

The Permissive Will of God
Bible Study - Lecture IX
Brookland Baptist Church
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We have completed our study on the circumstantial will of God. God's Circumstantial Will - that is, how evil circumstances may momentarily counter God's ideal purposes; and God's Ultimate Will that is, how God's ideal purposes may finally be realized though temporarily derailed. We understand that human folly and sin often delay or prevent God's intentional will from coming to fruition in our lives. Thus in the circumstances created by evil or neglect, there is a "will within the will of God." This means that God will make provision to help us overcome and bring good out of current circumstances.

As we continue our study, we are veering away from the book and our initial outline, to focus on an aspect of the will God that is perhaps the most difficult, to understand because it introduces the why question. "The Permissive Will of God." When we speak of the Permissive will of God that there are somethings that God allows and permits for an indirect fulfillment of God's. In other words, because God is sovereign, He must at least "permit" all events and happenings. Within God's sovereign will, He chooses to permit many things to happen that He takes no pleasure in. The question of why God permits some evil and the suffering that comes from it, even the suffering of innocents, is an extremely hard question to answer, because only God knows the purpose or the reasoning of it all.

The questions around why God allows and permits somethings is not new. Human beings have grappled with question since the beginning of time and that question becomes more personal when tragedy, suffering, or difficult times hit close to home. In fact they have been asked by men and women of all ages of history. How would you answer these two questions?

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1.) Why does God allow pain and suffering? -----

2.) Why did God allow _____?

Let's consider a few terms:

THEODICY: refers to the attempt to justify the goodness of God in the face of the manifold evil present in the world. Further theodicy is an attempt to reconcile the belief in a loving and powerful God with the suffering in our world. God is all-good. God is all-powerful. Terrible things happen. Trying to reconcile these three things is what we call theodicy — an attempt to understand why God allows evil to exist in the world. Where does evil originate?

Evil manifests itself in nature (in tsunamis, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, cancer cells and in human behavior (offenses against one another and against God). Together, natural and moral evil test the human spirit and cause unbearable suffering. There is simply no explanation for the suffering of children, but people nevertheless seek answers.

There are varying answers some have given to explain the question of theodicy:

- 1.) for example, comes **the retributive view that suffering is punishment for sin,**
- 2.) **Parental discipline provides an alternative explanation for suffering.** A loving parent punishes an errant child. The goal of correction is educative, a kind of soul building. By analogy, God is said to discipline favored ones (**Prov 3:11-12**).
- 3.) **Testing supplies a third response to the existence evil.** Lacking full knowledge, due to human free will, God needs to know whether an individual's devotion is genuine. That search underlies the harrowing tests of Abraham, whom God commands to sacrifice his son Isaac (**Gen 22**), and of Job.
- 4.) **Job 19:26, Dan 12:2, and Isa 45:15); suffering draws one closer to God, who shares the pain,** as in **Ps 73**; always a mystery, God is hidden or in exile because

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of the affront of sin; people are victims in a deterministic universe, as in **Ecclesiastes, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch**;

- 5.) **some individuals suffer to save others from an awful fate.** An example of Jesus' vicarious death on our behalf on the cross. He was the substitutionary sacrifice. **(as in Isa 53:5)** The chastisement of our peace was on his head. And suffering is transgenerational, offspring paying for the sins of their parents **(as in Exod 34:7)**.

ANTHROPODICY: has to do with or is concerned with man's inhumanity to man; the evil we do to each other. Examples: Joseph's brothers, David's children i.e. Absalom.

ACTS OF GOD: an act of God is generally considered an act attributed to nature without human interference. For an example, damage from a tornado or a lightning strike would be considered an act of God. Damage from tornadoes would not be considered an act of God if it is caused by the property owner. (Insurance company definition) in contrast to disasters caused by human hands, such as tragic bombings or shocking school shootings, it is the natural disaster that is most likely to be referred to as an "act of God".

When we hear words "act of God," and think about those words the implication seems to be that God is the source or cause of the disaster. Some may even offer their opinion as to exactly why God would send or cause the natural disaster. Some of the opinions maybe that the disaster was sent as punishment for some sin or to teach a lesson.

It is understandable that Christians and others who believe in an all-powerful God would either think that a disaster is something God has actually caused to happen, literally an "act of God," or be confused as to how such a disaster could happen.

However, we must be careful here because thinking of God as the cause of the disaster may affirm the almighty power of God but also lead some believers to another question that is whether God is really a loving God. The reasoning seem to be that if God is

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almighty, then God has both the power to cause a disaster and the power to keep the disaster way. How could a loving God not keep the disaster from happening?

There are others who reason that if God is truly a loving God who would not cause such a disaster, then God must not be all-powerful or at least not powerful enough to keep the disaster from happening. There are also those for whom the experience of a disaster shakes their faith that they conclude that such a devastating event can only mean that there must be no God at all.

Few believers can experience a disaster and not have it raise at least some faith-questions.

Now, our prescientific ancestors believed that that thunderstorms, and natural disasters were works of God. They would tell us to turn off everything in the house tell us to go somewhere be still and be quiet because God was at work. My Lord he calls me by the thunder.

However, today we know that there are scientific causes that natural force of nature are natural occurrences. However, on the other hand what about man's role in the environment and the ecology? Climatologist having been warning us for years about the gas house effects of omissions from cars the effects smoke factories are having on the ozone layer. They have found that some oil companies were warned about the effects over 30+ years ago.

We polluted our water supply polluted the oceans which supplies us with food resources.

WIGIAT = Where is God in All This? Or where was God in all that?

May I interject that as we study this aspect of God's will that we consider two things as it relates to our disappointment with God in the face of suffering, tragedy, or injustice comes from to two places. First, our assumptions about how God is supposed to work

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in our world. Namely, when God does not meet our expectations, we are disappointed, disillusioned, and confused.

Second, the way we have interpreted the message of the Bible. That is to say, we must remember that the message of the Bible is not a promise that those who believe and do good will not suffer, but the Bible shares the testimonies of those who refused to let go of their faith in the face of suffering.

This week your homework assignment was to look at the characters in the scriptures below and based on your understanding, explain how God's permissive will is involved:

- **Genesis 37:12-36**
- **1 Samuel 8: 1-6**
- **Job 1:1-12**
- **Habakkuk 1:1-11**
- **Psalms 49**
- **Psalms 7**