

#26 “How to Handle Biblical Paradoxes”

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There most certainly are things in Scripture which defy our comprehension (eternity, the Trinity, why God allows suffering, the co-existence of free will and predestination, etc.). Some things just go over our heads, and it doesn't bother us. Others frustrate us because there seems to be a contradiction. Yet the contradiction is a mere paradox. There actually is a resolution of the seemingly contradictory truths, but it requires further knowledge than God has given us. It is tempting to want to say that we have arrived in terms of understanding God fully. Yet the humble and Biblical call is to understand where the limits of one's understanding lies.

God has indeed only let us in partially to His reservoir of knowledge. In Deuteronomy 29:29 God says, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.” In other words, God has given us what we need to know in order to live in obedience to Him. He gives us all that we need to know Him as He desires. Yet there are things He keeps from us; they are His secrets. If they are God's secrets, that means that we don't and can't know them. This is a boundary which we must acknowledge and accept. As Paul cries out in Romans 11:33, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!” Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit and a brilliant man who knew the Old Testament Scriptures forwards and backwards. Yet He rightfully acknowledged His limitations of understanding. By the way, what was he speaking of before he burst into praise of God's knowledge? He was speaking of issues surrounding predestination and God's sovereignty and how that interacts with human responsibility and free will. Paul was willing to come to a place of humility and say that God's ways are beyond ours. He gave a few illustrations in the matter, but the bottom line was that God is the Potter and we are the clay. God is above us. Isaiah 55:9 says, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.” Can we ascend into heaven by our own intellect? Absolutely not. Then, by definition, we cannot have the thoughts of God. We must accept this and not try to sort it all out.

When and where do we draw the line between studying the Scripture to ascertain its intended meaning and coming to a place where we must stop because of the limits of our understanding? We do this where the Scripture does it. As I just illustrated, Paul stops short of resolving the paradox of God's sovereignty and man's will. So we should too. In Job's case, God never answered Job as to why He allowed the suffering to take place in Job's life. In the same way, we are not to try to determine why God allows what He allows. There is no Biblical command to find out why because fighting God to know why stems from a lack of faith. We already know why He does things. He is busy at work sanctifying us, willing and doing according to His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). Furthermore, we can have confidence in all that He allows because He is good and works

all things for our good (Romans 8:28). But we are never told to probe into the “why” area, for such is venturing into God’s secret areas. When God doesn’t explain something, it is for a reason.

Why would God choose to “keep” things from us? He does this simply because we cannot handle them. Our minds are too simple and finite to grasp His infinite wonder. Do we really want a God that we can’t outthink or at least think at the same level with? If we could understand God, then we might as well be God. God has given us minds which can reason and use logic to be able (by the work of the Holy Spirit) to discern truth and understand His Word. Yet we must be willing to stop short of God’s secrets. Going beyond where God has ordained will only lead to frustration, doubt, and even division among brothers and sisters.