

Chapter 7: Is God Really in Control?

The answers to this question are all over the map, from unbelievers denying God's very existence to blaming Him for all the misery in the world. Even many Christians claim that God is control of everything, or act as if He doesn't have any impact in this world at all.

If we claim that God is control of everything, then we must also admit that He is the one perpetrating evil upon us. And yet, the Bible says that temptation and evil do not come from God:

- *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. (James 1:13)*
- *For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. (Psalm 5:4)*

So why does God allow evil to attack even the most devout Christian? There are many reasons – all of our own doing:

- We live in a fallen world where the rain falls *"on the just and on the unjust."* (Matthew 5:45)
- We are subject to the law of sowing and reaping: *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."* (Galatians 6:7-8)
- We all *"fall short of the glory of God"* and so provide the devil with many legal rights to harass us.
 - *"Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil".* (Ephesians 4:26)
- God has endowed each person with free will and He will not violate this law.
 - Thus, when a child is abused, God tries to convince the perpetrators to abandon their wicked ways, but most of the time they either do not hear or refuse to comply.

However, there is another dynamic at work. Having eaten of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." God must maintain a 50/50 balance of good and evil in the world (i.e. until the end-times when His hand of restraint is removed and evil fully overtakes the earth).

- If this balance were tipped one way or another, we and Satan could well claim that there was built-in bias toward good or evil. God did not want us to be caught in this situation between good and evil, and so warned Adam and Eve not to eat of that tree (Genesis 2:17).
- However, once they did, they were cast out into a world where good and evil vie for our very souls. God achieves this balance by restraining evil:
 - *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. (2Thessalonians 2:7)*

That's why prayer is so important, for by asking for something we are giving God the opportunity to act in accordance with our free will. However, when we "ask amiss" (James 4:3), God will not respond – the request must line up with His Word, His nature and His will.

- Aligning our will with God's will is the most powerful weapon we have in this fallen world.

So, when bad things happen to "good" people, it is not God's plan. God "allows" certain things to happen to maintain the balance of good and evil based on whether these incidents will refine us in the fire (Zech. 13:9).

- He will always try to use what the devil meant for harm and turn it to the good, as we learn in the story of Joseph who told his brothers:
 - *"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."* (Genesis 50:20)