

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY – PART 5: TRUSTING GOD WITH EVIL & SUFFERING

Do some thinking while we wait to begin...

When is it OK to ask God questions? When is it NOT?

Read through each of these texts and then try to answer the question.

- Psalm 13:1-2, 88:1-18
- Job 38:1-4, 40:1-5
- Romans 9:20-21

RECAP: GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY...

God is 100% in control... Yet God is not responsible for evil

“God stands behind good and evil asymmetrically. To put it bluntly, God stands behind evil in such a way that not even evil takes place outside the bounds of his sovereignty, yet the evil is not morally chargeable to him: it is always chargeable to secondary agents... On the other hand, God stands behind good in such a way that it not only takes place within the bounds of his sovereignty but it is always chargeable to him, and only derivatively to secondary agents. In other words, if I sin, I cannot possibly do so outside the bounds of God's sovereignty... but I alone am responsible for that sin... But if I do good, it is God working in me both to will and to act according to his good pleasure... If this sounds just a bit too convenient for God my initial response (though there is more to be said) is that according to the Bible this is the only God there is. There is no other.” D.A. Carson, “How Long O Lord,” p213]

1. IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE GOD WERE NOT IN CONTROL OF EVIL OR SUFFERING

The atheist
The cycle of Karma
Islamic submission
Buddhist search for detachment
The helpless God of “Open Theism”

2. HOW SHOULD WE QUESTION THE LORD?

3. BUT, LORD, WHY DO YOU ALLOW EVIL?

(a) God has two ways of willing / two wills

Explanation

1. God's sovereign / efficient / secret / decretive will
(= what God actually wills to happen)
2. God's moral / permissive / revealed / perceptive will
(= what God desires to happen)

Scripture example – the death of Christ

Scripture example – the hardening work of God

Further explanation:

See John Piper "Are there two wills in God" (shorter) and "Does God desire all to be saved?" (longer) – both free online.

(b) God's chief aim is His glory

But why doesn't the Lord save everyone?

2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

Romans 9:22-23

But why the Cross of Christ?

John 12:27, "'Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name.'" Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'"

John 17:1, "When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."