

Our “Perspective” of God (and its *supreme* importance)

Our *perspective*, or if you like, our *world view* of everything *in* and *about it*, emanates from primarily one “spring.” Thus, there is one question to which the answer yields a *conclusion* that becomes a *conviction* that not only *determines* but *dominates* everything else we choose to believe and practice in life. It is this: “**Is there a ‘God’?**” If answered, concluded, and convicted “Yes,” then we are obligated to “*fear God and keep His commandments*” for such is “*the whole duty of man*” (KJV), Eccl.12:13. But if answered, concluded, and convicted “No,” then man becomes his own “god” in every sense and application. This IS the central question of not only *our lives*, but also *man’s existence*. There is none more important, or more determinate to our destiny in either the *short* or *long* terms. Our answer, conclusion, and conviction to this one question either establishes “*faith*” and all that such requires, cf. Heb.11:1,3,6, or enables *disbelief* and all that it entails.

In an audience such as this and I’m sure for most everyone in it, that question has been long ago answered in the affirmative, or you wouldn’t be here today. However, there is a further and subsequent question that *allows* and even *demands* an additional answer with its incumbent conclusions and convictions. And as before, is just as important to further delineation and distinctions even among those who *believe* (have *faith*) in God’s existence. It can be simply stated, but perhaps not so simply answered. It is: “**What is your perspective of God?**” Having confessed conviction of His existence, then a correct view of the *nature of God* becomes the next paramount conclusion required. This, too, not only *shapes* or *molds* our lives (or at least *should* do so), but also further determines our destiny eternally. So, if you indeed are convicted of God’s existence, “**What is your perspective of God?**”

- Is He a God of *love, grace, and mercy*?
- Or, is He a God of *righteousness, justice, and wrath*?
- Does He *forgive* and *accept* everyone who acknowledges His existence?
- Or, does He further *discern* and *discriminate* between the *obedient* and the *disobedient*?

Do see how our “perspective” of God *shapes* and *molds* our lives? How it *determines* our *course, speed, and direction*? To answer this important question on our *perspective of God*, we have two options (as in reality, we do in all things):

1. We can rely on the *wisdom* and *words of men*; or,
2. We can rely on the *wisdom* and *words of God*, 1Cor.1:18 – 2:16.

Simply put: **Our perspective of God comes either from what *man knows* (or *thinks he knows*) and *says about God*; or, it depends on what *God knows* and *says about Himself*.** You tell me: On which would you prefer, if indeed you *believe in God’s existence*, to base your *perspective* of God, and therefore not only the *course* and *direction* of your life, but your *eternal destiny*?

So, how shall we come to our *perspective* of God? Read fully and study carefully *ALL* that He has revealed to mankind about Himself? Of course! But such is surely a lifetime commitment and beyond the scope of our endeavor here and now. **So what verse or passage can provide the most *enlightenment* to our *perspective* of God?**

The number of answers would surely approximate the number of those asked! But since I have proposed the question and explained my understanding of its importance, I am obligated to provide at least “my” answer, despite the fact that I am neither an educated scholar nor an esteemed theologian (nor a *prophet* or the *son of a prophet*, cf. Amos 7:14). As you surely have surmised by now, I have given these matters serious contemplation- at least as my abilities allow. So, with this rather lengthy (but hopefully helpful) introduction, let’s consider just one passage, Rom.2:1-13, and then more specifically, one verse within it.

Let us first note some important features of the *context*:

- 1:18-32 has detailed the *course* and *destiny* of those who foolishly *concluded* that “*There is no God,*” cf. Psa.10:4; 14:1; but,
- Our general text of 2:1-13 has further outlined the *course* and *destiny* of those who “*rely upon the Law*” of and “*boast in God*” (vv.17ff), but seem to have a *false/wrong perspective* of God; thus,
- Their *practice* of His requirements (*Law*) did not align with their *profession* (of faith *in Him*), vv.1-3 and vv.5ff.

And now for our single verse of consideration, **v.4**:

1. To “**think lightly**” or “*despise*” (NKJV) comes from *kataphroneo*, and basically means to *contempt, disdain, or think little or nothing of*.
2. **Riches** is translated from *ploutos*, and refers to *fullness, abundance, or plenitude*.
3. **Kindness** or “*goodness*” (KJV) is rendered from *chrestotes*, and also includes the attributes of *moral goodness* and *integrity*.
4. **Forbearance** or “*tolerance*” (NASB95) is translated from *anochē*, and in addition to *forbearance* and *tolerance*, may also mean to *endure*.
5. **Patience** or “*longsuffering*” (KJV) comes from *makrothumia*, and additionally carries the ideas of *constancy, steadfastness, perseverance, and slowness in avenging wrongs*. And finally,
6. **Kindness** or “*goodness*” (KJV) is repeated, though this time it is from *chrestos* (instead of *chrestotes* as previously), and has a slightly broader meaning that includes *virtuous, good, pleasant, kind, and benevolent*.

The specific *meanings* of the words are not difficult, nor is it so to *perceive God* in these ways. But what must be realized is the **intent** or **purpose** of these attributes God so *richly* manifests toward those who *acknowledge His existence* (i.e. *believers in Him*). They are *intended* to produce **repentance**. This is significant because:

1. *Metanoia* (rendered here as “**repentance**” by all common translations) means to “to change one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness” (Greek-English Lexicon of the NT by Louw & Nida); thus, a *change of mind/heart/attitude* that leads to a change of *course/direction* in *life/conduct*. **Why is such repentance a necessary result of God’s manifested kindness, forbearance, patience, and goodness?**

2. Because, as we've vividly seen through our study of Hosea, God's *compassion* (for our purposes here, let such stand for His *kindness, forbearance, and patience*) **can be exhausted** (cf. Hos.1:6) even to the point that **He no longer acknowledges or accepts** even those who claim to "believe in" and "belong to" Him (Hos.1:9; 8:2), and He will, in fact, "**love them no more**" (Hos.9:15).
3. Such is also manifested in our primary text of Rom.2:
 - a. V.5 where *stubbornness* and *unrepentant hearts* will receive God's *wrath* at judgment;
 - b. Vv.6-7 where *deeds* will be the basis of *judgment* rather than *desires, intents, or claims*;
 - c. Vv.8-9 where God's *wrath* and *indignation* will produce great *tribulation* for those who *disobey* and *do evil*;
 - d. V.10 where His *glory, honor, and peace* will be upon those who **don't despise His kindness**, but **instead repent and obey Him**.

If we don't have this *complete/whole* "perspective" of God (discerned from His own words), and choose instead to accept the *wisdom/words of men* of only His *kindness, patience, and forbearance*, then:

1. We have either *been deceived*, or have *deluded ourselves* about God, Matt.22:29; and,
2. We will suffer the same fate as those depicted in our text (of Hosea or Rom.2) who *despised His kindnesses*, and *stubbornly refused to repent and obey Him*.
3. Rom.11:22, "**Behold then the *kindness* and the *severity* of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.**"

Now:

- If you *don't believe God exists*, please read Rom.1:18-32 and come talk to me or someone else who does.
- If you *do believe God exists*, have you based your "perspective" of God and His nature on *man's wisdom and words*, or *God's wisdom and words*? If the latter, great! You will continue *live in and walk by FAITH!* If, however, the former is the case, please reread Rom.2:1-5 for it predicts not only the *course* of your life, but also your eternal destiny.
- The *good news* is that thus far at least, God's *kindness, forbearance, and patience* have not yet been exhausted for you. It's not yet too late for them to "*lead you to repentance*"! Will you *accept and embrace God's kindness by repenting and obeying Him*? Or will you continue to *despise and disregard* it in *stubborn rebellion and disobedience*? The choice is yours. God's *kind and patient forbearance* can give way to His *justice, righteousness, wrath, and indignation*.