

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

Curiosity is a mark of intelligence in man and animals; but curiosity is not always a good thing. Curiosity kills the cat that looks too hard into the depths of a well. So also, people drown themselves spiritually when they try too hard to search the unsearchable depths of God's judgments and ways.

A couple I served in Tulsa, Oklahoma, lost their only son to cancer at the age of seven years! We can understand the question they asked when we first met: "Why did God take him?" Curiosity did not kill them, because they subjected their human reason to God's Word and faith.

However, at about the same time a Jewish Rabbi, who also lost his young son through death, took the plunge of human reason. For when he asked how God could do such a thing to a "good" person, he concluded that God had no power to prevent the death of his "good" little boy.

John Calvin struggled with the question: "Why are some saved and not others?" Calvin reasoned that if almighty God really loved all sinners, and wanted to save them all by His gracious working of faith in Jesus, then they would all be saved. Therefore, he concluded that God chose some to be saved and others to be damned!

So Calvin's followers plunge themselves into the depths of God's mysterious ways. Human reason leads them to contradict John 3:16 and many other passages of Scripture which teach that God truly "loves the world," and "desires that all be saved" by coming to "the knowledge of the truth." (1Tim. 2:4-5)

Others who try to use human reason to answer the curious question, "why some are saved and not others," think the problem is that "people make the wrong choice." Among these are the so-called "Free-Will Baptists" and many others in our area who teach that man has the "free will," the moral ability to make the right "decision" about Christ. "Invite Christ into your heart," they will say, as if man has the moral ability to believe and accept Christ.

But this theory also plunges dangerously into the depths of God's mysterious wisdom, and ends up contradicting His Word. For Romans 8:7 says that **"the fleshly (or natural) mind is enmity against God" and "cannot please Him."** And Jesus says in John 6:45 that **"No one can come" to Him "unless the Father . . . draws him."**

There is nothing wrong with asking, "why does God do this or that?" For when we ask such a question we are speaking as little children do. We are trying to understand something that is beyond us. But if we go on and ask: "How CAN God do such a thing," then our human reasoning is leading us to reject His righteous ways. Then we are trying to make God right in our own eyes, as if WE must in order for Him to continue as God in our lives. It is a very dangerous thing for poor, sinful human beings to make themselves God's critics and judges!

Whenever the whys and wherefores of God's ways trouble us, we need to remember the verse of our text. Paul was astounded at God's ways. In chapter 11 he reveals to us how God finally **"hardened"** the hearts of the unbelieving nation of Israel, so that He might show mercy in Christ also to the Gentile nations, so that they would then turn around and proclaim the mercy of Christ to the Jews!

The Gentiles who were once **"disobedient to God"** received mercy through the disobedience of Israel. In other words, **"God had committed them all to disobedience, so that He might have mercy on all."** (Rom. 11:32) No wonder Paul breaks forth in praise to our God, saying: **"Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"**

Surely God's ways would no longer be **"past finding out"** if we were always able to see how they were right. . . . So I ask you:

BY WHAT LIGHT IS GOD RIGHT?

I.

By the light of man's natural reason God's ways and judgments may appear to be unfair and even cruel. Look how the wicked often enjoy good health and prosper materially, while the Christian often suffers and struggles to get by in this world. Asaph writes about this very thing in Ps. 73. Job, Jeremiah, David, and other O.T. believers noticed this same **"injustice"** according to the "light" of their human reason.

As we have learned in our Bible Class study of Ecclesiastes, Solomon was grieved by the fact that when the wicked do wickedly "under the sun of this world, they are rewarded as if they are doing

righteously! Often the wicked, back-stabbing, unbeliever will receive promotions and benefits before the devout, hard-working Christian. Many years ago, I counseled a Christian woman who had worked to put her husband through college, and was devastated when he purposely moved them to another state where the divorce laws favored the man!

By the light of our own natural reason, we don't see how God could let these things happen. This is very troubling to Christians, since we want our God to be in the right. We want to speak to others of the God Whose ways are always right!

II.

But the light of nature is really the "cloud" of human reason. This cloud is cleared away only by **the light of grace**, which shines in our hearts through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The light of natural, human reason tells us only that the God of heaven punishes sin; But the light of grace in God's Word reveals His love and mercy. By the light of nature we think God demands that we earn acceptance with Him by our works. But the light of grace shows us that **His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways – Is. 55:8.**

By the light of natural reason it seems right to us that each person should suffer for his own sins; but the light of grace shows Christ suffering in our places, and God declaring the whole world of sinners acceptable to Him on account of Jesus' doing and dying! The light of grace shows our God commanding that this "Good News" be proclaimed to all men, and promising that whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish, but have everlasting life!

The light of grace reveals that the children of God may suffer in this body and life, but for them there is a glorified body and eternal life through Christ. By the light of God's Word we see that God will deal with the unbelieving wicked. He will punish and repay everything that is not punished and repaid in this life. For he will judge the world on the basis of that One Man, Jesus Christ – Acts 17:31. No longer shall the unbelieving wicked, rich, and powerful of the world dine in luxurious splendor; but believing Lazaruses shall take their place and enjoy the good things spread for them in heaven – Luke 16.

Our natural light of human reason is limited. It's like looking out the windows of our homes at night. We strain to see the true shape of an object by the light inside our homes. But the light of day makes everything clear. The higher, more perfect light of grace is like the light of the noon-day sun. This light, like the light of the sun, does not come from us but to us. This light comes from above, and reveals to us the way things really are! Thanks be to our Lord and Savior for His light of grace – a light by which our God is right!

III.

However, not even this wonderful light of grace is able to completely reveal God as right before men. In this life, under the light of nature and the light of grace, the question of WHY God graces some people with faith and life in Christ and not all people, remains unsolvable. We must not let this and question and others like it, trouble us to the point of denying the clear Word of God by our sin-darkened human reasoning.

But let us wait for the revelation of the truth in the perfect light of glory! Already the light of grace in Christ Jesus has begun to chase away the cloudy thinking of our human reason. Already, the Word of Grace has begun to reveal to us the right way God deals with the wicked and with His believing children in this life and hereafter. Surely, the perfect light of glory in heaven will show us in all other matters that our God is right!

This is God's promise to us in His Word. **"For we know in part and we prophesy (or preach) in part,"** Paul wrote to the Corinthians in chapter 13. **"But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see as in a mirror, dimly. But then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known."** (1Cor. 13:9-13)

For now, may God grant that each one of us be content to know His righteousness by the light of His grace in Christ, our Savior. Let this be enough for all His true children, until **the light of glory!** Amen.