

Notes – Part 1 – Why? Does God Cause Bad Things to Happen? Why do the innocent Suffer?

Topical Exegesis

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Introduction

- Atheists and Christians alike question...How can you believe in a God that allows bad things to happen?
- Prayed, gave to church, volunteered, and served...but now this?
- If God is loving and just, then God must not be all powerful or If God is all powerful, God must not be loving and just...Not
- Disappointment with God during suffering, tragedy, etc stems from our assumption of how God is supposed to work in our world.
- Bible not as much about those who believe that were kept from suffering but more about those who refused to reject their faith in the face of suffering.
- Victim of incorrect beliefs, preaching, and teaching
- The God I know does not cause bad things to happen

What not to say to one who is suffering or experienced tragedy

- Everything happens for a reason...Not.
- God needed another angel...Not.
- God planned for this...Not.
- It must have been the will of God...Not.
- When it is your time it is your time...Not.

Natural Disasters

- Natural disasters cause widespread human suffering
- In the past, human history viewed these things as acts of God because they had no other way to explain them. In this day of science, we understand more. We no longer should believe God sends natural disasters.
- Must adapt to the things we know are possible
- Hurricane Katrina...Did God bring devastation on the poor or was it the wealth distribution that lead to devastation?

Suffering Caused by Sickness

- Why go to the doctor when we are sick if it is God's will for us to be sick or die? God uses healthcare to combat sickness.
- Get sick and we ask...why me God?
- Sickness is not a punishment.
- Sickness happens
- God did not put a tumor in my daughter's head...the tumor came from decisions our society has made in terms of pollution, lead, food additives, and other carcinogens
- Sickness is not the will of God
- Jesus healed the sick...he did not make people sick.
- Human bodies are not indestructible...

Suffering Caused by Human Decisions

- 30,000 die daily from disease and condition related to starvation...Is this God's plan or is it failure of those who have resources to help?
- Why wear seatbelts and helmets if every car accident death is God's will? God gives us the ability to make conscious decisions about our safety.
- Suffering can be caused by wrong or poor decisions or misuse of freedom
 - Did God cause the alcohol kill the young child in a wreck or did the person who made the decision to drink and drive cause it?
 - Did God cause the 400 horsepower car to kill the family of three or did the person who made the decision to street race cause it?
 - Did God cause the gun to kill a person or did the person who chose to discharge the gun in the commission of a crime cause it?
 - Did God cause the knife to kill a person or did the person who chose to use the knife to end their own life cause it?
 - Did God cause the drug to kill a person or did the person who chose to use the drugs cause it?
 - Did God cause the person to be killed on a motorcycle or did the person who chose not to wear a helmet and drive unsafely cause it?
- Humans will make bad decisions, children will make bad decisions...just as you cannot fully control a child's choices when they explore their freedoms, humans in general will make mistakes as they explore their freedoms
- Consequences for actions and decisions
- Some get angry at God when they are really angry because of decisions they made

God Gave Humans Dominion over the Earth

- Humans have been placed in charge of God's planet, making us responsible for what happens
- God willed world into being...scientists help us understand process
- Have dominion, act on God's behalf, taking care of world
- Not left to our own desires or ways but God's way
- God gave humans intelligence and the ability to choose right and wrong
- Primary way God acts and rules is through interaction with people...wants something done, he calls people...feed the poor, heal the sick, stand for justice, offer encouragement. Jesus sent the apostles out just as we are now used.

Humans have been Given the Freedom to Choose Good and Bad

- Freedom can be used for God or against God
- Humans have the ability to choose right from wrong...God gave us that ability
- With this freedom comes the possibility to choose wrong decisions that will lead to suffering in our lives or others
- Adam and Eve
- Why the tree in the garden...the tree represented freedom and choice

Humans Struggle with our Freedoms

- Drawn towards things that are not God's will
- Consequences of bad decisions
- This sin and struggle with freedom, choosing the wrong path, leads to corruption, atrocities, genocide, abusers, crime, violated marriage vows, and worship of the idols of money, sex, and power
- What God intends as a gift is sometimes misused and leads to suffering.

Closing

- Rejecting God in the face of suffering does not change the situation. It only takes away the greatest source of hope, help, comfort, and strength.
- We have this wrong assumption of what God should be and how he should be.
- God we have previously conceived in our minds may not exist
- Teaching, churches, and preachers have let us down
- Suffering is a process...Christ hung on the cross for 6 hours not 6 minutes or 6 seconds.
- When we ask why, maybe we should look at the cross and ask why he did that for us.

Scripture

- 1 John 3: 18-20 Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.
- 1 Peter 4: 12-13 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange is happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed.
- 1 Peter 4: 16 Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear his name.
- 2 Corinthians 4: 17 For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure.
- Ephesians 3: 20 Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine.
- Exodus 3: 7 Then the Lord said, I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry.
- Genesis 1: 27-28 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.
- Genesis 2: 15-17 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.
- Isaiah 41: 10 Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.
- James 1: 17 Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

- James 1: 14 But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin
- James 2: 14-16 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, Go in peace; keep warm, and eat your fill, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?
- James 5: 13-14 Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.
- John 14: 6 Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
- John 16: 33 I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!
- John 3: 16-17 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.
- Luke 1: 37 For nothing will be impossible with God.
- Luke 6: 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven.
- Matthew 19: 26 For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.
- Matthew 22: 37-39 You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and will all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
- Philippians 1: 29 For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well.
- Philippians 4: 6-7 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- Philippians 4: 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
- Psalm 139: 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
- Revelations 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.
- Romans 12: 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God- what is good and acceptable and perfect.
- Romans 5: 3 And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance.
- Romans 8: 18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.
- Romans 8: 28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

References

The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version

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If God is Good Why Do We Hurt? Randy Alcorn

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