a promise of the gift of repentance to the Elect, see Jeremiah 31:33, 34 and Acts 5:31. The particle and here inferred, seems to make against this. But this need not trouble us, since it is only a supplement or addition of the translations, and is not in the text.

- 3.** A Profession of repentance and faith, Behold, we come unto thee, for thou are the Lord our God. You must understand this to be the speech of the Elect endued with God's special grace, see Jeremiah 31:18, 19.

Thus according to your request, according to the ability which God has given to me, I have opened the Scriptures that you have mentioned. The Lord open your understanding, that you may discern the truth and acknowledge the same to the glory of God.

FINIS