

The “Absolute” and the “Relative”

Martin Zender (1959-)



*F*ailure to distinguish the absolute from the relative perspective is the cause of many wacky and unscriptural church doctrines.

One of these is: “God, in His absolute sovereignty, has chosen to give every person his and her own absolute sovereignty (free will).”

How could people say something so illogical? Easy. They put verses demonstrating God’s sovereignty next to verses showing men and women making choices, then assume both verses to be absolute truth. If only they could realize that God’s sovereignty is absolute, while man’s is relative, such asinine doctrine could never have arisen to confuse the saints.

ABSOLUTE VS. RELATIVE: DEFINITIONS

Absolute: An unconditional and unlimited perspective, not compared with anything but itself. Something not dependent upon external conditions for existence.

Relative: Existing or having its significance only by relation to something else. Not an absolute or independent perspective. Something dependent upon external conditions for existence.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ARE TRUE?

I John 3:20 – God knows all ...

Genesis 3:9 – God does not know where Adam is

Romans 3:10 – There is none righteous ...

Luke 1:5-6 – Zechariah and Elizabeth are righteous

Romans 3:11 – None seek after God ...

Matthew 7:7 – Seek and you shall find

II Corinthians 5:18 – All is of God ...

I John 3:10 – The unrighteous are not of God

John 15:16 – You have not chosen Me ...

Joshua 24:15 – Choose whom you will serve

Romans 11:8 – God hardened Israel ...

Matthew 23:37 – I want to assemble ... you will not

MAD SCIENTIST OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

I have proof from Scripture that God doesn't know everything. I realize that this is breakthrough doctrine – the ignorance of God, that is – but I am a breakthrough kind of guy. I realize that my proof text contradicts I John 3:20, which says that God does know everything, but I am not going to let this bother me. My proof text is Genesis 3:9. In this important verse, God asks, “Adam, where are you?”

Next, I have proof from the Scriptures that, apart from the sacrifice of Christ, some people are already righteous. I know this contradicts Romans 3:10, which says that “*not one is righteous, no, not one,*” but this only highlights the stupendous nature of my discovery.

In Luke 1:5-6, Zechariah and Elizabeth are called, “*righteous before God.*”

That is not all. I have proof from Scripture that people must seek God in order to find Him.

I realize that my finding contradicts Romans 3:11, which says, “*There is none that seeketh after God,*” but these contradictions are coming to bother me less and less. My proof text is Matthew 7:7, “*Seek, and you shall find.*”

My genius for finding these kinds of verses astounds even me. The following piece of research is earth-shattering in its significance. I actually have proof from the Word of God that there are some people in this world who are not of God. The shocking aspect of this revelation is that my finding directly contradicts Paul's apparently naïve statement in II Corinthians 5:18, “*All is of God.*” Oh, well. I John 3:10 is the important thing. It says, “*Everyone who is not doing righteousness is not of God.*”

Now for my crème de la revelation: I, Martin Zender, have not one (1), but two (2) proof verses – from Scripture – showing men (and women, no doubt) exercising their free wills. The first is Joshua 24:15, “*Choose this day whom you will serve.*” (Do not be troubled by the

fact that this contradicts our Lord's statement in John 15:16, "*You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.*" We should be used to these contradictions by now, and quite practiced in ignoring them.) The second proof verse is Matthew 23:37. Our Lord speaks to Israel, saying, "*How many times do I want to assemble your children ... but you will not.*" Of course, this contradicts Paul's plain statement that it was God, not the Jews, Who hardened the Jews (Romans 11:7-8), but here we go with Paul again; the man is really starting to bug me.

I hope everyone realizes that I have been speaking facetiously. My purpose has been to detail for you what appear to be real and troubling contradictions from the Word of God – but the Word of God never contradicts itself! What we have been considering is the difference between ***the absolute*** and ***the relative*** perspectives.

ALL OF SCRIPTURE IS TRUE; WHAT IS THE PERSPECTIVE?

Sorry to shock you with my new "revelations," but many have done in reality what I have just done tongue-in-cheek: they have chosen to ignore certain verses of Scripture in order to embrace others.

How could all the verses listed earlier be true? It is the difference between the absolute and relative perspectives.

Absolutely speaking, God does know everything. He's God, for God's sake. Whenever God comes across as surprised, shocked or otherwise perplexed, He is speaking of Himself in relation to man (the relative viewpoint), employing a figure of speech known as Condescension, where God lowers Himself to the level of man in order to communicate with him.

To establish absolute doctrine from this figure of speech is a fatal (and stupid) practice.

In Luke 1, we are considering the behavior of Zechariah and Elizabeth in relation to (the relative viewpoint again) the behavior of the rest of the priesthood. Compared with clowns like Ananias and Caiaphas, this couple was righteous.

In Romans 3:10, however, Paul is considering the whole of humanity against the backdrop of the absolute righteousness of God – and guess what? Against this backdrop, none are righteous.

Romans 3:11 and Matthew 7:7? No contradiction here, just different viewpoints. That none seek after God is absolutely true. Man is helpless in this department. That our Lord invited some to seek Him only proves that our Lord invited some to seek Him. Where did the ability to seek come from, if none are seeking God? From God: "*No one can come to Me if ever the Father should not be drawing him.*" (John 6:44).

How can all be of God if some people are not of God? Absolute versus relative truth again. Some people are not of God only in relation to other people. Our Lord said that the Pharisees were of their father, the Adversary. This was in relation to the apostles, who were friends of God, not adversaries. All of this was of God.

"*Choose this day whom you will serve*" only proves that some choose God, and some do not; we are relating (relative perspective) one group to another. To get to the absolute truth, ask

yourself, “Why do some choose God while others do not?” The answer: *God chooses those who will choose Him.*

Our Lord wanted to assemble Israel, but they would not. True enough, from the human viewpoint, which is limited. As a man, Christ Himself takes this viewpoint. Is it absolute truth? No. The absolute truth is that God hardened Israel.

Isn't it wonderful to be able to believe *ALL* of Scripture?

Clanging Gong News

Vol. 1; No. 9, 2009

Taken from the *Bible Student's Notebook*[™], a weekly Bible study publication available in two formats (electronic and printed)

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