

It is true that God does have genuine and universal affection for fallen men as His creatures. He delights in the work of His hands. It is also true that God sincerely bestows His benevolence upon all men, causing His sun to shine and filling their hearts with gladness. It is also true that God desires that all men should repent and be saved, even though He does not gratify all of His desires.

Of course, if God is trying to save every member of Adam's fallen race and does not succeed, then His power (spiritual or persuasive) appears to be limited. If on the other hand God is not trying to save every member of Adam's race, then His mercy and love appear to be limited. Sometimes this dilemma has been used to distinguish the major opposing points of view on this doctrine. It is said that Calvinists limit God's mercy and love and exalt God's power and sovereignty; whereas Arminians limit God's power and exalt God's mercy and love. Upon closer analysis of this clever statement, we discover that by limiting God's power, Arminians actually exalt man's autonomy and wrest man's will from the clutching bondage and overwhelming power of his depravity. Also upon closer analysis of this statement we discover that Calvinists do not really limit either the quality or the quantity of God's mercy and love; rather they view God as selectively bestowing his special love upon certain individuals, thereby limiting the application of His mercy and love.

Such Scriptures as Psalm 103:11, 17-18 are cited in this connection:

"For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him."

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

3. "This doctrine is inconsistent with the justice of God."

In effect, this objection builds upon the concept that in all of His dealings with men, God is fair and equable and evenhanded; that even though He may seem to distribute blessings and cursings, rewards and punishments unequally at times, this is only so because of the various kinds of responses, righteous and unrighteous, which men make to His word and will; i.e., on the basis of strict justice.

However, this objection actually goes beyond what the objectors intend. For if the application of salvation is made on the basis of strict justice, those who deserve to be saved are saved, and those who deserve to be lost are lost. That is strict justice. Of course, the objectors quickly assert that the application of salvation is not an exercise of justice but of grace on God's part. If this is the case, then the concept of justice applies, not to the elect, but to those who are lost. If the objectors restrict the concept of justice to those who are lost (since they realize that those who are saved do not deserve to be saved), then this doctrine of predestination holds no inconsistencies with the doctrine of God's justice. As far as the preterition aspect of reprobation is concerned, this is not a violation of God's justice, since the reprobate do not deserve to be saved (it would only be inconsistent with God's justice if they deserved to be saved and God [unjustly] refused to save them; or if they did not deserve to be lost and God [unjustly] passed them by for salvation.) And as far as the precondemnation aspect of reprobation is concerned, this is certainly not a violation of God's justice, since the reprobate are justly condemned on the basis of their sins.