



Cherreguine Bible Doctrine Ministries

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VOLITIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

A related concept is justice, the measure of merit. Justice stems from the idea of equality between two persons having some agreement, understanding, or contract between them. If one party fails to keep the agreement, then he or she upsets the equality, thereby owing compensation to the other party.

The person keeping the agreement has something due him or her. Justice is served when the offending party pays the offended party whatever is deserved or merited, that is, whatever is considered to reestablish the state of equality. From the standpoint of the offended party the compensation merited is regarded as a reward. From the standpoint of the offending party the compensation that is owed is seen as a punishment. Moving beyond the limits of the simple contract situation into the broader context of moral responsibility in general, we find that punishment has several functions, since more than an individual is usually offended by an act of wrongdoing.

That act may be a crime against the group or the state. It may also be a sin against God. Retributive punishment serves the offended person by getting back at the offender and restoring the balance which justice demands.

Corrective or rehabilitative punishment serves the offender by bringing him or her back to the place of equality with the rest of the group or society. Preventive or deterrent punishment serves the group or society by forestalling future wrongdoing of the type committed. Vindictive punishment serves the law and the lawgiver, both human and divine, by putting down one who has flouted the very ideas of law, equality, and justice. By so doing, that person has offended the holiness and justice of God Himself.

Although responsibility is being treated here as a moral phenomenon, we have reflected the biblical approach by looking at it from the standpoint of some of the concerns of legal responsibility. A study of legal responsibility as such would lead into such topics as an offender's intentions, strict liability, and criminal insanity. Instead we shall focus on a concept, which is central to moral responsibility as such, namely, the concept of freedom.

Some does not hold responsible for a decision or act claiming that man's will is not free; hence for them there is no such thing as moral responsibility but man possesses free will. They blame such factors as the person's heredity, social background, mental history, character and environment.

Another condition necessary for moral responsibility is knowledge of what is expected of one. A person who is ignorant of a rule or law is either not held responsible or is thought to have a reduced degree of responsibility, as long as he or she did not willfully bring about that ignorance. However, ignorance of the law and regulations excuses no one.

Certainly in Scripture, but also in general usage, responsibility extends to the family, to larger groupings up to a nation, to groups of nations, and to even the entire human race.

But the primary focus of responsibility is a person who can be held accountable, an agent who has the power or ability to make decisions and act on them intentionally. One acts intentionally when one does something for a reason, that is, because of one's beliefs and desires. This is why God is said to judge "the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Specific biblical teachings relative to human volition and responsibility will be discuss separately in this book. Because God holds every human being responsible for the sin of the first human being (Romans 5:12), He gave us, free will -volition.