

#89 “Why Does God Allow This?”

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Have you ever gotten to the point in your life when, due to your own personal difficulties or perhaps due to the stresses of others around you, you wonder in the depths of your heart why God allows certain things to happen? When trials come, sometimes one after the other, why doesn't He intervene and stop them? After all, as the classic atheist objection goes, if God is perfectly loving and all-powerful, why do we still have pain, suffering, and evil in the world? Job was a man just like us, and he suffered greatly, losing belongings, children, the support of his wife, the trust of his friends, and his health. God never told Job why He allowed this, though we know from chapter 1 of the book of Job that God did grant Satan permission to afflict Job. No reason is ever given, and Job learns that he is not to demand one of God. God's response to Job's inquiries is over several chapters in which God questions Job by declaring His power, deity, and so on. Did Job create the world? (Job 38:4) No. Does Job take care of the sunrise? (Job 38:12) No. And so on and so forth. God is God, and we are not. Our job is simply to trust and to worship, to bow down and honor, and to love and serve. Do we need to know why bad things happen and why God allows them? The answer is "no." Do we sometimes get insights into how God uses bad things for our good? Absolutely. Does suffering and trial sometimes work for our betterment? Yes, if we are humble and teachable. Is there a theological answer to the atheist objection? Of course. But does this make us feel better? Not necessarily. Just my knowing that pain in this life is a result of sin, the work of Satan, and the sovereign purposes of God until Christ returns does not make the trials easier. Theology, though important, is in this case not the most helpful to a person in a time of crisis. So what is?

The answer we must come to accept is "God reserves the right to keep His reasons to Himself." This is the teaching from Deuteronomy 29:29 which says, "The secret things belong to the Lord." God gives us all that we need to know in His Word for living this life, but He keeps back that which we do not need to resolve in this life, say for example the paradox of the Trinity or the co-existence of the teaching of man's choosing and the predestination and election of God. We can forget about solving these things, and we ought also to forget about being God. Yes, trying to order God (we might call it asking) to tell us why He is doing what He is doing is to challenge His authority. This is not our job or our right, and it is disrespectful.

Now, let us not go on thinking that God is cruel, for that is the devil's trick in this. He wants us to think that God doesn't care, that God is keeping something from us, or that God is vindictive or evil. God allows evil to operate in our lives, and sometimes bad people win in the short term. This is a reality of living in a fallen world. However, let us not infer that because God allows evil in this temporary timeframe until Christ returns that God is Himself evil or malicious. God is love, He defines love, and the giving of His very Son to us ought to illustrate His love and devotion to us in the highest regard. If He did not spare His own Son for us, will He not also freely give us all things (Romans 8:32)? He gives us things such as heaven, such as eternal life, such as perfect love, and

such as pleasures and joy forever in His very presence (Psalm 16:11). Really, He is not holding things back from us. In fact, the worst thing that could happen to us is that we think that our eighty or so years on this earth is the main event. Eternity is the main event, and one of the benefits of evil operating in this time and space world is that we remember that this is not our home. We are citizens of a different land. Our home, our life, and our eternity is yet to come. This is merely a set up, though how we handle this testing ground has profound and permanent implications for our lives hereafter. *Now we must battle, though as victors. Now we must suffer, though as those who will be forever comforted. Now we must have pain, though as those who will forever be healed. Now we must have trial and tribulation, though in eternity we will have bliss forevermore.* Why God ordained things to happen exactly in this fashion is like asking why God had to send Jesus to the cross. Why did God decide that the death of a perfect sacrifice covers sins of other people? It makes sense, but something about it is too wonderful, too powerful, and too big to get our minds around. We would do well to believe as children, to have faith that is the evidence of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). We should walk by faith rather than by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7) when it comes to issues that God has chosen not to answer.

When we are in trials, and all of us will one day face the ultimate trial as death closes in on us no matter how easy our lives have been, we must not ask God why. Rather, we ought to say, "This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). This day I will choose to believe, to love, to live, to worship, and to obey. I will choose to love my God and to believe He loves me. I will choose to hope in heaven and my inheritance to come. I will go along with Paul and say, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Horatio Spafford, author of "It Is Well With My Soul," penned the hymn after hearing of the death of his family. Surely, his impulse had to be "God, why?" "Why didn't You intervene or protect them?" "Why did you allow this to happen?" But he chose to believe, to bow down, and to worship. Somehow, even in this horrible tragedy which surely ripped him to the core, he was able to say and know in his heart that he was okay with God because God loved him and His promises were sure. He would go to heaven, and he would see his family again. God would always be good, faithful, merciful, and on the throne. Rather than dwelling on why God allows specific difficulties into our lives, may God teach us and give us strength to know and believe that He loves us and that He is good. In that fact alone, we can get up each day, no matter the dilemma, and say, "God has made this day, and I will enjoy it." It seems impossible. Can such difficulties really be well with our souls? Can we really have joy? Can we really go without knowing God's every thought and intention? The answer is "with men, this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).