

The Question of God requiring us, His Creatures, to love Him

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“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov 1:7). The primary question for all knowledge is what is the cosmos? What is man? What is man’s place in the cosmos? Joined to that question is this query: Who is God? What is His relationship to the cosmos?

God testifies in His Word that He is Creator, Owner, Upholder, Ruler, Judge, Redeemer, and Definer of His creation. All this to say that we are created to run on God. This should be self-evident to us but it is not because human sin includes intellectual rebellion and a love of darkness.

Christ tells us that God has given a pronouncement; a testimony concerning the human condition; a condition which involves intellectual rebellion: “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God” (Jn 3:19-21).

Intellectual rebellion is defined as man’s stubborn commitment to autonomous reason. That is a deception in which man uses his mind to usurp the role of God as definer of the cosmos. According to Scripture, man’s mind was given to him by God to receive divine revelation. In so doing, man would be a truthful interpreter of the world if he places his mind under the mind of God as revealed in Scripture.

Scripture indicates that this business of interpreting life and human experience is an ethical endeavor. In other words, if we reject God’s Word (by which He structured all reality) we will interpret the creation untruthfully. Thus, this sheds light on why God says fearing Him is the beginning of wisdom. Here is the reason why: all other proposed epistemological pathways to knowledge other than the fear of God will not yield reliable knowledge.

That is the very premise of Scripture, that man loves darkness because he has made peace with his own sin. This is only corrected if we begin with the doctrine of creation. For we are but dust and ashes; God stamped DNA on wet dust, but when sin entered the world men demanded the ‘right’ to live independently of God.

According to Roman’s chapter one, apart from salvation in Christ, all of us use our minds to construct an idolatrous concept of God, which usually means conceiving of a god who is nothing more than a large, benevolent version of ourselves. Scripture condemns this as ‘the suppression of the truth of God’. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have

been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures” (Rom 1:18-23). That false god of our own imagining does not produce reverential fear.

Man is complacent in his lost condition, he fears the IRS, the Highway Patrol, and cancer more than God. The fear of God must be learned by having our consciences educated by Scripture. For in His Word we find that God is moral governor of the universe and He energizes moral cause and effect—that means there is a logical relationship between crime and punishment.

Let’s go back to the topic of us being created for God. We are fashioned by God to run on God. Wouldn’t it be absurd if a scientist said in order to be unbiased I will not breathe oxygen during my research of this important gas. Of course that would be suicide. Scripture is clear that God is the only source of life, light, love, and blessedness. Therefore, to reject God is to love darkness and alienation.

All sinners have an innate enmity toward God which is expressed in a resentment of God’s claim upon their lives. Romans one says that in our rebellion and love and darkness we worship and serve the creation but not the blessed Creator.

So back to our question: is God saying love me or die? Is God in a tiff because you commit intellectual sin and use your God-given mind to make an idolatrous conception of God? Is God bound to respect your freedom of choice so that whether you love Him or not, your temporal and eternal life will be blessed? That is an absurd proposition; it is like asking: Is a dolphin equally free in the ocean or on a hot sandy beach? The answer is he is not, on a hot sandy beach he will die an agonizing death. He has no means of locomotion—he will just simmer on the sand. Why, he was created for life in the sea.

We’re created for God, God is life—all living outside of Him is ultimately death, deception, darkness, self, and bondage. God doesn’t have to think up punishments for unbelief and rebellion. Those consequences are inherent in the sins, they are built in. Why? Because the very nature of this universe is moral because its Creator and Ruler is righteous and holy.

To love God is to love the truth. To hate the truth is to reap the consequences of error and rebellion. Ideas have consequences because a life committed to radical misalignment to God, the Author of all truth, is a life direction of confusion, folly, and ultimately alienation from all life, light and blessedness. A life committed to error is a life which will reap the whirlwind.

God has not stuttered; He has given a reliable testimony of Himself; He wills to be known. Our problem is we just don’t like who He is. In our sin, we love our imagined autonomy and independence. We use our God-given minds to create an illusory world, and then attempt to live in it. But with that delusion comes an unfathomable self-deception: “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer 17:9).

Only in God is there reliable true knowledge. He is the source of endless love and joy. It was Blaise Pascal who said that in the final analysis, everyone does what he thinks will make him happy, even the man who hangs himself. In America there are 38,000 suicides a year. These people put a bullet in their heads because they thought they would be happier dead than in their present existence. But now they are dead and dead wrong.

We can't escape the fact that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Human pride is based on ignorance. God is the very ground of our being and He alone has made our minds correspond with the categories in the creation. We owe all to Him.

The autonomy lie is the very essence of darkness that somehow God's glory and my good are at odds. That lie is only expunged by the gospel—that God in Christ paid the infinite price to pardon us and grant to us endless wellbeing in Himself. Those who have trusted Christ are convinced that God has accomplished their rescue from sin, and His glory together.

In closing, we must ask this question. If you do not want God in your life and you die that way, He will grant you your wish. But it will be eternal perdition and darkness. If you do want God in your life it will be on His terms. For Christ will be your Lord and your Savior.

Today, non-traumatic conversions seem to be the rule. I fear that the majority of these are producing stillborn offspring. For in these non-traumatic conversions there's no devastation (as to our sinfulness and the righteousness we owe God), there is no destitution (a crushing sense of our disobedience), and there is no desperation (no urgency to flee to Christ, the Merciful Savior, for refuge from the wrath of God).

Man in his pride loves darkness and ignorance said Jesus. The strongest manifestation of this is a refusal to fear God. It's like saying, I'm going to dive 5,000 feet down into the ocean on my terms; "the laws of physics be damned."

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them" (Deut 30:19-20).