



Why Do Bad Things Happen? Part Two: Good vs Evil

If God Is In Charge, Why Do Bad Things Happen?

The first time I did something that I consciously knew was sin took place when I was in either the fifth or the sixth grade. I am sure I sinned many times before that, but this was the beginning of me knowing I was without a doubt doing what was wrong and wrong in God's eyes. My friend invited me as we walked home from school to go into a liquor store. This was back when pornographic magazines were openly displayed on the shelves and men or women were free to look through them there. My friend gave me the secret sign that we were about to do something that could cause us trouble if we got caught. He and I walked casually past the pornographic magazine rack and he nonchalantly dropped his coat on one of the displayed magazines. My role in this and I performed it perfectly was to bend down and pick up the coat but at the same time grab the magazine right behind it and with the magazine hidden under the coat, walk out of the store. To my amazement I successfully left the store without being caught and from that point after, I wore the guilt of committing a crime as well as opening Pandora's box of lust. It was the moment I discovered what Adam must have felt when he tasted the forbidden fruit and realized to his shame he was naked.

Last time we looked at the entrance of Satan into the consciousness of the world of people. Satan not only tempted Eve to violate the command of God as well as pull her husband into the same sin, he also by doing so introduced through the temptation the first humans into the cycle of death and evil. Today we will lay the foundation for understanding the sovereignty of God from an angle you perhaps have never considered, and that is the primordial entrance of Satan into the universe. In the last message we looked at the experience of Job as he faced his horrific suffering. While debating his friends over the root cause of his anguish, for both Job and his buddies, the issue came down to why God treated him as He did. Never was there another protagonist. The question was always why God tormented Job. Never was any thought given to someone else being involved in the tragic life Job suffered. But, at the beginning of Job, the audience is introduced to Satan who seems to be somehow related to the angels. **One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"** (Job 1: 6-7a NIV)

Without Job knowing it at the time, Satan entered the council of God and Job came up in the conversation. **Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."** (Job 1: 8-11 NIV) Keep in mind that Job was oblivious to this back and forth between God and Satan. Notice something in this. God promoted the goodness and rightness of Job. He clearly was pro Job. Satan however discounted the praise, claiming that Job would not be so holy if God stopped giving him so many good things. Keep in mind, as is pointed out in the Bible notes, Satan's name means "accuser". That is his nature; it's how he is fundamentally, putting down, ridiculing and making charges against both humans as well as even God. So God gives Satan permission to test Job's faith. **The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.** (Job 1: 12 NIV)

Don't be mistaken by that rather profound bit of information the Bible provides. To leave God's presence does not mean Satan got away from God as if the Lord is here and not there, that Satan went somewhere that God did not exist. He was very much still in God's presence when he attacked Job as we understand

the sense of being in someone's presence. The expression means much more than physical proximity. It speaks of getting outside of God and His will, moving away from obedience and turning toward sin. Now Satan was on his own so to speak. He was acting in a state of rebellion as he came after Job. Satan was commissioned to test Job and his faith. Satan took his task and bent it so that cruelty and heartache was on his agenda. Keep in mind that Satan could do nothing about Job and his faith without permission from God. The Lord let Satan test Job and Satan went for it with all the evil he had in him.

Let's go back in time and return to the Garden of Eden. Why was Satan there? It certainly was not because God was not strong enough to keep him out of there. If that were the case, then God is much less powerful than the rest of the Bible insists. Satan had to be there because God wanted him there. It seems clear that there are at least two reasons for Satan's presence and God's allowance of Satan to approach Eve. We touched on the first reason in the previous message on the sovereignty of God. It was to give Adam and Eve a clear understanding of evil versus good. Good was in God and every interaction He had with Adam and Eve. Good was in every moment the two enjoyed the Garden where they lived because it was the direct result of the goodness of God. Remember what the Lord said after every day of creation? **And God saw that it was good.** (Genesis 1: 18c NIV) Therein we see our Lord's plan for Adam and Eve catching the knowledge of good and evil. Evil was what was outside them in the form of Satan and the temptation to disobey God and good was what became a part of them in the relationship they had with God and the taking in of all the Garden offered them minus the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Let's move to the heart of the issue when it comes to the sovereignty of God and the presence of good and evil as we currently have it. This is a complex concern and we can only give a framework today for approaching the matter. We have to first address the difference between testing and tempting. Both are happening at this moment and each took place when Adam and Eve began their life in the Garden of Eden. We need to make something clear. This is our baseline for understanding what is taking place in our world. God never tempts anyone to do evil. **When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;** (James 1: 13 NIV) There is a significant difference between tempting and testing that we all generally understand. Tempting is the push to get you or someone else to do what is wrong, which puts you in rebellion against God. Testing is more generally just figuring out what is there or more specifically, what is in you. Are you for God or against Him? Is it evil you are siding with or are you opposed to evil? What makes this fascinating is that the Greek word used here can be translated tempt or sometimes test. It can be either depending on context. Tempting and testing can be quite similar in how they look. It all depends on the goal of the one doing it. Satan tempts but God only tests. Next time we will examine more closely the part Satan plays in the sovereignty of God but to close, let us see a crucial point to make regarding testing.

Pay careful attention to the point the Scripture makes regarding testing and why it is so important you experience it. **Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.** (James 1: 2-4 NIV) The term translated "testing" here always means just that. Testing, proving something, making sure of what you have. It is crucial for you to go through what are called "trials" so that your faith can be shown to be true. Even more than that however is that when you are tested you develop perseverance which leads to complete maturity. It is absolutely essential for you to be tested, to go through trials that may make you look bad or hurt you or challenge your faith. You cannot reach your potential if it doesn't happen. A bird cannot ever become strong enough to survive if it isn't forced to peck its way out of its egg and plants can't develop the toughness to make it if they do not have the opportunity to push their way through the soil to reach the surface. Tough times make tough, mature, fully developed Christians. Next week we shall look at the part Satan plays in God's sovereign plan to make you strong and mature but for now consider this. Every trial you face, every hardship or test of your soul you meet is put there so you will reach the highest levels of your faith and gain the full measure of goodness God wants you to achieve.