A dramatic landscape featuring a two-lane road that recedes into the distance. The sky is filled with intense red and orange light, suggesting a fire or explosion. A large, bright yellow and orange comet streaks across the sky from the right towards the center. The ground is dark, and the overall atmosphere is one of awe and intensity.

# STOP BLAMING GOD

FOR THE WORK OF THE ENEMY

TROY J. EDWARDS

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*For the Work of the Enemy*

*By Troy J. Edwards*



Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *King James Version* (KJV) of the Bible.

# **Stop Blaming God**

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Troy J. Edwards

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Dedicated to my first cousin

**Robin Lee Kelly**

*I miss you girl! The devil's cancer  
may have taken you from this world,  
but Christ's redemptive work gave you  
a place with Him.*

## Preface

Years ago I worked as an IT systems administrator in the Air Force. Among my many duties was to prepare the tapes for the evening backup. The technology back then (as now) could be cumbersome and frustrating. One evening as I was backing up the main frame computer's data it seemed that none of the technology was working correctly and I was becoming increasingly frustrated. I began to cry out, "God, why are you letting this happen to me?" The Lord responded, not in an audible voice, but by a "still small voice" in my heart, "Stop blaming me for your problems."

He did not say this in a mean or cold way but He spoke in a gentle loving manner. I asked for forgiveness. However, old habits are pretty hard to break, aren't they? In those days we backed up our weekly data on reel-to-reel tapes. Sometimes the tape was difficult to get into the slot and could break. It was often aggravating and frustrating. I remember during one of those frustrating times when the tape just would not cooperate with me as I wanted. I cried out again, "God, why did you le.... Oops, forgive me Lord, you are not the cause of this."

It was the beginning of my learning how to deal with my problems without blaming God. As a matter of fact, do you notice that if you continue to blame God for the problem it becomes easy to either get upset with God and not serve Him for a significant period of time (or never again) or you slip into the "que sera, sera, whatever will be, will be" fatalistic attitude?

Sadly, blaming God is a popular pastime both within and outside of the church. In this book I address this problem and show from Scripture that God is not the source of any of our problems. I have also dealt with a number of areas in which God gets the blame. These areas are by no means exhaustive. On the contrary, I initially

planned to address how we blame God for such things as marriage problems, relationship issues, condemnation and overwhelming feelings of guilt, and even bad political outcomes (yes, many people believe that God is the One who actually helps politicians who support abortion and homosexuality to win elections as well as placing in authoritarian dictators who oppress and persecute Christians).

Had I addressed all of these areas as initially planned, this book would be a much larger one. Since it is my desire to reach the “popular crowd” rather than the academician, I had to eliminate some topics, even though I do not believe that their importance were any less than the ones I did address.

Therefore, I condensed the book to the topics you see here. The aforementioned topics that did not make the cut will be addressed in some other form in other publications. I pray that you will enjoy this book, that it will help you see that God is not at fault for the problems in life, and that we can have the victory in every situation if we focus on exactly who our enemy is. When I learned to stop blaming God and instead sought Him for help, God always gave me amazing wisdom to resolve problems that I would not have had apart from asking Him. He will do the same for you (James 1:5-7). Be blessed.

## Chapter One

### Stop Blaming God

*And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, **The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat** (Gen. 3:11-12)*

Blaming God has been around since the time of our first parents. One of the first manifestations of the fallen nature is to blame God for its condition. Solomon said it best when he wrote, “*People ruin their lives with the foolish things they do, and then they blame the Lord for it*” (Prov. 19:3; Easy to Read Version).

God created a being and gave him, not only freedom of will, but even authority over every part of His restored creation. The only thing God asked in return was for loving loyalty to Him. He warned Adam of the sad consequences of disloyalty (Gen. 2:15-17).

In the wonderful environment that God created for man, there was no reason whatsoever for him to become disloyal and betray God. God gave Adam everything his heart could ever desire, to include a beautiful wife (Gen. 2:22-24). If that had not been enough then He would have given man even more because this is consistent with God’s generous giving nature (2 Sam. 12:8-9). There was simply no good reason for man to rebel. Yet, he did exactly what God commanded him not to do (Gen. 3:6-7).

God sought out Adam, found him hiding, listened to him cowering about his nakedness and asked if he had eaten from the forbidden tree? Does Adam apologize for



his actions? Does he take responsibility? No. *Adam blamed God.*

### **“Blaming” began with Lucifer**

Blaming God has been around since sin and rebellion has been around. To “blame” means to find someone at fault or to hold them responsible for a harmful act. Sometimes we may blame someone rightfully when they are indeed at fault. However, God is never at fault because He has never done wrong or done anything to bring harm. Therefore whenever God is blamed for any evil or wrong He is being slandered. Lucifer, the original liar, has been falsely blaming God for numerous things since the time of his fall, thus slandering Him:

*Ye are of your father **the devil**, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: **for he is a liar**, and the father of it (John 8:44)*

The word “devil” means “false accuser, devil, slanderer” (Strong’s Number #G1228). In *Thayer’s Greek Definitions* it is further defined as “Prone to slander, slanderous, accusing falsely; a calumniator, false accuser, slanderer.” The New Simplified Bible translates the first part of the John 8:44, “*You are from your father [Satan] the Devil (slanderer) (false accuser)!*” The reason why Lucifer is now referred to as “the devil” is because he is always lying on God by blaming him for any misery that angels and men suffer as a consequence of their own rebellion. Slandering God was the thing that ushered evil and rebellion among the angels into God’s once peaceful and loving universe.

Sometime before the existence of man God created a universe (John 1:1-4; Rev. 10:5-6). Within that universe were numerous free-willed beings called angels (Col. 1:16-17). For ages upon ages there was nothing but peace, joy, laughter, love and positive activity within the universe. But one day one of God's top angels began to exercise his free-will in a direction that God never intended (Isa. 14:12-15). This angel started a rebellion against God and managed to get a third of the vast number of angels to rebel along with him (Rev. 12:3-4). This rebel angel had some measure of success because he learned the art of "merchandising" or selling *himself* by *slandering the "competition"*:

*Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. **By the multitude of thy merchandise** they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire (Eze. 28:15-16)*

Anyone who watches television commercials will notice that one product will attempt to merchandise itself by slandering its competitor. We see this type of "merchandising" in political attack ads as well. Satan is the originator of this form of merchandising.

The word "merchandise" in Ezekiel 28 is from the Hebrew word "*r@kullah*." In Lev. 19:16 God tells His people, "*Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.*" The Hebrew word "talebearer" is the Hebrew word "*rakiyl*" which means "slander, slanderer, tale bearer, informer." Both

“*r@kullah*” and “*rakiyl*” have their roots in the Hebrew word “*rakal*” which means “to go about (meaning dubious).”<sup>1</sup>

### **Lucifer: Politician and Conspiracy Theorist**

Lucifer went up and down as a *talebearer* and *merchandiser* among the angels. The type of merchandising that Lucifer was doing was to sell himself by slandering God. G. H. Pember explains:

For the word translated “merchandise” may also (as an investigation of the root will show) signify “detraction” or “slander”; and we know that the very name “Devil” means “the slanderer,” or “malignant accuser.”<sup>2</sup>

Many dubious manufacturers, especially drug companies, create non-existent problems in order to sell a product that solves the problem that *they* created. This is exactly what Satan did. He created dissatisfaction among the angels that claimed that they were not getting something that they deserved. Then Lucifer blamed God for the newly made-up problem. Then he began to merchandise himself as the only one who could solve the problem, much like Absalom did against his father King David (2 Sam. 15:3-6)

Dr. Robert D. Luginbill translates the first part of verse 16 as, “*In your **extensive conspiring**, you were filled with wickedness, and you sinned.*”<sup>3</sup> “Conspire” is the verb form of the word “conspiracy” which means, “a secret plan or agreement to carry out an illegal or harmful act, esp with political motivation.”<sup>4</sup>

No doubt that the “blame-game” we often see being played in modern politics today is influenced by the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). Lucifer is the first “politician” to ever slander his opponent. Satan perfected the art from the time he fell. Spreading his “conspiracy

theories” is exactly how Absalom was able to have some measure of political success against his father:

*And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. **And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.** (2 Sam. 15:12)*

The VOICE translation says, “*The rebellion grew in power and number.*” Absalom was able to succeed by merchandising himself. Here he gives us a parallel example of exactly how Lucifer successfully won a third of the angels over to his side. Like Absalom, Lucifer played the “blame-game” in order to gain a political victory over God. In Scripture we find two prime examples in which the “father of lies” slandered God:

*And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:4-5)*

*Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face (Job 1:9-11)*

In Genesis the slanderer tells Eve a direct lie while slandering God's character. He calls God selfish, unloving, egotistical, competitive and stingy. Sadly Eve falls for it and Adam allows himself to be persuaded by his wife to betray God. It all began with "character assassination" in which the slanderer blames God for holding back from Eve.

In the story of Job Satan slanders God again by claiming that the only reason that Job serves Him is because God has bought Job's dedication by blessing Job materially and spiritually. Here Satan blames God overall for the average man's fallen condition. He implies that no one will worship God apart from receiving something in return. Therefore, according to the slanderer, it's all God's fault that most men serve Satan because God is doing nothing for them. This angel that once loved God has now become God's greatest slanderer.

### **The Nature of "Blasphemy"**

When the Satan controlled anti-Christ is manifested one of his first acts will be to speak *against* the Most High. This has been Satan's modus operandi since the time he first rebelled against God. Satan attempts to discredit God in order to exalt himself and his system of rule.

*And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time (Dan. 7:25)*

Satan's most effective weapon is the use of words. Words can be used to paint a picture of a person in the minds of others. This picture may be a true or a false one.

Either way, words are the most effective way of building or destroying someone's character in the minds of others. Since Satan's anti-Christ will be speaking great words *against* God, we know that he will use false information to malign God's character.

John repeats this exact same truth in Revelation as he prophesies concerning the anti-Christ making war on the saints. However, rather than using the phrase "speak great words against the most High" as Daniel did, John says that the Satan-controlled man will speak *blasphemies* against God and against His name:

*And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations (Rev. 13:6-7)*

One etymological dictionary says that "blaspheme" is "from Greek *blasphemein* 'to speak lightly or amiss of sacred things, to slander,' from *blasphemos* 'evil-speaking' (see blasphemy). A reintroduction after the original word had been worn down and sense-shifted to blame."<sup>5</sup> Another etymological dictionary understand "blaspheme" and "blame" as synonyms.<sup>6</sup> In other words, Satan is falsely blaming God by attempting to find fault with Him.

In religious circles we have limited our understanding about "blasphemy" to the idea that it is merely offending God through irreverent insults. While this is true religious tradition has painted God's reaction to blasphemy as violent and vindictive—a "how dare you speak irreverently against me" attitude.

Yet, the God represented by Jesus is not concerned about blasphemy simply because He is offended. He is concerned about it because it paints a false picture of Himself. Notice that the satanically controlled anti-Christ will *blaspheme his name*. God's "name" always represents His character and nature. Therefore, Satan will use words to cast aspersions upon God's character. He will present a distorted view of God that will cause men to hate and despise Him.

Satan has been able to influence men to blame God for things that are not true. In Matthew 12 Jesus healed a boy that was both blind and dumb by the power of the precious Holy Spirit. However, the religious leaders accused him of using satanic power to heal. What they may not have realized is that they were blaming God for leaving the boy in this terrible condition while giving Satan credit for the good work done. Jesus said that this was speaking against the Spirit of God which He defined as *blasphemy*:

*And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it*

*shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come (Matt. 12:27-32)*

Blaspheming God is synonymous with speaking against Him. Many people do this today when they speak against the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches. Many of these people believe that God wills sickness upon people and accuse those who believe in divine healing and deliverance of practicing witchcraft or “mind over matter.” Some will even go as far as claiming that an infilling of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues or even an undeniable miraculous healing is the work of Satan.

These people are warped in their thinking. They blame God for sickness and disease while giving credit to Satan for the relief of it. This is the very nature of blasphemy and many who have criticized the works of God in our time are guilty of this sin. A person commits blasphemy when they intentionally blame God for the devil’s works in light of better knowledge.

### **The True Source of our Problems**

If we are to win our warfare against Satan we must ever keep in mind that a major part of the battle is to fight against dark ideas presented by Satan about God. Those words spoken to us against God claiming that he is unkind, unloving, uncaring, and the source of all of our trials and problems must be immediately dealt with and put away. It does not matter the source of these words spoken against God. Even if they come from a “Christian” pulpit, book, television or radio program, they must be rejected. Otherwise, Satan will succeed in wearing us out.



God is only good and is not in the business of doing harmful things to us. He only dispenses good things (Matt. 7:7-11). We must learn the truth about both God and Satan if we are going to walk in victory in this life. In the upcoming chapters we will look at some areas of Satan's attacks. We will see who our true enemy is behind these attacks and we will learn how we may resist him steadfast in the faith. When you see that it is truly Satan, as well as our own sinful choices, and not God behind these problems then you will not so readily accept them but will come against them with the weapons that God has provided for you. As Church Father Tertullian (155 to 240 AD) wrote:

....to impute the blame of what happened to the Creator, without any examination of His purpose. To conclude: the goodness of God, then fully considered from the beginning of His works, will be enough to convince us that nothing evil could possibly have come forth from God; and the liberty of man will, after a second thought, show us that it alone is chargeable with the fault which itself committed.<sup>7</sup>

You will see that Satan, often working through man's free will, is the reason behind broken marriages, sickness, financial problems, lack of success in evangelism, unanswered prayer, etc. You will learn to stop blaming God, man, and even yourself for these things. Now we only say that you should stop blaming yourself if you lacked knowledge of the true source of these problems. However, once you have gained knowledge and yet still refuse to act upon that knowledge to deal with your enemy then you can no longer even blame the devil. Then, as Tertullian said, the fault will be chargeable to you directly.

## Chapter Two

### You Have an Adversary

*So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, **An enemy hath done this.** The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? (Matt. 13:27-28)*

Many Christians have the wrong idea about who is behind their problems. When they are going through a trial, tragedy, or sickness; their first tendency is to blame God. “Why did God do this to me?” is their question. Or they will question God’s love and protection by asking, “Why did God allow this to happen to me?”

Others simply become passive and recite the usual mantras about God “being in control,” or His “being sovereign” or His “ways being mysterious.” Many of these Christians begin to lose their enthusiasm for God. They no longer want to truly serve Him. They start to think of Him as a cruel God who is out to get them.

#### **An Enemy Hath Done This**

Yet, in numerous places in Scripture God makes it clear who our true enemy is. In Matthew 13, Jesus gives a parable concerning some wheat and tares:

*Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his **enemy** came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. (Matt. 13:24-25)*

If some of us were the man in this parable we would probably blame God for putting those tares amongst our wheat. We would say “God did that to teach me something.” or “God is punishing me.” But Jesus makes it perfectly clear that an *enemy* did this. Jesus told His disciples and us that we were His “friends” (John 15:14-15) and not His enemies. In the parable this enemy is identified as the source of the problems faced by the man (who represents God in this parable): “*He said unto them, An enemy hath done this.*”

After telling this parable, Jesus disciples asked Him for more clarification. The Lord makes it plain that the sower of the tares (the bad seed) is the devil: “*The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels*” (Matt. 13:39). It is made clear to us that all the evil that is done in this world has its source, not in God, but in the enemy.

Jesus shows us that our enemy is the devil. The devil is a very clever enemy because he will not let you know that he is the one who is opposing you. He will do his dirty work and place the blame on someone else. Not only that, he has a multitude of well-trained fallen spirits to help him carry out his plan.

Satan is an enemy to both God and men. Satan is not a servant of God nor is God mysteriously using Satan for some secret purpose. Satan is genuinely and without coercion, making every possible attempt to undermine the loving work of God towards man. This is seen in Jesus’ parable in which Satan plants bad seed among God’s good seed.

Seed is a powerful thing. It can be a tiny little thing starting out but can produce a large ongoing harvest. The seed God always plants is good. God’s good seed of love, forgiveness, peace, healing, and provision is all for the benefit of mankind and His other creatures. Satan’s

seed of turmoil, sickness, destruction, lack, and hatred is an attempt to break God's heart, undermine His credibility, and destroy mankind in the process.

Satan is able to take good seed and distort and twist it. He does it as well the best of evil geniuses in our world who have taken God's resources and used them in destructive ways. Satan has turned good into evil, love into hatred, health into sickness, abundance into lack, and truth into lies. He has done this by planting seeds of deception into the minds of men and angels. Therefore, every tragic event from airplane crashes to automobile accidents to mass murders is Satan's doing.

It is very sad to see how some well-meaning Christians have erroneously charged God with all of the misery in this world, claiming that He ordains it for divine benevolent purposes. What a malicious indictment of God's character to charge Him with the work of His enemy. The next time we are faced with tragic events, regardless of what they are, let us stop blaming God for them. Instead, say, "*An enemy hath done this.*" To do so would be much more Biblical since God, as Jesus has stated in His parable, only plants good seed. God is not the author of evil of any kind.

### **The Meaning of Satan's Title**

It is this enemy who has caused all kinds of problems throughout the history of mankind. He started his adversarial mission in Heaven when he was able to convince at least a third of the angels to rebel against God with Him (Isa. 14:12-17; Eze. 28:12-19; Rev. 12:4). From that point he was no longer referred to as "Lucifer" which means "light-bearer," but became a "Satan:"

*And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out*

*into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night (Rev. 12:9-10)*

The New Testament was written in Greek and then translated into English. It is interesting to sometimes look at how a word is defined in its original language. The Greek word for “Satan” is “Satanas” which means, “adversary (one who opposes another in purpose or act), the name given to the prince of evil spirits, the inveterate adversary of God and Christ.”<sup>1</sup> Hence Satan’s own title or proper name is descriptive of his nature. He is the one that opposes people.

In the book of Revelation Satan is described as “the accuser of the brethren.” In the book of Job we read where a Heavenly council convenes and guess who decides to join in?

*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them (Job 1:6)*

This time we are looking at the Old Testament which was originally written in Hebrew and then translated into English. The word “Satan” in this passage comes from the Hebrew word “saw-tan” which means, “an opponent; especially (with the article prefixed) Satan, the arch enemy of good.”<sup>2</sup> The Julia Smith translation captures the thought when it translates the latter part of

the verse, “...*also the adversary will come in the midst of them.*”

When we see that Satan came to God as an adversary and not as a servant or a partner then perhaps we will stop using the book of Job to denigrate God’s character. Satan’s objective in going before God was to cast aspersions on God’s character before the angels by accusing Him of bribing Job to worship Him. His design was to destroy God’s reputation and Job’s life. The book of Job is not a story about God using Satan to test Job as so many theologians and ministers claim. Satan came as an *enemy* and not as a *friend* of the court.

God actually defended Job before the adversary. However, God had to be fair to Satan and allow him to attack Job as an opportunity to prove his fallacious accusations. If God did not allow these attacks then questions may have been left in the minds of the angelic counsel concerning God’s fairness. A lot of God’s dealings with mankind, including the church, are not only for man but also for the sake of the angels as well: “...*many-sided wisdom of God in all its infinite variety and innumerable aspects might now be made known to the angelic rulers and authorities (principalities and powers) in the heavenly sphere*” (Eph. 3:10; the Amplified Bible). No doubt that the angels, like us, are glad that Satan failed in his objective despite his cruel attacks upon Job.

The fact that God, rather than *using* the adversary for His divine mysterious purposes as some claim, actually opposes his designs against us, is seen in the book of Zechariah concerning the high priest Joshua:

*And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan,*

*The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment (Zech 3:1-4)*

The Wycliffe translation says that “...*the Adversary stood at his right hand, so that he could accuse him, or so that he could be adverse, or hostile, to him.*” This is Satan’s modus operandi. He is the one opposed to God’s people. He is the one who is harsh and hostile, accusing and looking for opportunity to destroy our lives.

In contrast God is completely on our side. He rebukes the adversary and reminds him of the work that he has done on our behalf. The “Angel of the Lord” is what some call a “theophany” which is the manifestation of God in some form in which He can be related to by others.

In this case we believe that the “Angel of the Lord” is the second member of the triune Godhead, the one we know as our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as he redeemed Joshua and cleansed him for service, He has done much more through His blood on our behalf. John writes by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, “*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death*” (Rev. 12:11).

Years ago I was in a used bookstore and saw a book titled, “God, the Problem.” While I do not know what the book was about I do know that God is *not* the

problem. How can we read these passages concerning Satan's hostility towards God and man and still believe that God is our *problem* rather than the *answer* to our problem? How can we continue to blame Him for what we suffer in this world when He is doing and has done all that He is able to do to defend us against the adversary?

### **We Have an Adversary**

We see from all of this that God is absolutely on our side. Paul tells us in Romans, "*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*" (Rom. 8:31). God is absolutely *for us*. This means that He is in our corner. He is not doing things to hurt us. Furthermore, Isaiah writes:

*So shall they fear the name of the LORD  
from the west, and his glory from the rising  
of the sun. When the enemy shall come in  
like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall  
lift up a standard against him* (Isa. 59:19)

The Julia Smith Translation reads, "*When the adversary shall come in as a river, the spirit of Jehovah was lifted up against him.*" God is on our side. He is not against us. It is our enemy, our adversary, which God is against. Going back to Rom. 8:31 we can ask the question, "If God is for us who is he that would dare go against God's elected ones?" The Bible makes it very clear exactly who is against us:

*Humble yourselves therefore under the  
mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you  
in due time: Casting all your care upon  
him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be  
vigilant; because your adversary the devil,  
as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking*



*whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. (1 Pet. 5:6-9)*

According to Webster's, the word "adversary" is: "*One that contends with, opposes, or resists: ENEMY.*" The Bible teaches us that the one who contends and opposes us is the devil. This is in contrast to God who invites us to cast our burdens on Him. Why? God cares about us. He absolutely loves us. Satan, on the other hand wishes to destroy and devour us.

God truly loves you and wants nothing but good. Satan, on the other hand, is looking for a way to destroy you. As human beings it is much easier for us to blame our problems on those we can see and touch physically. If we can't find a reason to blame our problems on them then our next source of attack is God. After all, "He allowed it." Sometimes we will blame both people and God. This all works out according to the devil's plan.

Notice again 1 Pet. 5:8: "... *your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, **seeking** whom he may devour.*" This tells us that he cannot just devour anyone at will. The person he devours must give him the opportunity to do so. You and I do not have to let him do this. God has given us authority over this enemy.

*And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the **enemy**: and*

*nothing shall by any means hurt you.*  
(Luke 10:17-19)

Note that the seventy returned with Joy because they had authority to deal with devils in Jesus' Name. In verse 9 Jesus commanded them, "*And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*" We will see in more detail in chapter 5 that God has nothing to do with sickness and disease. This is completely the work of the enemy. Yet many continually blame God for it. Luke 10:9 is immediate proof that God is not the One placing sickness on people. God is on our side. When we are confronted with sickness we need to stop looking at God as the source and begin to say, "*An enemy hath done this.*"

The Bible makes it clear who our enemy is. But we can praise God that the blood of Jesus has purchased for us the right to use His name. It is through this name that we command the devil to flee from us (James 4:7). Every born again Christian has authority over the devil, however, not every Christian knows that they have this authority. Some who do know do not know how to exercise it. Satan is *seeking* to find one of these types of Christians. He can easily devour them.

### **Don't Give the Adversary a Foothold**

Satan is also seeking people who will fall into sin and place themselves in his territory (1 John 3:8). Paul tells us that sin can give Satan a foothold into our lives: "*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil*" (Eph. 4:26-27). In his first epistle to Timothy we are given an illustration of this:

*I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give*

*none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan (1 Tim. 5:14-15)*

Again we see that Satan is identified as the adversary. The widows in this passage who were a part of the church turned aside after Satan by their conduct. Their conduct gives the devil and those who follow him occasion to slander and blaspheme. Satan hates God and looks for an occasion to denigrate His character.

When we engage in this warfare against sin and Satan, we must keep in mind that our constant battle to overcome the Tempter and his temptations is not for our sakes alone. There are people that are watching us. Our words about how good the Lord is and their need to receive Him as Lord and Savior is meaningless if we fail to conduct ourselves in a manner consistent with being a follower of Christ. Furthermore, God cannot be blamed for the results of our conduct. When we sin we give ourselves over to the adversary to bring about destruction in our lives (1 Cor. 5:5).

Nonetheless, Satan is identified as our enemy, our adversary. Let us stop blaming God for the work of the adversary and begin to overcome him by the blood and the Name of Jesus as we stand upon God's promises. God is for us. It is the adversary, Satan, who is against us.

## Chapter Three

### Two Kinds of Works

To destroy the works of the devil is one major way in which our testimony of word and deed can glorify the true nature of our living God, our heavenly father. It is not an alternative to evangelism, it will make our evangelism more credible. It is to rectify our God's damaged reputation. It is to avoid extending the implicit and embarrassing policy of almost constantly misrepresenting Him in our work around the world.<sup>1</sup> (Ralph D. Winter)

Many teachings within Christianity have a tendency to blame God for all of the ills that we face in life. We have told people, "God is punishing you for your sin," "God is testing you," "God is sending the trial to make you stronger," "God has a better purpose for you," and other less than encouraging things that makes God appear to be our destroyer rather than our Savior. It is no wonder that many sinners want nothing to do with God while many Christians live defeated lives.

#### **Vain Philosophical Distortions**

This is due to much of the philosophical foolishness has crept into the church that actually distorts the meaning of good and evil. Much of this philosophy was for the purpose of justifying some ascetic and predestinarian teachings. In these teachings God is often said to be the One who inflicts people with sickness, disease, tragedy, trials and even sin itself.

The claim is that all of these things are for good but usually mysterious purposes (often misquoting such

passages as Gen. 50:20 and Rom. 8:28 as proof texts). It is vitally important that God's people rid themselves of all philosophical definitions of what is good and what is evil and accept the plain teaching of the Bible and common sense. Paul said:

*Beware lest any man **spoil you through philosophy** and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ (Col. 2:8)*

Satan is the originator of such teachings and he has successfully used them to keep the church in a place of spiritual, moral, and financial defeat. It has also been Satan's purpose to cast aspersions upon God's character and make Him appear to be the culprit behind all of the problems and ills in life so that the very people God loves and came to save will curse Him to His face.

While some *pious* Christians will accept their "predestined lot in life," most people do not want to serve a capricious God who kills babies, causes floods and earthquakes, positions drunken drivers to kill people, ordains the kidnapping, rape of murder of little children, inflicts people with cancer, AIDS, lupus, multiple sclerosis, causes fires to burn up whole families, brings poverty to third world countries and the numerous other things that God is said to be doing.

### **The Works of God**

Some hate God simply because they want to live immoral lives without restrictions (not seeing that God's so-called "restrictions" are actually meant to protect us from the natural consequences of sin) but there are numerous others who would serve Him if they only knew the truth about Him. Sadly Satan has filled their minds

with distorted ideas about God. Many of these satanic ideas have come from pulpits all across this nation.

Part of the problem has been our failure to distinguish between the works of God and the works of Satan. The word “works” is used in the King James Bible to talk about an *action* or a *thing that was done*. Scripture describes both God and Satan as performing specific actions related to their desires, missions, and characters. Jesus tells His disciples:

*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father (John 14:10-12)*

Jesus said that it is the works that are done through Him that should have helped His disciples see what the Father is like. If we want to know what God is like we need to look at the works that Jesus did.

There is some dispute between *cessationists* (those who believe that God no longer does miracles today) and *continuationists* (those like myself who believe that God continues to manifest Himself in healing, deliverance, tongues, prophecy, etc.) as to the nature of the works that Jesus is referring to. Letting the Bible be its own interpreter we find that the “works” that Jesus says is a demonstration of His Father’s character are those of healing and deliverance from demonic oppression:

*And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them. And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore **mighty works** do shew forth themselves in him (Mark 6:12-14).*

In this passage, Herod makes a direct link between Jesus, His disciples, the miracles wrought through them and His mighty works. The Bible states that “miracles” and “works” are synonymous terms. The “works” that Herod noticed were healing of the sick and deliverance from demonic oppression.

Not once in the Scriptures do we find Jesus giving sickness, tempting anyone to sin, calling down famine, bringing about natural disasters to punish His enemies or condemning anyone in wrath and judgment. On the contrary throughout the gospels we find Jesus healing the sick, feeding the hungry, delivering people from sin, and averting natural disasters.

### **Jesus’ Purpose for Incarnating**

The Bible declares that God has works that are intended to relive God’s people from satanic oppression (Acts 10:38). But it also declares that Satan has works that are intended to destroy mankind. Jesus’ whole purpose for having incarnated into human flesh was to destroy *Satan’s* works:

*He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was*

*manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil* (1 John 3:8).

We can see from this that God has works and Satan has works. Jesus did His works to overcome the works of Satan. The works of the devil is sin and hatred and all of its consequences to include trials, sickness, disease, violence, etc. Jesus' works, on the other hand, were works of healing and deliverance (Mark 6:5-6; 16:15-20). Every one of Jesus' miracles of healing and deliverance was an attack on Satan's kingdom of death, destruction and deprivation (Matt. 12:22-28).

1 John 3:8 reveals that it is *sin* that brings a person under Satan's tyranny. This allows him to afflict them. In Psalm 107 we read how some foolishly sin and open themselves to affliction:

*Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!* (Psalm 107:17-21)

In this Psalm we see a distinction between God's desires and the desires of the devil for our lives. Sin opens the door for destruction in our lives. God provides His Word to keep us *from* destruction. Therefore we must stop crediting God with Satan's works.



## **Christ's Warfare with Satan**

An incident in the life of our Lord illustrates this point. When confronted with a man born blind, Jesus' disciples asked Him whether it was this man who sinned or his parents that sinned and put him in this condition. Jesus responds:

*Jesus answered, "Neither this man sinned nor his parents sinned. But that the works of God might be revealed in him, we must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day. Night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:3-5; Common Edition New Testament)*

Afterwards Jesus heals the man by spitting on the ground, making mud, putting it over the man's eyes, and having him go wash in the pool of Siloam. Note that Jesus compares the "day" with His being the light of the world. We had the "day" while Jesus was in the world and the "night" would come when His light was no longer in the world.

Basically, in answer to His disciples' question, the situation with the blind man was not a matter of who sinned to cause this problem. It illustrated the ongoing battle between light and darkness, good and evil. The Bible often defines "light" and "good" as well as "darkness" and "evil" as synonymous (Job 30:26; Isa. 5:20; John 3:19-20). The light dispels darkness, including the darkness of sickness and disease.

In using the metaphors of "light, day," and "night" Jesus was making a distinction between the works of God and those of the kingdom of darkness. In His commission to Paul Jesus says:

*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Acts 26:18)*

Note that Jesus describes Satan as “darkness” while describing God as “light.” All of the works of darkness, to include the blinding of the man in John 9, is credited to Satan. God has nothing to do with it. John, relating the mission of Christ on the earth, writes, “*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*” (1 John 1:5).

There is not even the slightest bit of darkness in God. Not even a smidge. Yet Satan is full of darkness. In contrast Satan is indeed “*the power of darkness*” (Col. 1:13) and operates his wicked kingdom through “*the rulers of the darkness of this world*” (Eph. 6:12). All that is dark has its origin and source in him rather than God.

Jesus described the blindness of the man healed in John 9 as a work of darkness. It is Satan and his demons who blind people both spiritually and physically (Matt. 12:22-28; 2 Cor. 4:4-5) and it is God who brings recovery of sight to the blind (Luke 4:18). Since there is no darkness in God then God cannot be blamed for the spiritual or the physical blindness suffered by men.

## **Two Kinds of Wisdom**

The Bible expounds further on this truth that God is light by declaring that God can only give that which is good. James says, “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of*

turning” (James 1:17). God is the “father of *lights*” while Satan is the “father of *lies*:”

*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: **for he is a liar, and the father of it*** (John 8:44)

The nature of an individual will produce the works according to that nature. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit and vice-versa (Matt. 7:17-18). James continues to illustrate this truth by showing the two kinds of wisdom and its different sources:

*But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy* (James 3:14-17)

James makes clear that the wisdom that causes bitter envying and strife is a satanic work that must be resisted. He tells those influenced by this demonic wisdom to, “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7).

The idea that everything that happens in life somehow comes from the hand of God is a popular

teaching in the majority of Christian circles. This has caused many to try to look for some mysterious good or some divine purpose in any negative circumstance in life. Some reason that perhaps the circumstance was sent by God to strengthen their faith and make them a better Christian.

The majority of the painful things we face in life often come from other people. Some of the people who have hurt us most have been professing Christians. People have hurt us through bitterness, envy, and strife. They have gossiped about us, soiled our reputations, and have caused us insurmountable pain. People have divorced, lost jobs, churches have split and families have been destroyed due to bitter envying and strife. Yet when these things happen we hear the phrase intended to bring comfort: “God is in control. He knows what He is doing.”

Yet, James tells us that these things are not from God. The source of the bitter envying and strife that brings confusion and every evil work has Satan as its author. We should never look for a divine reason or some expected good to come from the sin itself. Like Joseph, God can turn everything around for our good when we cooperate with Him (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28), but we should not look for *good* in the sin itself.

The source of this “wisdom” is devilish. The only thing we are to do with devilish ideas is cast them down and resist them (2 Cor. 10:3-5; James 4:7). We must remember that we are dealing with an enemy and we are not to take a passive position in dealing with his machinations. We especially must reject his constant lies about God that puts Him at fault for the very things that Satan and demons are doing.

### **Contrasting the Works of Christ and Satan**

With this evidence, one can surely see that God is not doing the things that He is often accused of doing. He

neither does the works that have been ascribed to Satan nor is He controlling Satan in the sense that the devil is merely an unwilling servant doing God's bidding and serving God's purposes. God is in a real war against Satan on behalf of mankind.

In his book, *Satan: A Defeated Foe*, Charles H. Usher offers this advice, "Are we overcoming Satan in our circumstances? If we are to do so, we must learn to recognize what is from Satan and what is from God."<sup>2</sup> One cannot confidently stand against Satan's attacks if they are unable to make a distinction between what is of God and what is of Satan. Jesus helps us to understand that there is a clear distinction:

*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10)*

In John 10:10 we find a definite contrast between the mission of God and the mission of Satan. Let us learn not to get the two confused. We must accept one and stand our ground against the other based on the blood of Jesus. Failure to recognize these distinctions have caused people to blame God. Blaming God has allowed an open door for Satan to creep in and destroy people's lives (Hosea 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

## Chapter Four

### Stop Blaming God for Sin and Temptation

*He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8)*

The Bible tells us where sin originates. In Ezekiel 28:15 we read concerning the enemy of God now known as Satan, “*Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.*” God is without iniquity so He could not have put it in Satan (Deut. 32:4-5; Matt. 7:17-18). That is why we are told that iniquity was “found” or “discovered” in him.

None of this was God’s doing. God did not “create” sin. Everything God created was good and beautiful including this now fallen angel (Gen. 1; Eccl. 3:11). Therefore God is not the author of sin and evil. Sin is not a *creation* but a *perversion* of that which is good (Num. 22:32; Lev. 18:23; Deut. 32:5; Prov. 14:2; 28:6). Satan is the original perverter, thus making him the author and father of sin (John 8:44).

#### God Accused of Authoring Sin

There is much evil and darkness in our world due to sin and God is constantly getting the blame for it. A drunk driver kills a single mother and her three babies end up in foster care and some will say that “God is in control. He took her home”. How does this paint a picture of a deity who is nothing but pure good to be made at fault for making children into orphans? Furthermore, if God had anything to do with the drunk driver killing this mother then He is the author of sin.

Sadly, it has been due to the false teachings of many of our most well-known theologians that have spread these false ideas about God and made Him the author of sin. There are well documented statements by “Christian” theologians, many of them hailed as “heroes” within Christian circles, who have laid the authoring of sin at God’s feet.<sup>1</sup>

While he is not the first to teach this false doctrine, John Calvin has certainly had the widest influence as far as its propagation. Calvin wrote, “I admit that in this miserable condition wherein men are now bound, all of Adam’s children have fallen by God’s will.”<sup>2</sup> One of Calvin’s theological descendants, A. W. Pink, expounds further on this “will of God” to bring sin into the world:

**Clearly it was the divine will that sin should enter this world,** or it would not have done so. God had the power to prevent it. Nothing ever comes to pass except what He decreed... God’s decree that sin should enter this world was a secret hid in Himself.<sup>3</sup>

Calvin and Pink believe that it was God’s irresistible will that sin enter into the world. Notice that these men cannot support their ideas from the Bible so they must appeal to “mystery” (God’s alleged “secret will”). The appeal to “mystery” is a common philosophy among theologians of this type. What these men claim to be “mystery,” the Bible refers to as “confusion,” something that God is not the author of (Lev. 18:23; 20:12; James 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:33). The Bible does not leave us to wallow in this confusion. It tells us, “*Wherefore, as by **one man** sin entered into the world*” (Rom. 5:12).

At one point wickedness became so prevalent upon the earth that God began to regret having created

man (Gen. 6:5-7). If this was His “secret hidden will” all along then why would God suffer so much grief over it? These theologians miss the fact that God relinquished some of His sovereignty to man when God gave man dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26-28; Psalm 8:5-6). Man, in turn, sinned of his own free will and allowed Satan to become the “prince” and “god” of this world (Luke 4:5-6; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph. 2:2; 6:10-12; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:18-19). Despite the false teachings of Calvin and Pink the Bible tells us that the sin in this world does not have its origins in God:

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is **not of the Father**” (1 John 2:15-16)*

Contrast the statement, “*is not of the Father*” with John’s other statement, “*he that committeth sin is of the devil*” and we will see that God is vindicated and the blame for sin is placed right where it belongs, which is with Satan.

Mr. Pink claims that sin entered in by a *decree* of God. In contrast Scripture says, “*Woe unto them that **decree unrighteous decrees**, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed*” (Isa. 10:1). On another occasion, Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar about a decreed judgment upon him (Dan. 4:24-26.) However, God’s decree was not an *unchangeable* one. Daniel told the king exactly how this decree could be changed:

*Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and **break off thy***



*sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.* (v. 27; see also Zeph. 2:1-3)

How can God decree that someone sin if His flexible decree demands that someone *break off their sins*? It is nonsense for God to supposedly decree that a person sin, decree their punishment for sin, and then tell them to break off their sin if He were the one decreeing that the person sin. In light of Scripture and basic common sense, the idea that God would decree sin to come into the world is ludicrous.

### **Don't Blame God for Sin**

In a nutshell, the theologians cited above have aligned themselves with Satan in blaming God for sin. While early Jewish theologians were far from infallible, most of them seem to understand the nature of God in relation to sin far better than their Western counterparts. In one of the ancient non-canonical books, the book of Sirach (written approximately 200 to 175 BCE), the Jewish scribe Ben Sira wrote the following:

Don't blame the Lord for your sin; the Lord does not cause what he hates. Don't claim that he has misled you; he doesn't need the help of sinners to accomplish his purposes. The Lord hates evil in all its forms, and those who fear the Lord find nothing attractive in evil. When, in the beginning, the Lord created human beings, he left them free to do as they wished. If you want to, you can keep the Lord's commands. You can decide whether you will be loyal to him or not. He has placed fire and water before you; reach out and take whichever you want. You have a choice between life and death; you will get whichever you choose. The Lord's wisdom and power are great and he sees everything. He is aware of everything a person

does, and he takes care of those who fear him. He has never commanded anyone to be wicked or given anyone permission to sin (Sirach 15:11-20; Good News Translation)

The Bible supports Ben Sira's statement in so many places that it would require more than one chapter to deal with this alone (and it is tempting to do so). However, we will limit ourselves to only a few statements of Scripture.

In Ecclesiastes 7:29 we read, "*Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.*" God didn't create man to sin. He created him upright. It was man apart from God that sought out ways to commit sin. As the Easy to Read Version translates it, "*God made people good, but they have found many ways to be bad.*" Moses also writes:

*He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and **without iniquity**, just and right is he. **They have corrupted themselves**, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation* (Deut. 32:4-5)

The fault for man's corruption has nothing whatsoever to do with God. Man must take the credit for his own corruption. God is without iniquity and is unable to give to a man what He does not possess (Matt. 7:17-18). James puts it another way:

*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, **neither tempteth he any man**: But every man is tempted, **when he is drawn away of his own lust**, and*

*enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (James 1:13-15)*

The Contemporary English Version renders verse 13, “*Don’t blame God when you are tempted! God cannot be tempted by evil, and he doesn’t use evil to tempt others.*” If God in His sovereignty ordained or decreed sin then He is ultimately the blame for temptation since sin is the result of a person being enticed by lust. However, God is not responsible in any way for temptation and neither is He culpable for the sin that comes as the result of a man *yielding* to temptation.

To say that God in any way decreed that sin should come into this world is nothing short of *blasphemy*, which we learned in chapter 1 is blaming God or finding fault with Him for something that He did not do. The idea that God decreed sin, secretly or otherwise, is a lie of Satan. If Satan can blame God then he can remain hidden and unnoticed. If he can remain unnoticed then men are less likely to resist him.

It is important that we understand that God is not the author of sin if we are to successfully resist the devil (James 4:7). If we believe that God has anything to do with our sinning then we will be less likely to resist temptation. On the contrary, we’d probably blame Him for our transgressions.

### **Properly Interpreting Scripture**

Yet, there does appear to be a number of Biblical passages in which God is said to be the agent behind someone’s sin. We have passages where God is said to harden hearts, blind them spiritually, cause people to err in their ways, deceive, put lying spirits in the mouth of prophets, personally tempt to sin and a number of other

things that *seemingly* contradict all that we have stated above. Charles Edwards Fraser-Tytlar in his book, “*New View of the Apocalypse*,” explains the reason why the Bible ascribes these acts to God:

In Isaiah, God says, “I create evil.” At the same time we know, from the whole tenor of Holy Writ, that God is not the author of evil. Yet Isaiah’s expression is correct and idiomatic. Whatever is done by an agent, is said to be done by the power restraining and directing that agent. In like manner, it is usual in Scripture to attribute to the Supreme Power, acts which are virtually those of his instruments, and which he merely permits, in order to overrule and evolve good from them.<sup>4</sup>

I prefer to call this “the permission idiom”. This is the idiom that scholars tell us is one in which ***God is said to be the cause of that which He merely allowed or permitted or did not prevent from happening***. Basically God did not “decree” or “ordain” the sin. He merely attempted to restrain His subjects from sinning. However, when they continued to rebel He finally removed all restraint and allowed them to do what they want unhindered by Him. The Bible supports this truth (Rom. 1:24-28). In Psalm 81 we read:

*But My people would not hearken to My voice, and Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them up to their own hearts’ lust and let them go after their own stubborn will, that they might follow their own counsels. Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways!* (Psalm 81:11-13; Amplified Bible)

Paul makes a similar statement in Romans 1 when he writes, “*Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of*

*their [own] hearts to sexual impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves [abandoning them to the degrading power of sin]*” (Rom. 1:24; Amplified Bible). God “gives up” the persistent unrepentant sinner. Whenever He gives them up” or allows them to persist in their sin He is often credited as being the doer of what He did not prevent due to the idiomatic language of the Hebrews. There are numerous examples of this in Scripture<sup>5</sup> but we will look at only one in this chapter:

*And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.* (2 Sam. 24:1)

Apart from understanding the idiomatic language of Scripture we will be led by the passage above to believe that God is a *tempter*. Bible translator Joseph Rotherham recognized this fact and “...he has endeavoured to avoid representing God as the author or instigator of wickedness.”<sup>6</sup> Rotherham translates 2 Samuel 24:1 as follows: “*And again was the anger of Yahweh kindled against Israel, - so that **he suffered** David to be moved against them, saying, Go, count Israel and Judah.*”

The word “suffered” in older translations of the Bible is a synonym for *permit*, *allow* or *let*. Other Bible translations also seek to resolve the seeming contradiction of 2 Sam. 24:1 by ascribing the temptation directly to Satan:

*And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he [Satan] moved David against them to say, “Go, number Israel and Judah.”* (21<sup>st</sup> Century King James Version)

*And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he [Satan] moved David against them to say, “Go, number Israel and Judah.”* (Third Millennium Bible).

*And the Lord caused his anger to burn forth again in Israel, and Satan stirred up David against them, saying, Go, number Israel and Juda.* (1851 Brenton’s English Septuagint)

*“And the anger of Jehovah addeth to burn against Israel, and an adversary moveth David about them, saying, `Go, number Israel and Judah.’”* (Young’s Literal Translation)

However, before these translators are accused of taking liberties based on theological bias, we will find that they have full backing from other portions of Scripture. 1 Chronicles 21:1, written several centuries after 2 Samuel by Ezra the scribe, reiterates the exact same account that is found in 2 Samuel 24:1 but credits Satan with the temptation: *“And **the devil** stood up against Israel, and **moved David** to number Israel.”*

### **Satan is the Tempter**

The translations above are accurate based on the comparison of “Scripture with Scripture.” Whenever we come across passages such as 2 Sam. 24:1, we must read it in the light of the “permissive sense” in which God is said to have done that which He merely permitted Satan to do. The Bible reveals Satan as *the* Tempter:

*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted of the devil**. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when **the tempter** came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. (Matt. 4:1-3)*

Furthermore, Satan is not working in partnership with God or as some unwilling servant under God's secret control as some seem to believe. His work of temptation is intended to undermine the work of God. In 1 Thess. 3:4, 5, we read, "*I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and **our labour be in vain.***"

As shocking as it might be to some, the work for Christ that we do can be done in vain if the tempter is able to succeed in his nefarious schemes. This is why we cannot fall back on "the sovereignty of God" when we encounter moral failures that undermine the mission of God. God is not the one working sin and disobedience in anyone (Phil. 2:13). This is the work of Satan:

*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:1-2).*

The word "worketh" means "to be operative or to put forth power." Satan reproduces himself in God's creatures and energizes them to sin. Sin is disobedience to God and obedience to Satan. The New Living Translation says, "*You used to live just like the rest of the world, full*

*of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.”*

Here is a simple resolution to the *mystery* of evil: If all of God’s creatures truly obeyed God then there would be no evil. Evil exists because many of God’s creatures are disobedient. God is not the author of disobedience; therefore, He is not the author of sin and evil. This is all Satan’s doing.

### **Victory over Sin and Satan**

We often fail and fall into sin because of so many lies that Satan has fed the body of Christ directly from church pulpits all over the world. Some continue to tell us that we will never overcome sin in this life. They tell us that we must see ourselves merely as “sinners saved by grace”. The teaching of the Bible is completely different:

***Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*** (Rom. 6:9-12)

Your knowledge will determine your ability. You do not have to allow satanic forces to control you in any way. Because of what Christ has done on our behalf you are free from sin’s authority and its consequences.

We are told to *let not sin reign in us*. Satan works *in* the children of disobedience but we do not have to let him work *in* us. To keep Satan from working in us we



need to put God's Word in us. John, to his young disciples, writes, "...young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14). Sin, Satan, and temptation can be conquered in our lives as we gain knowledge of God's Word.

Notice the two underlined phrases in the passage above: "young men" and "the word of God abideth in you." Now, as we look at Psalm 119 we begin to see some similarities:

*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Psalm 119:9-11)*

Both 1 John 2:14 and Psalm 119:9-11 address "young men" and both deal with the effects of God's Word in us. The differences are found in that the Word of God abiding in the young men in 1 John 2:14 enables them to overcome the wicked one but in Psalm 119 it enables the psalmist to overcome sin. In the New Testament we learn that sin and Satan are basically one and the same though the Old Testament did not make it as abundantly clear as the New Testament writers do (For example, compare Gen. 4:6-7 with 1 John 3:8-12).

When you have God's Word in you, you are able to cast down satanic lies of temptation (2 Cor. 10:3-5) and confront Satan with the Word just as Jesus did in His wilderness experience (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-14). God's Word *in you* will break the power of sin *over you*.

## Chapter Five

### Stop Blaming God for Sickness and Disease

*How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing **all that were oppressed of the devil**; for God was with him (Acts 10:38)*

Scripture tells us that Jesus was manifested so “*that he might destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8b). From the passage above we can see that sickness is a work of Satan that Jesus came to destroy.

Satan works his evil of inflicting sickness and disease through his demons, otherwise known as “evil spirits”. In Luke we read:

*There was a woman which had a **spirit of infirmity** eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.... And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, **whom Satan hath bound**, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? (Luke 13:11, 16)*

It was a demonic spirit that tormented this woman. However, Satan is given the credit for the infirmity. The Bible is clear about the fact that sickness is *bondage* and not a *blessing*. It has its origins in Satan. Jesus makes this point in an attempt to contrast God’s work with Satan’s and to help those around Him know the truth about God’s character. He wanted the people to get a picture of God, not as some arbitrary despot who holds men in bondage to pain in order to keep stringent ceremonies and laws, but

One who is looking for the best ways to demonstrate His love for men.

Sickness is the result of sin which brought death into the world (Rom. 5:12; Deut. 28; 30:15, 19). Sickness is a manifestation of sin and death (Mark 2:5-12; John 5:5-14; James 5:14-16). Since it is well established that God is not the author of sin then neither is He the author of sin's fruit.

### **Blaming God for Sickness**

Sadly, some of the same proponents of the wicked idea that God ordains sin under their understanding of what it means for God to be sovereign (controlling every single detail of every event) also teach that God is “a God of sickness.” In his book, “Trusting God,” Calvinist Jerry Bridges, who references Exodus 4:11, writes:

The God who is the God of deafness, muteness, and blindness is also the God of cancer, arthritis, Down's Syndrome, and all other afflictions that come to us or our loved ones. None of these afflictions “just happen.” They are all within the sovereign will of God.<sup>1</sup>

This “god” that Bridges promotes sounds more like the devil, Biblically speaking. However, Bridges' distorted view of God's character is based on the Calvinistic understanding of what it means for Him to be sovereign. Calvinist John Piper says, “Behind all sickness is finally the sovereign hand of God.”<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, in his book against the Charismatic movement, writes:

Would a loving God want anyone to suffer? Why would he make a man dumb, deaf, or blind? Yet again and again in Scripture we see that there is far more to God's sovereign plan than our finite minds can comprehend. God made the disabled and infirm. Babies are born every day with defects.

Many children grow up with congenital deformities. Some people have illnesses that last for years. While it is unexplainable according to our human logic, it is all God's plan and a gift of God's love.<sup>3</sup>

This is nothing short of asinine to call sickness and disease a part of God's "plan" and "gift" of love. Biblically speaking, MacArthur knows absolutely *nothing* about God's gifts or plans. Scripture says, "*Love does not do harm to a neighbor*" (Rom. 13:10; Complete Jewish Bible). God says that His plans are "plans for well-being, not for bad things" (Jer. 29:11; CJB). The gifts that God gives are *good* and do not bring harm to its recipients (James 1:17; Matt. 7:7-11).

### **God's Sovereignty gets the Blame**

MacArthur and others blame God for sickness by appealing to some "secret" plan of God that we will never understand. Yet these ideas about God denigrate His character and paint Him as a monster worse than Satan. While Satan operates in limited power and can be overcome by God's power, God operates in omnipotent power. Therefore if He is inflicting sickness and disease under a "secret plan" then who can stop *Him*?

God's "sovereignty" is always appealed to in order to promote this philosophical view. For this particular group of theologians, God's sovereignty is an unwitting way to blame God for every misery in this world, including sickness and disease. Yet, for all of their education these men do not appear to know what it truly means for God to be sovereign. Sovereignty is, "the position, dominion, or authority of a sovereign."<sup>4</sup> "Dominion" is actually something that God delegated to man, to which man later turned over to Satan (Gen. 1:26-28; Luke 4:5-6).

Someone might say to me, “You are getting your definitions of sovereignty from a dictionary and not from the Bible.” Whether or not this accusation is accurate one thing is certain and it is that Calvinists are certainly not getting their definitions from the Bible. Calvinists have a tendency to redefine and distort words to fit within their ideological system. The word “sovereignty” is only one of many examples of their distortion of language.

The word the Bible itself uses in reference to God’s sovereignty is “kingdom.” “Kingdom” is defined as, “the spiritual sovereignty of God or Christ; the domain over which the spiritual sovereignty of God or Christ extends, whether in heaven or on earth.”<sup>5</sup> Calvinists often fail to recognize that there are actually two “kingdoms” or two “sovereignties” at war with each other.

### **The Bible Truth about God’s Sovereignty**

After casting out a demon that kept a man from seeing and speaking Jesus was criticized by the religious leaders. Some of them accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Satan himself. Jesus corrects their false theology:

*But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. **But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you** (Luke 11:17-20)*

We know that God's Kingdom, His sovereign reign, is *come* when we see the power of Satan *overcome*. God's sovereignty is not demonstrated by sickness and disease but by the conquering of the sickness and disease that comes from an opposing kingdom. There is a real war. This is not some novel that God has written where the outcome has always been inevitable. Souls are at stake and two sovereignties are at war over them.

For God's kingdom-sovereignty to *come* upon us means that it was not previously there. Other versions render verse 20, "*This shows that God's kingdom has now come to you*" (Easy to Read Version), "...*then know this, God's kingdom is here with you now*" (Worldwide English), and the Living Bible paraphrases it, "*it proves that the Kingdom of God has arrived.*"

This means that the kingdom of God or God's sovereignty was not fully active before the casting out of demons. This also means that another sovereign was having its way before God's sovereignty overpowered it. Therefore, the sickness that occurred before hand was not God's doing. Healing and deliverance, not sickness and disease, is the manifestation of God's sovereignty:

*And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching **the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.** And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them (Matt. 4:23-24)*

Based on the definition of the word “kingdom” one can easily reword this without doing violence to the text: “And Jesus went about.... preaching the good news of God’s sovereignty, and this sovereignty was in manifestation through healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” Before the exercise of God’s sovereignty, Satan’s sovereignty was in manifestation. It is only when God chooses to exercise His sovereignty, as He did through His disciples, that we see it in operation:

*Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them **power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.** And he sent them to **preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick....** And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of **the kingdom of God, and healed them** that had need of healing (Luke 9:1, 2, 11)*

Before Jesus and His disciples healed and casted out devils, God’s sovereignty was not in manifestation. It was only after healing and deliverance of those who were oppressed by the devil that we see God’s sovereign reign manifested. Therefore sickness and disease, despite the lofty words of these theologians, is not a demonstration of God’s sovereignty. It is actually a lack of it. Sickness and disease is the allowance of the kingdom of death to reign (Heb. 2:14-15; Rom. 5:12).

### **Is God the Author of Sickness?**

Nonetheless, there are some passages that explicitly state that God creates people with severe handicaps. One of the favorite Calvinistic proof-texts for

this idea, as we saw earlier, is found in a statement that God made to Moses:

*And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? (Exodus 4:10-11)*

For all of their education I am surprised that many Calvinists conveniently avoid the “permissive idiom” of the Hebrew language when it does not fit the agenda of their teaching. However, they are far from ignorant of it. Calvinist Theologian Augustus Hopkins Strong writes, “...the Hebrew writers sometimes represented God as doing what he merely permitted finite spirits to do.”<sup>6</sup> T. O. Summers states it well when he says:

Nobody that knows anything about Hebrew idioms wants to be told that the Hebrew writers frequently speak of a person’s doing a thing, or appointing a thing, which he only permits or does not prevent. Calvinists themselves, however inconsistently, are obliged to make this admission.<sup>7</sup>

Other theologians have referenced Exodus 4:11 as well as other difficult passages when explaining the use of these idioms among the Hebrew writers of Scripture:

In the deterministic idiom of the culture, actions that were simply permitted by God, mediated through agents, or accomplished through the laws of nature, can be attributed directly to God.... In the context of such a worldview, it is possible and



perhaps likely that references to Yahweh closing wombs (1 Sam. 1:6), creating handicapped babies (Exod. 4:11), giving Saul's wives to David (2 Sam. 12:8), and the like, are an accommodation to the mindset of the culture.<sup>8</sup>

Among the passages understood to be idiomatic is Exodus 4:11 in which God is said to create handicapped babies. Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser understands the passage in a *permissive* rather than a *causative* sense:

While God was not to be blamed for directly creating any defects, his wise providence in **allowing these deprivations** as his goodness in bestowing their ordinary functions mirrors his ability to meet any emergency Moses might have suggested.<sup>9</sup> (Emphasis are Mine)

Therefore those Calvinists who cite Exodus 4:11 in order to paint a picture of God as the author of sickness and handicaps are either being negligent or outright dishonest. Either way they continue to malign God's character when they do this.

### **Interpreting Scripture with Scripture**

However, even if they are unaware of the Hebrew idiom of permission, many of these people who blame God for sickness, disease and handicaps should be fully aware of the fact that one must interpret all Scripture that charges God with a horrendous act in light of other equally authoritative passages of Scripture that explains the former ones (i.e. 2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chron. 21:1).

In Matthew 12:22 we learn that the same handicaps mentioned in Exodus 4:11 are actually the work of demon spirits:

*Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he*

*healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.*

If these handicaps are the work of God then Jesus would have been fighting against His Father's work by healing the person. However, Jesus was fighting against the devil works. God's character and acts do not change from one testament to the next so passages such as Exodus 4:11 need to be interpreted in the light of the Christ revelation (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; John 14:8-11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3). Passages such as Exodus 4:11 are *permissive* rather than *causative*.

Scripture abounds with this truth as it relates to sickness and other acts of Satan. A simple comparison will always vindicate God's loving character. In Exodus 15:26 God says, "*I will put none of these diseases upon thee, **which I have brought upon the Egyptians.***" In the last chapter of Job says that his family and friends, "*....comforted him over all **the evil that the Lord had brought upon him***" (Job 42:11b). When we go to the beginning of the book of Job we see that Satan is totally responsible for the sickness that came upon Job:

*So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.  
(Job 2:7)*

This is why we must always interpret Scripture in light of its contexts, with the whole of Scripture, the culture and language of the time in which Scripture was written, and especially in light of the loving character of God. God is only said to have done evil to Job in that He did not protect Job from Satan's attacks on his body. However, the Lord is not the One who inflicted Job.

In Exodus 12:12a we read: “*For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast.*” God is said to be the One doing the “smiting” (bringing death and sickness upon man and beast). However this is another example in which God is said to do the thing that He allowed or permitted to happen. This is proven several verses later in Exodus 12:

*For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, **the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.** (Ex. 12:23)*

Verses 12 and 23 appear to contradict each other apart from understanding the *permission idiom*. The Hebrew word for “passover” is the same word used in Isaiah 31:5: “*As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and **passing over he will preserve it.***” “Passover” should not be misunderstood as God *skipping* the house that had blood but rather as God *guarding, preserving and protecting that house from the destroyer*.

In Heb. 11:28 we read, “*Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that **destroyed the firstborn should touch them***”. Compare this with 1 John 5:18 which says, “*....but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and **the wicked one does not touch him***” (NKJV). By way of comparison it is the wicked one, Satan, who touches people in a way to harm them. God, on the other hand, is the protector. In his comments on Hebrews 11:28, Dwight J. Pentecost wrote:

The words translated ‘passover’ in that text literally means ‘to hover over.’ The picture is that when the Lord saw the blood, He would position Himself over the door to protect all those who had sought refuge through blood by faith, and He would turn aside the destroyer who had come to execute judgment.”<sup>10</sup>

Instead of the *destroyer* working alongside God as an agent of destruction, it seems that God is merely allowing him free access to the Egyptians due to Pharaoh’s failure to comply with God’s demands. Yet God opposes this destroyer to protect Israel, as He does for the child of God today when we obey and stand on His Word. One older commentary states:

Here are manifestly two distinct agents, with which the notion of passing over is not consistent; for that supposes but one agent; the two agents are the destroying angel passing through to smite every house; and JEHOVAH, the protector, keeping pace with him; and who, seeing the door of the Israelite marked with the blood, the token prescribed, leaps forward, throws himself with a sudden motion in the way, opposes the destroying angel, and covers and protects that house against the destroying angel, nor suffers him to smite it.<sup>11</sup>

It is evident that the destroyer in Exodus 12:23 is not God, but another person. The Psalmist would later tell us that it was “evil angels” (the angels that rebelled with Satan) that caused the problems for Egypt:

*He let loose against them the fierceness of his anger, wrath and indignation, and distress, a host of angels of misfortune. He leveled a path for his anger; he withheld not from death their soul, and **their life he surrendered to the pestilence;** And he*

*smote all the first-born in Egypt; the first of their strength in the tents of Ham* (Psalm 78:49-51; Leeser Old Testament)

This idea of “permission” rather than “causation” is seen in verse 50 where we read, “...**but gave their life over to the pestilence**” (KJV). God “smote” the firstborn of Egypt by letting loose the demonic forces that they themselves worshipped and gave their lives over to the destructive sickness that these forces bring. Or as Paul put it, “**To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh**” (1 Cor. 5:5).

God was holding back the evil forces poised to attack and inflict but Egypt’s stubbornness and rejection of God left Him with no choice but to let satanic forces loose upon them. However, God personally stood guard over the homes of those Israelites who obeyed His Word and covered their homes with the blood of the lamb. Therefore, God’s only relation to sickness is by *permission* and not by *causation*. He is not the author of sickness and disease.

Many Christians do not know their “rights in Christ” and passively allow the devil to bring sickness in their lives. Satan deceives them into believing that *God* is orchestrating the turmoil in their lives for some sovereign purpose and that they must accept it. If God’s people today are suffering from sickness perhaps it is best to enquire of God for healing rather than blame Him for the sickness and submit to it. Many people die from sickness, not because it’s God’s will for them to be sick, but because they fail to enquire of God (2 Kings 1:1-17; 2 Chron. 16:12-13; Isa. 38:1-6; Psalm 107:17-20; James 5:14-16).

## Chapter Six

### Stop Blaming God for Financial Deprivation

*The rich man's wealth is his strong city:  
the destruction of the poor is their poverty*  
(Prov. 10:15)

Some time ago on an internet message board I read a plea for help from a victim of a teaching on the Calvinistic idea of God's sovereignty:

I am down to my last \$1000 dollars. I have been working 45-50 hours a week trying to sell insurance. I have a wife and three kids to support. Every effort I make to improve our condition, God frustrates. I say he does it because he is sovereign. I have fought against despair for weeks as my bank account has dwindled. Objective truth about God proclaiming his own goodness make me sick to my stomach. I am ashamed of that.

Notice that this poor fellow makes no reference to God's Word, which contains His promises, but blames God for his predicament "because he is sovereign." In his book, *Christianity versus Fatalistic Religions in the War against Poverty*, Udo Middleman well said, "Faced with life's tragedies, most people will respond with views that bow to and accept the inevitable."<sup>1</sup>

The Bible says nothing good about poverty. Our opening passage tells us that poverty destroys. God says that, "*He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions*" (Psalm 107:20). Regarding Satan, Jesus tells us that, "*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*" (John 10:10a). God is not the source of poverty because He is not the source of destruction. He is the deliverer from destruction.

## **Blaming God for Poverty**

The fault for this heartbroken man's dilemma lies at the feet of erroneous teaching. Due to some traditional theological teachings that emphasize a "sovereignty of God" doctrine that we mentioned earlier, many people do not understand the goodness of God and His commitment to keep His Word. The famous protestant reformer, Martin Luther, demonstrated strong views on divine determinism in relation to sickness and poverty:

How can it be that we should love God when his will is not settled in our mind? If I love God, I cannot but love his will also. If God send sickness, poverty, shame and ignominy, it is his will: at which we murmur; our minds are carried hither and thither; we bear it very impatiently.<sup>2</sup>

Luther believed that God sends sickness, poverty, and shame for no other reason than it is His sovereign will. According to Luther, I am to bear the sickness and poverty that "God sent" with patience. Luther also claims that I am to simply love it because it is His will. A. W. Pink adds:

A true recognition of God's Sovereignty will avow God's perfect right to do with us as He wills. The one who bows to the pleasure of the Almighty will acknowledge His absolute right to do with us as seemeth Him good. If He chooses to send poverty, sickness, domestic bereavements, even while the heart is bleeding at every pore, it will say, Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right!<sup>3</sup>

Again Pink writes, "It is for Him [God] to determine under what circumstances I shall live, whether amid wealth or poverty, whether in health or sickness."<sup>4</sup> With teaching of this nature is it any wonder that people

struggle with sickness, poverty and other difficulties in life? Truly we become products of what we are taught and adhere to.

### **Does God Make People Poor?**

Are these quotes consistent with the revelation of Scripture? There are some passages of Scripture in which God is said to be the distributor of poverty. Hannah, who sought God for a child, offered this praise when He opened her womb:

*The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. **The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up** (1 Sam. 2:6-7)*

Pink and others point to this passage as proof that God is the one who chooses whether or not one will be poor or rich.<sup>5</sup> However, Hannah is actually making an almost word for word declaration that God Himself made to Moses in Deut. 32:39. The context of this passage offers an interpretation that Luther, Pink, and others who promote this ideology have not considered:

*To me belongeth vengeance and recompence; **their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand**, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the*



*wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection. See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand (Deut. 32:35-39)*

In verse 30 God says that Israel could be victorious, “... *unless their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had given them up?*” (Revised Standard Version) Deut. 32, which Hannah is *partially* quoting, is, within its full context, a description of the “sowing and reaping” process by which God removes His protection and allows Israel to suffer the consequences of their rebellion.

Phrases such as “*their foot shall slide in due time*” and “*the day of their calamity will come*” shows that God is taking a “hands off” approach. But what about the poverty part of Hannah’s quote? Did she just add that? No, Hannah is actually summarizing Deuteronomy chapters 28 to 32. Deuteronomy 32 is connected to the curses outlined in chapter 28 that come from disobedience to God. These curses included suffering poverty:

*Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies*

*which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. (Deut. 28:45-48)*

The Contemporary English Version says, “....*he will send enemies to attack you and make you their slaves. Then you will live in poverty with nothing to eat, drink, or wear.*” From this passage we see that poverty is a *curse*, not a blessing. Furthermore, unlike the fatalism promoted by Pink and others, there is a cause behind the poverty, which is “disobedience.”

The word “disobedience” implies a choice. Poverty can come upon people due to having made the wrong choice. Summing up Deut. 28 God said, “*I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life*” (Deut. 30:19). The fact that God pleads with them to “choose life” proves that the alternative (death, which equates to *cursing* which equates to *poverty*) is not His will for them. If they suffer the poverty it is due to their choices and not by God’s sovereign design.

### **“Sending” Poverty**

However, we still cannot get away from the punitive language used in Deuteronomy 28. God specifically says that *He* will do the *sending*. Throughout Deuteronomy 28 God makes a number of these types of statements; ““I will destroy thee.... I will smite thee.... I will send enemies.... I will send pestilence.... etc.” The word “send” as used in Deuteronomy 28 comes from the Hebrew word “*shalach*.” Gesenius says that this word means ““relax, loosen, let go, especially one who has been in any way detained; give over into the power of anything.””<sup>6</sup>

The word “send” when defined this way proves that God’s sending of poverty is *permissive* and not *causative*. The fact that this is the proper translation of the word in Deuteronomy 28 is already seen in chapter 32 where we learned that God would allow them to suffer these curses through the “sowing and reaping” process. Deuteronomy 31 also supports the idea that “send” in Deut. 28 is *permissive* rather than *causative*:

*Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods (Deut. 31:17-18)*

God “sends” these curses of poverty and other tragedies by forsaking and hiding His face from the individual. He does not directly inflict the poverty or other tragic events that comes as a result of being cursed. When one is forsaken by God they are left open to whatever evils that surround them. In Malachi 3, concerning tithing, God gives further explanation of what it means to be cursed by Him:

*For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto*

*you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. **Ye are cursed with a curse:** for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation (Malachi 3:6-9)*

God tells the people to *return unto Him* and He will reciprocate. If He is telling them to “return” then it is obvious that they have forsaken Him. The axiom of Scripture is, “...*if ye forsake him, he will forsake you*” (2 Chron. 15:2). God explains further that the fact that they are separated from Him means that they are “cursed with a curse.” God never personally inflicts the results of the curse. The Bible says, “...*and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches*” (Isa 43:27-28). God removes His protection and “gives over” or “allows” people to suffer the results of their rebellion.

### **Satan is the Agent of Poverty**

When God has forsaken us then Satan is able to do great damage to us in a number of ways which includes our finances. In verses 8-12 of Malachi 3 God promises financial blessings when we return to Him and obey Him by bringing our tithes and offerings. Knowing that Satan is a thief who comes to steal God’s blessing from His people, the Lord says:

*Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. **And I will rebuke the devourer for your***

*sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts (Mal. 3:10, 11)*

God is concerned about our financial needs and desires to bless us. On the other hand, we have an enemy whose desire is to see God's children go destitute and lacking. While the "devourer" mentioned here is an allusion to pests who destroy crops, we know that Satan makes use of these and other agents to do his work of destruction just as he did with the serpent in Eden (Job 1:13-19). Furthermore, Satan is known as "Beelzebub" which is transliterated as "Lord of the flies". Peter describes him as a devourer when he writes that the devil, "*walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*" Peter then exhorts us to *resist him steadfast in our faith* (1 Pet. 5:8, 9). Satan was able to destroy Job financially merely because God had removed His protection

*"And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD..... And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell*

*thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.” (Job 1:12, 14-17)*

Note that it was Satan who did the destroying. Sadly, God was the one given the credit for the destruction. Nonetheless, the primary point we are attempting to make here is that when we are without God’s protection, we become an open target for Satan to bring poverty our way. God is not the agent behind poverty. His only involvement is to give a person over into the hands of Satan to bring it upon the person.

The good news is that the committed child of God has been redeemed from both the “power of darkness” (Col. 1:12-14) and the “curse of the law” (Gal. 3:13). Our redemption was a transfer from Satan’s kingdom of darkness, hatred and deprivation to God’s wonderful kingdom of light, love and provision. If we obey God and seek His kingdom, then we receive protection in every area of our life from the attacks of the devil, to include the area of our finances (Matt. 6:25-31). Charles Usher says that we must submit our finances to the proper kingdom:

He who recognizes himself as God’s steward should lift his monetary affairs out of Satan’s realm and place them by faith in the kingdom and reign of Christ. From that place of vantage, he should defend from the power and dominion of Satan that which God has entrusted him. The enemy’s hold on his money should be broken as the believer claims Calvary’s victory over the devil, and his money should be liberated for God’s use.<sup>7</sup>

If we desire to have Christ's protection and provision that comes as the result of His redemptive work, we must obey Him in handling it the way that He has taught us in His Word. One of these ways is through our tithes and giving.

### **Why are Christians Struggling Financially**

As we examine all of the Biblical evidence before us then we can see that poverty has nothing whatsoever to do with God's sovereignty. The poor man that we cited earlier only concerned himself with his understanding of what it meant for God to be sovereign and therefore accepted his situation passively. However, God's Word is clear as to His material provision for His people:

*And if God so clothes the wild herbage which to-day flourishes and to-morrow is thrown into the oven, **is it not much more certain that He will clothe you, you men of little faith?**" (Mat. 6:30; Weymouth's New Testament).*

*But my **God shall** supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:18, 19).*

*The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing (Psalm 34:10)*

*I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread (Psalm 37:25)*

This perversion of God's sovereignty says that God does not keep these promises nor will He supply our

needs. In the way that some twist the understanding of what it means for God to be sovereign, we could not be certain that He will add to us all the things we need as we seek first His kingdom (Mat. 6:30-33) and it may be possible that He will forsake the righteous and allow his children to beg for bread (Psalm 37:25). This teaching makes God into a promise breaker.

With the wonderful promises cited above we may rightly ask the question as to why then do we see so many financial difficulties among God's people. Why are some living from paycheck to paycheck, and some barely living well on that? Why do many of God's people cringe during a church's tithe and offerings portion of the service? Why do they hate the collection of tithes and offering? S. B. Shaw in his classic book, *"God's Financial Plan, Or, Temporal Prosperity,"* gives a concise answer:

Some of our readers may ask, "If all these promises and this wonderful prosperity is for us, why do we not see the fulfillment?" And surely enough, why do we not? The reason is plain. We do not claim it, we do not expect it or believe for it. Like the Jews, we have dishonored God by robbing Him of tithes and offerings and in not giving Him our whole hearts. All this prosperity is promised upon conditions, and the Christian church has failed to come up to the requirements of God's Word. We cannot expect God to bestow upon us the blessings He has promised, so long as we fail to honor Him with our substance. People withhold their property from God for the same reason that they withhold their hearts. They do not believe that He will do what He promises to do. They are so blinded by unbelief that they fail to realize that every promise given to the patriarchs, and every promise given to the Jews and every prophecy relating to temporal, physical, and spiritual blessings were designed for us and for God's children through all time.<sup>8</sup>



I believe that Shaw hits the nail on the head here. Sadly, too many people miss this truth and blame it on God. In a discussion on this subject, one person told me, "Proverbs even teaches that it is better to be poor," as if poverty was God's will and He made no provision to get out of it. This statement is far from true. Proverbs makes a number of contrasts by explaining that it is better to be poor in contrast to being a liar (Prov. 19:22), perverse in one's ways (Prov. 28:6), or perverse in one's lips (Prov. 19:22). Proverbs does not teach that it is good to be poor but it simply teaches that being poor is better than engaging in certain sinful practices.

For a person to claim that the book of Proverbs extols poverty as virtuous, he or she would have to ignore all of the passages in this book that speak about how poverty is a curse that comes upon some people through laziness, carelessness, not giving to those who are poor, etc. Furthermore, poverty can lead to crime and sin (Prov. 30:8, 9).

Those who believe that being poor is a blessing need to spend time in the average inner-city of the USA or visit a third world country. Poverty leads its victims away from Christianity towards prostitution, crack cocaine, child neglect, drunkenness and other crimes. In the USA the state gets rich by taking advantage of the poor when they sell them lottery tickets with the false hope that they will strike it rich. It is easy to extol "the virtues of poverty" when one is doing well. However, when we see the true results of poverty we find nothing virtuous about it. Let us stop blaming God for it.

## Chapter Seven

### Stop Blaming God for Unanswered Prayer

If only Christians could see what incalculable harm they do themselves by thinking that because their prayer is possibly not according to God's will, they must be content without an answer....God is frustrated as long as we are content to say: "Perhaps it is because my prayer is not according to His will that He does not hear me." O let us no longer throw the blame for our unanswered prayer on the secret will of God, but on our own faulty praying.<sup>1</sup> (Andrew Murray)

One of the major problems in the church is laziness concerning prayer. Many "Christians" do not attend prayer meetings nor do they spend much time, if any, in personal prayer. They seem to have no confidence in it. Others pray but give up quickly when they receive no immediate answers. It is often attributed to the false idea that "maybe it was not God's will to do this or that."

This sentiment could be easier to understand if not for the fact that there are numerous promises recorded in Scripture to answer prayer for the very thing we ask. The Bible abounds with promises for spiritual and material provision. How is it that so many of God's people fail to get answers prayer? Even more, why are these lack of answers often laid at God's feet?

#### The "Secret Will" of God

Andrew Murray believed that God gets frustrated when His people quickly give up praying without ever receiving an answer from Him. He finds that the source of

the problem is the teaching about a “secret will” of God that is often in direct contradiction to His “revealed will.” Murray is correct when he writes, “Our notions of a secret will that makes decrees, rendering the answers to prayer impossible, are erroneous.”<sup>2</sup>

Sadly, many Christians who hold to a doctrine of fatalism do not see their error. Jerry Bridges, after telling us that God is the one behind all of the world’s tragedies, miseries, and crimes, explains the contradiction between this idea and what is revealed in Scripture by stating, “That is in the realm of the ‘secret things’ that are not revealed to us.”<sup>3</sup>

Bridges and others of his theological persuasion advocate a false idea that has led some to conclude that God is under no obligation to honor covenant promises. In an old magazine article one man wrote:

God is no further bound by his general promise to hear the prayers of His people, than to give such things as in his wisdom he shall judge most suitable in the case ....but they have no certainty, nor can they arrive at it by any process whatever. God is not bound, nor can they certainly tell what he will do until the event shall declare it, unless you suppose a special revelation.<sup>4</sup>

This author believes that there is no process by which one can have any certainty that prayer will be answered. God can make promises to answer prayer but one cannot be absolutely sure that He will fulfill them because, according to this author, God is not bound by them. However, the very nature of a promise bounds the promiser to its fulfillment. The Bible itself teaches this:

*Therefore, God in his desire to make it abundantly clear to those to whom he made his promise, that his purpose was*

*unalterable, bound Himself with an oath, so that by these two unalterable things, which make it impossible for God to break his promise, we who have taken refuge with him may be greatly encouraged to seize the hope that is offered to us. (Heb. 6:17-20; An American Translation by Edgar J. Goodspeed).*

In the New Living Translation we also read in verse 17 that, “*God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind.*” God not only makes promises, but in order to give us unwavering assurance, He binds Himself to them and obligates Himself to their fulfillment.

Bridges and others who adhere to the erroneous belief that God has some “secret will” that allows Him to do other than what He promised often appeal to Deuteronomy 29:29:

*The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

When applying this passage to the subject of prayer, the premise is that we are not guaranteed to receive those things asked for because they may not be a part of God’s secret plan and we may never know the reason why God denied our request. However, nothing in the passage implies that what *is not* revealed is in conflict with *what is* revealed. While God may not reveal all things, neither does He work in contrast to what He has revealed. Furthermore, we are told, “*The secret of the*

*LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant*" (Psalm 25:14). God does not keep secrets from those that He is intimate with.

Adding to this fact, God also says that He does NOTHING without first revealing His "secrets, will, and plans" to His servants, the prophets: "*Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets*" (Amos 3:7). Everything that God Himself does that effect our life is revealed through His servants. Finally, we read, "*Having made known unto us the mystery of his will*" (Eph. 1:9). God reveals His mysteries to us and He does not contradict Himself. There is no "secret decree" that goes contrary to the Bible.

### **Is God a Promise Breaker?**

God is not the "wishy-washy" God presented by some of our theologians. He is the true God whose promises are reliable:

*But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us (2 Cor. 1:18-20)*

Several times in Scripture, God is referred to as "the true God" (2 Chron. 15:3; Jer. 10:10; John 17:3; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 John 5:20). According to one Hebrew lexicon, the word "true" is synonymous with, "firmness, faithfulness, sureness, reliability, stability, continuance." In the Greek it is synonymous with "veracious, sincere." The Greek lexicon also tells us that it is "opposite to what is imperfect defective, frail, *uncertain*."

There cannot be some secret hidden purpose in God that contradicts that which He revealed if He is true. He does not say “yea” one minute and “nay” the next. The Bible equates fickleness in relation to promises with lying. In Numbers we read:

*God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: **hath he said, and shall he not do it?** or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Num. 23:19)*

The James Moffatt Translation renders this, “*God is no man to break his word, no mortal to change his mind; he promises, and does he not perform?*” To break one’s promise is equivalent to lying. In our present day society we don’t always equate the breaking of a promise with lying, but that is exactly what it is. Men are quick to make promises and then to break them just as quickly. God says that He is not like men. He doesn’t say one thing and then change His mind about it later like some wishy-washy person. When God makes a promise He is committed to doing exactly what He said. Ezekiel writes:

*Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: **I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it.** Thus saith the Lord God: **I will** yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, **to do it for them; I will** increase them with men like a flock. (Eze. 36:36-37)*

The Living Bible paraphrases it, “*For I, the Lord **promised** it, and **I will** do it.... I am ready to hear Israel’s prayers for these blessings, and to grant them their*

*requests.*” It is always God’s will to give us the blessings He promised but we must pray in order to receive them.

God’s word has numerous promises to answer prayer. If God did not want to answer prayer then He would never have made such an abundance of promises available for us to claim (Matt. 7:7-11; Matt. 21:22; James 1:5; 5:15). Making claims that God will not answer prayer due to some unknown mysterious will that He is supposedly under no obligation to explain cannot be accepted by a Bible believer. E. M. Bounds wrote:

The millions of unanswered prayers are not to be solved by the mystery of God’s will. We are not the sport of his sovereign power. He is not playing at “make-believe” in his marvelous promises to answer prayer. The whole explanation is found in our wrong praying.<sup>5</sup>

Biederwolf agreed with Bounds when he wrote, “...if your prayers are not answered, nothing is surer in the world than this, that the fault is yours and not God’s.”<sup>6</sup> A. T. Pierson also well wrote that, “This wrong view slanderously charges God’s will, rather than the petitioner’s life, with much of the failure to receive answers.”<sup>7</sup>

We would rather not “blame the victim” for lacking faith, but instead, we blame God for His so-called sovereign mysteries. However, isn’t it better to examine ourselves than to make God out to be the bad guy?

### **The Doctrine of “Denial”**

I know that some will object by saying, “But the Bible contains many instances where someone’s request was denied.” There are a few in which this *appears* to be the case. Let’s examine the two most well-known. The first one is Paul’s thorn in the flesh. Many “denial doctrinaires” want to use this as an example of a great

man of faith whose prayer request for relief was denied, all for some so-called greater purpose.

Paul said, “*For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*” God supposedly let Paul ask three times before He finally told him, “no”. This contradicts Jesus’ promises where He says, “*For everyone who asks and keeps on asking receives*” (Luke 11: 10a; Amplified Bible). Did God make an exception in Paul’s case?

*And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.** Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, **that the power of Christ may rest upon me** (2 Cor. 12:8-9)*

If one is able to read the passage without a theological bias one can see that God answered Paul by telling him that He has made His grace and His power available for Paul to overcome the enemy. Many faithless advocates of “defeat theology” fail to realize that God answers prayer by having us stand on His Word. God told Paul, “*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*” This is not a “no” to Paul’s request, but a promise of power for deliverance (Eph. 2:8; 6:10-18). No wonder Paul could glory in his weaknesses. He had a promise of sufficiency to deal with His problem and he spoke positively based on God’s Word.

The Lord’s prayer is also used as an example of a request being denied:

*And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, **if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless***



*not My will, but Yours, be done.” Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him (Luke 22:41-43; NKJV)*

It is reasoned that if the Lord did not get His prayer answered but simply submitted His will to the Father, then who are we to expect to always get answers to prayer. Sadly, many of the people who teach this do not understand the *prayer of petition* in which we claim God’s promise and the *prayer of submission* in which we consecrate ourselves to some task or mission given to us by God. Our Lord’s prayer in Gethsemane was the latter. Jesus already knew that He was to redeem the world through His death, burial and resurrection and was consecrating Himself to this task (Matt. 16:21; Mark 10:33, 34; John 10:15, 17, 18).

Every other example of Jesus praying was in confident faith in which He expected to receive an answer (John 11:23, 41-44). Jesus taught His people that we are to also exercise this same type of faith in prayer (Matt. 21:21-22; 17:20; 18:18-20; Mark 11:22-24; Luke 10:17-20; 17:6). E. M. Bounds said in relation to Christ’s Gethsemane prayer, “The prayer of submission must not be so used as to vitiate or substitute the higher and mightier prayer of faith.”<sup>8</sup> I agree.

### **Satan’s War against Prayer**

God is not the One holding back answers to prayer. We are at war with an enemy whose intent is to keep us from receiving all that God has for us. S. D. Gordon writes:

*The intense fact is this: Satan has the power to hold the answer back—for awhile; to delay the result—for a time. He has not the power to hold it back finally, if someone understands and prays with*

quiet, steady persistence. The real pitch of prayer therefore is satanward.<sup>9</sup>

This truth is evident in the book of Daniel. Daniel had been praying for God to give him further understanding of a vision that he had received earlier. An angel was finally sent to him with the answer to his prayer. However, this angel was hindered 21 days, not by God, but by a demonic entity:

*Then said he unto me, fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the king of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.*  
(Dan. 10:12-13)

This prince was attempting to keep this angel from bringing God's answer to Daniel's prayer. The book of Daniel reveals to us that Satan goes to war against prayer itself and makes every attempt to hinder the answers to our prayers from coming forth.

Two truths concerning prayer stand out in these passages. The first one is the fact that God hears our prayers the moment we pray. John tells us, "*and if we know that hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*" God delights in answering prayer. When we pray and get answers, it glorifies God:

*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall*

*be done unto you. **Herein is my Father glorified**, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. (John 15:7-8)*

In John 15:8 God says that He is glorified when you and I bear fruit. God is glorified by our receiving answers to prayer. Some, strangely enough, seem to believe and teach that God is glorified primarily by our hardly ever receiving anything from Him. Only one person is ever glorified when we fail to receive answers to prayer and that is Satan.

Many are under the delusion that when they don't get their prayers answered, that God either did not hear them, He's too busy running the universe to help them, or that it just wasn't His will for them to have it. These people never take into account that there is another being that does not want God's glory to be manifested in the earth.

The second truth found in Daniel 10 is the fact that it is not God who attempts to deny us answers to prayer that are prayed in faith in line with His Word. God was not denying Daniel the answer to his prayer those three weeks. The answer was heard and sent the first day. This proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is all for answering prayer and giving us what we ask for. Why do we have delays? Satan knows the impact that answers to prayer will bring. He knows the damage that they will do to his plans. Therefore he sends one of his ruling spirits to fight against the angel that is delivering the answer.

Daniel, unlike most Christians, did not give up. He stayed in faith and received the answer to his prayer. In spite of all of the knowledge available today, many Christians are still ignorant about the spirit realm. It seems they would rather blame God when they have not received the answer they crave from Him. Here is a simple Bible truth: ***God wants to answer prayer and***

***Satan wants to hinder it.*** Once you begin to realize this then you will do what it takes to get the answer.

### **Standing on God's Promises**

God's promises of provision and answered prayer are important because they have the potential to protect us from the destructive power of the enemy. Satan knows that if he is able to keep someone in ignorance, then he will be able to devour and destroy them:

*Destruction has overtaken my people because they have no knowledge; because you have given up knowledge, I will give you up, so that you will be no priest to me, because you have not kept in mind the law of your God, I will not keep your children in my memory.* (Hosea 4:6; Bible in Basic English)

It is not the will of God that His people are destroyed. Neither is it God who is usually behind their destruction. Hosea says that God will discipline willful ignorance by "forgetting them." This is the same as "giving them up" or in some sense to "lift from them His umbrella of protection." Paul said, "*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind*" (Rom. 1:28). When people reject or give up His knowledge, He is left with no choice but to give them up.

Unfortunately when God "forgets" or "gives up" people then they become easy prey for Satan and His destructive ways (2 Thess. 2:7-12). The good news is that the opposite is equally true. When we make up our minds to fortify ourselves with God's knowledge then we will have the protection we need against Satan's destructive onslaughts.

Every promise from God is meant to counterattack Satan in some area in our lives. For example, the Bible shows us that Satan is the author of sickness and disease (Job 2:7; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38). Sickness and disease is meant to destroy our bodies. But God's promises for healing and health are meant to destroy the works of the devil in this area of our lives. The Bible also shows us that Satan is the one who tempts people to sin (Matt. 4:1-11; 1 John 3:8). Sin is meant to destroy us morally and spiritually (and eventually physically). But God's promises for victory help us to overcome the temptation to sin (Rom. 6-8; 1 Pet. 2:24). This is why Satan will try to hinder the answer to our prayer and then attempt to destroy our faith through His lies.

God makes His truth available to shield and protect us from the lies of the enemy. Psalm 91:3-4 says:

*“For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from the fatal plague. He will shield you with his wings. He will shelter you with his feathers. **His faithful promises are your armor and protection**”*  
(New Living Translation).

If Satan can convince Christians to reduce answered prayer to the matter of some “mysterious will of God” then he is easily able to get a victory over the church. Knowing God's Word and standing on it in prayer completely destroys this false idea.

## Chapter Eight

### Stop Blaming God for Trials and Tribulations

*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. **In the world** ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33)*

The word “tribulation” in the passage above can be easily translated as “trouble, distress, or *problems*.” Jesus said that we will have these things due to the fact that we are in this world. The reason we are warned about suffering tribulation in this world is due to the world’s hostility toward us:

*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you (John 15:18-19)*

The world maintains hostility toward its creator (John 1:10). Adam yielded to Satan and brought sin into the world. Satan has become its prince and ruler (Rom. 5:12; 1 John 3:8; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph. 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:4). Scripture tells us that the world is under Satan’s control, at least temporarily (1 John 5:18, 19; Rev. 12:12).

It is unreasonable to cry “God is in control” whenever we encounter problems in this life. While different things are meant by the statement it is most often implied that God sent the trial, tribulation or test. We should not accept such a fatalistic view of God. Trials come because we live in a world that is controlled by

demonic power that is against God and those created in His image. The world is an enemy of God (James 4:4; Rom. 5:10) and is hostile towards Him. We are now a part of God's kingdom so we will suffer its hostility.

### **God is not the Source of Tribulation**

The Bible is clear that the source of tribulation is the world and not God. The Bible tells us that the things that are in the world are not of the Father and all that happens in this world is not in accordance with His will (1 John 2:15-17; Matt. 6:10). If all the tribulation we encounter in the world is designed by God then why does Jesus say, "I have overcome the world"? To "overcome" something means to gain the victory over it and to conquer it. This implies an *enemy* and *not a partner*.

Yet numerous Christians seem to believe that God is the sender of trials and tribulations. Once during a conversation a person began to talk to me about some of the trials she was experiencing. In an attempt to bring comfort to herself the person said, "Well, God will never put more on you than you can bear." The implication was that God was responsible for the suffering that she was dealing with.

Having heard this statement made by Christians so often I decided to challenge the congregation I pastored that same morning. I first asked everyone, "How many of you believe that the Bible says that God will never put more on you than you can bear?" Many people raised their hands. I then asked them to please find me the chapter and verse where it says this. I heard pages turning for several minutes as I waited patiently. After a few minutes and no one finding a chapter or verse I then asked them to turn to 1 Cor. 10:13 and I began to show them what the Bible *really* says:

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, **that ye may be able to bear it** (1 Cor. 10:13)*

1 Cor. 10:13, though often misquoted, tells us that the trials and temptations that we face are those that are *common to man*. In other words, nothing that we go through is so unique to us that others have never suffered it. However, nothing in the passage says that God puts these trials on us. On the contrary, the passage tells us that God is faithful in not letting us suffer anything above our ability to do so but *makes a way of escape*. God is not the One who brings the trial itself—He is the One who gives us an escape from the trial and temptation. By giving us this escape, we have the ability to bear it.

It is sad that God has been blamed by His own children for giving them sickness, financial difficulties, relationship problems, marriage troubles, and even struggles with temptation and sin. How can God's people seek Him for the way of escape that He so clearly promises when they believe that He is the One who brought the trial and temptation in the first place?

When we read the Bible using traditional statements often we read *into* the Bible what it is not actually saying. This is how passages like 1 Cor. 10:13 can be distorted. This is also the reason that so many of God's people are weighed down by trials. They submit to trials rather than taking God's way of escape.

### **God is For us, not Against Us**

God is not bringing tribulation our way. Scripture says, "*What shall we then say to these things? **If God be***



*for us, who can be against us?"* (Rom. 8:31) In contrast, verse 35 says, *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"* If God is responsible for our tribulations, persecutions and distresses then He would be *against* us. However, we are assured that God is *for* us. He loves us. He is not the One causing us problems. He loves us and cares for us deeply.

Many of our teachings within Christianity have had a tendency to blame God for all of the ills that we face in this life. There have been various reasons for making God culpable for our problems ("God is punishing you for your sin," "God is testing you," "God is sending the trial to make you stronger," "God has a better purpose for you," etc.). It is no wonder that many sinners want nothing to do with God while many Christians live defeated lives.

But someone might protest, "But verse 28 of Romans 8 says, 'all things work together for our good.' Doesn't this mean that God sends trials for our good?" When the passage is kept in context we can see that it says something quite different:

*So to the Spirit assists us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray aright, but the Spirit pleads for us with sighs that are beyond words, and He who searches the human heart knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, since the Spirit pleads before God for the saints. We know also that those who love God, those who have been called in terms of his purpose, have his aid and interest in everything* (Romans 8:26-28; The James Moffatt Translation)

The Spirit of God is working with us, pleading for us, and giving us His *aid*-His *help*. Paul doesn't teach that God sends trouble to work for our good. He gives us the Spirit of God to aid and help us. Far from making God the source of our problems the Bible tells us that He is our refuge and *help* in the midst of them:

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea (Psalm 46:1, 2)*

If we go by much of the sentiment we find in many Christian circles today, we may as well read the passage this way, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present **instigator of** trouble." By blaming God for the problems in life we miss one of the most helpful revelations concerning God's character—that He longs to help us in trouble. He is no bringer of problems. Instead *He is a problem-solver.*

The discovery that God is our refuge, strength and help in trouble removes any fear that we may encounter due to negative circumstances that we might find ourselves in. The promise of God's help and protection is repeated in another psalm:

*I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.... Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: **I will be with him in trouble;** I will deliver him, and honour him (Psalm 91:2, 14, 15)*

The word “troubles” in Psalm 46:1 and 91:15 comes from the Hebrew word *tsarah*. Which means, “adversary, adversity, affliction, anguish, distress, tribulation, trouble.” (Strong’s Dictionary) In our day there are many people that teach that God Himself sends us trials, tribulations, afflictions and adversity to make us strong. However, if we compare this traditional idea with Psalms 46 and 91 then we get a picture of a schizophrenic deity who sends trouble only to help us in it.

### **Satan is the Source of Tribulation**

The problem with people who blame God for trials is their failure to recognize the Biblical truth that God’s people are engaged in warfare between the forces of good and evil. As long as we remain in the world we will find ourselves as combatants in enemy territory. God is not the one who brings us trouble; He is the one who is a very present help in the trouble brought to us by *the adversary*:

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you (1 Pet. 5:8-10)*

How sad that the majority of Christians believe that trials, tribulations, persecutions and afflictions are sent by God to chasten and/or strengthen His people. I believe that Scripture supports the opposite of the major

Christian view on this. The Bible, in contrast with traditional teachings, reveals that the primary source of affliction is our adversary. If Satan is an adversary-enemy then that means that he is working his afflictions to DESTROY US. In contrast, we are told about God, *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”* (Psalms 34:19). Satan is the afflicter and God is the deliverer from affliction

Failure to distinguish between the works of God and the works of Satan has caused so many people to lose their faith in God. Our failure to learn and believe who God says that He is has caused us to wrongly accuse Him of doing things that He would never do and attribute to Him the things that the devil does to us.

Satan has blinded so many of God’s people with traditional ideas about God that are utterly false. Instead of reading the Bible and allowing this to change what tradition says about God, we read too many of our traditional ideas about God into the Scripture, thus distorting what the Scripture actually says about Him.

This is most true in relation to the trials and tribulations that God’s people suffer, some even on a regular basis. God is too often accused of bringing trials upon His people. Yet the Bible makes it so abundantly clear that Satan is the source of these things:

*I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are **the synagogue of Satan**. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, **the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life** (Rev. 2:10)*

How can we look to God for help if we continue to blame Him for the work of the devil? Most of us are familiar with the persecution that Christians constantly suffer in Islamic and Communist countries. While some have erroneously (and blasphemously) claimed that Christians and Muslims worship the same God, there is no truth to this tall tale. Muslims reject Jesus as the Messiah and they are some of the biggest persecutors of Christians. It is a murderous religion influenced by Satan.

Communism claims to be atheistic, but this is also a lie. Richard Wurmbrand in his book, *Marx and Satan*, makes a strong case based on the evidence from writings and testimonies from the founders and leaders of Marxism that they were Satan worshippers and intentionally did his bidding by spreading communism and socialism.<sup>1</sup> Wurmbrand quotes a statement from a communist newspaper that reveals its true heart: “We do not fight against believers and not even against clergymen. We fight against God to snatch believers from Him.”<sup>2</sup>

With this statement and many other proofs recorded in Wurmbrand’s book, there is no doubt that trials, tribulations, and persecutions are Satan’s method of warfare against God Himself. God is not the source of these things. He is our deliverer from them.

### **Tribulation is Designed to Destroy**

There are some who hold to the belief that God sends trials to make us strong. However, Scriptures refutes that notion. Satan is the source of these things and he has in mind your destruction, not your advancement:

*Those by the way side are they that hear;  
then cometh the devil, and taketh away the  
word out of their hearts, lest they should  
believe and be saved. They on the rock are*

*they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and **in time of temptation fall away** (Luke 8:12-13)*

The word for “temptation” in this passage is “*peirazō*.” This is the exact same Greek word translated as “tried” in Rev. 2:10 above. The New Century version translates the latter part of verse 13, “*But when trouble comes, they give up*” Trials and tribulations are not designed to strengthen us but to cause us to fall and quit. In case some may say that Luke 8:13 is only dealing with temptation to sin, let us look at the same passages as recorded by Matthew and Mark:

*And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when **affliction or persecution** ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended (Mark 4:17)*

*Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for **when tribulation or persecution** ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended (Matt. 13:21)*

Temptation, trials, afflictions, tribulations, adversity, persecution are all used interchangeably in these passages. These things did not produce any virtues in those who experienced them. Rather it caused them to be offended and turn away from Christ. If God is sending them to make us strong, He is doing a poor job with some people according to Jesus Himself. However, if Satan is sending them, and Scripture says that He is, then they are doing exactly what they are designed to do, which is to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).

## **Virtue Established before the Trial**

God does not send problems to make us strong. On the contrary *He* is our strength: “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*” Satan certainly is not attempting to help us and strengthen us. Satan is not working in partnership with God to bring affliction to help us grow. His intention is to devour us.

The *grace of God is given to strengthen us*, perfect us, and to establish us (1 Pet. 5:10). **The afflictions are not meant to do these things but the grace of God is.** So many people seem to have it backwards, but Scripture gets it right. So remember, afflictions are meant to devour us, but *the grace of God* is meant to stablish, perfect, strengthen, and settle us.

Trials are a part of our *spiritual warfare* rather than a program for building strength and character. On the contrary we are to “*be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*” when we encounter the warfare (Eph. 6:10-18). The warfare does not make us strong. It is the Lord who strengthens us as we yield to Him. Strength comes by establishing our lives upon God’s Word. This will determine how trials and tribulations affect us:

*He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great (Luke 6:48-49)*

Notice that both people faced the same storm (trial). One person was destroyed through the trial. If the trial came to make this person strong then it utterly failed. The second person faced the exact same storm but because he had his foundation built on God's Word he was able to continue standing strong in the midst of the trial. He was not destroyed by it but stood strong in it.

Please understand that it was not the trial itself that made this person strong. He was already strengthened by God before the trial because he adhered to the Word of God. James tells us that the decisions we make determines the outcome of a trial in our lives:

*My brethren, **count it all joy** when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But **let patience** have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:2-4)*

The trial itself does not give joy, faith or patience. We must make a personal decision to *count it all joy* and to *let patience* have its perfect work. Some have strangely read into this passage the idea that God is the one sending these trials for our joy and our patience. Below is how the passage is understood by many of God's people:

My brethren, count it all joy ~~when ye fall into divers temptations;~~ when God sends you tests, trials and problems: Knowing this, that ~~the trying of your faith worketh patience~~ God is trying your faith in order to give you patience. But ~~let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.~~ the Trial itself will give you patience and strength.



This is the way the passage is often taught, preached, and understood by thousands of Christians. When we have a tendency to blame God for everything that happens then we remove from Scripture what it is actually saying and then we read into it what it is not saying. Contrary to erroneous but popular opinion, verses 2 through 4 are not to be separated from verses 12 and 13:

*Blessed is the man that **endureth temptation**: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is **tempted**, I am tempted of God: **for God cannot be tempted with evil**, neither tempteth he any man (James 1:12-13)*

The Good News Translation renders this, “*If we are tempted by such trials, we must not say, ‘This temptation comes from God.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one.*” Temptations are not sent to bless you. They are an inevitable part of warfare. It is the endurance of the temptation that brings the blessing and not the temptation itself. The same temptations that men require endurance for in order to be blessed are the exact same ones mentioned in verses 2 through 4. While we are thankful for the division of the Bible into chapters and verses (makes for very easy reference), sometimes they cause people to forget that James wrote this as one letter and was dealing with a particular subject: trials *and* temptation. James said that God is not the author of either. We have a better chance of being victorious in trials and tribulation when we see God as our helper, and not the sender of the trial itself.

## Chapter Nine

### Stop Blaming God for Natural Disasters

*I make light and create darkness. I make blessings and **create disasters**. I, the Lord, do all these things (Isa. 45:7; God's Word Translation)*

The bad weather patterns that steal, kill, and destroy such as hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis, earthquakes, lightning strikes, floods, volcano eruptions and other deadly disasters are the “evils” that are covered in our opening passage. However, other translations such as the King James Version can be misleading since it says, “*I make peace, and create **evil**.*” Some have misunderstood this to mean “moral evil.” Yet one could only derive the idea from this passage that God created sin by ignoring the context.

The context is in reference to God's judgment upon Babylon and his raising up of Cyrus to help the people of Israel. God would send “evil” upon Babylon. The word “evil” in this context would refer to disaster, calamities, or trouble. God is said to send these things as a judgment upon those nations like Babylon that had come against Him and His people (see Ps. 7:14-16).

#### **Did God Create Natural Disasters?**

While understanding the passage to teach that God creates “disaster” instead of “sin” seeks to vindicate Him from being the author of moral evil, it still makes God the author of its fruit.

When God completed the creation of the earth He pronounced everything as *good* (Gen. 1:31). Before the fall, there would never have been any natural disasters, but after the fall, this changed. God said, “*cursed is the*

*ground for thy sake.*” Adam was given dominion over the earth and his actions effected it (Gen. 1:26-28). By yielding to Satan and rejecting God (the only one able to sustain life) Adam himself caused the earth to be cursed.

It was Adam’s sin and not an arbitrary act of God that brought death and its consequences into the world (Rom. 5:12-14). Because of man’s interconnection with the earth sin has an automatic but devastating effect upon it (Gen. 4:10-12; Lev. 18:24-28; 20:22; Hosea 2-3; Isa. 24:4-5; Rom. 8:18-22). As William Matson writes:

We have seen that Satan was the cause of the sin that is in the world. But sorrow and suffering are the consequence of sin, as are all the disorders of Nature. They are no part of the original plan and purpose. Search creation through, and you will find every creature and every part and organ of the creature made to subserve the purposes of use and happiness. You cannot find in the whole expanse of creation one being or part or organ or atom, even, that was created for the sole purpose of giving pain or producing sorrow. There are pain and sorrow in abundance, but nothing was ever created for the purpose of producing suffering. These, then, are the proofs of disorder,—a perversion, a distorting of what was made with some benevolent design.<sup>1</sup>

Sins such as the shedding of innocent blood, which abortion plays a major role, rampant sexual immorality (including the promotion of homosexual marriage), oppression, dishonesty, the spread of Darwinism (which has led to extreme atheism), the removing of God’s laws from our courts and prayer from schools, the rejection of any Christian symbols publicly displayed and so many other things are having a negative effect on the earth and is the reason for so many “natural” disasters. Man is destroying the earth and while he wonders why it is reacting in the manner that it is.<sup>2</sup>

Regardless, the Bible is clear that God is not in the destructive forces of nature:

*And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice (1 Kings 19:11-12)*

Often when a natural disaster occurs people will ask, “I wonder what the Lord is trying to tell us?” It is perplexing that many Christians believe that God has no other way to communicate with us and the world than by sending tragedies and natural disasters. The Lord refutes this very idea by showing Elijah that this is not His mode of communication. He spoke to Elijah, not through the fallen forces of nature, but through His personal still small voice. This is exactly how God speaks to us today.

1 Kings 19 tells us that the Lord was *not* in the great and strong wind (probably a tornado or hurricane). The Lord was not in the earthquake or the fire. In other words, God was not the source of these destructive forces of nature. He was not in them. He does not speak through them. Therefore, it is unfair to blame God for them.

### **God is not a Destroyer**

Blaming God for natural disasters has led people to believe that if there really is a God then He is mean and cruel. At the least many believe that He is very distant and has no interest in His creation. Years ago when I was a

child we had a tragedy occur in our neighborhood. One of our neighbors died. I heard a few of the men on the street corner talking about it. One of the men said, "I believe there is a God in heaven, but I don't believe that He gives a damn about us."

Men like this are a victim of erroneous church doctrine. They go to church and hear that every tragedy and every accident is the result of the judgment of God. "God works in mysterious ways," they are told from the pulpit. Is it any wonder that many of our young people want absolutely nothing to do with the Lord? The church has already painted Him as either One who delights in destruction or who does not care.

Jesus, who shows us exactly what God is like, balked at the idea that He would call down natural disasters upon those who wronged Him:

*And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For **the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save** (Luke 9:54-56)*

When His disciples wanted to destroy a village by calling down fire upon it, Jesus told them that they did not recognize the spirit that gave them such an idea. For Jesus to have rebuked them so harshly proves that the spirit they were exhibiting was not the Holy Spirit. If the source of their actions had come from Father God then Jesus would have heartily endorsed their destructive idea. However, since Jesus rebuked them then He did not see His Father's hand in the destruction of His enemies. Jesus

never said or did anything except what He saw the Father doing:

*Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise (John 5:19)*

If the Father engaged in the type of destructive behavior we see attributed to Him in some places in the Old Testament then Jesus would have approved of His disciples dealing with the disrespectful Samaritans as harshly as they suggested. Yet when Jesus said, “*For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save,*” He was saying and doing only what He saw the Father doing.

### **The Storm that almost Killed Jesus**

Another incident in the life of our Lord will illustrate this point. When Jesus and the disciples were traveling by boat a “natural disaster” struck that could have killed them:

*And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm (Matt. 8:23-26)*

It should be obvious to the most rationally sane reader that God had nothing to do with the storm that almost killed Jesus and His disciples. It has been well stated by other great preachers that if the storm was God's Work then Jesus was fighting against His Father. That is impossible. The only conclusion is that Satan whipped up a storm with the intent to kill Jesus. This was due to all of the damage that Jesus was doing to his kingdom in casting out demons, healing the sick, and providing hope to the world. S. D. Gordon offers more insight:

The usual reading is He "rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace be still." The more literal reading is immensely suggestive and helpful. "He said to the sea, Lie down, be muzzled." It is the sort of language one uses in speaking to a dog that is misbehaving. If the word be repeated in the sharp peremptory tone of command, in which one speaks to his dog, it makes the sense yet more intense and real;—"down sir! lie down!" The whole passage is significant. It is not the sort of language to be used in talking merely to wind and wave, especially by as even-poised a man as our Lord was. There is at once the recognition of an evil spirit, or a group of 1 Mark iv. 35-4, them, who had aroused the unusually violent storm. The very language used is a recognition of personality. There was some one at work through wind and water. He is ordered down. He obeys. There was a great calm. But the point to mark just now is that his sphere of action includes wind and water as well as the earth. Mark keenly why this is the sphere of his activity—because we are here. It is us he is after, and through us the dominion of this realm.<sup>3</sup>

The evidence strongly points to Satan and wicked spirits behind this storm. The Father would not have sent a storm to kill His Son and Jesus would not have fought against His Father's work. The only logical conclusion is that Satan was behind it.

## How to Interpret Old Testament Language

If all that we have stated above is true then why does God tell Isaiah, “I make blessings and create disasters”? Why do we have so many places in Scripture, especially the Old Testament, where God is credited with sending natural disasters?

Jesus is the interpretative grid for viewing all of God’s actions in the Bible. Hence, all Old Testament Scripture must be understood, first, in the light of the New Testament. Second, we must interpret Scripture with Scripture. The book of Job is very helpful in this regard:

*And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.... While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, **The fire of God is fallen from heaven**, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee (Job 1:12, 16)*

God gave Job into Satan’s power and Satan began to do a series of horrible things to him. Satan sent lightning to destroy Job’s sheep and servants. Yet, who is given credit for the fire? We certainly don’t read where the servant said, “The fire of *Satan* is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them.” Yet, this is the true source of the fire.

Many of us rightfully chastise the insurance companies that call natural disasters, “an act of God”. However, God has been blamed for centuries for acts that He really had nothing to do with. In the earlier part of Job chapter 1, we learn that Satan made false accusations



against God and Job. He challenged God to prove him a liar by allowing him to destroy Job's life. God reluctantly allowed this test in order to remove doubt from the minds of the watching universe.

However, the people during Job's time had very little revelation of a being called Satan. Therefore, everything was attributed to God including the work of Satan. God Himself, using the mode of expressions of the people of that time, takes responsibility for Satan's actions, even though He was not pleased with them:

*And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although **thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause** (Job 2:3)*

Bear in mind that everything that happened to Job was Satan's doing. God never instigated these attacks on Job, nor did He give Satan details on how to bring the attacks about. God's only act in this whole incident was to permit and limit Satan's activities. Yet, God takes full credit for the destruction of Job's life.

### **Giving up the Sinner**

Many people are troubled by how often the Old Testament attributes disasters to God. However, Job 1:16 and 2:3 are the grid for interpreting all such passages of Scripture. They prove the important Biblical principle that God is only said in Scripture to do that which He merely permitted or did not prevent.

When God removes His protective presence then He allows whatever forces that are already poised to bring

destruction to have their way. Yet, He often takes the credit for what He allows. Take for example how God describes His method for destroying Ephraim:

*How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, **I will not return to destroy Ephraim:** for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city (Hosea 11:8-9)*

God's method of destroying is to *depart* from the unrepentant sinner, thus removing His protective presence, and allowing the automatic choices of the sinner to take effect (Exodus 12:12, 13, 23; 2 Kings 13:23; 2 Chron. 12:7; Job 2:3-7; Psalm 5:10; 73:27-28; Isa. 34:2; Jer. 7:29-31; 18:7-10; Eze. 21:31; 22:30-31; 32:12-13; Hosea 4:5-6; 11:8-9).

This is the "sowing and reaping" process at work here. Therefore, God "destroys" by no longer stopping the reaping from taking place (Ps. 9:15-17). When God has removed His protective presence then He delivers the sinner to the consequences of their choices: "*For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: **he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter***" (Isa. 34:2).

God "delivering" or "permitting" the nations to be slaughtered is His method of destroying. It is not something that He personally does but He allows it to take place when He no longer protects the individual or nation. In the idiomatic language of the Hebrews He is said to be the One doing the destroying.

## The Flood of Noah

Now let's apply this principle to one of the most famous "natural disasters" recorded in Bible history, which is *the flood of Noah*. Here God says that He will personally engage in destructive behavior using a "natural disaster:"

*And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, **I will destroy them with the earth....** And, behold, I, even **I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh**, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die (Gen. 6:13, 17)*

Note that God said that He would personally destroy and personally bring the flood. But several verses before He gave these warnings we read:

*And the Lord said, **My spirit shall not always strive with man**, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years (Gen. 6:3)*

Some have mistakenly understood this passage to teach that God lowered man's lifespan. However, this is not the case. The passage is saying that the Spirit of God would continue to convict and draw men to repentance for 120 years. The Living Bible paraphrases it: "*Then Jehovah said, 'My Spirit must not forever be disgraced in man, wholly evil as he is. **I will give him 120 years to mend his ways.**'*" What a merciful God to give this much time to repent. However, after 120 years the Spirit would

depart, taking along with Him His protective presence. He would then allow men to receive the destructive consequences of their rebellion. Sadly men persisted in their rebellion and pushed God away:

*Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood: **Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?** Yet he filled their houses with good things: but the counsel of the wicked is far from me. (Job 21:15-18)*

The people of Noah's time asked God to depart. God does not subject men to punishment willingly (Lam. 3:33). He does all that He possibly can to win men's hearts before He allows them to suffer the consequences of their sin. When God is asked to leave a situation, He is a gentleman. But He does so very reluctantly. Sadly, when God does leave them then He says, "...*woe also to them when I depart from them!*" (Hosea 9:12b)

Man would not repent so God "destroyed" by removing His protection. He abandoned them (except for Noah and his family) and allowed the *consequences* of their sin and corruption of the earth to bring the inevitable destruction. However, God did not do this by an act of creation. He did this by the removal of His presence:

*For a small moment **have I forsaken thee;** but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath **I hid my face from thee** for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. **For this is as the waters of Noah unto me:** for as I have*

*sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. (Isa. 54:7-9)*

The hiding of God's face is equal to the departure of His presence and protection:

*Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and **I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, **Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?**** (Deut. 31:17)*

Consistent with Deuteronomy, the Living Bible paraphrases Isa 54, “*Just as in the time of Noah I swore that **I would never again permit the waters of a flood to cover the earth and destroy its life, so now I swear that I will never again pour out my anger on you.***” This paraphrase relates the idea that the flood was by God's *permission* rather than His *causation*.

God did not actively bring about the flood but He abandoned the antediluvians. God hid His face and withdrew His protection. The people of Noah's time told God to *depart from them*. Therefore, His Spirit stopped striving with them. This automatically removed His protection and allowed the consequences of their corruption of the earth to take place. This may not be the way the flood of Noah is often taught but it is consistent with the Biblical facts and the truth of God's loving, non-destructive character. This is how all natural disasters attributed to God in Scripture are to be interpreted and understood.

## Chapter Ten

### Stop Blaming God for Accidents

*I also observed under the sun that the race doesn't always go to the swift, nor the battle to the mighty, nor food to the wise, nor wealth to the intelligent, nor favor to the knowledgeable, because **accidents can happen to anyone** (Eccl. 9:11; Common English Bible)*

Someone made a misstep while walking down a flight of stairs. They fell and broke their neck. God is blamed. Another falls from his horse and is paralyzed for life. God did it. A car crash that kills several innocent people: God's "mysterious plan" was somehow involved in it.

God is blamed for everything from a stubbed toe to a fatal train wreck. I heard the story of one preacher who believed strongly in the idea of Calvinistic predestination. He believed that God had determined ages ago every incident in life that would ever happen before it did. One day this preacher broke his arm. His response to his friends: "Glad that's over."

#### The "Providence" of God

One major reason that God is blamed for accidents is because it is a doctrine touted by the most well-known and respected ministers throughout history. Many preachers of every theological persuasion, be they Baptist, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Word-Faith, Arminian, Calvinist, etc. loves the late Baptist preacher Charles H. Spurgeon. Like many in his theological circles (Calvinist), Spurgeon attributed accidents to "God's mysterious providence:"

The idea that whenever an accident occurs we are to look upon it as a judgment from God would make the providence of God to be, instead of a great deep, a fiery shallow pool. Why, any child can understand the providence of God, if it be true that when there is a railway accident it is because people travel on a Sunday.... But then, if such a thing be providence, if it be a providence that can be understood, manifestly it is not the Scriptural idea of providence, for in the Scripture we are always taught that God's providence is "a great deep;" ....and if you and I pretend that we can find out the reasons of providence, and twist the dispensations of God over our fingers, we only prove our folly, but we do not prove that we have begun to understand the ways of God.<sup>1</sup>

Spurgeon believed that accidents come about as one of God's "mysterious providences" that none us can understand. In other words, God is to be blamed for the accident and it is unlikely that we will understand the reason behind it. Rick Warren, who has done more to introduce Calvinistic thinking into mainstream Christianity in this generation, writes:

Because God is sovereignly in control, accidents are just incidents in God's good plan for you. Because every day of your life was written on God's calendar before you were born, everything that happens to you has spiritual significance.<sup>2</sup>

Now should one pray for God's protection to be kept from accidents? Should one plead the blood of Jesus? Claim angelic protection? Appeal to the numerous promises in Scripture in which God has promised to keep us safe? Not under this type of teaching. In a "question and answer" session with well-known pastor John

MacArthur we are told that God has the sovereign right to say, “no,” to such requests:

**Question:** I understand why God might not answer a prayer for a [new sports car]. But I don't understand if a family is praying for a safe trip and on their way back half are killed and it's stated, “it's God's will.” I don't understand what the point of prayer would have been or even constant prayer because it was going to be God's will for the family to split in the first place.

**Answer:** Well the point was that we have to learn to let God say no. That's all. And true faith in God will let Him say no. You know, we pray for the safety of our children, but some of our children die. That doesn't cause us to lose faith in God, that just causes us to say God is sovereign and He makes the choices. So prayer is still useful because prayer is communing with Him. And prayer then must be offered in His will.<sup>3</sup>

Sadly, in this view, you will not know that God has said “no” to your request until *after* you have asked Him for protection and you meet with tragic circumstances that are contrary to that which you have sought from Him. This view places God's “providence” or His “sovereign whims” above any promise He has made to protect you.

For the rare few of us that prefer to get our understanding of God's character from Scripture rather than from “mystery philosophy,” the Bible speaks contrary to some of the statements given by these men:

*For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young*



*lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him (Psalm 91:11-15)*

The VOICE translates verse 12, “*They will hold you up in their hands so that you will not crash, or fall, or even graze your foot on a stone.*” One can accidentally hit their foot on a rock and can even crush it. However, Biblical accident theology promises protection from such things. This type of teaching may not be popular outside of certain circles, but it is more Biblical than what we have been given by the “providence proponents.”

God has promised angelic protection but we must ask Him for it. He promised to answer and to give us the very thing we asked for. The Scripture conflicts strongly with Calvinist philosophy in which their understanding of God’s “sovereignty” and “providence” makes God’s promises ineffective and prayer practically meaningless.

### **Accidents are Inevitable in a Fallen World**

In his book, “*Keys to the Kingdom,*” Dr. Roy Hicks notes the influence that Calvinistic ideology concerning accidents has had even within secular businesses such as insurance companies:

The Calvinists readily ascribe to God the blame for all accidents and catastrophes. They have done such a thorough job in their preaching and writing that the insurance companies picked up on it and have put a clause in their policies negating all responsibility if they can prove the mishap was “an act of God.” I could easily imagine that many

insurance writers have heard a great number of these heavy sovereign sermons in their churches.<sup>4</sup>

Since God is constantly blamed by those within the church, those who are supposed to be representing God to the world, then the world has picked up on this and has decided to benefit from it. Why make an insurance payment when God is the One who caused the accident or calamity in the first place?

Instead of continually blaming God for accidents, we must learn to recognize that we are in a world that has been tainted by sin and death. This world is no longer the perfect world that God created it to be:

*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom. 5:12)*

The sin of man has affected the earth in a very negative way (Gen. 3:17-18; 4:10-12; Lev. 18:24-28; 20:22; Hosea 4:2-3; Isa. 24:4-5). Where once the earth was a place of safety in which there was nothing that hurt or destroyed, it is now subject to death. This world is ruled by Satan. Accidents are due to the spirit of death and the curse that currently rules this world.

It was not God but man's sin that brought the earth under death and the curse, thus making this world accident prone. Many who advocate a "mysterious providence" simply do not recognize this fact nor do they recognize that God created an irrevocable inter-connection between man and creation:

*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be*

*revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now (Rom. 8:18-22).*

The creation was subjected to vanity and corruption. This is the reason why we have accidents. Basically, the earth has been subjected to death and decay: *“That all living things will be made free from the power of death and will have a part with the free children of God in glory”* (v. 21; Bible in Basic English). Theodore H. Epp writes:

According to these verses, everything in nature is in the bondage of corruption. It is all, whether it be plant life, animal life or mankind, in a state of death. All around is death and decay. Because man sinned, all of creation came into this state of bondage.<sup>5</sup>

Man’s sin did not merely bring physical death to man himself, but allowing sin to enter into the world brought death to everything that he was given dominion over. The reason we have accidents in this world is due to allowing death to take over every part of it through sin.

### **God’s Permission, not His Causation**

Some will still read into Rom. 8:18-22 what is not there by claiming that God intentionally had the earth

subject to corruption. Furthermore some English translations give the erroneous idea that God is directly responsible for the condition described in Romans 8. However, the late Southern Baptist minister, Herschel H. Hobbs, believes otherwise:

“Was made subject” is a passive form. The one who did this was God. The Greek text does not attribute direct agency to God. Rather it was God’s righteous will which furnished occasion for it. He is not the doer of the act of making the natural order subject to vanity, but it was “by reason of” or “on account of” him in his righteous will. It was not a punishment upon nature but upon man. The effect of man’s sin extended into nature.<sup>6</sup>

So here we have another nail in the coffin of the type of “mysterious providence” held by those who believe that God, in some unknown way, is behind the accidents that people suffer in this world. God did not make or decree the world to become the death trap that it currently is. However, when Adam turned against God He *permitted* the earth to become this way. Other translations bring this truth out more clearly:

*Everything that has been made in the world is weak. It is not that the world wanted it to be that way. **God allowed it to be that way.** Yet there is hope. Everything that has been made in the world will be set free from the power that can destroy. These will become free just as the children of God become free. (Rom. 8:20-21; New Life Version)*

God’s “permission” is not necessarily His “commission.” God did not want things to turn out this

way but they did. God allowed on the earth what man himself allowed when he sided with Satan and rebelled against God (Matt. 18:18-20).

The permissive language of the Bible is also applied to actual accidents where God is said to be involved (by not preventing it from occurring). In Exodus we read:

*He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death. And if a man lie not in wait, but **God deliver him into his hand**; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee (Ex. 21:12-13)*

The word “deliver” comes from the Hebrew word “aw-naw” which can be translated as “to allow to meet, cause to meet” (studylight.org) or “befall, deliver, happen” (Strong’s Dictionary). The word “happen” often has to do with “chance” and not with planned direction. Therefore, the accidental killing referred to in the passage above has nothing to do with a “mysterious providence” but with a “chance happening.”

The Easy to Read Version translates verse 13, “*But if an accident happens, and a person kills someone without planning it, then God allowed that thing to happen.*” God’s only involvement in the accident is that He did not prevent it from occurring. But He certainly is not behind them as far as planning them.

### **God’s Involvement in Accidents**

There are a number of places in Scripture that mention accidents and very few of them mention any relation that God may have had to them. One of the most taught passages concerning accidents is found in Luke 13:

*Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, **except ye repent**, ye shall all likewise perish (Luke 13:4-5)*

In this passage Jesus repudiates the idea that accidents are by any special design or by a mysterious providence. God is given no credit at all for the accident of the tower that fell on those men. Jesus said, “Nay: but, *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” Far from claiming that accidents are a predestined act of God in relation to accidents, Jesus said that men have choices to repent or perish in the death trap that this world is. There are choices we can make that can place us under God’s protection or move us from under His protection and bring about our destruction.

Another example of an accident recorded in Scripture is found in the book of Acts:

*And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead (Acts 20:9)*

Now did God cause this man to sit on a third floor window, providentially assure that Paul’ preaching would be so dry and boring, causing this man to fall asleep to ensure that he suffered this deadly accident? If we accept the “accident theology” of some theologians we may have to conclude this. However God had no involvement in this except to work through Paul in raising him from the dead.

In our last example of a Bible accident, we find that some of them have logical explanations that have nothing whatsoever to do with God. In 1 Samuel 4 the high priest, Eli had an accident and the Bible is clear as to why he suffered it. After a messenger reported to Eli about the death of his sons and the loss of the ark of God in a war with the Philistines we read:

*And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: **for he was an old man, and heavy.** And he had judged Israel forty years (1 Sam. 4:18)*

A more modern translation says, “*Eli fell backward off his chair near the gate and broke his neck. **Eli was old and fat, so he died**” (1 Sam. 4:18; Easy to Read Version). Note that there is no divine mysterious purpose in Eli’s death. The plain truth is that Eli was overweight so when he fell, he died. He died due to not properly taking care of his body which hurt him in his old age. Did God cause Eli to become overweight and die from falling over due to shocking news? If so then that would make God the author of sin, and being overweight is a sin (1 Cor. 6:12-13).*

If God indicates no personal involvement in any of these accidents then we have no Biblical authority for making Him the author of any of the accidents that occur. The “mysterious providence” taught by some men does not take precedence over the written revelation that God has given us.

## Chapter Eleven

### Stop Blaming God for Crime and Violence

*When wicked people increase, crime increases, but righteous people will witness their downfall* (Prov. 29:16; God's Word Translation)

Theologians over the centuries have given us a distorted picture of God that makes Him the author of crime and violence. 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant reformer, John Calvin, wrote, "If one falls among robbers.... all of them exert their force only in so far as directed by the immediate hand of God."<sup>1</sup>

According to this understanding, God is working through men that deprive others of that which rightfully belongs to them. God is said to be the empowerment behind criminal activity. Violent crime, in this ideology, is not due to the increase of wicked people, but rather to God's sovereign hand.

#### **Is God behind Violent Crime?**

I wish that I could say that most of the church recognized the ridiculousness of Calvin's theology, how it does not portray the picture of God that Jesus has given us, and that Calvin was condemned as a rank heretic. However, none of that has happened. Instead, many have carried on Calvin's devilish teaching even in our day.

In his book, "*Why do Bad Things Happen if God is Good?*," Ron Rhodes quotes a prominent Calvinist theologian name Gordon Clark in which he believes that God is behind criminal activity. Rhodes summarizes Clark's theology as follows: "God's will is in absolute sovereign control over all things—including human



wills.”<sup>2</sup> Then Rhodes points out the irony of Clark’s theology and provides a quote:

While maintaining that all that God causes is good, Clark nevertheless states, “I wish very frankly and pointedly to assert that if a man gets drunk and shoots his family, it was the will of God that he should do it.”<sup>3</sup>

No doubt that most of us find this false idea about God repugnant. However, it gets worse. Famous Southern Baptist pastor Charles F. Stanley believes that the criminally violent activity of the terrorists who flew into and destroyed the twin towers on September 11, 2001, killing thousands of people, was all under God’s control and for some “mysterious purpose” that we finite beings cannot comprehend:

But what of those who went to work that morning and died as the two massive skyscrapers imploded? Should we conclude that those people could have avoided dying that day if they had just called in sick and not gone to work? No. God was no less in control of their lives. We may not understand His plans and purposes for their lives to have ended that morning—we may never understand this side of eternity the fullness of God’s plan and purposes for that tragic day. But I assure you of this, God was no less in control.<sup>4</sup>

What Scripture does Stanley use to support this position? None. He doesn’t need any. He simply falls back on the “mysterious sovereign plan of God” that we could never understand in this present lifetime. However, one must legitimately ask how it is that Stanley and others are privy to the knowledge that the death of those 911 victims fit into God’s control and plan.

Scripture, on the other hand, is in complete dispute with Stanley. Many of the people that died on that sad

morning did not even know Jesus as Savior. Therefore, many of these people went to a Christless eternity where they will suffer forever. The Bible is very clear about the fact that this is not the will of God. Paul said that it is God “*Who will have all men to be saved*” (1 Tim. 2:4). Peter says that God, “*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Pet. 3:9). Through Ezekiel God said, “*Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?*” (Eze. 18:23)

It is clear that the 9-11 tragedy was not the purpose and plan of God. It was not His will for any of these people to die in such a violent manner and then spend eternity without the One who died to save their souls. Stanley does not seem to understand that a person can reject God’s true plan for their lives (Luke 7:30). The fact is, God does not always get His way, His will is not always done, and many things happen that He has no plan or purpose for (Job 2:3).

### **Crime is Never God’s Will**

Some may be horrified by the quotes cited above. However, whenever someone is killed by a drunk driver or killed in a neighborhood shooting and we say, “God took him. His time was up. God is in control” then we are blaming God for a crime that was committed. Whenever someone has been robbed or stolen from and we say, “All things work together for good. God has a reason for everything” then we are blaming God for a crime.

If God is behind crime then we must ask why He forbids the criminals that He supposedly empowers from entering into His kingdom:

*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor*

*idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10)*

Why aren't thieves allowed into God's kingdom if God is behind their crime? Jesus said:

*But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Matt. 6:20)*

Why are there not thieves in Heaven to steal our treasures if crime is God's will and if He has a plan and a purpose for it? Jesus said that we are to pray, "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*" (Matt. 6:10). If crime is the will of God for earth then, according to this prayer, it should be happening in Heaven as well. Someone might answer, "We cannot understand the 'secret things' of God. However, He does all things for His glory." If that is the case then Peter is in dispute:

*If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters (1 Pet. 4:14-15)*

If God is behind criminal activity, and it is for His glory, then why didn't he tell the murderer and thief that

the spirit of glory and of God rested on them as He did for those being reproached for Christ? Why does Peter warn his readers not to suffer as a murderer, thief, or evildoer if they are "...directed by the immediate hand of God" as Calvin claims? Shouldn't Peter be advising the murderer, thief, and evildoer to continue in their activities since it is God that is directing them?

### **Crime and Violence**

It is clear from Scripture, which is our only source for doctrine, and not some alleged "mysterious sovereign will" that no one can ascertain, that these men are blaming God for the work of the enemy (2 Tim. 3:16). Jesus, in contrasting Himself with Satan, said, "*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10).

"Steal, kill, and destroy?" This sums up rape, murder, robbery and every other crime ever committed. A crime usually deprives someone of their property, their life, their physical health and worse of all, their peace of mind. All of this is covered under stealing, killing, and destroying. Earlier in John's gospel Jesus said this about the religious leaders:

*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. **He was a murderer from the beginning**, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it* (John 8:44)

Jesus said that the one influencing the religious leaders of his time to commit the criminal act of killing our Lord for no other reason than envy was the devil. We

have God's very Word to show us that Satan and his fallen angels and demons are the ones behind every rape, murder, robbery and other criminal act committed against men and women.

A number of testimonies from some criminals state that they did not even know what came over them when they committed certain acts. It was like they lost control and became another person. A lot of crimes are committed by Satanists who perform these things as acts of worship to their dark lord. Satan is indeed the definite influence behind such things.

Jesus said that Satan was a murderer from the beginning. In Ezekiel 28 we are told that the primary reason for Satan's downfall was due to his criminal intentions which God discovered within him:

*Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, **till iniquity was found in thee.** By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled **the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned:** therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire (Eze. 28:15-16)*

Violence here is associated with sin and iniquity. The word "iniquity" is from the Hebrew word "evel" which itself can mean "violent deeds of injustice"<sup>5</sup> The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* associates the word "iniquity" to "crime" and "lawless deeds".<sup>6</sup>

### **Satan's Criminal Influence**

Satan was the first creature ever to become a criminal. He then led numerous other angels to follow him in his criminal acts. Since the fall of man Saatan has

also been able to influence men to become criminals like himself. Almost from the beginning of mankind's history he was able to move Cain to commit an act of violence against his brother Abel. In Genesis 4 we read:

*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him (Gen. 4:7-8).*

Cain was upset because God accepted Abel's sacrifices and rejected Cain's. The reason was that Abel obeyed God in giving a sacrifice that represented the coming of the Messiah and His shed blood on our behalf. Cain offered the fruit from the ground that had already been cursed. God told Cain that he could do well if he would only make up his mind to do it. This means that Cain knew the right way to worship God but decided he was going to do it his own way. Yet, he became angry when God did not accept *Cain's way* of doing things.

What a loving God who would even take the time out to talk to Cain and tell him where he was going wrong. God loved Cain and wanted to see him do well but God simply cannot lower His standards to make that happen. It would not have helped Cain one bit for God to have done so. That is why God lovingly took the time to teach Cain how to do well. God also warned Cain of the danger of an impending enemy. He told Cain, "*sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*" Cain could have ruled over sin but he chose to yield to it. It was sin that then influenced him to commit the first criminal act of murder:

*In this the children of God are manifest, and **the children of the devil**: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither **he that loveth not his brother**. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, **that we should love one another**. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous (1 John 3:10-12)*

Here we see that *Satan* and *Sin* are synonymous. They are the same entity. Satan is the inventor of sin and so it is very much associated with him. Many places in the Bible that speaks about sin can be substituted for Satan. While the Old Testament does not necessarily mention Satan by name in so many parts of it, his footprints are clearly seen as revealed to us in the New Testament. Satan was the first criminal and he inspired the first criminal act among men.

### **Absalom Rapes David's Wives**

Of course there are always some idiomatic expressions used in Scripture that appear to teach that God is the author of certain sins. For the sake of space we will deal with only one. Scripture record an incident in which Absalom, son of King David, raped his father's wives and concubines (2 Sam. 16:21-22). We are told that God Himself did this:

*Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and **I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he***

*shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this  
sun* (2 Sam. 12:11)

Some have pointed to this passage as proof that everything, including violent crime, happens under God's control and God's direction. As usual these people are ignorant of or neglect the permissive idiom of the Hebrew culture and language in which God is said to do that which He only permits. Two very well-known commentaries make reference to this truth in explaining the passage above:

That is, in the course of my providence, I will permit all this to be done. Had David been faithful, God, by his providence, would have turned all this aside; but now, by his sin, he has made that providence his enemy, which before was his friend.<sup>7</sup>

The prophet speaks of God threatening to do what He only permitted to be done. The fact is, that David's loss of character by the discovery of his crimes, tended, in the natural course of things, to diminish the respect of his family, to weaken his government, and to encourage the prevalence of many disorders throughout his kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

This is supported by Scripture itself. When David sinned in the egregious manner in which he did, he forfeited God's protection. In other examples found in Scripture God removes His protective hand and allows them to suffer the criminal activity He previously protected them from:

*Who let the people of Jacob be carried off?  
Who let robbers take Israel away? The  
Lord allowed this to happen, because we  
sinned against him. We did not live the*



*way he wanted us to live and did not obey his teaching (Isa. 42:24; New Century Version)*

*My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret place: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it (Eze. 7:22)*

As we have discovered in previous chapters, God turning away His face means that He has forsaken His people and removed His protection. Therefore, He subjects them to criminal activity by permission rather than causation. The Contemporary English Version translates the latter part of Eze. 7:22, “*but I will look away and let it happen,*” thus implying that God would permit this to happen. This is exactly how we interpret the incident in the prophecy given to David.

Furthermore, God does not empower the criminal to perform his violent acts. All criminals who persist in crime are at one time or another given over to a reprobate mind:

*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents (Rom. 1:28-30)*

The Bible puts criminal activity such as murder in the same category as being “haters of God.” Is it God’s plan to create haters of Himself? Some might think that God’s character is so warped to do such. However the passage does not even suggest it. Murder, hatred for God, and other activity of this nature comes from the freedom to choose that God has endowed all His creatures with.

God’s activity begins with the desire to restrain criminal from acting out fully on their inclinations. However, when they persist in rebelling against Him He finally removes the restraints and gives them over to the reprobation that they desire. Yet, it is clear from this passage that God is not in any way behind the criminal acts being committed since He “gave them over” to it which means that He took a “hands off” approach.

### **God’s Protection from Crime**

This should remind us to never take sin lightly. God has given us the victory over sin, which means that we have victory over Satan Himself. However, we also need to stand on His Word so that we do not become victims of Satanic criminal acts.

*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord (Isa. 54:17)*

*Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and*

*buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day (Psalm 91:3-5)*

Testimonies abound concerning people who have stood on God's promises in the midst of danger. Many have been rescued from robberies, near rapes, death and numerous other dangers because they knew God's promises of protection. This again is the reason why we must know the truth about God's character if we are to trust Him. Many people have blamed God for the criminal acts that happened to themselves or to their loved ones. They either believe that God allows some of these things for mysterious purposes or that He actually energized the criminal to do their dirty deed. It is Satan and not God who energizes criminals (Eph. 2:1-5). So many people are bitter against God because they were told that some rapist who brutally raped and murdered their child was allowed to do so by a sovereign God for purposes only He has known.

Do not accept Satan's lies even if they come from a "Christian" pulpit. God is on your side. He is not ordaining bad people to hurt you. He loves and you and offers you His protection. Learn to memorize His promises of protection in this crazy and insane world where crime is running rampant.

## Chapter Twelve

### Stop Blaming God for a Lack of Miracles

*For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake (1 Thess. 1:5)*

The word “power” in the passage above comes from the Greek word “*dunamis*” which is defined as “specifically miraculous power” (Strong’s Dictionary). Paul preached a gospel that had miraculous power accompanying it. Paul did not want people’s faith to be in his great wisdom or intellect but in God’s power (1 Cor. 2:4-5). Jesus told His disciples that they would need this same miraculous power in order to be effective witnesses for Him (Acts 1:8). Nothing in Scripture indicates that God would have wanted anything other than a gospel demonstrated by miraculous power.

#### **Theologians: The Powerless Gospel**

Why do we see so very few, if any, manifestations of God’s miraculous power today? Men of great academic learning have placed the blame on God for the lack of miracles the church suffers in this present age. They give us various reasons for why He supposedly no longer does miracles today.

Some claim that miracles ceased upon the death of the last apostle since only (as they claim) apostles, or whoever they conferred this ability upon, did them. Others say that miracles were no longer needed after the canon of Scripture was complete. There are a number of other reasons, but basically what is being taught is that now the gospel is in *word only* and is no longer

accompanied with power. This is the gospel which is dependent upon intellectually persuasive arguments and enticing word of man's wisdom.

How did this teaching become so prevalent in the church? It first started with Augustine but he later renounced this "powerless gospel". Sadly, one of the more famous so-called reformers, John Calvin, continued to teach this lie:

But the gift of healing, like the rest of the miracles, which the Lord willed to be brought forth for a time, has vanished away in order to make the preaching of the gospel marvelous forever.... [Healing] now has nothing to do with us, to whom the administering of such powers has not been committed.<sup>1</sup>

Calvin's influence was and still is strong in the church. Therefore many people support his false teachings. Calvin claims that this impotence concerning the miraculous supposedly "makes the preaching of the gospel more marvelous". Calvin believes that a powerless gospel is more marvelous than a gospel with God's miraculous power to support it. His gospel is different than the one Paul had.

Sadly, Calvin's powerless gospel was the "pillar of truth" for many theologians for centuries to come. One of the most widely known cessationists of a previous century was Benjamin B. Warfield. In his book, "*Counterfeit Miracles*" he affirms this belief in a powerless gospel:

Therefore it is that the miraculous working which is but the sign of God's revealing power, cannot be expected to continue, and in point of fact does not continue, after the revelation of which it is the accompaniment has been completed. It is unreasonable to ask miracles, says John Calvin—or to find them—where there is no new gospel. By as

much as the one gospel suffices for all lands and all peoples and all times, by so much does the miraculous attestation of that one single gospel suffice for all lands and all times, and no further miracles are to be expected in connection with it.<sup>2</sup>

Notice that Warfield's belief in this powerless gospel is not founded upon Scripture. He relies primarily on Calvinist theologians, John Calvin himself being the most prominent. Many of the present day cessationists heavily rely upon Warfield's views to promote their own version of this false teaching. One of them includes the controversial reformed anti-charismatic pastor, John MacArthur. Here is one of several statements by MacArthur affirming the influence behind his own powerless gospel:

Tongues, healings, and miracles all served as signs to authenticate an era of new revelation. As the age of revelation came to a close, the signs ceased also. Theologian B. B. Warfield wrote....<sup>3</sup>

What is the driving force behind MacArthur's powerless gospel? Benjamin B. Warfield. Who influenced Warfield? John Calvin. Calvinistic theology with its teachings of an all-controlling despot is the foundation of the powerless gospel. MacArthur, unlike Calvin and Warfield, does attempt to back his powerless gospel teaching with references to Scripture. However, MacArthur's Scripture exposition is tainted by his cessationism which was strongly influenced by Calvinist theologians. MacArthur's interpretation of the Bible is Calvinistically influenced rather than Holy Spirit inspired.

### **Jesus: The Gospel with Power**

The basic premise behind MacArthur's proclamation of this powerless gospel ideology is the idea

that miracles only occurred in order to authenticate an era of new revelation. This is so ludicrous that it leaves me wondering why anyone who claims to know the Bible would teach or accept this lie. Since we are dealing with this issue in relation to the gospel message, let's examine three statements that Jesus made concerning His "gospel of the kingdom":

*And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching **the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people (Matt. 4:23)*

*And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and **preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people (Matt. 9:35)*

*And **this gospel of the kingdom** shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come (Matt. 24:14)*

Take note of five things in these three passages of Scripture:

1. All three make reference to "the gospel of the kingdom".
2. The first two state that this message was accompanied by supernatural healings.
3. The third reference, Matthew 24, says that this gospel would be preached in all of the world.
4. The third reference also says that this particular gospel of the kingdom, and not a new epoch of

revelation, would be preached until the end would come. This falls in line with what Paul says in 1 Cor. 1:7 about the fact that miraculous gifts would continue until the coming of our Lord Jesus.

5. Most importantly, not one of these passages speak about the signs of Jesus confirming a new revelation. Hebrews 4:2 says that the SAME gospel that was preached to the Israelites in the Old Testament is being preached to us today.

When Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom He was not authenticating a new revelation. In Luke 4 He gets His gospel directly from the book of Isaiah. In Luke 24, after His resurrection, Jesus explains the gospel of the kingdom to two of His disciples directly from the Old Testament Scriptures that already spoke about the gospel concerning Him. There is no authenticating of new revelation in Jesus' gospel. Supernatural healings, deliverances and other miracles were following the gospel of the kingdom that started from the Old Testament and continues to this day. Now look at Mark 16:

*And he said unto them, Go ye **into all the world**, and preach **the gospel to every creature**. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow **them that believe**; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth,*



*and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and **confirming the word with signs following.** Amen. (Mark 16:15-20)*

Now, we see Jesus' statement in Mark 16:15 where He mentions that *the* gospel, not a *new* revelation, but *the same* gospel that He had been preaching, is to go into *all the world*. Compare it to His statement in Matt. 24:14 where He again says that this gospel must be preached all over the world and then the end would come. Jesus says that this gospel being preached in *all the world* would be accompanied by certain supernatural signs from those who BELIEVE!!

The gospel was meant to have supernatural power as it went around the world until the end came. Scripture nowhere confirms the powerless gospel of the unbelieving Calvinist predestinarians. Furthermore, Jesus said that this is the *gospel of the Kingdom!* God's kingdom is to always be accompanied with *power!* Look at two statements concerning God's kingdom:

*And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. **But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.*** (Matt. 12:27-28)

*For the kingdom of God is not in word, **but in power.*** (1 Cor. 4:20)

Jesus stated that if supernatural power was exerted by the precious Holy Spirit to counter Satan and his evil forces then God's kingdom has come unto us. The devil is not defeated by theological erudition, but by *supernatural*

*power!* It takes the miracle power of God to counter satanic power.

Paul says that the kingdom of God is not in word – not in great so-called Bible exegesis and hermeneutical skills of exposition, but in POWER. That word power is again from the Greek word “*dunamis*” which means “miraculous power”. If we are to preach the gospel of the kingdom then we must expect supernatural miraculous power to come with it, otherwise, it is not God’s kingdom. How insane to say that because the canon of Scripture is complete that the kingdom no longer needs the Holy Spirit to put forth supernatural power in order to deal with satanic forces.

### **The Primary Purpose of Jesus’ Miracles**

Sadly, most of the “powerless gospel proponents” have ignored the teachings of Jesus concerning the need to preach the gospel of the kingdom with miracle power. They have justified their teaching with the false idea that the miracles of Christ were meant primarily to affirm the truth that He was God while He walked on the earth.

I affirm with others that Jesus is truly Yahweh, the true and living God and is the second person of the Triune Godhead. However, I believe that the claims of the propagators of the powerless gospel that Jesus worked miracles only to prove His deity is as far off base as one can get. When we look at the miracles our Lord did during His time on earth, all of them were connected with *compassion*. Some passages make this emphatically clear:

*Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, **he had compassion on her**, and said unto*

*her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. (Luke 7:12-15)*

*And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and **was moved with compassion toward them**, and he healed their sick (Matt. 14:14)*

*So Jesus **had compassion on them**, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him (Matt. 20:34)*

*And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and **hath had compassion on thee** (Mark 5:18-19)*

All of the miracles performed by the Lord in the above passages are attributed to His *compassion*. Sadly, many powerless gospel advocates claim that Jesus did miracles primarily to prove that He is God. Yet this cannot be true since not only did He give authority to His followers to perform miracles, but Jesus did not always make public the miracles that He performed. Concerning a leper that Jesus healed, he instructed him as follows:

*And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them (Mark 1:43-44)*

If Jesus' primary purpose for doing miracles was to prove His deity, why not tell the man to "go and broadcast it everywhere. Let them know that it was I who did this and tell them that this proves that I am truly the God of Israel manifested in the flesh." This would have been true but it obviously was not the intention of the healing.

Jesus wanted, more than anything else, to reveal the true character of our loving Heavenly father. He wanted everyone to see that God is a God of compassion. Therefore, if miracles have ceased from the church then this must mean that compassion has ceased. God is no longer compassionate if the powerless gospel is true.

Thankfully, we have it on a reliable witness that God is a God that *never* changes: "*For I am the Lord, I change not....*" (Mal. 3:6). God "*....does not change like shifting shadows.*" (James 1:17; NIV). Jesus Christ, who performed these miracles in the past is still the same Jesus now as He was *then*: "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.*" (Heb. 13:8)

### **The Real Problem Is Unbelief**

The true reason for the lack of miraculous power in most churches today cannot be blamed on God. This lack is due to a simple thing called "unbelief." Jesus explains this very thing to His disciples after He was confronted with their failure to cast out a demon:

*Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, **Because of your unbelief:** for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you (Matt. 17:19, 20).*

The word “impossible” here comes from the Greek word “*adunateo*.” This word means “not to have strength, power, or ability; to be weak.” Lack of faith deprives us of God’s power, ability, and might. God makes His omnipotent power to do all things available to the believer through the exercise of faith. Faith and prayer makes the omnipotent power of God work on our behalf. Is it any wonder that the Bible continually puts an emphasis on faith?

Jesus stated that the lack of miraculous power that the disciples experienced had nothing to do with restrictions on His promises. On the contrary, if they applied genuine faith, they would be able to move literal mountains if that were necessary. Commenting on this passage, John Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), whose well known commentary on the New Testament is still published and referenced today, wrote, “The reason why many miracles are not now wrought, is not so much the establishment of the faith, as the general prevalence of unbelief.”<sup>4</sup> Now look at a promise that Christ made to His disciples concerning the power of faith:

*Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said*

*unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, **Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive** (Matt. 21:18-22)*

Jesus specifically stated in the passage that if a person has faith, they not only can do the exact same thing that He did to the fig tree, but they can go beyond this and command mountains into the sea. This sounds exactly like His words in John 14:12 which says, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that **believeth on me**, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*” God does not change His mind concerning His promises:

*God is not a man. He will not lie. God is not a human being. **He does not change his mind.** What he says he will do, he does. What he promises, he keeps. (Num. 23:19; The Everyday Bible)*

*God wanted to prove that his promise was true. He wanted to prove this to those who would get what he promised. He wanted them to understand clearly that **His purposes never change.** So God proved his*

*promise by also making an oath* (Heb. 6:17; The Everyday Bible)

*God cannot tell lie! And so his promises and vows are two things that **can never be changed**....* (Heb. 6:18; Contemporary English Version)

God has never changed. His Word has never changed. How could miracles have ceased if God has never changed His mind concerning His promise for miracles? What has happened is that men have changed the concept of God to fit their denominational and theological beliefs. Since God does not change His mind concerning those things that He promised, then miracles of healing, deliverance, supernatural provision, and the gifts and graces of the Spirit are available to God's people today.

*Believing* is the key. The teachings of our Lord on faith and the power that God exhibits when it is applied contradict what our cessationist friends say that they do not believe—or rather, what they doubt. When our theology contradicts what the Scripture teaches, we should not wonder why we do not get the results that scripture promises. Let us stop blaming God for the lack of miracles in the church.

## Chapter Thirteen

### Stop Blaming God for Lost Souls

*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, **the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience**: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:2-3)*

The Amplified Bible says, “*You were obedient to and under the control of] the [demon] spirit that still constantly works in the sons of disobedience [the careless, the rebellious, and the unbelieving, who go against the purposes of God].*” We are told in Scripture that those who are disobedient to God are under the control of the prince of the power of the air and that he is the spirit that works in them. It is not God who is keeping sinners in their sin or causing them to be disobedient to Him. This is the work of His enemy, Satan:

*We know [for a fact] that we are of God, and the whole world [around us] lies in the power of the evil one [opposing God and His precepts] (1 John 5:19; The Amplified Bible)*

The evil one is God’s enemy and seeks to do all that he possibly can do to undermine any of God’s efforts to restore the peace and harmony to the universe that was disrupted when Satan rebelled (Isa. 14; Eze. 28). If Satan



is working, energizing, and controlling sinners then it stands to reason that he is in opposition to any and all designs that God has towards sinners. If Satan is keeping sinners bound it is only because God wants them free. If Satan is moving sinners to disobey God, it is only because God desires their obedience.

### **Predestination Theology**

Sadly, there is a predestination theology that teaches the exact opposite of the Biblical truth stated above. Men who hold to the false predestination teaching tell us that God, before He ever created any man, desired that a large portion of them become reprobate, satanically bound, and destined for hell. This is before any of them were ever born or committed an offense worthy of judgment. Calvin writes:

Again I ask: whence does it happen that Adam's fall irremediably involved so many peoples, together with their infant offspring, in eternal death unless because it so pleased God? Here their tongues, otherwise so loquacious, must become mute. The decree is dreadful indeed, I confess. Yet no one can deny that God foreknew what end man was to have before he created him, and consequently foreknew because he so ordained by his decree.<sup>1</sup>

Calvin claims that his enemies must be silenced (or “muted”) by his great intellectual effort to prove that God is a sadistic monster who created men for the express purpose of damning them to an eternal hell. Calvin claims that since God allegedly foreknew man's end then it is natural that he ordained that it should be. This argument might possibly work against an “Arminian,” which is a person who may not agree with Calvin that God preselected men to be lost yet believes that God knew

from eternity that man would fall. But Calvin's argument cannot hold up against the Bible itself:

*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them (Gen. 6:5-7)*

If God ordained, before any man was ever born, that some would become such totally depraved creatures (or even if He knew it would happen and went ahead and created anyway) then why do we have Him grieving the rampant wickedness of men and regretting the fact that He ever created man in the first place?

Many theologians refuse to accept the Bible for what it plainly says. Therefore they use words such as "anthropomorphism" to describe God's reactions here. They tell us that God is only expressing Himself in human language since we finite creatures can never understand God. Yes, once again we have the appeal to "mystery" when the Bible does not support one's invalid and erroneous theological premise.

To be sure that the buck does not stop at Calvin. Calvin was so influential in the propagation of his horrible teaching that a number of theologians even wrote a "Confession of faith" that would be the test of "orthodoxy" for centuries to come:

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His own glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death (Westminster Confession of Faith, III:3).

This is the picture given to men about God. Is it any wonder that such teaching have turned many men into atheists and agnostics? Who would want to serve such a monster throughout eternity? Sadly, this teaching continues to remain influential in our own day. Loraine Boettner provides us with a modern example of Calvin's influence:

We believe that from all eternity God has intended to leave some of Adam's posterity in their sins, and that the decisive factor in the life of each is to be found only in God's will.<sup>2</sup>

Did any of these men read Genesis 6 before accepting Calvin's thoughts? Why do men so easily accept so-called "orthodox" theological positions while ignoring (or re-explaining) the Bible, especially when the Bible clearly contradicts this philosophy? While the above is an accepted "orthodox" teaching in many churches, it is not consistent with the Bible's description of God's character and His ways.

### **God Wills Salvation for ALL Men**

In contrast to the false predestination teaching stated above, God has expressed His will for the salvation of all men in a number of different places in Scripture. For example Peter says:

*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as*

*one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish**, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:8-9)*

Here the will of God is expressed very clearly. He is not willing that any should perish. Unless one has embraced the dark Universalist lie that all will be saved in the end, we know for a fact that many are indeed perishing against the will of God. But why are people perishing if this is not what God wants? Like the Pharisees and lawyers of Jesus' time, many people have "*rejected the counsel of God against themselves*" (Luke 7:30). They refuse God's offer of salvation.

God will not force salvation on anyone. He offers it freely and pleads with sinners to take it. But at the same time each person must choose which direction he or she will take (Matt. 7:13-14). Nevertheless, the refusal of God's salvation has nothing to do with a decree from God to withhold it from anyone. On the contrary, God not only wants all men to be saved but Jesus died for every last one of them. In 1 Tim. 2:4-6 we read:

*Who **will have all men to be saved**, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself **a ransom for all**, to be testified in due time.*

God wills the salvation of all men and Jesus paid the ransom for all men by His blood. What is a ransom? It comes from the Greek word "antilutron" and means, "what is given in exchange for another as the price of his redemption" (studylight.org). Whenever heinous men

kidnap someone we are told that they demand a “ransom.” This is a demand for a certain amount of money one needs to pay or some other demand in order to receive the kidnapped loved one back safely.

Man was under satanic bondage. God was not the one holding man in bondage. This was all Satan’s doing. Because we are part of God’s “loved ones” then God was willing to pay whatever ransom that was necessary to buy us back from the heinous kidnapper, Satan.

### **Satan Holds Men in Bondage**

But this begs the question as to why the majority of the world still rejects Jesus, who is the only means of salvation. The answer is that Satan continues to work diligently to keep men blinded to the truth:

*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (2 Cor. 4:3-4)*

Satan keeps people from seeing their need for Christ. He has multiple ways in which he blinds people. However, God has given His people a weapon that can thwart the enemy’s blinding power over the sinner which is God’s Word—His gospel. Paul says, “...**lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.**” The gospel is “good news”. It is God’s Word which in its very essence is the power of God unto salvation to *everyone who believes*.

God has a kingdom and Satan has also set up a kingdom. Satan is a king who oppresses his subjects and keeps them in bondage. The reason why God’s Kingdom,

when it is proclaimed, becomes good news is that, when one embraces it, they are released from the bondage inflicted upon them by Satan's kingdom (Matt. 12:22-29; Acts 26:16-19; Col. 1:12-14). No wonder Satan makes every attempt to blind men and keep them from receiving this good news. It is the good news that is the destruction of his evil works over our lives. Now that truly is "good news."

Satan, not God, is the one keeping unsaved man in darkness, thereby keeping them in unbelief. God is fully dependent upon His redeemed children to stand against the forces of darkness that are keeping sinners blinded to the truth and populating that horrible place called hell. For this, we need weaponry that is superior to Satan's. We need the gospel—the "good news!" God tells Paul in Acts 26:18:

*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:18)*

Paul was told by God that he was to open their eyes. Why? Because Satan has blinded sinners to the truth. Paul was also to turn them from the power of Satan unto God. That word power in this Scripture is speaking of Satan's authority over people. We are to release them from satanic authority and bring them into the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13-14). God gave Paul the responsibility of "turning them" and He has given us that responsibility.

### **Does God Blind and Harden?**

However, I can already hear the objection of the predestinarian who says, "Satan cannot do anything apart

from God's permission. God, in His sovereignty, works through Satan to keep men blinded." They even have Scripture for this:

*Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, **He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them** (John 12:39-40)*

The Apostle John is quoting from Isa. 6:9-10 and applying it to those who rejected our Lord's teachings. In this passage it is inferred that God is the one who has blinded their minds and hardened their hearts. Calvinists have taken this passage to teach their doctrine that God wills men to be spiritually blind and to disbelieve.

As we have stated in previous chapters, the permission idiom of the Hebrew language and culture is too often ignored in the false philosophical system of Calvinism. Richard Watson writes:

That it affirms not that their eyes should be blinded, or their ears closed by a Divine agency, as assumed by Mr. Scott and other Calvinists. This notion is not found in Isaiah vi. from which the quotation is made. There the agent is represented to be the prophet himself... Now as the prophet could exert no secret direct influence over the minds of the disobedient Jews, he must have fulfilled this commission, if it be taken literally, by preaching to them a fallacious and obdurate doctrine, like that of the false prophets; but if, as we know, he preached no such doctrine, then are the words to be understood according to the genius of the Hebrew language, which often represents him as an agent, who is the occasion, however innocent and undersigned, of any thing being done by another....

The true agents were, however, the Jews themselves; and by all who knew the genius of the Hebrew language, they would be understood as so charged by the prophet.<sup>3</sup>

F. F. Bruce also explains that the passage, "...is simply due to the Hebrew tendency to express a consequence as though it were a purpose."<sup>4</sup> Even the "father" of Calvinist philosophy, Saint Augustine, understood this truth better than his spiritual descendants when he wrote concerning John's passage, "For God thus blinds and hardens, simply by letting alone and withdrawing His aid."<sup>5</sup>

The early Jews understood how some might misunderstand God's role in this blinding and hardening process. When they translated their Hebrew Scriptures into Greek (known to us today as the "Septuagint"), in their translation of Isaiah 6:10 from which John is quoting, they placed the responsibility on the people who were blinded and hardened:

*For the heart of this people has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and **their eyes have they closed**; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*  
(Isa. 6:10; Brenton English Septuagint Translation)

Here we have much scholarly proof that weighs heavily against the Calvinist's misinterpretation of John words. However, there really is no excuse for the Calvinists misunderstanding John. It does not take a skilled theologian who is proficient in the original languages and background of Scripture to understand the Biblical truth that God is often said to do the thing which



He merely allows or permits. All one needs to do is “compare Scripture with Scripture” and one will arrive at this truth. Jesus explains the truth in Mark:

*And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? **have ye your heart yet hardened?** Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? (Mark 8:17-18)*

Notice that Jesus, using the exact same reference from Isaiah that John is using, places the blame for the hardening of the heart, not on God, but on those whose hearts are hardened. Of their own volition they have hardened their hearts. Luke, in explaining Paul’s failed attempt to share the gospel with the Jews, also cites Isaiah 6 and placed the responsibility for the blinding on the Jews themselves:

*Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, **and their eyes have they closed;** lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Acts 28:26-27)*

Paul says that these men have closed their own eyes. Jesus says that they have hardened their own hearts. The Scripture interprets itself. Souls are not lost due to any divine decree from God, but due to men’s willing

rejection of the gospel. As Paul said in Ephesians, men have chosen to walk, or follow, after the prince of the power of the air.

### **Satan Seeks to Damn Sinners**

Satan hates mankind and is committed to its destruction. Satan knows his own destiny and is determined to take as many people with him as possible (.Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:7-15). God, on the other hand, wants no one to follow Satan to their doom and is committed to rescuing them. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and Jesus died to secure salvation for all men (Eze. 18:32; John 3:16; Heb. 2:4). It is Satan, not God, who seeks to damn souls to hell. I like what one Baptist preacher wrote:

First of all, *who does the devil seek to damn?* Perhaps someone is saying, “Mr. Greene, the *devil* does not damn us—it is God who sends people to hell.” Careful study of the Scripture will reveal that *God has never sent anyone to hell.* It is not God’s will that any perish, but that all come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). Every soul that drops into hell goes there because of their own stubborn will, not because of God’s will ....The devil is the deceiver, the liar, the murderer and the damner of souls—but who does he damn? He certainly does not damn born again believers, for every person covered by the blood of Jesus will enter heaven. It is those who are not born again who will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, to be tormented forever and ever, day and night.<sup>5</sup>

Many centuries ago one of the church fathers wrote something similar: “Take heed, lest resting at our ease, as those who are the called [of God], we should fall asleep in our sins, and the wicked prince, acquiring power over us, should thrust us away from the kingdom of the Lord.”<sup>6</sup> For this very reason Satan keeps sinners in

darkness through his lies and deceptions. If they could truly see what's available to them by entering into God's kingdom, they would quickly change citizenship. Hence Satan works to steal God's Word from the heart of sinners before it is able to take root: "*...then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved*" (Luke 8:12b).

Here is the reason for so much difficulty in evangelism: Satan fights against its efforts by keeping the subjects of his kingdom "in the dark." Soul winning is not simply a matter of passing out tracts and pressuring someone into repeating a few words of prayer. This is part of it, but the most important part to remember is that soul winning is *spiritual warfare*. It is engaging the enemy with the attempt to rescue prisoners of war.

Here is also why it should never be said that God is the One who damns souls. God provides every resource that the sinner needs in order to be saved. The only thing God cannot do is force a person's will to believe. Satan works hard to keep sinners in unbelief (2 Cor. 4:4). Jesus' sacrifice and the gospel that proclaims it can only be made effective in the life of the sinner when they repent and believe (John 3:16; Rom. 1:16). God has given every man a free will. They must accept the freedom from Satan's authority that has been made available to them. He will not force anyone to do this.

Satan may attack our efforts to evangelize but we have the victory over him. If we desire to be effective witnesses, missionaries, and ministers of the gospel, we must first realize the forces that would oppose us and come against us are defeated. Indeed we have victory and authority over them in the Name of Jesus. We will find that when we have learned to deal with our enemy through interceding on the behalf of the lost and breaking Satan's power over them, we will begin to see more of the lost come to Christ.

## Chapter Fourteen

### Satan: a Defeated Enemy

“There can be no permanent victory in the lives of God’s children until they see and appropriate the fact that Satan was defeated at Calvary. The church of God, as a whole, will not be able to face the satanic floodtide by which it is confronted unless it learns to wield the power and victory that Calvary gives in a clear and ringing testimony to the defeat of the devil.”<sup>1</sup>  
(Charles Usher)

God is often blamed for all the things in this world that are designed to hurt and destroy men. It is sad that God is blamed for things that He not only has nothing to do with, but has made a tremendous sacrifice in order to rescue men from them.

Sin and death have power in this world to hurt because man, not God, gave it legal entry. Though man gave Satan legal entry, Jesus, through His redemptive work, legally casted him out: “*Now is the judgment of this world: now shall **the prince of this world be cast out***” (John 12:31). Satan’s kingdom of sin entered into this world but Jesus casted him and his reign out of it.

Rescuing mankind from satanic tyranny required the ultimate sacrifice and demonstration of love. This meant that God Himself had to become one of us and then die for us. This is exactly what Jesus did and by this act He was able to overcome the world on our behalf:

*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good*

*cheer; I have overcome the world* (John 16:33).

The misery in this world is not the result of God controlling things. The Bible credits Satan with having all control in this world (1 John 5:18-19). Jesus makes it clear that the world is the source of our miseries. Yet, through His death, burial and resurrection, the world has been defeated by Jesus and legally deprived of its power to hurt us: “*For I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you.]*” (The Amplified Bible)

### **Freedom from the Authority and Works of Death**

Satan was able to wield the *power of death* to keep the world under its tyranny. Jesus deprived the world of its power to hurt by destroying the very one that wielded its power. In Hebrews we read:

*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might **destroy him that had the power of death**, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb. 2:14-15)*

All that is wrong, hurtful and perverse in this world is due to the fact that it is a world that is ruled by Satan under a government of death and darkness. Jesus came to take away the authority that Satan once held. It was this authority that enabled Satan to bring about all of this misery.

Satan’s “destruction” does not mean we no longer encounter problems from him. The word “destroy” is

from the Greek word *katargeo* which means “‘to nullify,’ and so to render something inoperative or ineffectual.”<sup>2</sup> “Destroy” as used in Heb. 2:14-15 does not mean to blow something out of existence. It means that Satan has been rendered *ineffective*.

Though Satan has not been put out of action we can rejoice in the fact that his works against us have been rendered inoperative and ineffective. In 1 John we are told specifically that the *works* of Satan have been destroyed:

*He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy **the works of the devil.*** (1 John 3:8)

The Greek word for “*destroy*” in this passage means “*to loose, dissolve, sever, break, demolish.*” (Vines).<sup>3</sup> Basically the word “*destroy*” can be understood to mean “*render powerless.*”<sup>4</sup> Sin has placed men and women under Satan’s dominion. Sin gave him the legal right to attack and hurt us (Acts 26:18; Eph. 2:1-6; 1 John 5:17-20). Jesus came to redeem us from the *works* that the devil legally used to destroy mankind. Our Lord came for the express purpose of destroying Satan’s works against us. Jesus now possesses all authority over death (Rev. 1:18) and He is the Word of Life (1 John 1:1).

Connecting Heb. 2:14 with 1 John 3:8 we see that the works of Satan are all culminated in his work of death. Dr. Beth Snodderly, president of the William Carey institute, has written a 271 page scholarly dissertation on 1 John 3:8. Dr. Snodderly says that the main focus of her dissertation is, “...understanding the meaning of the phrase, ‘the works of the devil.’”<sup>5</sup> She comes to the following conclusion in her research:

The summary of the inter-texture studies concluded that the devil is an evil being who has been sinning since the beginning of his rulership over the earth. His inherently sinful nature demonstrates opposition to God's will. While the devil's works can be summarized as bringing death—both physical (disease and deformity, social chaos, mental chaos) and spiritual (unbelief, hatred), the Son of God appeared to give life (1 John 4:9). The appearing of the Son of God was seen to result in works and characteristics that are the opposite of those associated with the sin of the devil, thus nullifying or destroying them.<sup>6</sup>

More than a century before Dr. Snodderly, William Matson wrote, "...by death I here mean what Scripture often means by the same word,—all the ills that come upon man in this life and in the life to come. Satan, the enemy, brought sin into the world and all its sad consequences."<sup>7</sup>

In Deuteronomy 28:1-13 Moses lists the blessings that come as a result of obedience to God's Word such as *fruitfulness, abundance, protection, direction, victory, success, holiness, honor, riches, and dominion*. These were the blessings God meant for Adam and Eve to walk in from the very beginning. Sadly, the rest of Deuteronomy 28 gives an even longer list of consequences for rejecting God's Word such as *unfruitfulness, insufficiency, frustration, failure, defeat, bondage, poverty, fear, and all kinds of sickness and disease*. These things came into the world as a result of Adam's disobedience and the devil's dominion. These are the *works* of Satan (Job 2:7; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38)

It is difficult to understand why so many believe that God receives some perverted pleasure from watching His children suffer poverty, sickness, failure, and defeat. These are not the works of God but of Satan. These are the works of death that Jesus defeated on our behalf.

## **Satan Has Been Disarmed**

Satan was able to rule and control men because he operated a kingdom (government) of death and destruction in this world. His kingdom is directly opposed to God's kingdom of love, light, and life. Satan legally held a certain amount of authority over the subjects of his kingdom. Jesus came for the express purpose of delivering these captives from Satan's governmental authority of darkness, death, and destruction:

***If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. (Luke 11:18-22)***

Satan trusted in his armor (the power of death) to hold Jesus and to keep Him as his captive, thereby, keeping his hold on his kingdom. Jesus took away Satan's trusted armor, plundered his domain and took all that he had. Everything that Jesus did was done righteously and legally with no trickery or deception. Satan killed the Son of God with full knowledge of what could happen. His rage and hatred of God blinded him to the reality that doing such would destroy him.



But what does it mean for Christ to take away Satan's armor and divide his spoils? In Ephesians 4:8 Paul writes, "*Therefore it is said, When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive [He led a train of vanquished foes] and He bestowed gifts on men*" (The Amplified Bible). Paul tells us that Jesus actually disarmed and stripped Satan of all power, authority, and the hold that he had on mankind.

Paul illustrated what Christ had done by providing a picture that his readers were familiar with during this period of Roman imperialism in which he lived. The picture is that of an emperor who has defeated an enemy and stripped them of their armor. He then paraded them naked through the city amidst a cheering crowd. Paul gives another allusion to this in the book of Colossians:

*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; **And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*** (Col. 2:14-15)

In Colossians we learn that Jesus *spoiled* principalities and powers. The word "spoiled" means "disarmed". The Goodspeed translation says, "**He disarmed the principalities and dominions and displayed them openly, triumphing over them through him.**"

Jesus *disarmed* Satan and the other authorities that ruled with him, making them ineffective in their warfare against us. He took all of their weapons. By disarming Satan, he took away all of his authority over us.

Satan and his evil demonic forces have been stripped of all authority over us. Jesus disarmed our enemies, took away their authority, vanquished them and

divided the spoils of war with us. Our redemption from satanic bondage was accomplished through the shed blood of Jesus. Jesus has completely defeated Satan.

### **Satan and Evil Forces Dethroned by Christ**

Jesus conquered Satan and his evil forces, dethroned them and stripped them of all their authority:

*We do discuss 'wisdom' with those who are mature; only it is not the wisdom of this world or of the **dethroned Powers who rule this world**, it is the mysterious Wisdom of God that we discuss, that hidden wisdom which God decreed from all eternity for our glory. (2 Cor. 2:6-7; The James Moffatt Bible)*

To dethrone someone means to remove them from any position of power and authority that they once had. By dethroning Satan Jesus restored God's original intent for man. God's Word says, "*Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; **thou hast put all things under his feet***" (Psalm 8:6).

This is the way it was always meant to be. Man was supposed to always be master of his domain under God's loving authority. It was never God's intention for him to be in subjection to Satan. The overwhelming love of God, through His finished work, turned the tables on Satan and restored the Father's original intent for His beloved children:

*Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that*

*is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: **And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*** (Eph. 1:20-23)

All things being under the feet of Christ simply means that He has thoroughly defeated His enemies (Josh. 10:24-26; Psalm 110:1). Those of us who have made Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior are a part of His church—His body. Therefore we are connected to Him and share in His victory. If we are Christ’s body, and all things are under His feet, then naturally all things are under our feet as well.

### **Born-Again Believers Enthroned by Christ**

In conquering and dethroning Satan through His death, burial, resurrection and ascension, Christ identified all who would enter into covenant connection with Him as sharers of this authority:

*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, **according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.... Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*** (Eph. 2:2, 5, 6)

Another translation says, “....*raised us with Him from the dead, and enthroned us with Him in the heavenly realms as being in Christ Jesus*” (Weymouth). We are

enthroned with Christ and share His authority. When Christ *dethroned* Satan He in turn *enthroned* us. We are already *enthroned* with Christ. We already rule with Him. This is *past tense* and not *future tense*. This is something that belongs to every believer that is in union with Christ. Paul wrote again, “*For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; **much more** they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness **shall reign in life** by one, Jesus Christ*” (Rom. 5:17).

Paul uses the phrase “much more”. What Adam did brought us in bondage to Satan but what Jesus did is one hundred thousand times more able to deliver us and enable us to reign over our former captors. Furthermore Paul said that we are to “*reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*” We are in union with Christ *now*. He reigns *now* (1 Cor. 15:25). Therefore it is in *this life* that we reign over the forces of evil.

We need to start acting as if it is true in all of our circumstances. We must learn to accept what God says over and above what our circumstances are saying. We may not *feel* like we are enthroned and able to reign over sickness, disease, poverty, lack, trials, and the many other problems that confront us in this life. We may *feel* like Satan is still ruling over us as we look at all of the hardships in our lives. However, the truth of Satan’s defeat and our position in Christ is not founded upon *feelings* (2 Cor. 5:7). God’s Word has the authority to change our situation if we will stand on our throne rights. Reverend George B. Peck in his classic book titled, *Throne-Life or the Highest Christian Life* offers this Biblical advice:

...the believer determines henceforth to accredit God’s Word as veritably and unalterably true, as it has been shown him, concerning his present position and privileges in enthronement with Christ, far above all his enemies. He decides to take God’s

view as his own view, unquestionably, from this moment, and continually, irrespective of circumstances or appearances. He means to consider himself as in Christ, wholly beyond the power of Satan to make him miserable.<sup>8</sup>

We do not have to be defeated by the problems that the prince of this world brings our way. We can rule in every circumstance and every situation that confronts us. We can exercise our throne rights. Many of God's children are potential victors over the devil and do not know it because they have not taken the time to study God's Word. Even though Satan has been defeated, so many of God's children remain in bondage and are living beneath the privileges that Christ wrought for them.

S. D. Gordon wrote, "What our Lord has done for us, we must each accept and claim for ourselves. Our Lord defeated Satan on our behalf. We must each of us claim all the power of that defeat on the battlefield of our own lives."<sup>9</sup> We must know the truth about what Jesus did in His death burial and resurrection and accept it over what circumstances say, what others say, or how we feel.

### **The Unselfish Love of Christ**

God loved us so much that He came as a man and endured all that was necessary to rescue us. In His supreme act of love Jesus conquered the devil and his reign of hatred. Because Jesus conquered Satan on our behalf, we enjoy the privileges of that victory:

*Nay, in all these things **we are more than conquerors** through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, **nor principalities, nor powers**, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from*

*the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus  
our Lord. (Rom. 8:37-39)*

The basic dictionary definition of the word “conquer” is to “*defeat, vanquish, overcome, subdue, gain the mastery over.*” This is what Christ has done to the devil. You and I are *in Christ* and through Him we have the victory (1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Cor. 2:14). The Greek word translated “more than conquerors” according to one scholar, “It may be translated ‘superconquerors.’ Christians win a surpassing victory through the one who loved us.”<sup>10</sup>

*Through Him* we are already victorious over satanic forces. We don’t need to *fight* in order to gain victory. Our fight is one of faith by which we claim the victory that is already ours (1 Tim. 6:12). Our fight of faith is to enforce the truth of God’s Word over Satan’s deceptions—deceptions that claim that he still has power and authority to inflict and hurt us. Jesus has already “...*overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils*”. (Luke 11:22). Jesus disarmed Satan. Satan is ineffective against a child of God who knows the truth concerning his or her victory and is willing to stand on what God’s Word says concerning it.

### **Why is Satan still Active if He is Defeated?**

An important question remains: “If Satan is already a defeated foe, why must we still contend with him? Why is he still able to cause so many problems in the world and even in the Lord’s church?” S. D. Gordon offers some insight:

If our Lord had been acting on His own account simply, and only, the conflict would have been closed up at once, and the defeated never able to do more. But our Lord was not acting for Himself. He

was acting for us. And there is something for us to do in settling the conflict. We must accept as our own what was done for us. We must step in and take possession of what had been our own originally, and what is now won back for us.<sup>11</sup>

God was determined to defeat Satan legally and take back what was originally His. But why was it necessary for God to have to deal with Satan this way? Why not just place him and his forces in the lake of fire where they could do no more harm? That day is coming (Matt. 8:28-29; Rev. 12:12; 20:10) but why is that time not yet? If God were to put Satan away forever right now then so many others would share his fate because they still remain in bondage to his kingdom of darkness:

***Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13-14).***

The Father “hath” delivered us from the power of darkness. This is a done deal. However we had to accept it in order for it to be personally effective. Many sinners have not yet accepted Christ’s victory over the dark kingdom of Satan. We must declare this truth to them.

In Revelation we read, “***Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down***” (Rev. 12:10b). God’s kingdom has come because Satan has been defeated. It’s by the blood that we overcome (Rev. 12:11). But until others have become aware of this truth, in order for them to have a chance, God allows Satan to be active. Nonetheless, we who know this truth can declare that Satan no longer has the right to harm us.

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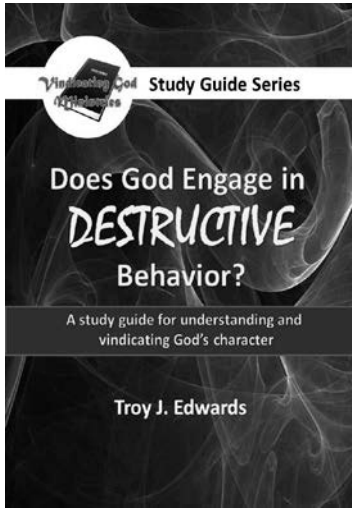
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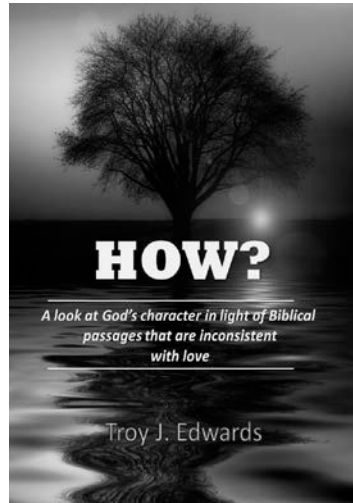
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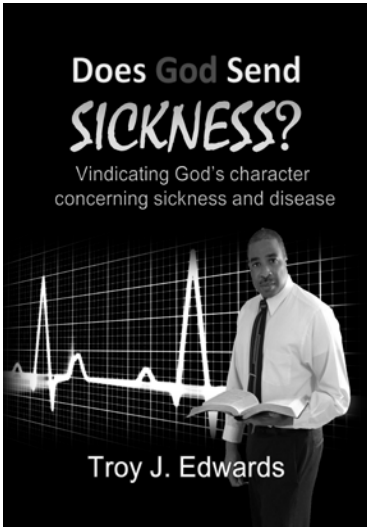
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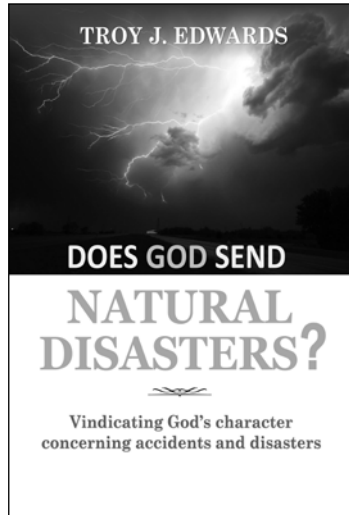
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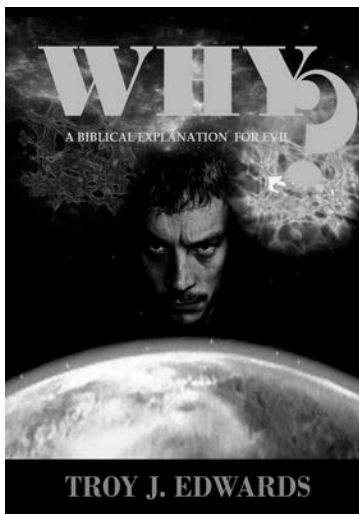
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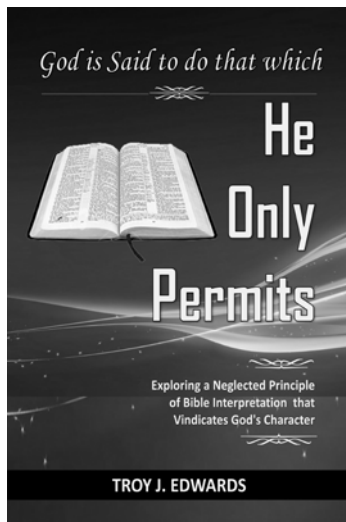


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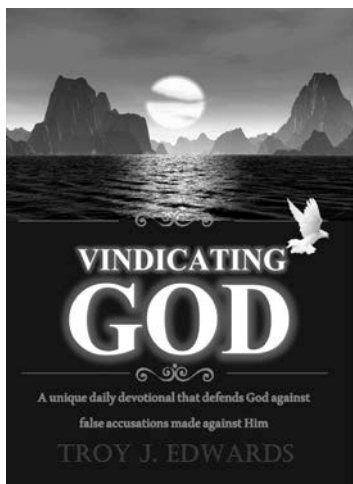
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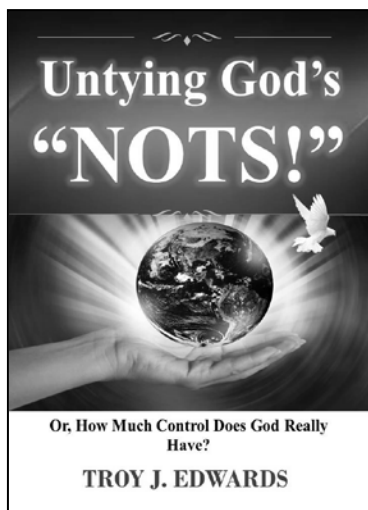
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