

ex-spouse responded was still their decision. God could not violate the free will of either the woman's husband or the free will of Saul. Those two individuals simply chose different responses to God's nudging. No matter how very much God *wanted* the woman's husband to repent and return to her or how much God *wanted* the marriage to be saved, the ex-spouse had the *choice* of refusing to do the right thing and God could not interfere with his free will.

So we can see that there are certain things that God can not do. Most of the examples we've discussed so far, deal with the physical rather than the spiritual, but does all of this have anything to do with our lives as Christians — or with the lives of those who are *not* Christians? Let's think about that for a minute. If we accept and understand that God can not do everything He might *want* to do — because even His great and almighty power is limited by certain factors — then we must ask some obvious questions. Let's look again at those verses we read earlier in I Timothy.

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone — for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 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 2:1-4 NIV)

From what we've discussed so far, we can see that it is not within God's power to *force* all men to be saved. So would it be within His power to force all men to come to the knowledge of the truth? Can God force all people to be baptized for the remission of their sins simply because that's what He *wants*? What if some don't? Can He save those who refuse to obey Him? If He saves those who refuse to obey Him, has He lied to those who *do* obey His words about His plan for salvation? Can God save those who have *not* followed the Biblical instructions and examples He provided for mankind and not be lying to those who do? Can one become a Christian by methods other than what is prescribed in God's Word? What about those who choose to believe there are other methods? Is there security in thinking that there are multiple ways to be saved? What if you're wrong and there's only one way? We know that *God* adds the saved to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47). We know that the saved are called Christians (Acts 11:26). What is a Christian? What does it mean to follow Christ? What does the Bible say about becoming one of His followers? What does He say to His followers concerning their responsibility? What is a Christian in relation to Christ?

We can't know the mind of God but we *can* know what He teaches — we have His Word — He gave it to us for that very reason (II Timothy 3:16). In the next issue we're going to continue with this discussion. We hope to use a modern day application that should help to answer many of those questions listed above. It's *not* an enigma wrapped in a conundrum — there are answers and they're in the Bible.

*"Diligence" is a privately funded publication of:
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DILIGENCE

"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure." — Hebrews 6:11

A ministry of Dennis and Sherri Owens

Volume 4

April 15, 2005

Issue 4

God Can Do Anything! He Can? Are You Sure About That? or An Enigma Wrapped In A Conundrum?

When we think of God, one of the thoughts that generally come to mind is that He can do anything. After all, He *is* God, right? And God *is* all powerful so there's nothing He can't do, right?

Most of us do a pretty fair job of handling that question until a four year old asks, "so can He make a rock bigger than He can pick up?" Whoops! Now *that* makes the whole thing a wee bit "muddy" to deal with, doesn't it? And as a matter of fact, there *are* some things that God can not do. Let's look at them.

God Cannot Violate His Nature

"¹³When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, 'I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.'... ¹⁷Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. ¹⁸God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged." (Hebrew 6:13, 14, 17 and 18 NIV)

"Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness — a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time," (Titus 1:1-2 NIV)

"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; (James 1:13 NIV)

"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth." (I John 1:5-6 NIV)

God is perfect in all ways. His nature is pure and perfect. He can not cease being God. He can not do wrong and He can not act out of character. He can't lie, or cheat or engage in moral evil. His power is limited by His perfect nature. Nothing evil can come out of Him.

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God Cannot Violate His Own Laws

When God created the universe, there were certain laws that He put in place. For example, this planet was created with the law of gravity at work on it. We can be certain that if a rock were to be dropped from a second story window, that rock would indeed fall toward the earth. If the object dropped from that same window was a much loved child that simply got too close to the window and tripped on a nearby toy, the same law of gravity would cause the child to fall to the ground below. It would be ridiculous to think that God would intercede and cause that child to be able to fly rather than fall to the earth. Yet we often hear quoted from Scriptures that “*with God all things are possible*” (Matt. 19:26) so why would we not expect God to give that child an instantaneous ability to fly? That’s just crazy you say. Why? Because we accept the fact that we “operate” within the framework of the natural laws put in place by God and He doesn’t violate those laws to prevent unfortunate events from happening.

Just so we’re sure to understand the point being made here, let’s think of a couple more examples along this same line. Is there anyone among us that would pray to God to grow another leg if one was tragically lost in an accident? Of course not. Why? Because we accept the fact that the human body does not regenerate itself in that manner — or — we accept the fact that medical science has not yet discovered a higher law (if in fact there is one) that would allow for such a regeneration. That’s just the way God designed us and for now, we accept it.

Another example — what about a young couple who wants to have children but has tried unsuccessfully for many years? They might pray to God that He would allow that to change or they might pray that they would have the opportunity to adopt a child. But would they prepare a crib in their nursery and pray that God would drop an infant out of the sky into it? Why not? Because any sensible person knows that’s not a reasonable request. We just accept certain things.

We could go on and on with similar examples like these. They make it clear to us that we accept certain limitations placed on mankind because of the laws God put in place at the time He created this world. We must however also recognize that God is not a prisoner of His own universe. God *can* intervene with higher laws in ways that we know nothing about. For example, if an airplane were to have flown over the Apostle Paul, he surely would have thought it was defying some natural law of nature. In this day and age however, we understand that the law of gravity can be superseded by the law of aerodynamics. New discoveries are made every day in the realm of science but that doesn’t mean that they are new. It simply means that mankind discovered something that God knew was there all along. God knows *all* of the higher laws. We could even say that God can *make* higher laws at His discretion if He so wills and can choose to use them at His discretion but He does not violate His own laws.

There’s another aspect of this discussion about God’s laws that we need to mention

before moving on. Remember the verses we just read that stated that in God “*there is no darkness at all*”? That means that God and darkness can not exist together. They are contradictory things and therefore *can not be put together*. A lighted candle in a dark room does away with the darkness that existed before it was lit. Why? — because darkness can not exist if light is present. They are contradictory things and therefore can not be put together. Still more contradictory things that can’t be put together — an object can’t be both square and round at the same time nor can a rectangle be a triangle. (Yes, for you geometry savvy people, a rectangle *can* be two or more triangles, but one rectangle can not also be one triangle). Black can not also be white. The laws of this world simply do not allow contradictory things to be put together. The question the four year old asked at the beginning of this article — can God make a rock bigger than He can pick up? — falls into this category. That question is an attempt to put contradictory things together that cannot be put together. According to God’s own laws — they are contradictory and it is impossible to put them together.

God Cannot Violate Mans Free Will

If God had created mankind in such a way that God had complete control over him, Eve would not have eaten of the fruit in the garden of Eden — but she did. The Scriptures tell us that God *desires* that everyone live in peace and be saved —

“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone — for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:1-4 NIV)

— but God cannot *make* that happen by exercising His power. Every individual has to *choose* whether or not he/she will obey God. Even Saul, with the experience he had on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-20) had the option of disobeying what God told him to do. As Paul related his most unusual experience to King Agrippa, he said —

“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.” (Acts 26:19 NIV)

Along this same line, we could use the example of a young couple whose marriage has broken up. Perhaps one of the partners is an extremely faithful Christian who has tremendous faith. She, along with those who counsel her in the matter, believe there are numerous Scriptures that *promise* that her fervent prayers as well as the fervent prayers of an entire congregation of faithful Christians will be heard, and the errant spouse will return to his senses and all will be well. After months of praying, her previous spouse marries another and she is crushed, confused and disappointed in God. Her faith is seriously shaken. This woman, as well as those who counseled her failed to understand that God’s power was limited by the free will of her ex-spouse. God *could* surely have touched him as firmly as he touched Saul, but the manner in which Saul and the