

DOCTRINE OF GOD CONSCIOUSNESS

(The accountability of man's Volition/Free will)

- I. Introduction:
- A. This doctrine is designed to explain God's culpability/obligation to the members of the human race as it relates to their receiving or not receiving a gospel hearing in time.
 - B. In addition it answers seeming conflicting doctrines of the sovereignty of God and the free-will/volition of man.
 - C. The question regarding the sovereignty of God (His Divine Decree's that govern His plan and are causative in nature) as it relates to His part in the process of salvation, are dealt with extensively in the Doctrine of Election and Calling.
 - D. Man's role as to the effects of God's sovereignty falls under the doctrines of Volition and God Consciousness (GC).
 - E. Some questions that this doctrine addresses include:
 - 1. The reality of spiritual death (*See Doctrine of the OSN/STA*) and its effect upon the destiny of children and the mentally incompetent.
 - 2. The heathen of mankind (those who have never heard or reject the gospel).
 - 3. The terms positive and negative volition (+V and -V).
 - F. As is applicable to all "Doctrines", to be hermeneutically sound, this doctrine must maintain compatibility/harmony with other pertinent doctrines such as: The Impartiality of God, Unlimited Atonement, Volition and Election and Calling.
- II. Vocabulary and definitions.
- A. As there are no specific terms for concepts such as "Trinity or Rapture" in the Old or New Testament, neither is one found for God consciousness.
 - B. However, this does not mean that the terms used are not legitimately explanatory for the concepts expressed.
 - C. The primary verb that is used for those who are interested in the plan of God as it relates to their volition is "seeking".
 - D. Hebrew:
 - 1. **vqB'** – verb: to search, to seek out or inquire into something, to look for something with the idea of obtaining it.
 - 2. **vrD'** – verb: to tread with the feet, to walk to or frequent a place, hence to seek diligently.
 - E. Greek: **zhtew** – verb: to seek in order to find or obtain, to seek to find out, to pursue or strive after.
 - F. These verbs are important since God states in His word that "*He is a rewarder of those who seek Him*". Heb.11:6
 - G. It must be understood that under the term "seek" as it relates to seeking God, there are "true seekers" and "pseudo-seekers", as well as those who do not seek at all:
 - 1. True seekers are those who find God:

- a. This seeking is dependent upon and stems from the recesses of one's intellectual honesty and volitional propensity to choose for a committed relationship with God. Deu.4:29; 1Chr.22:19a (the word "set" is literally "give/!tɪ"); Jer.29:13
 - b. They reflect a desire to understand God, the truth about Him and His word, and therefore denote a willingness to acquiesce or humble one's self to Him and His sovereignty. 1Chr.28:8; 2Chr.7:14; 14:14; Psa.14:2; Luk.11:10
 - c. True seekers (versus non-seekers or pseudo-seekers) willingly choose to find God based on His terms and conditions (the POG) and express that willingness by adherence to His directive will. Luk.13:24 cp. the perfect "seeker" of God, Christ Himself in Joh.5:30; 7:18
 - d. True seekers have what is termed as positive volition/+V.
2. The antonym for "seeking/+V" is "forsaking/-V", which is considered to be evil before God and carries with it a destiny and penalty of death and wrath. 1Chr.28:9; 2Chr.2:14; Psa.10:4; Ezra 8:22
 3. Non-seekers are an expression of extreme negative volition as they reject God to such a degree that they have absolutely no desire at any time in their life to understand or acknowledge Him.
 4. Those non-seekers who do not even acknowledge God's existence are called Atheists.
 5. Pseudo-seekers are those who, though may give an overt appearance of wanting to have a relationship with God, are not willing to seek Him on His terms, but seek Him with their own terms and agendas. Mat.16:4; Joh.5:44; 6:24 cp. vs.26
 6. These may acknowledge that God exists, but are not willing to humble themselves to the sovereignty of His plan. Ex. – Judaism.
 7. Pseudo-seekers also fall under -V. Again cp. Joh.6:24,26 of these pseudo-seekers who Jesus states are unbelievers in vs.36.
 8. That a distinction can be seen in -V, reveals that there are "degrees" of -V and +V.
 9. For the purpose of this doctrine, we will categorize -V as all those who are not believers (those who refuse to believe in Christ for salvation Ph₁, see Doctrine of the SAJG), also called heathens, and +V as all those who make the SAJG, but understanding that +V at the SAJG does not necessarily mean that one is or remains +V to the doctrine of the MAJG.
- H. The act of one seeking God, by its very nature, demands that they possess the mental capacity to comprehend His existence.
 - I. God consciousness refers to the time in one's life that one becomes aware that God does exist and is also referred to as the age of accountability.

1. There is no specific age for every member of the human race, but under normal circumstances this would occur fairly early in life.
2. Babies, young children and the mentally deficient not able to comprehend the reality of God's existence, obviously too are not capable of exercising their volition in this regard.
3. Therefore, volition is moot/disputable/of no consequence and they are provided for under the doctrine of Unlimited Atonement:
 - a. Only one sin was not covered by Christ on the cross, being "the sin" that sends one to hell, the sin of unbelief. Mat.12:31-32
 - b. Failure to believe in Christ is a conscious choice to reject the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (Joh.16:8-9), "the sin" Christ did not die for.
 - c. Therefore, babies and others without the mental capacity to understand that God exists and the issues of His plan, are not capable of making this decision and are secure before God, since Christ died for whatever sins they may commit. 2Sam.12:23
 - d. In other words, one cannot be held accountable for -V if they are not capable of expressing it and thus volition becomes a non-issue.
- J. It is at the point of God consciousness in one's life that volition is first expressed towards God.
- K. And it is at that time that one determines whether they desire to have a relationship with God (+V) or that they are disinterested and desire no relationship with Him (-V).
- L. And it is at that time that one's volition determines which of the two camps of mankind that they will fall under i.e., believers or unbelievers.
- M. God consciousness is to be distinguished from gospel hearing and saving faith.

III. The nature of God consciousness.

- A. God consciousness means that every mentally culpable member of the human race becomes aware that God exists.
- B. The fact that **all** men become aware of His existence is by virtue of God manifesting evidence of His existence to them. Rom.1:18-20
- C. When this consciousness of God develops in life, the individual becomes culpable before God for his or her eternal destiny.
- D. God consciousness is developed through the power of reason that logically concludes His existence.
- E. One's reasoning is based on their knowledge of right and wrong/one's conscience (Rom.2:14-15), through observation (Rom.1:20) and through accumulation of information by others (Rom.1:25 where -V exchanges truth for lies).
- F. This compilation of information forces one to consider the issue of God and His existence.

- G.** Various logical systems of thought may lead to God consciousness, including:
- 1.** The cosmological (from the Greek *kosmōj*) system that deals with the philosophy and metaphysical science exploring the nature, origins and development of the universe.
 - a.** It denotes the orderly nature of the material world and the universe, which demands intelligence. (*Not chaotic and derived from happenstance.*)
 - b.** It denotes the law of cause and effect, which one can arrive at the original cause.
 - c.** Confer Aristotle's *First Philosophy* re-titled *Metaphysics* and his treatment of God as the "Prime Mover" or "Unmoved Mover", stating Him as the first cause, as pure intellect, perfect in unity, immutable and "the thought of thought". Isa.48:12-13
 - 2.** The ontological (study of the nature of being or reality) system that argues for the existence of God based on being or reality.
 - a.** The soul, which was created in the image of God (Gen.1:26-27 cp. 2:7), develops the concept of an ideal being or soul.
 - b.** The concept is, if our souls exist, then there must be a perfect soul or being that created it, therefore that being must exist. Deu.32:4
 - 3.** The anthropological (study of man from the Greek *anqrwpōj*) system that states that since man is a moral creature knowing right and wrong, then the existence of that conscience bears witness that these standards must have a source of morality. Rom.2:14-15
 - 4.** The teleological (the study of final causes from the Greek *telōj*/end or limit) system that argues that the physical world and all in it have a purpose.
 - a.** The order visible in the universe demands a Designer or Planner. (*Belief in chance/evolution/happenstance is the result of -V at God consciousness.*)
 - b.** If this is true for inanimate objects, plants and animals, then is it not more obvious with regard to man.
 - c.** The final cause/reason of our existence reflects a purpose for our existence, therefore our existence has to be based on purpose or by design. Isa.46:10;

- IV.** The issue at God consciousness.
- A.** When an individual becomes aware of the existence of God, there is but one question to be answered.
 - B.** Does said individual want a relationship with God or not?
 - C.** This issue divides mankind into two opposing camps; those who want to have a relationship with God and those who don't.

- D. When one reaches this point he becomes accountable to God to do those things that God's essence demands of mankind. Rom.1:21
 - E. +V, even before salvation, is referred to as sheep; -V is referred to as goats. Mat.18:12-14; 25:32-34,41,46; Joh.10:16
- V. God consciousness and gospel hearing.
- A. God consciousness, or the awareness and belief that God exists, does not constitute anything in terms of adjustment to God. Jam.2:19
 - B. As noted, God consciousness divides mankind into two separate camps: +V and -V.
 - C. +V and gospel hearing:
 1. All whom God foreknew to be positive, He chose or elected to be conformed to the image of His Son. Rom.8:29
 2. The fact that He foreknew whom would be +V does not mean that He caused them to be +V, only that He anticipated which camp their volition would choose to be a part of.
 3. The process of conforming is accomplished in three separate stages of salvation, Ph₁, Ph₂ and Ph₃.
 4. He states that it is a given that all whom He anticipated to be +V, He predestined according to His sovereign will to be called in the course of human history. Rom.8:30
 5. The call is the presentation of the facts of the gospel focusing on the need for faith in Christ. 2Thes.2:14
 6. All who hear the gospel and are +V will eventually believe, although not necessarily the first time that they hear the truth. Joh.6:37,39,45 cp. Stephen in his presentation of the gospel heard by Saul in Act.7:1 – 8:1, who later became the Apostle Paul.
 7. This process is secure because it was worked out by God in eternity past as He made provision for His sheep.
 8. Therefore, it is concluded that those who express +V at God consciousness, will express +V at gospel hearing.
 - D. -V and gospel hearing.
 1. Since God chose those whom He anticipated would be +V, He obviously did not choose those whom He knew would be -V.
 2. Some have stated that this failure to chose on God's part predestines the -V for eternal destruction.
 3. However, God states that He only predestines +V for conformity with His Son, and never does He state that He predestines -V for any other eternal destiny.
 4. No passage of Scripture can be adduced to promote or substantiate that erroneous viewpoint.
 5. Those whom He did not choose, He simply foreknew that they would choose not to have a relationship with Him.
 6. And this being the case, it leaves only one viable option for -V to choose for, Satan's dominion. Act.26:18

7. And since Satan's eternal destination was determined before the creation of man to be the lake of fire, so it goes for those who would follow him. Mat.25:41 cp. Rev.20:10,14,25
 8. In effect, all -V was judged in conjunction with Satan's -V and in essence therefore, all -V freely determines that their own destiny will be with him. Joh.3:18-19
 9. Due to God's foreknowledge, at God consciousness He recognizes the individual's expression of volition as +V or -V and therefore, whether or not a person will accept the invitation contained in the gospel.
 10. Since that is the case, He is not required to send an invitation to anyone that He knows will reject the invitation anyway.
 11. This is not to say that negative types are not exposed to the gospel, just that they will never believe no matter how many opportunities they may be given. Rom.10:14-21
 12. This is because at God consciousness they have already determined that they do not want a relationship with God, concluding that -V at God consciousness remains -V at gospel hearing.
 13. Therefore, many that are negative at God consciousness will never hear the gospel and those that do they will fail to make the SAJG. Mat.22:14 cp. ex. of Judas Iscariot.
- E. With regard to God consciousness and gospel hearing, the overwhelming majority of the human race is -V. Mat.7:13-14

VI. The result of -V at God consciousness.

- A. Many throughout Christianity and particularly in our century have expressed a great deal of consternation regarding the heathen of the world.
- B. Their presupposition is that people are heathen because they have not heard the truth.
- C. The Word of God teaches that they are heathen due to a rejection of the truth at God consciousness. Rom.1:21
- D. When negative unbelievers reject the truth of God, they are left with error, which manifests itself in religious apostasy and moral error. Rom.1:21-23,25,26-32
- E. Their rejection of the light of truth of necessity leaves them in the darkness of error. Rom.1:21b
- F. Rather than change their mind (repent) they end up actively suppressing the truth, fighting against God. Rom.1:18
- G. This brings about further judgment in time from God, which is obvious in the decay of their society and institutions. Rom.1:24,26,28
- H. Since they chose to remove the true God from their frame of reference, God removes His restraints of evil and allows unbridled STA activity that always eventuates in active judgment by Him.

- I. This is how heathen nations became heathen nations, since the truth was spread abroad from the eight who survived the flood. Gen.9:18-19; 10:32; Act.17:26
 - J. Conclusion: The heathen are heathen because they have been exposed to the light at GC and rejected it (-V) and not because they have not heard.
- VII.** Case histories that validate this doctrine that volition is the issue.
- A. Esau and Jacob. Rom.9:10-14
 - 1. God chose Jacob before either of the twins was born.
 - 2. This must have been based on some knowledge that God had. 1Pet.1c-2
 - 3. Jacob was positive and Esau was negative, which accounts for God's attitude toward each of them. Rom.9:13
 - B. Nebuchadnezzar illustrates the fact that God will remove all hindrances to faith in those who are positive, especially human arrogance, the chief obstacle. Dan.4:28-37
 - C. Nineveh. Jonah 1-4
 - 1. This history demonstrates that God knows where +V resides. Jon.3:1-5
 - 2. It also illustrates that failures of communicators will not deter the plan of God. Jon.1-2 cp. 4
 - D. The Pharaoh of the Exodus demonstrates that -V will not come to faith no matter how many opportunities they may have. Exo.5-14
 - E. Judas Iscariot. Mat.27:3-10
 - 1. This man was privy to all that Jesus did and taught over the course of his ministry.
 - 2. Nevertheless, he failed to believe just as Jesus knew he would. Joh.6:64
 - 3. He had a perfect communicator and failed to make the SAJG and went to hell. Joh.17:12
 - F. In addition to these case histories, Jesus taught that God removes all stumbling blocks that would deter any who are +V to make the SAJG. Mar.10:23-27 cp. 9:43-48
- VIII.** Conclusions.
- A. This doctrine, when properly presented and understood is in harmony with all other doctrines of Scripture.
 - B. God consciousness and the issue of volition is what God's foreknowledge was "looking for", which in turn formed the basis of His sovereign election.
 - C. Since God knows where all +V resides, He can make any necessary provision to harvest that +V in time.
 - D. We do not have this knowledge, so we are fishers of men and under the principle of evangelism we use doctrine as bait and fish for those who are +V. Mat.4:19
 - E. Not one "fish" who is +V will fail to be caught! Joh.17:2,20-22