

Who Are You, and What Have You Done with My Real Father?

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People can only fully and accurately understand what they are capable of relating to by experience. Without experience, one may be able to answer the question of how something happens, but true understanding is more firmly hinged upon **why** something happens. Experience brings understanding that classes, quizzes, tests and reading cannot. I may understand how Christ died for my sins by reading about it in the Bible; I may even grasp the fact that Christ's sacrifice was done out of love, but only after seeing and feeling His love and loving as He did do I understand **why** He died. Only after loving someone enough to sacrifice myself for them can I relate to even the smallest part of the love that God had for the world when He gave His Son for it. After experiencing the bond between a father and a son and after understanding that unconditional love which would cause me to continue to give my life for my father over and over again forever, I can finally begin to grasp how much I would have to love the world to will my only father's suffering and death to save the world. Theologians, scholars, priests, preachers and men of the cloth can talk about eternal conscious torment until they turn blue, but my answer to their depiction of a Father who would torture His children forever will always be "That's not my God!"

Yes, it is true. I proudly and loudly proclaim it. If the God Whom others worship has a nature which absolutely negates love, that God is not my God. The God I worship goes by the name "Love" and "*Savior of all men.*" In today's version of Christianity, worshiping and sucking up to a god who finds pleasure in burning his children alive forever is the only way to get on his good side and spare one's own well-being. If my father told me to serve him faithfully and lovingly while he burned my sisters alive forever; my response would not be "Hooray! Such good news!" Rather, it would be, "Who are you and what have you done with my **real** father?" So should be the response of every Christian when they hear the doctrine of eternal conscious torment.

The idea of all men receiving eternal life is thought to be heretical by partialists, but even partialists believe that all will have eternal life. They may not realize this because the idea of a man living in death is so ridiculously contradictory, but partialists believe that every man will have eternal life; only most of these will live eternally in a "place" called death. Partialists claim that the inhabitants of "*the*

second death” are alive; and not just alive for a period of time until they die, but alive forever. The very thought of this may sound silly, but over a billion people on the planet right now hold more strongly to this teaching than they do to the teaching that two plus two equals four. Unfortunately for them, anyone who does not loudly proclaim “take my brain, just don’t take my religion” is immediately labeled as a heretic by the chairmen of each and every organized religion on the planet. Partialists also claim to believe that the last enemy which will be destroyed is death (I Corinthians 15:26), however they deny this belief with the contradictory belief that “*the second death*” is never-ending.

So, why did God put us here? Is our existence the result of an accident that God didn’t see coming 6000 years ago, or is our existence and our experience in this life part of God’s plan? Scripture is clear about the fact that God had a plan before the foundation of the world, but was that plan foiled after Adam and Eve sinned? All these questions have one simple answer. Why are we here? God willed it so. Why are we going through this experience in our short life here? God willed it so. God’s plan was not foiled by sin. He was not surprised to see sin come into the equation. God is the potter, we are the clay and our life full of experiences here is the means by which God molds us. I am not saying that God is actively dragging each of us through certain experiences; I am saying that each person’s life consists of experiences caused by decisions and situations we face and that we are molded regardless of whether we choose sin or righteousness.

Take Paul’s experiences for example. Was Paul’s life affected by sin? Sure, he tempted and was tempted, he betrayed and was betrayed, he hated and was hated, he killed and was killed. Did Paul suffer? Absolutely. Did Paul have the opportunity not to walk with God? Yes. In the end, Paul chose righteousness instead of sin and he was molded by his experiences. Now consider Pharaoh’s life. Was Pharaoh’s life affected by sin? Sure, he tempted and was tempted, he betrayed and was betrayed, he hated and was hated, he killed and was killed. Did Pharaoh suffer? Absolutely. Did Pharaoh have the opportunity not to walk with God? Yes. In the end, Pharaoh chose sin instead of righteousness and he was molded by his experiences. In Pharaoh’s case, his heart was hardened by God to fulfill God’s plan (Exodus 7:13), and in Paul’s case, his heart was softened by God on the road to Damascus. Both of these men were not only molded directly by God, but molded indirectly by God through their experiences and contact with a sin-cursed world.

Will Paul be rewarded without end by God because God chose to soften Paul’s heart, but Pharaoh will be tormented without end by God because God chose to harden Pharaoh’s heart? Or can we submit the fact that God’s will is supreme over ours? Are our sin-cursed experiences here an accident by God – a result of God’s apparent lack of foresight – or were we put here by God on purpose after the counsel of His own will which Ephesians 1:11 depicts as a higher authority than man’s stubbornness? Will death someday be destroyed and life given to all who were dead (the only way to destroy death is with life)? Or will/can non-believers be dead and alive at the same time for all time? I subscribe to the belief that God will accomplish what He planned, even if the rest of the Christian world finds God’s will to be impractical and undoable.

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