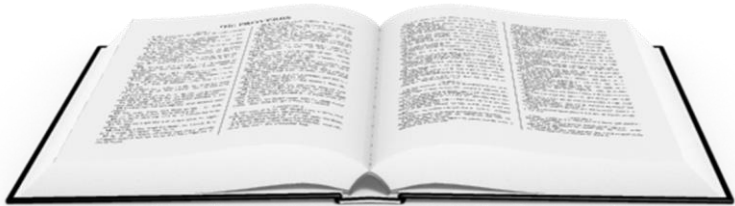


GOD
DIDN'T
DO
IT

TROY EDWARDS

God
DIDN'T
Do IT

By Troy J. Edwards



Vindicating God Ministries

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

God Didn't Do IT

Troy J. Edwards

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To those who know that God is much
better than you were told:

This book is for you!

Chapter One

Angry at God

I was so stupid. I thought about such people and became upset. God, I was upset and angry with you! I acted like a senseless animal. (Psalm 73:21-22; Easy to Read Version)

Many people are angry at God and blame Him for their misfortunes. The father of a well-known television mogul lost a daughter due to lupus. He reacted by saying, “If that’s the type of God he is, I want nothing to do with him.” Sometime later he committed suicide.

Recently while doing street evangelism, our team shared the gospel of Christ with a couple of ladies. One of them told us that she was angry with God. She claimed that God took her mother through cancer and that she felt empty inside due to this. We made every attempt to convince her otherwise.

Over the years I have heard a number of people express hurt or anger towards God for a perceived wrong that He supposedly did to them. *Are you one of those?*

What Happened to You?

Do you feel let down by God? Disappointed with Him? Are you outright angry and disgusted with Him? Do you feel that He is somehow responsible for the negative circumstances in your life?

Did something happen in your life to make you mad at God? Perhaps you did not get the job or promotion you wanted? Maybe you lost someone you truly loved to a sickness, an accident or an act of violence. Is it possible that you are going through a divorce or some other type of

heartbreak? Did you suffer a fire or some other disaster that caused you to lose your home and property? Have you been scammed in some way and are now suffering a detrimental financial loss? Are you the victim of an unfair and/or false accusation? Were you recently fired or laid off from your job? No doubt we can mention a number of other painful things here. Regardless, we've all felt that *someone* should be blamed for our pain.

Often there is someone directly responsible for our pain, but many of us have been taught that God is either the *ultimate* cause of our life's trials or He approved of them. Here is what most of us have been taught:

- God directly manipulated circumstances to ensure that we would encounter the problems in our lives.
- God *allowed* (or put His stamp of approval) on our trials when He could have prevented them.
- God failed to answer our prayers or intervene in the situation.
- God is punishing us for our sins.

If one believes that God is, at some level, the reason behind our suffering, he or she will react to this idea in several ways. One of the common ways, especially for those who have embraced some form of fatalism - a "que sera, sera, whatever will be, will be" attitude - will more than likely be to just "grin and bear it". People who do that feel that, perhaps, somehow, some way, things will work out in the end. They dare not allow themselves a moment of self-pity. We usually perceive such people as strong.

Then there are people who believe that God *allowed* or *directly caused* their difficulty. Their reaction is to become angry with Him. They lack any desire to serve someone who would unfairly treat them so

monstrously. This type often becomes an atheist, denying His existence.

Reject Atheism and Stoicism

I can assure you that atheism will not do anything to relieve you of the emotional damage caused by placing God at fault. It only leads to becoming angry at someone you know in your deepest heart of hearts is real but you will deny Him out of spite. Therefore, please reject this useless option.

I must also recommend that you do not attempt to become one of those “strong” Christians who become stoic in the face of painful circumstances. Many of these types can put on a good front but inside they are very angry with God. The reason they don’t confess to this truth is due to false religious convictions. They must “keep it inside” in order to be “strong”. If we are angry with God then it is healthier to acknowledge it.

Once we acknowledge our anger with God then, if we desire healing or resolution, we need to learn the truth about God’s part in our situation. Is He really the One behind it? Is He the cause of it? Did He *allow* (approve of) it for His own higher reasons?

We believe that this book can answer these questions and we believe that the Bible, which we have no doubt is God’s divinely inspired message to mankind, provides us with the answers. Through its accurate and no holds barred historical accounts as well as its practical principles, we can learn how to understand God’s *true* role in our difficulties and, as a result, receive healing.

Bible Accounts of Expressing Anger

If you are angry at God, you are not the first. Throughout Bible history men and women have expressed anger towards God (or even God’s minister) when they have been hurt and treated unfairly in life.

During the time of Moses, some of the people were getting “fed up” with the manna from heaven and wanted some meat. They began to complain to Moses and put a heavy burden on him. Moses, like most of us usually do, saw this as God’s fault and prayed:

11 And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? 12 Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? 13 Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. 14 I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. 15 And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness. (Numbers 11:11-15)

Moses, one of the greatest servants of God to walk on the face of the earth, asked God to kill him as he felt that God was making him so miserable. However, did God influence these people to act towards Moses in the manner that they did?

Verse 10 says, “*Moses heard all the people crying in every family, each man at the door of his tent. **The Lord became very angry with them** and Moses was not pleased*” (New Life Version). Since God Himself was

upset with the behavior of the people then it seems unjustifiable for Moses to accuse God of afflicting him.

This is not the only time Moses blamed God for his being wronged. The Bible records an earlier circumstance of this:

*And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast **thou so evil entreated this people?** why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all (Exodus 5:22-23)*

Moses accused God of treating His people in an *evil* way because *Pharaoh* continued to persecute Israel after Moses and Aaron gave him God's message. But is it fair for Moses to blame God for Pharaoh's actions?

The answer is "no". God had warned Moses that this was exactly how Pharaoh would react: "*And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand*" (Exodus 3:19). Moses, like most of us, became upset with God for something that God had already told him would happen. We too often forget God's actual words (or we have never bothered to seek God) when it comes to a circumstance that does not turn out in our favor, and then we blame Him for it.

Accusing God of Lying and Deceiving

Perhaps, like Moses, you have felt let down by God. You may have even gone as far as to call God a few nasty names and accuse Him of some unholy acts. Again, you are far from being alone. One of God's greatest prophets did just that. In his anger and frustration, Jeremiah accused God of being a liar and a deceiver:

Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail? (Jer. 15:18)

O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. (Jer. 20:7)

Jeremiah suffered heavy persecution for preaching the truth. He was beaten, imprisoned, sentenced to death, had his writings burned, discredited, and his ministry was a seeming failure since no one listened to his preaching.

Jeremiah truly suffered due to his faithful service to the Lord. However, was it fair to angrily blame God for this? God never promised Jeremiah that his ministry would be an easy one. On the contrary, He forewarned Jeremiah that the people that Jeremiah would minister to were going to fight against him:

And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee. (Jeremiah 1:19)

Thankfully, Moses and Jeremiah continued to serve God despite the erroneous ideas that they held about Him. The wonderful thing about the inspired Word of God is that it reveals everything about God's great servants to include their wrong ideas about Him.

Tragic Loss of Loved Ones

Perhaps your situation is more tragic. You have lost a loved one. You either believe or were told by some sincere person that God "took" that loved one. This is a

religious way of claiming that God killed the person. The Bible is not shy about addressing this issue either.

In one example we find a mother who fed and housed one of God's servants during a time of severe depression. What did she get for her troubles? The sickness and death of her son. Note that she blamed the man of God, who in turn, blamed God Himself:

*17 And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. 18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? **art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?** 19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. 20 And he cried unto the Lord, and said, **O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?** (1 Kings 17:17-20)*

Not only did this poor woman accuse the man of God for the death of her son, the man of God himself blamed God for what was done. Thankfully this story has a happy ending as the son was raised back to life.

A similar example is found in the story of Job. In one day, Job's servants were killed by a hostile army and they robbed him of his oxen and donkeys. His sheep were all burned by lightning. Another hostile army came and killed more of his servants and stole his camels. To add insult to injury, he lost all of his children when a tornado

destroyed the house where they were eating (see Job 1:14-19).

Job handled these tragic events well based on the understanding of God that He possessed at the time. His wife, on the other hand, is a different story: “*Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die*” (Job 2:9).

Sounds like someone who is both angry with God and upset with her husband for *not* being angry with God. However, unlike us, neither Job nor his wife were able to see that Satan, and not God, was the actual culprit behind Job’s troubles:

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
(Job 1:12)

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)

We will look further at Satan’s role in our life’s difficulties in later chapters.

The Bible shows that there is precedence for expressing anger and accusation to God for life’s difficulties. The Bible also supplies us with enough information that lets its faithful readers know that to do such to God is unfair to Him. After all, God didn’t do it.

Chapter Two

Is God Caring or Cold?

*He that loveth not knoweth not God; for
God is love (1 John 4:8)*

When I was about 12 years old there was a woman in our neighborhood that was loved by many. Sadly she passed away at a young age. Expressing their grief concerning her death I heard one man say in anger, “I *do* believe that there is a God up there, but I *don't* believe that He gives a damn about anybody.

I have since met many who are like this man. They describe Him as a harsh, cruel deity who is mean, vindictive, cold and uncaring. But is this an accurate description of God?

Describing Love

In our opening passage we are told that *God is love*. The world has many definitions and ideas about love. False ideas about God along with distorted ideas about love have led many to believe that, if God does exist, He does not love them.

We encounter many unfavorable circumstances in life and are told from church pulpits that these have come from God's hand. This has led us to believe the false idea that He is cold and unkind.

If we are to change this perspective about God in our hearts then we must first get an accurate description of love and then see that it applies directly to God. One of the best descriptions of love is found in 1 Corinthians 13:

*4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does
not envy; love does not parade itself, is not*

puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Cor. 13:4-7; New King James Version)

Scripture affirms that 1 Cor. 13 accurately describes God's love. He is very patient, difficult to make angry, kind, gracious, compassionate, loving, merciful and forgiving (Ex. 34:6-7; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Psalm 78:38; 86:15; 103:3, 8; 11:4; 112:4; 145:8; Jer. 31:34; 36:3; Dan. 9:9; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2; Lam. 3:22; 2 Pet. 3:9).

God is Harmless

Scripture also explains love as follows: *“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore **love is the fulfilling of the law.**”* (Rom. 13:9b-10). The International Standard Version renders verse 10, *“Love never does anything that is harmful to its neighbor”* and the Easy to Read Version simply puts it as, *“Love doesn't hurt others.”*

Sadly, people have been taught a different idea about God's love. They have been told that God loves certain children so much that He “takes” them through accidents, murder, long painful death through diseases, etc. simply because He wanted another flower in Heaven.

Such a selfish idea about God brings little to no comfort to most parents. To believe that God would harm a child in such a way does not place God in a positive light. On the contrary it makes Him to appear to be cold, uncaring, selfish, and hurtful. Scripture refutes this idea:

Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or

if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?
(Matt. 7:9-10)

God does not do or give things to harm people, even when they do things to hurt Him. Jesus goes further in this teaching to show us that God expects us to emulate His harmless behavior towards others:

*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: **for this is the law and the prophets***
(Matt. 7:11-12)

Matt. 7:12 and Rom. 13:10 both state that refraining from harming others is fulfilling God's law. God, who we are to emulate, does nothing to hurt others.

Jesus' Non-Vindictive Attitude

An incident in the life of Christ shows us His non-vindictive behavior towards those who hurt Him:

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, 52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. 53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. 54 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? 55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. (Luke 9:51-56)

When Christ was unfairly and harshly rejected, He refused the advice of His disciples to retaliate. Instead, He rebuked them for their vindictive attitude.

God does not hurt people even when they do things to hurt Him. Jesus is the perfect example of how God treats His enemies. After being beaten, tortured, humiliated, betrayed and hung on the cross by His enemies, we read, *“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”* (Luke 23:34a).

Jesus refused to curse or call down wrath upon His enemies. On the contrary, He was so concerned about them that in the midst of His own physical, mental, and emotional pain, He pleaded on their behalf to be forgiven. What is true about Jesus is true about God overall since the Father and Jesus are exactly alike in every way (John 14:8-11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Hebrews 1:1-3).

When I was a kid, I saw an old silent movie where, after Jesus died, the “wrath of God” came upon His murderers. Lightning struck some while earthquakes killed others. Granted, an earthquake did take place after Jesus’ death but this was only to open the graves of the dead believers (Matthew 27:51-54). Not one of the murderers of Jesus was killed (See Acts 2:22-23, 3:13-16 and 4:10-12). This is the God who is exactly like Jesus.

The Unconditional Love of God

God’s love is not a selfish human love that only loves people for what they can do for Him or what He can

get from them. In another passage asking us to emulate God, Jesus says:

*But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: **for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.** Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. (Luke 6:35-36; see also Matt. 5:44-45)*

Jesus says that when we treat our enemies (those who mistreat us and hurt us) with kindness and love, then we are acting just like our Father in Heaven.

In His teachings, Jesus reveals a God who, far from being mean, vindictive, or uncaring, is actually kind and caring towards those who treat Him with coldness, vindictiveness, and carelessness. God loves so unconditionally that He is willing to die for them:

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and

sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:9-10)

If God loves us *so* much, even while we did nothing but hate Him, that Jesus would take our place and die on our behalf, why would He want to do anything to harm us? John tells us the true heart of Father and Son when he writes, *“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved”* (John 3:17).

God did not send Jesus to browbeat and condemn the world for its sins. He came to help us get out of them because they are destroying us. Hence, God is not looking to punish or destroy people (Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9). God has no desire for anyone to be destroyed. This is why He sent Jesus in the first place. This is the heart of God.

Mercy Extended to a Really Bad King

Perhaps a Biblical example will help to drive this point home. Israel and Judah had some very evil and rebellious kings during the early histories of these two nations. Manasseh was one of them. Manasseh offered his own children as sacrifices in torturous barbaric ceremonies to pagan deities (2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chron. 33:6), put an idol in God’s temple (2 Kings 21:7; 2 Chron. 33:7) and he shed innocent blood (2 Kings 21:16).

God pleaded with Manasseh and the people to turn from these things but they refused. God had no other choice but to allow their enemies to conquer them: *“So he let Assyrian army commanders invade Judah and capture Manasseh”* (2 Chron. 33:11; Contemporary English Version). However, note the mercy God demonstrated to someone as terrible as Manasseh was:

12 And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled

himself greatly before the God of his fathers, 13 And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.
(2 Chron. 33:12-13)

After the horrible things Manasseh did God still rescued him from his enemies when he repented. If God were as cold, mean, vindictive and uncaring as some believe, He would have left Manasseh in that Assyrian prison to rot. However, God shows kindness even to the evil and unthankful.

Does God Care?

While teaching His disciples, Jesus explained the meticulous concern that God has over each one of His creatures:

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. (Matt. 10:29-31)

God is so concerned and caring about us that He has counted the numbers of hairs on our heads. If you have children that you love may I ask when was the last time you counted each strand of hair on their head? Yeah, I haven't done that with my kids either. Too time consuming to even try.

Yet, God loves you and I so much that He takes the time to perform this minute detail. Never should we accuse Him of being cold, uncaring and unconcerned

about us. The Psalmist asked God, “*what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them?*” (Psalm 8:4; New Living Translation). The Psalmist also wrote:

O Lord, what are humans that you should care about them? What are mere mortals that you should think about them? (Psalm 144:3; God’s Word Translation)

Peter says, “*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*” (1 Pet. 5:7). Even when Israel betrayed and forsook God, we read:

In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old (Isa. 63:9)

Even in our affliction He Himself is afflicted. When we are going through and hurting, He is hurting right along with us. Therefore, He should never be accused of hurting us. He is not the cold-hearted and vindictive deity that some have falsely painted Him as. He actually cares because He is loving and kind.

Chapter Three

God Didn't Do It

Many people are angry with God for things He did not do. Part of the problem is the false ideas taught in the church concerning God's providence. In the false understanding of this doctrine, we are taught that God micro-controls every single event in the world down to the most minute detail.

Hence, all that happens to you is the result of God's sovereign predestination over the events of your life. This includes every happy moment as well as every tragic one and those in between.

Temptation and Sin is Not from God

Many who claim to believe that God is holy, sinless, and perfect also attribute acts to Him that are anything other than holy, sinless and perfect.

There have been theologians who have outright accused God of orchestrating the fall of mankind and sin for "mysterious but holy purposes". This not only defies all logic and common sense, but is contrary to Scripture:

*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 1:13)

God is light and can only do and produce that which is good (1 John 1:5). God cannot sin, He cannot be tempted to sin and therefore He cannot tempt others to sin. On the other hand, the Bible tells us that Satan is a tempter (Matt. 4:3; 6:13; 1 Cor. 7:5; 1 Thess. 3:5). The Scripture says, "*He that committeth sin is of the devil*" (1

John 3:8). Sin does not originate with God but is from another source entirely. In verse 10 we are given a distinction between the children's actions and those of Satan:

*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.** (1 John 3:10)*

God can only produce righteousness and righteous children. God has not predestined anyone to sin and has nothing to do with any acts of unrighteousness.

God does not “Ordain” Sin

When men accept and promote distorted ideas about God and His sovereignty, then the doctrines of men, doctrines that can potentially cause men to be angry and even hate God, are promoted above the Scriptures.

One of the reasons why some get away with doing this is that they portray their teaching as being Biblical. For example, one theologian claims, “To emphasize the sovereignty of God even more, it is necessary to point out that everything is foreordained by God... **It is even biblical to say that God has foreordained sin.**”¹

However, is this teaching *really* Biblical? The following passages of Scripture refute this false idea:

*And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which **I commanded them not**, neither came it into my heart (Jeremiah 7:31)*

*They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which **I commanded not**, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind (Jeremiah 19:5)*

*Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which **I have not commanded them**; even I know, and am a witness, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 29:23)*

*And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which **I commanded them not**, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin (Jeremiah 32:35)*

Among their numerous sins Israel had committed adultery and painful child sacrifice. For anyone to claim that God foreordained such acts is to accuse Him of the worst kind of monstrosity. However, God clearly says that He did *not* command any of this. The word “commanded” comes from the Hebrew word “*tsavah*” which, among several things, means “to command, appoint, ordain (of divine act)”² The belief that God foreordains sin is refuted by the Scriptures.

The only thing God “ordains” are good things: “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good works**, which God hath before **ordained** that we should walk in them*” (Eph. 2:10).

Sin and Misery in the World is Not of God

The Bible further provides vindication to God in relation to sin in 1 John 2:16:

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**, but is of the world (1 John 2:16)

I have never understood how anyone could read 1 John 2:16 and continue to hold to the idea that God is responsible for the way things are in this world. It is also important to understand that God is not the author of the death and destruction that sin has brought into the world. Mankind bears the sole responsibility for this:

*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* (Romans 5:12)

It is sin that produces death (Rom. 6:23; James 1:15). None of the vice and evil that we experience in this world and its resulting consequences of death come from God's hand. God considers death an enemy that He intends to destroy one day (1 Cor. 15:26; Rev. 20:14).

As a matter of fact, only that which can be traced to goodness is said to originate with God. In the first chapter of his epistle, James tells us that only *good* gifts descend from God:

*“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)

Good gifts come down “*from the Father of lights*”. John tells us that “*God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*” (1 John 1:5). God is “light” and is “the father of lights”. He can only produce that which is good. Dr. Timothy Jennings has written a wonderful paraphrase of this passage in his book, *The Remedy New Testament*:

Everything good, healthy and beneficial originates in heaven and comes down from the Father who created the universe. He is always good and will never alter his methods of love. He does not waver, and he is certainly not the source of darkness and death!

Satan is also a “father” but can only produce evil things that hurt and destroy (John 8:44; 10:10). When Adam chose to side with Satan against God, he basically placed this world into Satan’s hands (Luke 4:5-6). Satan’s kingdom of death and destruction was the result (Rom. 5:14; Heb. 2:14-15).

The world and its inhabitants are currently under satanic control (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; Col. 1:12-14; 1 John 5:18-19; Rev. 12:9). Satanic control over the world is the reason why there is so much hostility in it towards the followers of Christ (John 1:10; 15:18-19; 16:33).

Worldly Wisdom Not from God

James dedicated a decent amount of his epistle to attacking the system of the world. While God loves the inhabitants of the world enough to sacrifice His Son to save us (John 3:16-17), the world’s satanic system is viewed by Him as an enemy (James 4:4; Rom. 5:10).

It is this system that does not recognize the principles of love and harmony. Instead, its “wisdom” is

built upon the satanic ideas of strife, division, death and destruction. The Bible is clear that this is not from God:

*14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15 This wisdom descendeth **not from above**, but is **earthly, sensual, devilish**. (James 3:14-15)*

Scripture makes it plain that the bitter strife and envying, the attempts of people to act in selfish ways despite the pain that it may cause others around them, does not originate with God but with Satan and his minions who control this world. But if this is not clear enough, some modern translations provide more clarity:

*That kind of “wisdom” **does not come from God**. That “wisdom” comes from the world. It is not spiritual. It is from the devil. (Easy to Read Version)*

*That kind of “wisdom” **does not come from God** but from the world. It is not spiritual; it is from the devil. (New Century Version)*

*This is **not the kind of wisdom that comes from God**. But this wisdom comes from the world and from that which is not Christian and from the devil. (New Life Version)*

People have divorced, lost jobs, churches have split and families have been destroyed due to bitter envying and strife. None of this originates with God and He should not be blamed for it. Verses 16 to 18

distinguish God's wisdom from that which the world offers:

*16 For where envying and strife is, **there is confusion** and every evil work. 17 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. 18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. (James 3:16-18)*

Envying and strife, which brings confusion and evil is distinguished from God's wisdom, which brings peace. Paul writes, "*For God is **not the author of confusion, but of peace**, as in all churches of the saints*" (1 Cor. 14:33). Again, the Bible, contrary to some of the twisted teachings of some "Christian" theologians, tells us that God simply does not have a hand in, nor does He exercise a stringent sovereign control over everything happening in the world.

God Does Not Want Sinners to Perish

We can find many more things in the Bible that inform us that God is not behind many of the things that He is blamed for. But for the sake of brevity, we will conclude our study with the fact that God has no wish for those who have sinned in any way to be destroyed.

Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish (Matt. 18:14)

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 Peter 3:9)

Twice in Ezekiel God tells the prophet that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:32; 33:11). Therefore, those who reject Christ and the salvation He offers are not doing so because God desires this (John 3:16-18; 2 Tim. 2:1-6).

God is not uncaring, cold and vindictive. He does not delight and salivate over the demise of any sinner. On the contrary, He is painfully grieved over every lost soul. While God hates sin, He is deeply in love with the sinner. He desires to rescue every sinner and bring them into His kingdom.

Sadly, there are some that promote a clearly false idea that God not only wants people to perish but that He preordained the majority of His creation to perish before He ever created them. As a matter of fact, according to this widespread but false teaching, some were created for the express purpose of eternal damnation - all for His glory, of course.

Such false ideas have moved people to hate God and understandably so. However, if people would base their ideas on the Scriptures instead of on the false teachings of men, they would see a good, kind, gracious, and loving God who only wants the best for them and is working hard to help them understand this fact.

Chapter Four

Scriptures that APPEAR to say that God Did It

*Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and **the LORD hath not done it?** (Amos 3:6; King James Version)*

The passage above and others like it have been used by many to teach that all evil comes from the hand of God. This passage has been used as the basis for teaching that God inflicted sickness, killed someone's loved one, and was responsible for every other tragic event that has occurred in our lives. It has been easy for people to accept such teaching because the Scripture, apart from a more thorough examination, can easily lead us to believe this idea.

In this chapter we are going to use Amos 3:6 as a model for how to correctly interpret all Scripture that appear as if the Lord did evil to us. It is not the purpose of this chapter to examine every single passage that has been misinterpreted and misunderstood to teach that God is behind those things that hurt and harm us. We have other books for those who desire a more exhaustive study concerning passages that imply God is behind hurtful events.

Private Interpretation

The first rule in understanding such passages is, *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation”* (2 Pet. 1:20). What is a “private interpretation” of Scripture? It is when a person *begins* with a theological presupposition and then scours

the Bible to find single Bible verses that appear to support said presupposition.

For those who believe that God exercises detailed meticulous control over every single event that occurs, and that He is behind every tragic event, a passage such as Amos 3:6 can be taken out of its contextual setting to support such a view.

Jesus' Revelation of God's Character

No passage, especially an Old Testament one, should be isolated and interpreted based on a biased theological perspective. Every passage must be examined in the light of our Lord's revelation of God's character.

Jesus is referred to in Scripture as "The Word of God" (John 1:1, 2, 14; 1 John 1:1; 5:7; Rev. 19:13). In plain simple language this means that Jesus is the Message that God the Father sent in order to give men a better understanding of Himself.

Since Jesus Himself is God (2nd member of the Triune Godhead) then He is most capable of giving us a revelation of God's character. John writes, "*No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. **He has revealed God to us***" (John 1:18; New Living Translation). The Easy to Read Version renders it, "*The only Son is the one who has shown us what God is like.*"

In his first epistle, John reemphasizes the Lord's earthly mission:

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life (1 John 5:20)

The Contemporary English Version says that Jesus, “.... *has come and has shown us the true God.*” This fits right in line with John’s record of the Lord’s prayer before His death when He says, “*And this is life eternal, that **they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent***” (John 17:3). Knowing the truth about God’s character and nature is the essence of eternal life.

What is the primary truth that Jesus revealed about God’s character? Again John, by the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, gives us the answer:

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)

Jesus came to reveal to us and help us understand that there is no darkness in God. Darkness is used in Scripture as a metaphor for evil (Prov. 4:19; Isa. 5:20; Matt. 6:23; Luke 11:24; John 3:19; Acts 26:18; Eph. 6:12).

Jesus said that, “*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit*” (Matt. 7:18a). Since there is no darkness in God then He is unable to produce anything that is evil. Jesus’ life shows that, rather than doing evil, God only does good:

*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)*

I especially appreciate how Dr. Timothy R. Jennings paraphrases Acts 10:38 in his book, *The Remedy New Testament*:

.... how God empowered Jesus of Nazareth with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and how he went throughout the land giving of himself for the good of others. He healed everyone who was oppressed by the devil, because he was God's very thoughts made audible and visible.

Jesus being "*God's very thoughts made audible and visible*" is confirmed by Hebrews 1:2 where we read that God, "*Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.*" Jesus only did what He saw His Father doing (John 5:19, 30; 8:38).

Not once do we read in the gospels that Jesus afflicted people with sickness. We only see Him healing. Not once do we read about Jesus bringing natural disasters. We only see Him rescuing people from them. Not once do we see Jesus doing anything harmful. Jesus, through His life and teachings, reveals to us that such things do not come from the hand of God.

Among His revelations about God, Jesus distances Him from being an afflicter of sickness (Matt. 12:22-29; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38) and anything else that brings death and destruction (John 8:44; 10:10).

Understanding Amos 3:6

Jesus' revelation of God the Father is the foundation for understanding every other portion of Scripture. In light of our Lord's revelation, how do we interpret passages such as Amos 3:6 and other passages that portray God as the afflicter of evil?

The Bible was written from the Ancient Hebrew perspective which contains a number of cultural idioms that are sometimes missed by our Bible translators. One

of those idioms is that of *permission*, or the fact that *God is said to do in Scripture that which He merely permits*.

To understand this truth and how it applies to Amos 3:6, let's first look at its immediate context. God called the prophet Amos to warn Israel about the inevitable consequences of their continued rebellion towards Him. Though the Israelites were materially prosperous during this period, they were steeped into idolatry. They lived immoral, sexually deviant lives. They also oppressed the poor and engaged in corrupt judicial proceedings.

God, in His mercy, continued to protect Israel and Jerusalem in particular, from its surrounding enemies. But their continued efforts to push God away would eventually result in the removal of this protection (Job 21:14-15; 22:16-17; Hosea 9:12). When we forsake God and push Him away, He will, at some point, honor our choice and leave us (Deut. 31:16-17; 2 Chron. 12:5; 15:2; 24:20).

Amos' warning to Jerusalem was a call to repentance because they were at the point of losing God's presence and protection. God was about to remove the barrier He kept over their enemies and allow them to destroy the city:

*The Lord God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore **will I deliver up the city with all that is therein**. (Amos 6:8)*

The phrase "deliver up" is from the Hebrew word *nathan* which means, "to give, bestow, grant, **permit**, ascribe, employ, devote, consecrate, dedicate, pay wages, sell, exchange, lend, commit, entrust, give over, **deliver**

up, yield produce, occasion, produce, requite to, report, mention, utter, stretch out, extend.”¹

God was saying here that, apart from their repentance, He would cease to protect Jerusalem and allow Israel’s enemies to have their way. Some modern translations bring this point out better:

The Lord God made this promise; the Lord God All-Powerful says: “I hate the pride of the Israelites, and I hate their strong buildings, so I will let the enemy take the city and everything in it.” (New Century Version)

The Lord God used his own name and made an oath. The Lord God All-Powerful said, “I hate what Jacob is proud of. I hate his strong towers. So I will let an enemy take the city and everything in it.” (Easy to Read Version)

When we connect this to Amos 3:6 we learn that God’s method for “doing evil” in the city is to remove His protection and allow the enemy to have his way.

God Permitting Rather than Causing Evil

With the immediate context in mind, we can now legitimately interpret Amos 3:6 in a *permissive*, rather than in a *causative* sense. As one writer well notes:

And now let me briefly note a third and final canon. You may not admit it, or if you admit it you may laugh at it, but as a matter of Biblical criticism, and of Hebrew composition it is simply indisputable :— viz., “*That Jewish writers were frequently in the habit of attributing to God Himself the evils which He permitted in His Providence.*”

Let me first give, you one undoubted illustration. “Shall there be evil in a city, and I have not done it? saith the Lord” (Amos iii. 6). The morality of the Old Testament might indeed be truly impeached, if this were intended to teach that God was the actual author of evil. Indeed, the notion is so preposterous, that nothing but the glaring impossibility of such an idea could have permitted this Jewish method of phraseology to approximate so apparently close to it.

Falling, however, as it did, within this well-known line of Hebrew style of composition—viz., that what God was known to have *permitted* without any arbitrary intervention of providence, He was often said to have *done*— that statement of the prophet Amos was liable to no misconception. We ourselves, in these western countries, may pronounce such a method of speech both awkward and loose; but in eastern lands, our own more precise and formal habits of expression are not by any means the law.²

With this truth in mind, no one should object to understanding Amos 3:6 in its cultural *permissive* context as the following Bible translations and paraphrases render it:

*Does the trumpet alarm sound in the city, without the people being scared? Does anything evil happen to a city, and **yahweh hasn't let it happen?*** (Yahweh God's Word: An Old and New Testament Paraphrase by Go Fish Ministries)

*Does the trumpet sound the alarm in the city without frightening the people? Does disaster come to a city unless **the Eternal One has permitted it?*** (The VOICE Translation)

Here we see that God is not the dispenser of evil. If those He is watching over and protecting decide that they hate His presence and prefer to live in rebellion against Him, at some point He has no other choice but to respect their wishes and allow them what they want. But woe unto them when He does it (Hose 9:12).

Conclusion

Amos 3:6, contrary to the perverted theology of those who misquote it, is not a blanket statement teaching the false idea that God sovereignly brings about and controls all of the evil that occurs in the lives of people. On the contrary, it is a warning of a judgment that can be easily avoided through repentance (Jonah 3:1-10; 4:1-2). All passages in Scripture that are similar to Amos 3:6 must be understood in this light.

Chapter Five

But Doesn't God Punish People?

*The Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says, "Very soon **I will punish** Amon,[a] the god of Thebes, and **I will punish** Pharaoh, Egypt, and her gods. **I will punish** the kings of Egypt, and **I will punish** the people who depend on Pharaoh. (Jeremiah 4:25; Easy to Read Version)*

The word for "punish" in this passage comes from the Hebrew word *paqad*. The word is translated in some Bible translations as both "punish" and "visit". However, *paqad* is also translated as "visit" in places where God desires to give a blessing. Therefore, scholars have been debating on whether or not *paqad* should ever be translated at all as punishment.

How Does God "Punish"

Does *paqad* mean that God is going to use His divine power to bring destructive judgment upon the sinner? Actually, God's *paqad* is to remove His protection from the sinner and permit the sinner to receive the inevitable consequences of their rebellion as noted in verse 26 of our opening passage:

I will let all of them be defeated by their enemies—their enemies want to kill them. I will give the people to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and his servants. (Jeremiah 46:26; Easy to Read Version)

The King James Version translates the first part of this verse, “*And I will **deliver them** into the hand of those that seek their lives.*” The word “deliver” is from the Hebrew word *nathan* which we learned in the last chapter can be translated as “permit”. In essence, God “punishes,” if this is the word we must use, by no longer preventing the enemies of the rebels from attacking and defeating them. This method of *paqad* (“punishment”) can be found in several places in Scripture, but let’s look at one more:

*Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, **I will set my face against you for evil**, and to cut off all Judah.... For **I will punish them** that dwell in the land of Egypt, **as I have punished Jerusalem**, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence (Jer. 44:11, 13)*

Note that in verse 13 God threatens to “punish” the people for their sins. In verse 11 He tells us that this method of punishment is by “setting His face against them for evil.” God uses a similar phrase in the book of Leviticus for those who choose to worship Molech:

*And **I will set my face against that man**, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. (Lev. 20:3)*

The Amplified Bible “amplifies” this for us: “*I will also set My face against that man [opposing him, withdrawing My protection from him] and will cut him off from his.*” Basically, we are to understand “the setting of God’s face” as the removal of His protection.

Deuteronomy 31:17 gives us the clearest definition of what it means for God to *hide His face*:

*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?*

The hiding of God's face is His "forsaking". It is the removal of His protective presence. The great Bible commentator and scholar, Adam Clarke, explained, "I will surely hide my approbation and my protection. This is the general meaning of the word in Scripture."¹

Some of our modern translations are also helpful. The VOICE translation reads, "*I won't look on them when they pray. I won't protect them, and they'll be eaten alive*" and The Easy to Read Version says, "*I will become very angry with them, and I will leave them. I will refuse to help them, and they will be destroyed.*" The Bible paraphrases below also make this point clear:

When they do this, I will have to withdraw my protection from them and leave them at the mercy of their enemies. (The Clear Word by Dr. Jack Blanco)

I'll get angry, oh so angry! I'll walk off and leave them on their own, won't so much as look back at them. Then many calamities and disasters will devastate them because they are defenseless. (The Message Bible)

S. D. Gordon, wrote, "Sin is cutting one's self off from God.... Sin is choosing to leave God out. The very

act cuts off the source of life.”² God’s *paqad* (“punishment”) in relation to sin is not direct. If a person wants to rebel against God and remove themselves from under God’s protective presence, God will sadly and reluctantly respect that choice. However, He should not be blamed for the consequences.

The Danger of Pushing God Away

Another valuable truth that the Bible teaches (and that is often missed) is that sin contains within itself its own seed of destruction. When God “hides His face” or rather, removes His protection, He leaves us to suffer the consequences of our sins that He, at one point, mercifully held back:

*And there is none that calls upon thy name,
that wakes himself up to take hold of thee;
therefore, thou hast hid thy face from us
and hast allowed us to wither in the power
of our iniquities (Isa. 64:7; Jubilee Bible
2000)*

The New Century Version says, “.... *you have turned away from us and have **let our sins destroy us***”. Therefore, to say that God punishes us in the sense that He directly inflicts us with harm is inaccurate. Our sins bring about their own destruction. Again, S. D. Gordon is insightful here:

....punishment is not a thing that God chooses to be meted out to us as a judgment for our misdeeds. It is something included in the sin itself. The worst thing God could do to any man would be to leave him utterly alone to the working out of his sin. In great graciousness He does not do that. But He does keep hands off in part, and permits much of the

result of sin to work its way out. And so pain comes through the break in the natural order.³

The Psalmist wrote, “*He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities*” (Psalm 103:10). This means that God has mercifully held back the consequences of our rebellions. However, when we reject God’s pleas to repent and push Him away then we will be left to eat the fruit of the sin-seed that we have planted:

They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. (Prov. 1:30-32)

We are told in this Proverb that those who reject God’s counsel and reproof will eat the fruit of their own way, or, as Galatians 6:7 says, “.... *for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*”

Sin Contains within Itself “Punishment”

Rejecting God’s mercy does not cause God to personally harm the sinner. It only allows the individual to suffer the consequences of their own sin. The VOICE translation adds more clarity to Proverbs 1:30-32:

Because they rejected my advice and turned down my correction, They will surely get what’s coming to them: they’ll be forced to eat the fruit of their wicked ways; they’ll gorge themselves on the consequences of their choices. You see, it’s

turning away from me that brings death to the simple, and it's self-satisfaction that destroys the fools.

Verse 32 of the VOICE translation has God saying, "... *it's turning away from me that brings death to the simple.*" Other portions of Scripture tell us that "death" is inherent in the sin itself:

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)

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 6:23)

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

If you smoke then you develop the possibility of getting lung cancer and heart disease. If we drink excessive amounts of alcohol then we place ourselves in danger of having liver disease. Eating sugar filled foods can produce diabetes. Unprotected sex can lead to deadly venereal diseases, etc. As Jesus told the man in Bethesda:

*Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: **sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.** (John 5:14)*

Jesus did not say that *God* would put a worse thing on this man if he sinned. Jesus knew that within the sin

itself was the seed of death and destruction. In Ezekiel 18:30 we read:

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

The New Life Version says, “*Be sorry for all your sins and turn away from them, so sin will not destroy you.*” The 1599 Geneva Bible renders the last part, “*....so iniquity shall not be your destruction.*” It is sin, not God, that destroys. God warns us not to sin based on His complete unselfish love and because He knows that *the sin itself will destroy us.*

The Forgiving Compassion of God

We continually blame God for the results of our sin by claiming that He is punishing us for our bad behavior. Yet, God clearly states that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked:

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 33:11)

God begs and pleads with His people to turn from their sin and He is continually rejected (Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34; 2 Chron. 36:15-16; Jer. 7:13, 25-26; 11:7-8; 25:3-4; 26:4-5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14-15; 44:4-5). When we push away from a kind and longsuffering God who respects our freedom, what more can we expect than to suffer the

consequences of our rebellion? But if we decide to sin, then we should recognize the fact that it is the sin itself rather than our loving God that is destroying us.

God is not the vindictive deity He is often portrayed as. God is willing to forgive our sin and deliver us from its destructive power. Jesus told a paralyzed man, “...he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mark 2:5). When the religious leaders protested Jesus further stated:

Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? (Mark 2:9)

God forgiving this man’s sin opened the door for deliverance from the destruction that the sin brought. In verses 11 and 12 we see that Jesus miraculously delivered the man from sin’s destruction on his body.

James tells us that if sin caused our sickness then God is willing to forgive and heal us:

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. (James 5:15)

The psalmist said that it is God, “*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases*” (Psalm 103:3). Healing and forgiveness go hand in hand. It’s our iniquities, not God, that afflicts us. But it is God in His mercy who heals us when we cry out to Him (Psalm 107:17-21). Therefore, if you are suffering as the result of sin, do not say, “God is punishing me.” Instead, run to Him for forgiveness and deliverance. He loves you.

Chapter Six

The Pain of Unanswered Prayer

A lot of people are feeling ignored by God and are angry. Spouses pray for their failing marriages and still end up in a divorce. Family and friends pray for a sick loved one and the person dies. The unemployed pray for jobs and are never hired. Business owners pray for their business to succeed only to later file for bankruptcy. The list goes on.

The Bible Addresses this Problem

Does God truly answer prayer in supernatural ways or is this just another false hope produced by religion? Before answering this question, we should first see that Scripture records the complaints of good people who felt that they were being mistreated by God for supposedly failing to answer their prayers:

O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! (Habakkuk 1:2)

In Isaiah we find similar complaints: “*Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?*” (Isaiah 58:3). In his trial Job said that God ignored his prayer and was treating him cruelly:

*I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me:
I stand up, and thou regardest me not.
Thou art become cruel to me: with thy*

*strong hand thou opposest thyself against
me (Job 30:20-21)*

Even today many of God's people are like Job in this situation. They believe that God does not answer prayer and that He is the one opposed to them.

Is God's "Answer" Sometimes "No"?

Do a search on the internet asking "Why doesn't God answer prayer?" You will find numerous online articles, some by very prominent and well-known ministers, who claim that sometimes God's answer to prayer is "no." I believe that this teaching is designed by the devil to make God appear to be unkind and cruel.

Dr. Charles Blanchard, the second president of Wheaton College, wrote, "... I do not believe this teaching to be true and I do not believe it to be a comfort or help to anybody. I think it would tend to make infidels rather than Christians."¹ I agree. This teaching is a ploy that helps Satan to create more atheists and agnostics. It provides him more recruits in his propaganda war against God.

One could understand God denying the requests of those who pray selfishly and in ways that benefit no one (James 4:3). However, for an all-powerful God to deny the request of a mother pleading for the life of her sick child, the family praying for divine protection while traveling, the healing of a sick body ravaged in pain, for a decent job to support and feed one's hungry children, for God's divine assistance to be relieved from an overbearing financial burden, and numerous other things that are charitable makes God to appear as harsh and cruel, especially when given no discernable explanation for the denial of the request.

Yet, God is a God of unfathomable love and in His love, He has recorded numerous promises in the Bible in which He has pledged to heal, deliver, provide, protect,

and help in all difficult circumstances. These promises are an expression of His will, so it is ridiculous for a person who asks God to do one of the things He promised to do to be told that, “it may not have been God’s will.”

God has also given numerous promises to answer prayers that are prayed in line with these promises. Many of the prayer promises of God use pronouns like “anything,” “whatsoever,” and “whosoever” in order to show how broad and limitless these promises are. With such promises, why would we think that God would ignore a pleading mother for her child’s life or a humble father who wants to take care of his family?

Did God really mean what He said when He made these promises or is He playing some cruel game of semantics with us? Listening to and reading articles by so many “experts” on the subject would lead us to believe the latter. Yet, God has said, “*If the Lord says he will do something, then he will do it. If the Lord makes a promise, then he will do the thing he promised*” (Num. 23:19; Easy to Read Version).

Furthermore, we are told, “*In Jesus we hear a resounding ‘yes’ to all of God’s many promises*” (2 Cor. 1:20; the VOICE). Therefore, there has to be something more to the easy but lazy response to a heartbroken person whose request to God has seemingly been denied than to simply say that God sometimes answers “no”.

Satan’s Authority over the Earth

Along with making God appear to be harsh and cruel, Satan has also used his deceptive “doctrine of denial” to keep people from looking into the real reason why prayers are hindered. Through the centuries, men have taught a twisted idea about what it means for God to be sovereign and omnipotent—an idea that has deceived many people and prevented them from persevering in prayer in order to get real, tangible answers.

God is indeed sovereign and is certainly all-powerful. He is the Creator of all things and there is no creature greater than Him, more powerful than Him, or who has any authority over Him. There is no equality between Him and the devil. From a *power standpoint* it would take no effort for God to destroy Satan. However, God does not operate a cosmic bully throne in Heaven where He crushes His enemies based on His great might.

When God created the universe, He established it upon the principles of love, respect, and freedom. When He created man, we are told “*You have made him rule what your hands created. You have put everything under his control*” (Psalm 8:6; God’s Word Translation).

Psalm 115:16b says, “.... *the earth hath he given to the children of men.*” When God gave the earth to man this was binding on Him due to His inability to lie or go back on His Word (Ps. 89:33-35; Titus 1:1-3; Heb. 6:17-18). He cannot even change His mind concerning unconditional statements (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Rom. 11:29; 2 Cor. 1:19-20). However, man decided to turn this all over to Satan when he rebelled against God:

All these kingdoms, all their glory, I’ll give to You. They’re mine to give because this whole world has been handed over to me.
(The VOICE Translation)

Because Adam took what was given to him and handed it over to Satan, Satan became the prince-ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; Col. 1:12-14; 1 John 5:18-19; Rev. 12:9). Satan began to rule man and the earth through the power of death. We are told, “*Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses*” (Rom. 5:14a) and “*through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*” (Heb. 2:14).

This is the reason why Satan is able to use evil men under his deceptive control as well as the very earth's elements itself to steal, kill and destroy (Job 1:12-19; John 10:10). Because of God's covenant of freedom and love, He cannot use His omnipotent power to remove the authority that man's sin gave to Satan. The only way God could legally defeat the enemy was by becoming a man Himself, living a sinless life, and then taking our place by taking on the suffering and death that we deserve (Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8; Col. 1:12-14; 2:14-15).

Prayer is Spiritual Warfare

We are thankful that things will not be this way forever. As we will learn in chapter eight, Jesus our Lord will usher us into a better world where He will rule and reign forever. But until that day comes, the devil still exercises a certain amount of legal authority over the earth due to the continued sins of men (1 John 5:18-19).

Therefore, the problem of prayer has nothing to do with God constantly denying the petitions of the suffering. If (and when) God was (and someday will be) fully in charge of the earth at this present moment, there would be no suffering or pain to begin with and any other needs, if they ever exist, would be met swiftly to the one making the request.

The problem we face is that there is still a war going on in the Heavens that we are participants in:

*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,
but against principalities, against powers,
against the rulers of the darkness of this
world, against spiritual wickedness in high
places (Ephesians 6:12)*

Here we learn that we are in a wrestling match with the demonic forces who are the actual rulers over the

darkness and evil in this world. Paul gives us the pieces of spiritual armor that guarantees success in this warfare, one of the foundational pieces being persevering prayer:

*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and **watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints** (Ephesians 6:18)*

The word “watching” in this passage means “to be sleepless,” “stay awake,” “be ready,” “be on the lookout” and “be alert”. This is military terminology that commands us to always be prepared for enemy attacks.

In 1 Peter 5:9 we are told, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*” The word “vigilant” also means to be *alert, awake, and watching*. Here we see that successful prayer is one that recognizes that it is engaged in a battle for God’s will upon the earth.

Perseverance in the Prayer-Warfare

Therefore, prayer does not accept a denial to its request. Prayer continues to push forward until it has received the desired answer. The Easy to Read Version renders Ephesians 6:18 as follows:

*Pray in the Spirit at all times. Pray with all kinds of prayers, and ask for everything you need. To do this **you must always be ready. Never give up.** Always pray for all of God’s people.*

The VOICE translation says, “*Keep on praying feverishly, and be on the lookout until evil has been stayed*” (The VOICE Translation). Daniel provides us

with one of the best examples of persevering prayer that defeats the enemy:

12 Then the man in the vision started talking again. He said, "Daniel, do not be afraid. From the very first day you decided to get wisdom and to be humble in front of God, he has been listening to your prayers. I came to you because you have been praying. 13 But the prince[a] of Persia has been fighting against me for 21 days. Then Michael, one of the most important princes, came to help me because I was stuck there with the king of Persia. (Daniel 10:12-13; Easy to Read Version)

Nowhere in the passage are we to understand that God was unwilling to grant Daniel his request. Yet, it took 21 days of fasting and *persevering* prayer before Daniel received the answer. Most of us would have given up the first hour, believing that it must not be God's will to give it to us. Some of us would have assumed the first day of no response from God that it was His "no" answer.

What if Daniel had given up on day 20? Too many people asking God to intervene fail to realize that God desires to grant their request. He sends the answer the moment we ask. However, because Satan is still working in the earth, he has the ability to confront and war against the angels that God uses to send the answers. Our perseverance or lack thereof makes the difference as to whether or not the prayer answer is received by us.

Things Satan Uses to Hinder Answers

We need to also understand that many of our sinful actions gives Satan, the accuser of the brethren, a legal right to hold back from us answers to prayer (Zech.

3:1; Rev. 12:10). Note the things that gives Satan a right to go before God's throne to accuse us and keep us from receiving answers to prayer:

- Sin (Isa. 59:1-2; Jer. 5:25; Psalm 66:18; 1 Pet. 3:12; James 4:3)
- Unforgiveness (Mark 11:22-26; Matt. 6:9-15)
- Problems with spouse (1 Pet. 3:7)
- Doubt (Matt. 21:21-22; Mark 11:23-24; James 1:6-7)
- Unbelief (Mark 6:5-6; Num. 14:11; Heb. 3:18-19; 4:1-2; Psalm 78:19-43)
- Impatience (Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17; Heb. 6:12-19; 10:35-36)
- Ignorance of God's promises (Hosea 4:6; Rom. 10:17; Mark 4:14-17)

Jesus told us, "*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38). The word "watch" is the exact same Greek word translated for "vigilant" in 1 Peter 5:9 in relation to our warfare with Satan.

The Bible refers to Satan as the tempter (Matt. 4:3; 6:13; 1 Cor. 7:5; 1 Thess. 3:5). Part of our prayer-warfare is to ensure that we do not yield to Satan's temptations in these areas and be denied an answer from God.

Many people who fail to receive answers to prayer do not take the time to evaluate themselves to see if, perhaps, they might be falling into one of these areas, thus hindering the answers to their prayers. They prefer to blame God rather than check their own lives. Satan wins every time with that kind of an attitude. However, when it comes to having answers to prayer withheld, we loudly exclaim that *God didn't do it*.

Chapter Seven

The Horror of “Christian” Clichés

But he says about the Jews, ‘All day I held out my hands to a people who did not obey me, who said wrong things against me.’ (Romans 10:21; Worldwide English New Testament)

Daniel, speaking about the soon coming Anti-Christ, writes, “*He will honor himself more than every god, and will say very bad things against the God of gods*” (Daniel 11:36; New Life Version). Satan has subtly worked within the church to replace revelation about God with meaningless and powerless “Christian” clichés.

Sadly, many Christians do not stop to consider the contradictory nature of such clichés nor have they, “.... *searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*” (Acts 17:11). We will examine a few of the more well-known clichés.

God is in Control

“God is in control” Is a very popular statement in Christian circles. Different people understand this expression in a variety of ways. Our purpose here is to repudiate the *fatalistic* understanding of the phrase that is held by some.

Books and teachings of those influenced by the theology of the 16th century theologian John Calvin, present the thought of “God’s control” to mean that nothing, no matter how good or how evil, happens in this universe apart from God’s approval or direct involvement. This is founded upon a twisted understanding of what it means for God to be sovereign and omnipotent.

Scripture teaches that God is both sovereign and all-powerful. But it also demonstrates that God permits a tremendous amount of freedom to men, angels, and devils. God even respects the rights of His own enemies to rule in certain territories and in ways that cause Him pain if that is what they desire. Therefore, evil and darkness in this world is completely under *Satan's* control:

*“We are not fighting against people of flesh and blood. But we are fighting against rulers and powers whom we cannot see. We are fighting against those **who control the darkness of this world**, and against bad spirits who have power in the air.”* (Eph. 6:12; World English New Testament)

In 1 John 5:19 we are told, “.... *but the Evil One controls the whole world*” (Easy to Read Version). Now, certainly God has the authority to overrule the wickedness of the enemy for our benefit when we cooperate with Him (Job 42:10-11; James 5:11), but this does not mean that He stringently initiates, controls, or even desires the enemy to work against us. Therefore, I believe that, apart from a careful explanation, the “God is in control” cliché is careless and misrepresents God’s part in life’s circumstances.

All Things Happen for a Reason

This cliché conveys the false idea that God is behind the tragic events in our lives and that He has a reason, even if said reason is unknown to us, for bringing them about. Sometimes the book of Job is cited as proof of this. However, Job actually refutes this cliché:

*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)*

Another translation says, “*You persuaded me to let you attack him for **no reason at all**, but Job is still as faithful as ever*” (Good News Translation). The VOICE translation which says, “.... *you provoked Me to wreck him for **no particular reason**, to take away My protection and his prosperity.*”

God says that there was no legitimate reason for these attacks upon Job that Satan (and not God) initiated. God is not behind every painful event in our lives:

*Behold, they shall surely gather together, **but not by me:** whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.*
(Isa. 54:15)

The New International Reader’s Version says, “*People might attack you. But I will not be the cause of it.*” Therefore, we must reject this “whatever will be, will be” philosophy and stand against evil through faith, prayer, and exercising our delegated authority in Christ.

All Things Work Together

The deception of this cliché is that it is partially based on Scripture. In Romans 8:28 Paul writes:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them

who are the called according to his purpose.

If a drunk driver kills someone's daughter, a person dies from cancer, or a single mother supporting her four children is shot by a stray bullet, some misquote this Scripture in a cliched manner: "Well, we don't know why this happened but all things work together for good". Peter had this to say to those who twist Paul's writings:

There are parts of his letters that are hard to understand, and some people give a wrong meaning to them. These people are ignorant and weak in faith. They also give wrong meanings to the other Scriptures. But they are destroying themselves by doing that (2 Peter 3:16; Easy to Read Version)

Dr. Timothy R. Jennings offers this paraphrase of 2 Peter 3:16, "And those who don't understand God's healing plan distort Paul's writings - as they do the other Scriptures - to misrepresent God" (The Remedy New Testament). This is exactly what happens when people misquote and misuse Romans 8:28.

The Greek word translated "works together" in Romans 8:28 (*sunergeo* or *sunergei*) shows that God works in partnership with His people via prayer, evangelism, and other ways (Mark 16:20; 1 Cor. 6:1). In **The International Revision Commentary on the New Testament** edited by Phillip Schaff we read, "Some ancient authorities read *God worketh all things with them for good.*" The Revised Standard Version is more consistent with this understanding: "*We know that in everything God works for good **with those** who love him, who are called according to his purpose.*"

When Romans 8:28 is kept in context with verses 26 and 27 it demonstrates that this passage has to do with the Holy Spirit making intercession through the saints. Therefore, Romans 8:28 is not a passage teaching that God's hand is behind all events. It teaches that God *works with us* through prayer to bring good in every situation.

God's Ways are Mysterious

One cliché quoted as though it was a verse of Scripture is, "God moves in mysterious ways; His wonders to perform." Again, the implication is that God was somehow involved in some evil or tragic event. Since it is difficult to explain how a good God could possibly bring things that hurt people, "God moves in mysterious ways" is used to dismiss all objections. However, the will of God is no mystery to His children:

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself (Eph. 1:9)

God has made known to us the mystery of His will. We can learn it by reading His Word and by the Holy Spirit illuminating that Word to us. To claim that evil events such as sickness, disease and other painful circumstances are inflicted upon us by some mysterious providence is contradicting what God has *made known*:

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.... **He made known his***

ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. (Psalm 103:2-4, 7)

God made His ways known unto Moses and we learn the ways and acts of God in the preceding verses. Rather than God's mysterious ways being that of sickness, disease, harshness and vindictiveness we learn that His ways are health, mercy, forgiveness, and redemption.

If we study the Bible fully then we will be assured that God does not mysteriously inflict sickness, disease and death upon anyone for mysterious and unknown purposes. The Bible tells us, *"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"* (Eph. 5:17). The Bible tells us that it is unwise to be ignorant of and misunderstand the Lord's will. That is why He provides wisdom (James 1:5-7). Those who hold to the idea that God's will is some type of "mystery" are being unwise according to Paul's teaching.

God's ways are only mysterious to those who do not know Him (Hosea 6:3; 1 Cor. 2:9-16). Yet the Lord wants us to know and understand Him (Jer. 9:24). He is not behind sickness, disease, car accidents, sin, and failure to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and be born again. Satan has blinded men to the truth by having them blame God for these things under the lie of "mystery".

Reject this false teaching and remember that God makes His ways known to men. He is the forgiver and deliverer from sin. He is the protector, healer, and provider. These are the ways of God as seen in Jesus.

This Trial is Sent by God to Test You

Quite often when someone is going through a tragedy we like to comfort them by letting them know that God has greater plans for them and sent this "test" in order to prepare them for their next level.

The Bible certainly talks about times when God has had to test His people. Usually it has been due to their own previous acts of rebellion against Him as well as their seeming unwillingness to repent (Exodus 16:4; Deut. 8:1-3; Judges 2:1-22). In none of these cases do we find God testing His people through temptation to sin, sickness, accidents, or any other painful event (compare Deut. 13:1-3 with Jer. 14:15 and 23:32). It is not God's way to test people with evil of any kind:

Let no man say when he is tested, I am tested by God; for it is not possible for God to be tested by evil, and he himself puts no man to such a test (James 1:13; Bible in Basic English)

Nobody being tested should say, 'It's God that's testing me', for God cannot be tested by evil, and he himself tests nobody. (New Testament for Everyone)

Let no one, undergoing trial, be saying that "From God am I undergoing trial, for God is not tried by evils, yet He is trying no one." (Concordant Literal Version)

The Bible is clear that God is not the source of our testing and trials. This *dishonor* is reserved for the devil:

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)

It is the devil that tries, tests and brings trouble upon people. This is why Peter tells us to resist the devil, “*stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world*” (1 Pet. 5:9).

Never are we asked to accept devastating trials as coming from God and then “*grin and bear it*”. We are to remind ourselves that *God didn’t do it*. We are to declare that “*An enemy hath done this*” (Matt. 13:28, 39), and stand against him in the authority of Jesus’ Name.

God “Took” (Whoever the Dead Person Is)

Here is another cliché founded upon misquoting and misunderstanding Scripture. Some will claim that God “took” a loved one and then they will quote Job 1:21 where Job, after the death of his children, servants, and livestock, says, “...***the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.***”

The cliché, backed by the misquotation of Job, is heard quite often at funerals. However, when we jump back to verse 12 of Job 1, we read:

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.

Job was unaware of the real personality behind the tragedies in his life and resorted to the idiom of his culture in which God is said to do that which He merely allows or permits. This is why the Hebrew scholar, Robert Young, on page 46, note 8 of his Concordance says that Job 1:21 should read, “the Lord hath (permitted to be) taken away.”

If God personally takes anyone, it is not through death since death is the devil’s tool (Heb. 2:14-15). In

Genesis 5:24 we are told, “*And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.*” If this is not clear enough then note what the divine record says in the book of Hebrews:

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (Hebrews 11:5)

When God “took” Enoch, it was through *translation* and not death. When God “takes” someone then that someone does not experience sickness or death. Elijah also provides us an example of this (2 Kings 2:1-11). Therefore, it is irresponsible and slanderous to say that God “took” someone who died from a painful disease or some other tragedy.

His Time was Up-God Called His Number

Sometimes people respond to tragic deaths with the cliché, “Well I guess his time was up.” Or “God must have called his number.” Yet, many of the people who God is said to have “taken,” “whose time was up” or “whose number God called” died without ever accepting Christ into their heart. For these people God says that He takes no pleasure in their death (Eze. 18:23, 32; 33:11).

Anyone who dies apart from Christ is eternally lost. God has no desire for that (2 Tim. 2:4-6; 2 Pet. 3:9). Nonetheless, those who believe that God has a “set appointed time” for each person to die, as usual, find a Scripture to support their erroneous cliché:

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ

was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Heb. 9:27-28)

When reading this passage it is important to keep it in the context of Hebrews chapters 7, 8 and 9. In these chapters we find the writer of Hebrews is making a comparison between the work that Christ has done in bringing about our redemption with that of the Levitical High Priest of the Mosaic covenant.

The writer explains that every *high priest* that was *appointed* according to Mosaic law had to die sooner or later just as *all men* are subject to death due to the fall of Adam (Heb. 7:23). However, we are told that the priesthood of Jesus Christ “*continueth ever*” (Heb. 7:24-28). This is the primary teaching of Hebrews 9:27.

All men will eventually die unless we are still alive during the rapture of Christians when the Lord Jesus comes to meet us in the air (1 Thess. 4:17). Adam’s sin and our own has assured us of that. Therefore, Heb. 9:27 is not teaching us that God has a set appointed time of death for each individual. In light of these facts, we must reject any idea that when a person dies that God “called their number”. God is not the author and distributor of death.

God Knew this Would Happen

There are many Christians who, thankfully, reject the erroneous belief that God personally sends or ordains evil circumstances in our lives. However, some of these same people still attempt to comfort victims of tragic events with the “fact” that, “God did not cause this, but He knew from eternity past that this would happen and permitted it for His own divine purposes.”

While I used to believe this teaching myself, I admittedly never derived any comfort from it. On the contrary, whenever I did confront difficulties in my life, I had to intentionally put out of my mind these ideas about God's knowledge of future events in order to be able to look to Him for help without blaming Him.

You see, if you really think about it, if God knew ten million years ago that creating mankind would result in such tragedies, and knew, in particular, the exact date and time I would face my difficulty, and He did nothing whatsoever to prevent this, then this makes Him, at best, negligent and irresponsible. At worse, it makes Him to appear cold, uncaring and selfish. It does little to distinguish Him from the god of Calvinism who predestined all events to occur.

It is unpopular in Christian circles to question what theologians have referred to as God's exhaustive foreknowledge of future events. Nonetheless, if a teaching cannot be supported by Scripture and has a tendency to mischaracterize God then it needs to be challenged.

This book is not designed to give a detailed refutation of this embedded ideology. We will have a book dedicated to confronting this issue in the very near future.¹ However, we certainly need to deal with it briefly here. In Hosea 8:4 God complains that, not only did He have no part in the people's actions but He did not even *know* that were going to do it:

*They have set up kings, **but not by me**: they have made princes, and **I knew it not**: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.*

God said that He did not even *know* that they were going to do this. Some translations attempt to get around this by interpreting the phrase, "I knew it not" as "did not

consult me,” “I didn’t approve,” “I did not acknowledge them,” “whom I did not recognize” and “princes I didn’t know.”

However, all of the *literal* translations I have consulted make reference to the fact that God had no knowledge of what they were going to do. The Bible in Basic English renders Hosea 8:4 as follows:

*They have put up kings, but not by me; they have made princes, but **I had no knowledge of it**; they have made images of silver and gold, so that they may be cut off.*

If God knew that they were going to set up these kings apart from His permission and His knowledge, why would it bother Him so much, unless, of course, we believe that God has no real emotions and all of His emotional expressions recorded in Scripture are merely anthropomorphic statements? Personally, I reject such a premise and take His lack of knowledge literally.

The fact that God does not exercise an exhaustive foreknowledge of future events means that He is genuinely shocked and surprised at the level of evil, coldness and callousness that He finds among His creatures:

And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. (Isa. 59:16)

Another translation reads, “*He could not find anyone to help the people, and **he was surprised** that there was no one to help*” (New Century Version). One can argue that the language here is only metaphorical, but

I find no foundation for believing that. Things happen that cause God pain because He does not necessarily expect His creatures, which He created in *His* image and likeness, to go to the level of depravity and hard-heartedness that we often degrade ourselves to.

Sometimes God's Answer is "No"

There are some who pray, asking God to prevent a tragic outcome to a situation, only for things to turn out the opposite of what they have asked. Some attempt to comfort them by telling them that God did answer their prayer but His answer is sometimes "no".

While we responded to this cliché in the last chapter, it won't hurt us to briefly touch on it again here. Here we want to ask and answer the question, "Is 'no' really an answer to prayer?" We submit that "no" is really not an *answer* to prayer but a *denial* of our request:

*Then shall they call upon me, but **I will not answer**; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD (Prov. 1:28-29)*

God's "no" is *not* an answer to prayer as the common cliché is used. God's "no" is a denial of an answer. Basically, if God is unwilling to grant the request of the petitioner, from a Biblical standpoint, He simply gives no answer at all.

On the other hand, if God does grant the petitioner's request then this *is* His only answer. In Isaiah 30:19 we read, "...*he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; **when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.***" Notice that it is *when* God hears the prayer that we are guaranteed an answer.

Furthermore we read in Psalm 91:15, “*He shall call upon me, and **I will answer him**: I will be with him in trouble; **I will deliver him**, and honour him.*” In Psalm 81:7 we read where God actually fulfilled this promised when it was claimed through prayer: “*Thou calledst in trouble, and **I delivered thee**; **I answered thee** in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.*”

As we stated in the last chapter, there are things Satan can use to block our request. However, Satan primarily uses *us* against *ourselves*. If we followed the guidelines and principles laid out in the Bible for faith and prayer, we would never receive a denial of our request. To claim that an unanswered prayer request is simply God answering “no” (often, again, for mysterious reasons we may never know) is nothing more than a fruitless cliché that blames God for our failure to correctly pray and walk in faith.

Conclusion

Satan has bombarded the body of Christ with numerous clichés designed to distract us from God’s Word, destroy faith, produce laziness, and ultimately hatred towards God. Satan knows that when Christians put more confidence in clichés rather than Scripture, true confidence in God is destroyed and this gives Satan an advantage over us.

We are in a propaganda war with the forces of darkness over the souls of men. It is time that we woke up to this, stop blaming God for things that these worthless clichés imply, and start viewing the truth about God through the lens of what Scripture says about Him.

Chapter Eight

One Day There will be a Better World

18 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. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Romans 8:18-21)

Because creation has been subject to vanity (misery, failure, and frustration) then we experience much pain and suffering in this life. However, we are also told that what we are suffering now in this life has no comparison to the better world that awaits us.

The World Subjected to Vanity

God never intended for the world to become like it turned out to be. God told Isaiah:

*For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, **he created it not in vain**, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. (Isaiah 45:18)*

The current condition of the world is “*not of the Father*” (1 John 2:16). It is *sin* that has caused the vanity (misery) in creation (Lev. 18:24-25; 20:13, 22; Psalm 106:37-38; Jer. 3:2, 3, 8, 9; 12:4, 10, 11; Joel 1:10-12; Micah 2:10). But if God did not create the world in vain and if He never intended it to be this way then why does Romans 8:20 say that it was subjected to vanity, “*by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope*”?

This goes back to the Hebrew cultural idiom we discussed in a previous chapter in which ***God is often said to do the thing that He merely allowed or permitted***. God gave Adam dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26-28; 8:6; 115:16). It was Adam’s sin that brought death into this world (Rom. 5:12). God told Adam, “.... *the ground shall be cursed on account of thee, that is, because of thy sin*” (Gen. 3:17b; Wycliffe Translation).

God did not supernaturally, using His divine power, cause the earth to become cursed. He merely *informed Adam* concerning the results of his sin. Adam, giving everything over to the one who ruled by the power of death, brought these effects upon the earth (Luke 4:5-7; Rom. 5:14; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 5:18-19).

While God had the might and omnipotent power to intervene in Adam’s transaction with Satan, He is a covenant keeping God who does not go back on His Word (Psalm 89:33-35). When God gave man dominion over the earth, He could not morally interfere in man’s decisions without violating His own integrity. Therefore, because God restrained the use of His omnipotence and *permitted* Adam to exercise his free-will to rebel against Him, the Hebrew culture credits Him with the act.

Our Western Bible translators have not always done well in interpreting the idiomatic language used by the inspired writers of Scripture. Romans 8:20 is an example of this failure. Even Marvin Vincent, a New Testament Greek scholar, noted:

Paul does not use the grammatical form which would express the direct agency of God, by Him who hath subjected, but that which makes God's will the occasion rather than the worker - on account of Him. Adam's sin and not God's will was the direct and special cause of the subjection to vanity.¹

Some translations give us a better understanding of God's role in creation's vanity: "*It is not that the world wanted it to be that way. God **allowed** it to be that way*" (New Life Version), "*The world was spoiled. It did not want to be spoiled, but **God allowed it***" (Worldwide English New Testament) and "*For nature did not of its own accord give up to failure; it was for the sake of Him **who let it thus be given up***" (Williams New Testament).

God's Encouragement

In order to fully appreciate God's future deliverance of the world and its people from pain and misery, we must understand that He is actually rescuing man from our own self-destruction. This demonstrates a boundless and unfathomable love on God's part. Jesus showed John that this is His ultimate intent:

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. (Revelation 21:4-5)

While the book of Revelation contains some warnings to some of the churches that were sliding into worldliness and while there are vivid descriptions of how judgments upon the unrepentant would come about, the book itself is a detailed outline of how God will one day remove evil from the universe once and for all and how those who love Jesus will forever live in peace and harmony free of pain and sorrow. As a matter of fact, Isaiah also relates some of God's future plans for us:

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 1:9)

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord. (Isaiah 65:25)

One reason why nothing will hurt or destroy on God's holy mountain is because, "*the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.*" In Revelation 21:4-5, we are told that there will be no more pain and sorrow in the new world. Verse 3 gives a fuller explanation:

*And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, **the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.***

The reason for the pain and misery, the hurt and destruction in our present world, is due to the failure of people to know God, know the truth about God, and their lack of desire to have His presence in our midst. One does not want the knowledge or presence of God when they are too busy enjoying their sin.

The New Earth of Righteousness

Lacking knowledge of God causes so much pain and heartache in this present world. Hosea writes:

*1 Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, **nor knowledge of God in the land.** 2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. 3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away. (Hosea 4:1-3)*

The Common English Bible Renders Verse 3, *“Therefore, the earth itself becomes sick, and all who live on it grow weak; together with the wild animals and the birds in the sky, even the fish of the sea are dying.”* In verse 6 of this same chapter God complains, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”*

The lack of knowledge concerning God, rather than God Himself, is why sin prevails. This automatically brings the sickness and corruption that causes our pain and suffering. While God is blamed for things such as natural disasters and other horrendous sufferings, the

Scriptures, when carefully studied, assure us that it is sin itself that is the reason for these things:

*I see troubles for you people living in this land. I see fear, pits, and problems all around.... There will be earthquakes, and the earth will split open. **The sins of the world are very heavy, so the earth will fall under the weight.** It will shake like an old house. It will fall like a drunk. It will not be able to stand (Isa. 24:17, 19, 20; Easy to Read Version)*

The earth is falling under the weight of sin and *not* because God has introduced any supernatural destructive judgment into it. Therefore, God must give us a *new* heavens and earth, one *without sin*:

*But new heavens and earth, according to his promise, we expect; those **wherein righteousness dwelleth.** Wherefore, my beloved, while these you expect, be diligent, that, without blemish and without spot, of Him you may be found in peace. (2 Peter 3:13-14)*

John writes concerning this new world, “*Evil will not enter, nor anyone who does what is abhorrent or deceitful*” (Rev. 21:27; The Passion Translation). Since it is sin that is fully responsible for the present pain and suffering in this world, then it is the destruction of sin and the restoration of righteousness that will rid the earth of it.

What is Taking so Long?

Furthermore, God must rid the universe of the ultimate cause of sin, which is Satan and his deceptions:

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:10)

Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire where he will reside forever and ever. He and his demonic forces will no longer bring misery to the universe (Matt. 25:41). Satan knows he has a very short time and continues to perform as much wickedness as he can (Rev. 12:12).

On a somewhat sadder note, God will also have to perform the heartbreaking task of ridding the universe of the men and women, people that Jesus died for, who chose to reject Christ and follow Satan. John writes, “*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire*” (Rev. 20:15). This is not God’s desire but God simply cannot permit the unrepentant, those who continue to practice sin, to enter into His kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-6; Heb. 12:14; Rev. 21:27; 22:14-15).

If God allows entrance to those who practice sin then creating new heavens and a new Earth will be meaningless since it will not take long for defilement and corruption to set in again accompanied by the inevitable pain and misery they bring. In order for God to rid the universe of evil He will have to deny entrance to the unrepentant.

God hates the suffering and pain of this present world but He allows it to go on a little longer because of His desire that as many as possible who still live in rebellion against Him will learn the truth about Him, come to love Him and turn from wickedness to His righteousness:

But the present heaven and the present earth have been kept for destruction by fire, which is waiting for them on the day of the judging and destruction of evil men.... The Lord is not slow in keeping his word, as he seems to some, but he is waiting in mercy for you, not desiring the destruction of any, but that all may be turned from their evil ways (2 Peter 3:9; Bible in Basic English)

If some who are reading this are wondering why it is taking God so long to do something about the pain and misery in this world, this is the reason. If God were to allow the judgment to take place then so many (and this includes many so-called “Christians”) would be eternally lost. The thought of this pains Him so much that He continues to wait. The evil in this world grieves Him but the fact that more would be lost to Him grieves Him more severely.

Nevertheless, the day will come when God finally says, *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still”* (Rev. 22:11). God is waiting for and longs for people to repent. But He will not and cannot wait forever.

Conclusion

If you are reading this and you have not yet made Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior and turned from your sins, you are one of the reasons for God’s delay in ridding the world of evil. He loves you and is waiting for you. When you think about it, one person failing to repent has caused a temporary delay in God’s plan to cleanse the universe of evil. If you want to see evil gone forever, do your part in repenting of your sin and making Christ the Lord of your life.

Notes

Chapter Three

1. Edwin H. Palmer, “The Five Points of Calvinism”, p.82-83
2. See lexicon at <http://www.studylight.org>

Chapter Four

1. The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/nathan.html> (Last accessed: March 31, 2015)
2. Titcomb, J. H. “*The Moral Teaching of the Old Testament*” in **Popular Objections to Revealed Truth** (London: Hodder and Stoughten, 1874), pp. 171, 172

Chapter Five

1. Clarke, Adam **The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments** (New York: G. Lane and F. F. Sandford, 1843), p. 820
2. Gordon, Samuel D. **Quiet Talks on Personal Problems** (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1907), pp. 28, 29
3. Ibid, p. 133

Chapter Six

1. Blanchard, Charles **Getting Things From God** (Wheaton, IL: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1915, 1934, 1953), p. 31

Chapter Seven

1. See our upcoming book, **Is the Future Set in Stone** (tentative date, August 2019)

Chapter Eight

1. Vincent’s Word Studies, E-Sword Edition

Invitation and prayer for salvation

To become a TRUE Christian One must be born again -1. John 3:1-7

We must be born of the water and the Spirit. This water is not speaking of water baptism but of the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18; 1 Cor. 4:15; Eph. 5:25-27).

There is only ONE avenue into heaven and that is to be born again. Water baptism, church membership, religious duties, giving to the poor, living a moral life, taking the Lord's supper, being a member of a denomination, or an INTELLECTUAL reception (vs. a heart reception) of Jesus Christ cannot save you. You must be born again.

Are you born again? If you are not you will not spend eternity in heaven with Jesus Christ but instead you will enter into eternal damnation. I urge you to consider accepting Jesus Christ as your savior.

To be born again is very simple. You need only accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Why not give your heart to Him today? All you need to do is ask Him to come into your life. Here is a simple prayer to pray:

Lord Jesus

I ask you to come into my heart right now. You said in your word that if I confess you with my mouth and believe in my heart that God raised you from the dead then I will be saved (Rom. 10:9). I recognize that I am a sinner and I need your forgiveness and a change in my nature. I repent of all my sin. I know that all that come to you, you will not reject (John 6:37). Thank you for your dying for me so that I can be born again. Thank you Father for Jesus. Thank you Holy Spirit for coming in to my life. AMEN.

You are now born again. It's that simple. By the way, welcome to the family!

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