

## Logic vs. the Bible

Critics of the Bible often maintain that there are inaccuracies and contradictions in the Bible. As far as inaccuracies, they are unable to find a single one that is obvious or has stood the test of time. Contradictions do not occur either. They only seem to occur when one logically projects a statement from the Bible beyond the assertion that the Bible actually makes.

If the Bible were to make contradictory assertions about exactly the same situation, that would be an example of an error. For example, if one writer of the Bible maintained that Jesus was the son of Mary, but another writer maintained that He was the son of Elizabeth, that would be a contradiction.

Some people would say that the verses “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2: 3, 4) contradicts the verse “For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son” (Romans 8:29a). They would say that if salvation is the result of God’s choice alone and God really wants everyone to be saved, then all men should be partakers of salvation. But, they say that the Bible also speaks of many as going lost. Therefore, they say there is a contradiction here.

However, the contradiction only occurs in the logical extension of the verses, not between the verses themselves. If the second verse were “God would not have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”, then it would certainly be in contradiction to the first verse. Or, if the first verse was “God does not predestine anyone to the adoption as sons”, then there would also be a contradiction. But, there is not this contradiction.

We, as believers, will believe both verses. We believe that God wants all men to be saved, and we also the reason we have come to faith is by God alone. We may apply these verses differently. We seek to reach out to any person who crosses our path, knowing that God would have him come to salvation. We put no faith in our own abilities regarding salvation knowing that our interest in salvation was only sparked by God Himself from eternity and is not due to our own actions. We leave the understanding of how these verses can both be true to eternity someday, where we will look at it from a different perspective. But, for now, there is no contradiction in how we are to live our lives.

These are not the only two verses in scripture that will seem to be contradictory if logical conclusions are drawn from them. Unfortunately, many in the church have not been content to accept this and have gone beyond scripture to try to develop an interpretation of the Bible that relies upon human logic to try to develop a more complete understanding of God and his ways, especially concerning salvation. Classical Reformed theology has developed a system based mainly upon the sovereignty of God. To build a logical system based upon that truth, they have to explain away verses such as I Timothy 2: 3, 4 or verses that speak of salvation being received through the sacraments, that Jesus

paid for the sins of the world and not just the church, or warnings of eternal punishment for those who fall away from the faith. However, one area where they were not able to come up with a logical solution is in the area of human responsibility, so there they will admit there is a mystery, and that both the teaching of God's sovereignty and human responsibility are taught by the Bible, even though they cannot logically connect the two truths. But, they have already gone far beyond the teachings of scripture using logic before they arrive at that point.

Those who dismiss predestination or attempt to explain its main purpose by saying it is essentially just God looking ahead in time and knowing who would accept His salvation also make a similar mistake in using logic to dismiss clear teachings of the Bible about election. Unfortunately, even some Lutherans have fallen into this trap, trying to come up with a logical explanation of the extrapolation of verses like those mentioned above under the term "prevenient grace". They say that God alone does provide the grace (similar to the verse about predestination) and that he does want all to come to salvation, but that we can resist this grace if we wish. While this may seem to solve the logical dilemma, it is a weak, false solution that still leaves our destiny in the control of our own sinful hearts. [Prevenient grace](#) is discussed more thoroughly in another essay.

Even though the Bible does not use the illustration below, I will offer it in hopes that it will serve the purpose of helping avoid the temptation to construct a logical understanding of God or His salvation that goes beyond what the Bible maintains.

C.S. Lewis once used the illustration that some truths, such as beauty, cannot exist in our minds at the same time as an examination of the characteristics that make up beauty. Once we start to examine the curvatures, hues, intensities, mixtures, etc. that make up beauty, say in a rose, we cannot at the same time fully experience the beauty of the rose. However, both are necessary. An understanding of what makes up beauty can help us breed more beautiful roses. The same illustration could apply to the study of a person. If we try to examine at deeper levels, such as the cell or atom level, what makes a person the type of person he is or why he behaves the way he does, we will probably never be able to do it. But studies at this level can be useful for health purposes.

If we were to use this illustration to help us understand the verses, we would say that showing love and concern for another person knowing that God would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth is more like comprehending the beauty of a rose. Knowing that God alone is responsible for our salvation and often does his work in ways that is hidden to us is more like studying the various characteristics that make up beauty.

Whether or not this illustration helps, the fact is that if we would be true to scripture, we must not use logic to twist the interpretation of verses that seem to contradict if we logically extend them. The Lutheran church's theology avoids this practice and allows each passage to be interpreted as it was intended by God and the writers He used. Our theology allows the cross to be central, just as the Bible makes it central, and avoid trying to build a logically consistent system that hinders the teaching of the message of the

cross.

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