What is Impossible for God?

It has become quite common for Christians to say that God can't do things that He has chosen not to do. For instance, people sometimes say, "God can't make someone choose to love Him." He has given us free will and people can walk away from God even if He wants a relationship with them. This kind of statement does two things; it diminishes God's omnipotence, and it makes Him less appealing to the masculine mind.

God COULD overcome our free will if He chose to do so. It would not make sense for Him to give us the gift of free will if He intended to routinely overcome it. A more accurate statement would be that God does not want a relationship with us if we do not want to come to Him on His terms. Likewise, a man might say, "My wife could never cheat on me," when he means that because of her values she would not cheat on him. He probably does not mean that she is so unattractive as to be incapable of cheating. When the reason something cannot occur is because the individual involved does not desire the action it is more accurate to say that the person "won't do it," instead of "can't do it." "Can't" should be reserved for conditions involving a lack of ability not desire. By saying, "He can't," we have presented an image of an impotent God sitting around frustrated that we do not love Him.

Why is the God who cannot make a person come to Him less attractive to the masculine mind? Men sometimes respect goodness, but they always respect strength. Men know that if they had omnipotence they could make anything happen that they desired. A man that desires something, but cannot achieve the goal is viewed as ineffective (at least in that instance). Such a God would be viewed the same way.

Why do people say such things? Our present culture (even in the Church) feminizes God, that is, it makes Him appear less masculine. Motherly love is viewed as constantly reaching out, even if the child does not love. The greatness of motherly love is that it loves the person greatly for who he is (my son) independent of the person's actions. Fatherly love is viewed as more demanding. Men say, "Good job," when women say, "Good boy." Boys seek to earn their father's respect, which being a response to value is a form of love. The greatness of fatherly love is that it recognizes the efforts and accomplishments. God, of course, is both. He loves us unconditionally because we are made in His image and likeness and more if we are His children through baptism. He loves us more (conditionally) if we are more like Him, that is, holy. Turning God into a mommy and us into babies does not make the relationship appealing to men. The God Who expects us to answer His call to holiness and responds accordingly (with more love) when we do so makes more sense to men. After all, He is a Father.

So, we should only say God "can't" do something when He is incapable, right? That is, we could say, "God cannot make a rock so large that He could not lift it," or "God cannot make a square circle," right? WRONG. Even those statements limit God unreasonably. How so?

The rock—if God made a rock that filled the entire universe it was in, it would be unable to be lifted…because there would be nowhere for it to go. The rock would not have to be infinite for it to be immovable, the universe would just have to be finite (as ours likely is).

The square circle—I took drafting in high school. When drawing a cylinder a draftsman looks at it in both the x – y dimension and the z- y dimension. A cylinder with its axis along the z axis would be

a circle in the x – y plane. If the length of the cylinder is the same as the diameter of the circle the cylinder would be a square in the z – y plane. It would have all of the qualities of a circle and a square; none would be missing. A person might say, "OK, it could be a circle in one plane and a square in another, but it could not be both in one plane" Wrong again. If we shine a light on the object and projected its image on a screen as it rotated between around the y axis the projected image would be a circle and then a square and then a circle…. The man still intent on limiting God might then say, "But they can't be both a square and a circle at once." It seems that way to us, because we experience time successively. God is truly eternal; all things are always present to Him. He still sees me as I was the day I was born and still sees me, as I will be the day I die. The circle that became a square is both before God. We could take this farther, but the point is clear. We create the image of a limited God with "can't."

When good people say, "God can't," they really are saying that they cannot see how He could…or worse that they desire Him to have limits.

What are the ramifications of this? There are people in hell and God wants them to be there. Likewise, the angels and saints (who are in perfect conformity to the divine will) also want those people in hell. God wants people to love Him and to spend eternal life with Him, but only to the point that He has given each of us the grace to do so. If He wanted us to be with Him more, He would give us more grace. He does not irresistibly want everyone with Him in heaven.

As a footnote, I shared these thoughts with my older son. He agreed with my points, but then asked how God could overcome the principle of non-contradiction. I said that I did not know, but that my ignorance of a solution only proved that I was incapable of solving the riddle. I was still unwilling to bet against God on this challenge…and so was my son.

Upon further thought, I realized that God has already overcome the principle of non-contradiction, that is, He can do something and cannot do something. He overcame that limit when He assumed a second (limited) nature. He became a being Who is NOT all-powerful, while remaining a being Who is all-powerful.

I shared my thoughts on this subject with a friend. He pointed out that God may not have ever made a rock so big that He could not lift it, but He DID make a cross so heavy that He could not carry it by Himself. He needed help.

God can.