

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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## Don't Blame God for the Dishonorable

*Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. (1 Timothy 6:15–16, KJV 1900)*

Sometime in the 1970s, I attended a meeting in northern California on a Sunday morning. A man invited me to visit a regional conference of another denomination in the afternoon, so I accepted and attended. The group claimed the Baptist name, as well as a rather conservative philosophy of their faith. Since I'd studied some about this group in my historical research, I was interested to learn more about them. They strongly professed belief in an old confession of faith that many of our people respect. They were Baptist, claimed the same confession, and were strongly conservative. It all shaped up to be an interesting afternoon. The first speaker in the afternoon service introduced the lesson of Joseph from the fiftieth chapter of Genesis. He did a respectable job of summarizing the extensive history of Joseph's life that built to the conclusion in the chapter he read. He was articulate and descriptive in his presentation. He had my attention. About halfway through the sermon, he arrived at Genesis 50:20.

*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. (Genesis 50:20, KJV 1900)*

He read the verse, paused, and read it again. Then another pause of several seconds during which he glanced over the entire audience. When he finally broke the silence, despite an effective sound system, he literally shouted, "Absolute predestination of all things." He devoted the remainder of his sermon to trying to prove what he could not prove, either from this verse or from any other passage in the Bible. He tried to make God the instigator, the cosmic puppeteer, of every evil episode in Joseph's life. Why could the man not prove his point from this verse? Without excessive detail, I offer two clear reasons.

1. First, Joseph clearly refers to his brothers' sinful motives when he uses the word "thought." What did they think that motivated them to despise Joseph and to eventually sell him to the Midianite merchants? (Genesis 37:28) Further, "...God meant it unto good..." also

addresses God's motive. Motive not only appears in the English words of the passage, but, interestingly, the same Hebrew word was translated by the two English words in the passage, "Thought," and "Meant." Since Joseph sets his brothers' motive in parallel to God's, we can no more attribute every event subsequent to Joseph's being sold to the Midianites to God than we can attribute them to his brothers. To attribute all the dreadful trials in this era of Joseph's life to God contradicts every moral tenet of honor that we learn from Scripture. It fails the "Honor God" litmus test of Scripture for what God does.

What then did Joseph have in mind when he referred to his brothers' thinking and God's "...meant..."? What prompted the brothers' resentment of Joseph? What occurred in Joseph's dream that so enraged his brothers? Despite him being their junior, the dream described them as bowing down to him. What happened repeatedly later in Egypt? (Genesis 42:6; 43:26; 43:28) I wonder. Did either Joseph or his brothers think back to that dream and realize its fulfillment in these moments?

We need not doubt that God gave Joseph the dream as a prophecy of what lay ahead for Joseph. And we cannot doubt that the dream came to pass, honoring God's intent.

2. Joseph refers to whatever he has in mind in Genesis 50:20 regarding God's action by the singular pronoun "It," not by a plural word. I suggest that the "It" that enraged Joseph's brothers so that they eventually sold him to the Midianites, and the "It" to which Joseph refers in Genesis 50:20 is the dream that God gave him in his youth. God had good intentions in the dream, and, despite his sinful brothers' rage, despite Potiphar's wife's entrapment and false accusation, despite all that could have destroyed Joseph, God revealed in this dream that He had good things in store for Joseph, and that He would preserve Joseph through all his trials, eventually fulfilling the dream, as we see in the forty second and forty third

chapters of Genesis. "It," a singular pronoun, is hardly an appropriate word to refer to several decades of history in Joseph's life. "It" rationally and logically refers to one event, a single episode, the dream that God gave in prophecy to Joseph.

The man who shouted "Absolute predestination of all things" failed to make his case, as do those who follow his belief, because the idea fails the "Honor God" test that Scripture consistently applies to everything that He does.

Our study passage reminds us of this central truth of Scripture. ...*to whom be honour and power everlasting*. From the timeless reality before God created the first molecule of this material universe till the final trumpet blows at the end of time, nothing that God does, according to Scripture's teachings about His actions, shall ever impute any degree or question of dishonor to Him. When every act of human history is revealed at the judgment of that Final Day, not one single act that God performed shall in any way or to any degree raise any question regarding God's honor. Redeemed saints and angels shall sing His praises for eternity based on His glorious and "Honorable" works.

Some non-Christian religions impose a moral dualism onto their deities; example, the "yin and the yang" of eastern mystical religions. On rare occasions—thank the Lord for the extreme rarity—misguided professing Christians impose a similar moral dualism onto God. For example, Gilbert Beebe wrote of the mystery of godliness and the mystery of iniquity as being equally caused by God and eventually to be orchestrated for His glory. Contemporary advocates of this heretical idea try to stretch the word "Orchestrated" so as to make God cause or in some way manipulate every depraved action of sinful humanity, but to do so in a way that leaves God innocent from the wrong. David "Orchestrated" Uriah's death. Did God hold him innocent? Of course not; the addition of this word fails to insulate the diabolical and morally dualistic god of these people from responsibility for dishonorable sin. In the end, their false belief lays dishonor directly at God's feet, contradicting our study passage, as well as every passage in the Bible that describes God's moral honor.

I cannot imagine the schizophrenic chaos and confusion in the minds of those who try to make their god the cause or orchestrator of every sinful event that occurs. An advocate of this view preached a sermon the day after the Tucson, Arizona shooting earlier this year in which he repeatedly claimed that everything that occurred that day, including the killing of the nine year old girl, happened "...according to the will of God." We reflect our moral character by the bent of our will, so in the end such a belief must necessarily conclude that the senseless shooting of a nine year old girl was in perfect harmony with God's moral character. First Thessalonians 4:3-7 specifically associates

God's will with His moral character, as well as His commandments to His people.

Two simple questions should forever dismiss this bizarre thinking from our minds. Where is God's honor in such events? Where do we see His moral character exhibited in the senseless actions of a madman?

The Greek word translated as "honour" in this lesson is briefly defined.

...honor as an element in the assignment of status to a person—'honor, respect, status.'<sup>1</sup>

Throughout eternity, we shall have occasion to praise God with well-deserved "Honor," for His status fully deserves and requires such honor. He will not need eternity to explain how He caused or orchestrated all the depraved and heinous sins of humanity, but yet deserves our honor. There shall be no question about His honor then. In the minds of godly, Bible thinking Christians today, there should be no question.

Paul's doxology (a statement glorifying God) emphasized His adorable and unique sovereignty, immortality, and ***incomprehensible holiness***. ***To Him belong all honor and rule throughout eternity.***<sup>2</sup> (Bold emphasis added)

*And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*  
(Revelation 5:13, KJV 1900)

*Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.* (1 Timothy 1:17, KJV 1900)

A "Doxology" is a brief, but full statement of deserved praise. As Paul anchored his letter to Timothy early on to God's deserved honor, he returns to the point near the end of the letter, still praising God with deserved honor. Add to this truth the point that John makes in his doxology. He so clearly and loudly proclaimed "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power..." to God that every creature in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth heard his words. Not in mere words, but in the whole fabric of life, how loudly and how consistently do we give deserved honor to God?

<sup>1</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., 732 (New York: United Bible societies, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, 1 Ti 6:15 (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003).

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Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor