

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Some Blessings are Conditional

For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. (1 Peter 3:10–12, KJV 1900)

Regardless the idea, if you read or talk to people at any length, you'll find extreme ideas on both sides of Biblical truth. In the area of Biblical discipleship, you will see this broken bent toward extremes manifest quite clearly. One extreme view holds that God remains aloof and does nothing whatever to influence His children to obey Him. The other extreme holds that He does everything, effectively controlling not only His people, but all people and events as if dangled on the end of a set of cosmic puppet strings. Another fatalistic view holds that God irresistibly causes the regenerate elect person to do everything good that he/she does, but that the individual is somehow left to sin. This view never addresses the obvious contradiction. If God irresistibly causes every good action that we take, why does He ever leave us to sin? More fundamental to this error, where in Scripture can advocates of this idea find that God ever "Leaves" His people, especially in such a predicament that they shall inevitably sin? No such Scripture exists, but many passages directly contradict the idea.

*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will **never leave thee**, nor forsake thee. (Hebrews 13:5; emphasis added)*

Sometimes advocates of this errant view will veil their error by such words as "God is 100% responsible for my obedience, and I am 100% responsible for my sins." Every Scripture that **commands the believer to do** certain things for the glory of God contradicts this claim. If God is 100% responsible for our good deeds, no commandment is necessary. In fact any commandment that appears in Scripture directly contradicts this claim, for, if God does 100% in our faith-walk, that idea leaves zero percent for us. God is indeed 100% responsible for our new birth and for our eternal inheritance, but Scripture never teaches that He is likewise 100% responsible for our acts of faith and obedience. By the indwelling Holy Spirit, He unquestionably convicts and directs us to active life in the path of righteousness, but Scripture does not teach that He puppeteers our acts of obedience. In the passage cited, Paul

begins the verse with a commandment, "**Let** your conversation be...." We may do this, or we may choose not to do so. The language in no way implies an absolute and irresistible divine impetus. Paul's point deals with covetousness. If we fully believe the Lord's promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," we have no reason whatever to covet anything that is not ours already. If we need something that is good for us and that glorifies the Lord, He has promised to provide it, no less than He clothes the lilies of the field. However, Scripture teaches that children of God can and, at times, do fall into covetousness. One of God's Ten Commandments deals with this particular sin, "Thou shalt not covet," (Exodus 20:17) and the commandment gives several examples of things that we should not covet. Paul's exhortation in Hebrews 13:3 warns believers of the danger of their falling into a covetous attitude.

A greater objection to this errant, fatalistic idea that God irresistibly causes every good deed that we perform deals with His moral character. If God knows that "Leaving us," even for a moment, predicts our sinning, advocates of this idea cannot evade the consequences of their belief; like it or not, at the least, they make God the indirect cause of sin by His "Leaving us," something that Scripture repeatedly and clearly repudiates. According to Scripture, temptation to sin grows out of our own sinful disposition, not out of God's supposed and unbiblical abandonment.

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. (James 1:14)
In this context, do not overlook the prior verse. No one can say, when he is tempted, "I am tempted of God." If we fall into sin because God abandons us, even for a second, then God indirectly caused the temptation. Blasphemy!

Paul repudiates this errant idea in Romans 3:1-9. He reasons in these verses that, if God puts Himself in the position of using our sin to enhance His righteousness, He becomes an accessory to our sin and should face trial for the sin, not act as Judge of it, Paul's specific conclusion.

For he that will love life and see good days....
Peter addresses the will of a regenerated (Born

again) person, whose will has been changed by grace. Desiring the good life and days that end with godly joy grows out of the will of a born again person. However, as Peter teaches in this lesson, desiring the good life, as God defines goodness, and seeing good days in this world is not an automatic event. And the impetus that brings us to this godly and contented outcome begins with our conscious, willing desire to conduct our lives so as to glorify our God in what we say and do.

...let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. "Let" does not indicate an exclusive act of God; it rather puts the weight of responsibility on the believer who desires good days and a life that honors the love of God. "Let" means that we must make the conscious choice to control our speech, to avoid speaking evil or guile. The indwelling Holy Spirit convicts and provides the ability, but He does not force or irresistibly cause our actions. Have you ever spoken evil or words of guile? Ever? If so, you chose to do so; God didn't cause you to do it. Nor did He "Leave" you, so that you could not possibly do otherwise.

From the beginning of humanity in the Garden of Eden, God established a moral universe, and He rules over this universe as its Moral Governor. According to Scripture, He shall likewise end this universe with His moral judgment of sinful humanity. He commands obedience to His Law. He shall punish violations against His Law. If He in any way, directly or indirectly, contributed to our sins, He thereby compromises His moral governance and His moral character. A Moral Governor cannot rightly judge or punish the very behavior that He indirectly caused, as in the errant notion that He "Leaves us" on occasions. Why embrace an idea that contradicts Scripture?

James takes away all rationalizations for our sins. We may join Adam and Eve and attempt to blame God for our sins, as with the unbiblical claim that God "Leaves us" for a season, but we are no more right in our bogus claims than Adam and Eve were in theirs. God is no more responsible for our sins than He was for Adam's and Eve's. Not even indirectly. The cause for sin in the life of a child of God is our choice to follow our own lust and enticement. So do we desire to love a godly life and see good days? If so, God tells us what to do. Start with controlling your tongue.

Let him eschew evil, and do good. To "eschew" evil does not mean to embrace it, or to blame God for it. It demands that we avoid it in every way possible. To "Eschew" something means that we consciously swerve, alter our course so as to avoid it. Peter's words define a two-pronged attack against sin in our lives. We stifle any form of evil, and we invest all of our energy and labors to doing good. While the word "Good" may be used in a utilitarian way to describe something that performs well, its use in Scripture normally includes a moral quality. *"...he hath shewed thee, O man, what is good..."* (Micah 6:8; emphasis added)

...let him seek peace, and ensue it. To "Ensue" something means that we consciously and energetically pursue it. "Seek," "eschew," "ensue;" none of these words permits the passivity implied by fatalistic error in any of its forms, including the "God does 100% of my good" idea. Along with an endless multitude of Scriptures, this passage lays a specific responsibility onto the regenerated believer to take some personal action.

Many years ago a good friend told me a wise saying that his father taught him. When someone "Pursues" fatalistic leanings in his beliefs, you may rest assured. This person has either done something highly sinful, or he intends shortly to do so, and he wants to blame God for his sin.

We then as workers together with him... (2 Corinthians 6:1; emphasis added) repudiates the fatalistic claims that we have here examined. If God performs 100% of the work necessary for our good works, there can be no working *"...together with him."* If He does it all, nothing is left for us to do; He supposedly does 100%. Scripture consistently affirms that the born again person has been endowed with certain undeniable abilities and convictions that reside permanently within. According to Scripture, we may obey the leading and convicting of the Holy Spirit, His Law written indelibly in our hearts and minds, or we may choose to disobey. When we obey, we work "together with him." When we disobey, we work against Him, and He certainly doesn't work together with us in our sins. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18) The outcome of a godly working together with Him brings the accepted time, the day of salvation; see the context of the passage in 2 Corinthians 6.

Our refusal to obey brings His chastening. *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.* When people with a quickened conscience choose to sin, they seek ways to hide their actions. Peter comforts and warns us that we can hide nothing from the Lord. He sees everything about us—all the time. Even when we stumble through our prayers, His ears are open and attentive to us. What a comforting encouragement to think that our Lord never misses a single moment of our life or of the many needs that we encounter. And the verse also includes a powerful warning. When we choose to think or do evil of any kind or degree, His face is **against** us. Do not think that anything you consider doing that contradicts God's commandments, the Biblical faith-walk, shall long prosper. When God opposes a person, his efforts shall surely fail. Oh, they may appear to succeed for a brief time (Hebrews 11:24-28), but in the end they shall utterly fail. We may work together with the Lord in pursuit of godliness, or we may face His frowning, opposing face. He commands obedience. If we *"...will love life, and see good days,"* our study passage shows us the way. What shall we do? Which path shall we take?

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor