

God Gives Freely

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God gives freely to those who ask

Luke 11:10; James 1:5

God withholds His blessings and prevents men from receiving them

Joshua 11:20; Isaiah 63:17; John 12:40

At the heart of these apparent contradictions in scripture is the concept that people are entitled to receive blessings while breaking God's law and commandments. Also, it ignores the fact that God will withhold certain requests if their fulfillment would harm an individual's spiritual growth and well-being (cf. 2Cor. 12:7).

The context of the first apparent contradiction in the scriptures above deals with the corrupt nations who inhabited Canaan following the death of Moses. Because these nations were involved in Baal worship, they participated in numerous perverse activities including human sacrifice. The atrocities associated with their pagan rites were so entrenched that God elected to destroy them. However, because God is merciful they will have an opportunity in the second resurrection to repent and begin obeying His law and commandments (cf. Rev. 20:5-6),

For it was of the Lord to harden (make strong) their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, and that they (the Canaanites) might receive no mercy... (Jos. 11:20a; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The next scripture, used by some people to accuse God of contradicting Himself, actually proves that God is impartial (cf. Ac. 10:34) because it involves the punishment of Israel for their sins. However, it is very misleading to use Isaiah 63:17 in isolation because it ignores the fact that God is dealing with Israel's transgressions, even though He worked with them previously to punish the Canaanites. Therefore, some verses that precede Isaiah 63:17 must be reviewed first,

I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and **the great goodness toward the house of Israel...** (Isa. 63:7a; emphasis added).

But they (Israel) rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them (Isa. 63:10; Ed. note in parenthesis).

O Lord, why have You made us stray from Your ways, and hardened our heart (as God did with the Canaanites) from Your fear? Return for Your servants' sake, the tribes of Your inheritance (Isa. 63:17).

The final scripture used to discredit God by accusing Him of contradicting Himself is John 12:40. Again, if a scripture is used in isolation to support an accusation against God it needs to be viewed as suspect,

He (God) has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes and understand with their heart, lest they should turn (repent), so that I should heal them (Jn. 12:40; Ed. notes in parentheses).

This scripture in the book of John is describing exactly the same circumstances as the previous two references that have been previously used to claim that God contradicts Himself. In all three cases, God is dealing with a stubborn and rebellious people who have no desire to obey Him. Consequently, He temporarily withholds His truth from them as part of their punishment. A more complete version of these events is mentioned in the next scripture dealing with ancient Israel's stubbornness and rebellion,

But they (Israel) refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders (gave a stubborn or rebellious shoulder), and stopped their ears (made their ears heavy) so that they could not hear. Yes, **they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law** and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the Lord of hosts. Therefore it happened, that just as He proclaimed and they would not hear, so they called out and I would not listen, says the Lord of hosts (Zec. 7:11-13; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Instead of being contradictions, these scriptures prove that God is impartial and will withhold blessings from **anyone** who continues to rebel against His law and commandments. The greatest blessing that can be withheld is the knowledge of His truth. On the other hand, those who seek to obey Him will receive blessings, but these are not necessarily physical in nature nor are they always immediate.

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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