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Does God Play Favorites?

Proverbs 21:2-3: (NASB) *²Every man's way is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts. ³To do righteousness and justice is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice.*



We all have our favorites. Favorite colors, seasons, sports, teams, foods. Sometimes we have favorite people, places and things. We may have a favorite chair, movie or song or a favorite saying, website or group. When you think about it, our "favorites" can really dominate our lives. Do you schedule your time around your favorite TV show? Do you get especially quiet when your favorite song comes on? Do you have a favorite early morning Christian Talk Show? ☺ Yes, our favorites are important and that leads us to an important question: Does God have and does God play favorites? If He does, does this mean there is there some level of inequity in His plan? Stay with us as we look into God, favoritism and the human race.

Let's start at the beginning...

Genesis 1:1: (ASV) *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

What does this verse tell us about God?

- Are we here by chance or by design? We believe there is a purpose with design.
- Do those who are created have the same rights and powers as the Creator? Technically, are we God's actual children or His creation?

God's Creation of Humans	vs. Human Offspring
<i>The Created = a lesser result</i>	The Reproduced = same family, could be greater
<i>The Created = choice of building materials</i>	The Reproduced = DNA built in to the parents - no choice of building materials
<i>The Created = a product of planning and design</i>	The Reproduced = design is "built in"
<i>The Created = a result of thought + creativity</i>	The Reproduced = result of genetic combination

Who sets the definitions - the Creator or the created? We as the created can't set definitions for the Creator.



Is God unfair, God not obliged to all, Greg Koukl, str.org

- *God is not under obligation to rescue all or to even make the rescue available to all equally...If two people owed me a million dollars and I forgive one debt, I am not obligated to forgive the other simply because I was gracious to the other person.*

Psalms 89:11-14: Everything is God's. He and His character are great! **Deuteronomy 32:3-4:** So, God is righteous and above question...does that mean we are not *capable* of understanding the whys and wherefores of His plan? Of course not! What we can do is use His righteousness as a basis for our understanding and then piece together how the parts fit - especially those parts that seem to be incongruous with the character of God just laid out...

If God does have favorites, where did it start?

Genesis 1:27-28: Seems like mankind was the "favorite" of His creation! He created us differently from the beginning. Humans were put above the rest and given special instructions to multiply and have dominion.



Observations on this creation account and the rules of man's favored state:

- Man made in the image of God. Human beings are capable of so much more than any other part of creation.
- Man given dominion (rule) over all the living things on the earth just as God ruled the universe.



- Man given the special task of obedience, with a penalty of death for failure (not in this text).
- Man given an open door to populate the earth.

So mankind was given the Earth and all in it for their use. In this perfect environment this would have been a wonderful responsibility.

Well, as we know, sin entered and changed some things:

Genesis 3:17-19: (NRSV) ¹⁷And to the man he said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, You shall not eat of it, *cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;* ¹⁸*thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.* ¹⁹*By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*

Notice the elements of the curse on man (colored above).

But even through all of this difficulty to happen upon this favored creation, the dominion is NOT REMOVED! It is, however, placed in a much more difficult context.

No longer would this dominion develop within the confines of the perfect garden, to be expanded as the human family expanded. Mankind, now in prison to sin, was doomed to a life of toil and difficulty. This was the result of sin - of disobeying the Creator. (Note: Adam and Eve *did* obey, however, they changed their allegiance and obeyed the wrong spiritual power.)



Why God allows evil, God and evil logically compatible, William Lane Craig

- *We can prove that God and suffering and evil in the world are compatible by adding the proposition that God has morally sufficient reasons for permitting the evil and suffering in the world. As long as that is even possible, it shows that God and evil are compatible.*



So, how is God's "favorite" looking now? Hmmmm.....

Thus far, what observations do we understand about God's favoritism?

- He is the Creator.
- He set the rules.
- His rules are based in righteousness and justice. (We are so glad for this! He tells us this over and over again.)
- He allowed Satan, as a highly created angel, to choose. (Allowing choices inherently allows evil to arise.)
- He allowed man to choose.
- He is true to His word.

Did God decide on a new "favorite" once the world went bad?

First let's remember how far away from God man was going: Genesis 6:5-8: Noah and his family attempted to live righteously in a very unrighteous world. The people he preached to had the opportunity to be favorites but chose not to be.



Your will may grant others free will, C.S. Lewis on free will

- *Anyone who has been in authority knows how a thing can be in accordance with your will in one way and not in another. A mother can say that she wants the children's room to be kept tidy, yet leave it to them to do it. It is her will for it to be tidy, yet it is her will that left the children free to be untidy.*

If God gives us the will to choose, we have the ability to chose right or wrong. But there has to be justice reflected.

Another chosen person is established...

The first promise of unique, far-reaching favor: Genesis 12:1-3: Why was Abram (later called Abraham) given this unprecedented promise? This wasn't random - Abraham was willing to follow God! Abram would be tested on his dedication, especially with the test regarding Isaac.

Genesis 22:18: (NKJV) *In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.*

What additional observations do we have about God's favor?

- He rewards those who diligently follow His precepts.
- His timetable is much longer than ours - He allows suffering to seemingly drag on.





God's favor continued with Abraham's son. **This text is God talking to Isaac:** [Genesis 26:3-5](#): God's favor continued with Abraham's grandson. **This text is God talking to Jacob:** [Genesis 28:12-14](#): The promise is repeated and grows. We know that Jacob's name was changed to Israel and that his 12 sons became the 12 tribes of Israel. God's unmistakable favoritism was shown to one man, Abraham, his son Isaac, and his grandson, Jacob. Is that fair? Once they were delivered from the slavery in Egypt, (which by the way is an "interesting" way for God to show his favor to them) and once they finished wandering in the wilderness for 40 years (another example of God's favor), they were *finally* in position to inherit their long-promised land. Here is what God's favor required of them: (It was not arbitrary favoritism - something bigger was involved.)

Instruction regarding their "separate" existence as a favored people:

[Deuteronomy 7:1-12](#): (NKJV)

No mixing of societies - *¹When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you...You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.*

No mixing of families - no mercy on His own people if they turn from Him: *³Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. ⁴For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.*

No mixing of worship - *⁵But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.*

You are a different people than those around you: *⁶For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. ⁷The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; ⁸but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

No mercy on those who perpetuate sinful practices: *⁹Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; ¹⁰and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face.*

No breaking of His promise to protect them if they remain true: *¹¹Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them. ¹²Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers.*

God was serious about Israel's being a separate people but He had requirements for their own good. According to God, with the privilege of favor comes responsibility. **The following is a marked example of what can go wrong, even with privilege in place:** [1 Samuel 8:1-22](#): But why not just ask for new and better judges? Israel wanted to be like everybody else. All the other nations had kings - it somehow seemed more glorious. So God decided to give them what they asked for.


⁶But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us. So Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷And the LORD said to Samuel, Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. ⁸According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. ⁹Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them.

God puts the request in perspective - man's sinful mind seeks for the glitter of the king and forgets the goodness that got them here. History told them, miracles told them, and blessings told them that they were special, yet how easily these things were forgotten!



¹⁰So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. ¹¹And he said, This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. ¹²He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. ¹³He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. ¹⁴And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. ¹⁵He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. ¹⁶And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. ¹⁷He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. ¹⁸And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

As God's mouthpiece, Samuel provides full and fair disclosure of the *dominion* of man turning into the *domination* of men. They traded in following after God's way in favor of something else - they became traitors. (Note: We are not supposed to play favorites. God's favoritism is for the sake of bringing all men to Himself...so we are glad that God chose favorites. It is for the benefit of not only the favored, but all mankind.)

 **Traitor in your midst, *The Chronicles of Narnia***

- *Witch: (picturing Satan) "You have a traitor in your midst, Aslan." Aslan the lion (picturing Jesus) "His offense was not against you." Witch: "Have you forgotten the laws upon which Narnia was built?...Every traitor belongs to me. His blood is my property... Aslan knows that unless I have blood as the Law demands, all of Narnia will be overturned and perish... that boy will die on the stone table, as is tradition."*

So, with all of this new information, what did Israel do? Continuing the account of Samuel, Israel and their desire for a king: ¹⁹Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, No, but we will have a king over us, ²⁰that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles. Wow! God was fighting their battles but they wanted a king to do it instead. They were rejecting God. God's favorites are for lessons in the moment and eternally. ²¹And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD. ²²So the LORD said to Samuel, Heed their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said to the men of Israel, Every man go to his city. God allows their childishness to reign.

Here is where our theme text really rings true! Proverbs 21:2-3: God's favoritism is for the good of all mankind.



What do we observe about God's favor thus far - now that there are nations in the picture, and now that Israel having been privileged is acting out of accordance with God's will?

- He allows the masses to choose.
- Like a good father, He gives fair warning to the masses regarding the consequences of their actions.

Sometimes God's favor brings challenge...: Amos 3:1-2 ...other times it brings us GREAT HOPE and SECURITY: Isaiah 55:8-11

 **True meaning of sacrifice, *The Chronicles of Narnia***

- *If the witch knew the true meaning of sacrifice, she might have interpreted the deep magic differently, that when a willing victim who has committed no treachery (Jesus) is killed in a traitor's stead (mankind), the stone table will crack and even death itself will turn backwards. (resurrection)*

So even when it looks like we are utterly alone...: Psalms 22:1-2: ...we can surely count on His favor! Job 13:15 God does play favorites out of what He knows is the right plan for His chosen people and the world of mankind. His favoritism brings ransom and restitution. It is what brings the world back to Him.

***So does God play favorites?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!***